



It's All about ME!

It seems I was meant to write this message today!

As I fixed breakfast this morning, I flipped on the kitchen television. There, on my screen, appeared the full team of one of the morning network news shows. Around the table they all sat, chatting enthusiastically and laughing unashamedly about some pop culture topic.

Out of the blue, one of the anchors linked the discussion to something personal. And, the joking, but rather pointed, response from the second anchor indicated that it was no surprise that the conversation eventually would travel down a personal path. In essence, the message delivered was: "We know, we know. It's always about you!" (Ha, ha!)

Ooh! Did you feel the chill? I sure did.

The question is whether Anchor #1 did. This poor person, still laughing heartily, gave a playful elbow to the ribs of the offending colleague, and then wrapped up the segment. (I guess listening to the little inner-ear voice from the control room.)

I've intentionally left genders out this story so you can't relegate this to simply being a "man-thing" or a "woman-thing". Nope, my friend, it's a PEOPLE-thing! And, sometimes, it's a source of craziness about *us* for those around us.

So, in this month's edition of **EA Insights**, let's tackle the topic of conversation hijackers. With hope, it can help you end some of the madness for others...and for yourself.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC



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Quotes

"There is as much difference between the counsel that a friend giveth, and that a man giveth himself, as there is between the counsel of a friend and of a flatterer.

For there is no such flatterer as is a man's self."

~Francis Bacon

"Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom."

~Walter Benjamin

"You can't have a conversation if you don't listen. It wasn't a monologue."

~Jeff Bower

"A conversation is a dialogue, not a monologue."

~Truman Capote

"Excuses change nothing, but make everyone feel better."

~Mason Cooley

"His impact on me has been great. He's been a great friend and someone I have counted on for counsel a number of times in my career."

~Fran Dunphy

"Only if we can restrain ourselves is good"

Are YOU Driving People Crazy? Part II: The Conversation Hijacker

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We began our "Are YOU Driving People Crazy?" series last month with a look at people who constantly wing it. In case you missed that edition, feel free to [read the article](#).

Let's continue on with a second potential blind spot -- conversation hijacking.

You know what a hijack is. It occurs when one person seizes or takes over something that belongs to someone else. Usually, we think of hijacking in connection with airplanes or other modes of transportation. The vehicle is taken over. We thought we were going in one direction, only to find ourselves headed someplace completely different.

All too often, though, conversations also fall victim to this dastardly deed.

Person 1: "May I ask you a question?"

Person 2: "Sure! What's up?"

Person 1: "Well, I'm having a little trouble getting started on this assignment."

Person 2: "Oh, I understand because when I was working on my piece of things last week, I had the same problem. I wasn't grasping what was going on, and it was throwing me for a loop. I seem to...."

Hijacked!

Now, on occasion, we all do this. Really, we do. However, when it is habit...when conversations with you typically start out going in one direction and, nine times out of ten, end up pointed straight at you, then it's a problem. And, you're probably driving people crazy in the process.

So, what do you do? Here are some thoughts about how not to fall into conversation hijacking mode. (And, in case you didn't notice, they spell out the word "hijack".)

Hear yourself.

Are you unsure about whether you're a conversation hijacker? You can ask others. (Note that you may, or may not, get an honest response.) Another effective means of getting your answer, however, is simply to hear yourself.

If you're able, while the conversation's still going on, pull back, and try to analyze what's happening. If this is too weird for you (and, don't feel badly if it is), do a rerun of the dialogue after the fact. Either way, try to assess yourself honestly. Was the original subject matter something related to the other person or some other topic but, by conversation end, you were mostly talking about yourself or something of importance to you?

Again, it may be a one-time occurrence. It may only be occasional. Then again, it may be habit. Give a listen to your conversation patterns to determine if you find yourself in hijack mode more often than not.

Identify when you do it.

The "when" is at the root of this part of the process. Do you take over conversations when you're in a group of strangers? Do you take over conversations when you're under stress? Do you take over conversations when you're talking about a topic in your sweet spot? Do you take over conversations... *anytime* you have a conversation? If you can begin to dissect when you move into hijack mode, this information will aid you in overcoming your challenge.

Justify not.

Bottom line...no excuses. If you justify your actions (which is different from understanding your actions), no change will occur. Be prepared to keep driving folks bonkers. The only way to take meaningful steps

conversation possible. Good talk rises upon much discipline."

~John Erskine

"I tried to use the questions and answers as an armature on which to build a sculpture of genuine conversation."

~Clifton Fadiman

"Listening well and answering well is one of the greatest perfections that can be obtained in conversation."

~Francois VI,
Duc de La
Rochefoucauld

"He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else."

~Benjamin
Franklin

"The philosophy of the wisest man that ever existed is mainly derived from the act of introspection."

~William Godwin

"[She] was sitting in a group of people, giving the monologue she always thought was conversation."

~Lillian Hellman

"[T]his is a good time to do a self-assessment."

~Scott Kahan

"It was not a give-and-take conversation."

~George Karl

"Litigation is completely inappropriate and unfounded in light of the ongoing discussions.... We are extremely disappointed that a few individuals are attempting to hijack those discussions."

~Don Knauss

"Self-justification is a treacherous servant."

~Wellington
Mara

toward the forward movement you're after is to admit (at least to yourself) what you're doing.

Active listening is essential.

Sometimes folks take over conversations because they want to engage with someone else, but they don't know how to do that. Active listening can be a useful tool.

How might this look? Well, as someone else is talking, truly focus in on what he or she is saying. Don't think about how this applies to you; just listen to understand. Listen so that you can rephrase or summarize the gist of what was communicated, and you want to do this so that the speaker can clarify if your understanding is off in any way. Asking open-ended questions also is helpful. This demonstrates your engagement and your desire to comprehend what is being shared. It involves you fully in the conversation...without making the conversation about you.

Confer with trusted counsel.

You may have a conversation hijacking blind spot, and/or you may identify this as a challenge area but need some help in turning it around. The assistance of trusted counsel can make a tremendous difference.

Notice that the key here is *trusted* counsel. You may find many people who will be willing to tell you that you're driving them crazy. However, what is likely to be more useful is someone who's willing to help you not only uncover the source of the lunacy but who's willing to walk with you as you seek to turn it around. Trusted counsel helps you to see yourself as you are now, and it helps you to continue your growth into what you can become!

Keep working at it.

Habits aren't formed in a single day. Habits aren't changed in a single day. Some days you'll be spot on. Other days will be a struggle. Keep working at it. Keep focusing in on the changes you're attempting to make. Give yourself kudos, and mark your progress, when you succeed. Assess your shortcomings, and work through alternate plans, when you slip. But, don't give up! And, over time, you'll find yourself a part of Hijackers Anonymous!

The thoughts set out here are simple, but they're not necessarily easy. So, why don't you let **Executive Advantage** serve as trusted counsel for you? **Contact us today.** We'd be honored to help you with the H-I-J-A-C-K steps set out here or in any other areas that may be limiting your professional and/or personal success.

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*"We don't give up.
We don't quit."*
~**Mehmet Okur**

*"If you don't want
to do something,
one excuse is as
good as another."*
~**Proverb**

*"You have brains in
your head. You
have feet in your
shoes. You can
steer yourself in
any direction you
choose. You're on
your own. And you
know what you
know. You are the
guy who'll decide
where to go."*
