



PEARL RIVER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Professional DEVELOPMENT

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 19, 2024



MONDAY MORNING MENTOR

HOW CAN I USE AI TO CREATE MULTIMEDIA TEACHING MATERIALS?

Presentation date: February 19, 2024
(and on-demand for one week)

Link to the Presentation:
<https://mondaymorningmentors.com>

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Advice on Advice

by Dina Gerdeman

To be effective leaders, we all need good advice, and we need to give good advice to others. Problem is, advice sharing is not as easy as it sounds, explain Joshua Margolis and the late David Garvin.

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Yet business executives aren't always making the most of advice—on both the giving and the receiving end—because they may not realize that it involves skills that can be learned and refined, according to Harvard Business School professors David A. Garvin and Joshua D. Margolis.

Highly skilled advisers pay close attention to how they advise as much as what kind of advice they give, Garvin and Margolis contend in the recent article in Harvard Business Review, The Art of Giving and Receiving Advice, which is based on research and discussions with advice experts.

The advice give-and-take is not always easy to pull off. Both the advice-giver and the receiver are prone to common missteps that can cloud communication and even damage relationships.

But when advice-giving does go well, it is a beautiful thing, says Margolis, the James Dinan and Elizabeth Miller Professor of Business Administration.

"If you've been thinking about a problem in a certain way, and the advice and counsel you get lets you see it in a completely different light, it allows you to see a path through that you didn't see before," he says.

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"People have a remarkable degree of overconfidence, and that diminishes the amount of advice they typically seek," says Garvin, the C. Roland Christensen Professor of Business Administration. "But I don't see how a leader can make critical big decisions without getting advice."



Plus, many executives believe that if they seek advice, they will be viewed as incapable of making decisions on their own.

Research shows that people who seek too much advice—those who ask for a wide range of opinions, for example, before making every little decision—are viewed as overly dependent and receive lower performance ratings from their bosses, but then again, people who rarely seek advice receive lower performance ratings as well. The folks in the middle—those who seek advice regularly but not too often—earn the highest scores.

Advice-seekers Make Mistakes

People who seek advice make a variety of mistakes, including:

- **Choosing the wrong advisers, particularly by turning only to those with like-minded ideas, rather than seeking out people who will provide a devil's advocate point of view**
- **Defining the problem poorly, either by taking the conversation to unrelated tangents or by omitting key information that might cast the advice-seeker in a poor light**
- **Misjudging the quality of the advice they are given**

Once advice-seekers have received counsel, perhaps one of the biggest mistakes they make is discounting the wisdom they were given, often because of an egocentric bias that has them naturally favoring their own viewpoints. Sometimes people will ask for advice from others, but their true goal is to seek validation or praise for their own solutions.

Experience shows that people in powerful positions are often most guilty of doing this, in some cases because they actually feel competitive when receiving advice from experts—which may lead them to dismiss the advice those experts are giving.

"Powerful people often say to themselves, 'I have to be in this position for a reason. I trust my opinions implicitly and discount others, especially if they suggest a different direction or approach,'" Garvin says. "They see such advice as a threat to their expertise."

Yet the advice-giver may also play a role in the advice falling flat by failing to clearly outline the reasoning for the advice.

"As an advice-seeker, you're in a dilemma. You know how you got from A to Z, but an adviser says, 'What you should do is X,' and often [doesn't] tell you how [he] got from A to X," Garvin says. "You have two reasoning processes—your own, which is clear and well understood, and the other person's, which is completely opaque. People tend to favor clarity. All too often, they discount advice because they can't get the adviser's reasoning process clear in their minds."

That's why it's important for the advice-giver not only to provide suggestions, but also to clearly lay out how he or she got to the recommended options from where the advice-seeker started.

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Mistakes Of Advice-givers

Those who give advice often make several mistakes of their own, such as overstepping invisible boundaries with unsolicited advice that may be seen as intrusive, or by giving advice when they're not qualified to do so.

The first question an advice-giver should ask is: Am I the best person to help?

If someone comes to you for advice and you know you're not able to provide helpful, thoughtful input, it's OK to pass, says Margolis, noting it's better to shy away from giving advice than to give poor advice. Advice-givers often feel so flattered to be sought out that they provide advice about topics they may not be qualified to discuss.

"You want to be helpful. You feel like you're now the expert in the room," he says. "It's hard to sometimes say, 'I don't have the field of vision necessary to help.'"

But if that's the case, perhaps the adviser can recommend speaking with someone else more qualified.

Other advice-giving mistakes include:

- **Communicating the advice poorly**
- **Misdiagnosing a problem, either by prematurely believing you see similarities with issues you have faced or by neglecting to ask the kind of probing, relevant questions that will get to the heart of the matter**
- **Giving self-centered guidance**

According to Garvin, advice-seekers should see a red flag when advice-givers limit themselves to saying, "Here's how I would respond if I were in your shoes."

"They're not thinking about you and your circumstances and limitations; they're thinking [about] how they would act, and their experiences, expertise, and standing may be very different from yours," Garvin says. "When a junior faculty member goes to a senior faculty member who is tenured, and the senior faculty member says, 'If I were in your shoes,' that may be poor advice because the situation facing a nontenured faculty member is very different than that facing a tenured one." For this reason, skilled advisers often add the caveat, "But since I'm not you, here's the way I'm thinking about the problem, and here are some factors you might want to consider."

A key problem for both advice-seekers and -givers is a lack of careful listening.

"What listening requires is suspending judgment," Garvin says. "You have to hear the person out—at length and in depth—before shifting to action or making recommendations."

Garvin says when he is advising someone, he listens for emotion and tone, something that may indicate that a deeper issue underlies the problem; and he also listens for whether the person is leaving certain things unsaid. Sometimes the advice-seeker is leaving out key pieces of information inadvertently or because of discomfort with his contribution to the problem.

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"If someone says I have interpersonal issues at work and mentions a lot about peers and supervisors, but nothing about subordinates, there may be something more to the story," Garvin says. "So I will ask if anything is going on with them. The part that's left out of the story is often the key to understanding it." He adds that is one of the reasons people come to you for advice: They aren't able to see the full picture on their own.

That's why it's important for both the advice-seeker and the advice-giver to ask questions of each other. The advice-seeker needs to get clarifications on the adviser's thinking to determine whether the advice fits the situation, and the advice-giver needs to fully understand the problem—and that might mean teasing out some unflattering facts the advice-seeker may have been shy about revealing.

One of our very talented advice-givers said you shouldn't presume that the version you heard at the first telling is a completely accurate story," Garvin says. Plus, the advice-giver needs to remember that the goal is to understand the problem and then convey the advice in a way that can be heard—and often this means talking through the pros and cons of various options with the advice-seeker, rather than zeroing in on one answer too early.

"There's a tendency to forget it's not about you, how smart you are, and how helpful you feel you can be, but it's about being experienced by the advisee as helpful," Margolis says. "The danger is that you immediately jump to a conclusion about the best solution. It's better to see advising as a process where you inquire, listen, and talk through the issue, and once you've got a sense of the problem together, you need to generate some options and explore them. That way you increase the likelihood of producing advice that is actionable and feasible, and in fact helps."

Margolis says he was thrilled to work on the advice project with Garvin since he has turned to his colleague for professional advice and has found him to be especially skilled in providing it.

"I was curious about the method and skill set he had that made his advice so helpful," he says. "In some ways, this was a search to say, does my experience and what David does correspond with what we see other great advisers do?"

Meanwhile, the person Garvin is most likely to turn to for advice is his wife. Why?

"It's precisely because she not only knows me so well, she's willing to tell me what I don't want to hear," he says. "In fact, I've have learned that when I'm most resistant to the advice I'm hearing from her, that's when I need to listen even more closely."

AI Literacy Explained

Double Click Below



AI Literacy, Explained

Now that AI is expected to influence fields from medicine to policing, what do students need to understand about the technology?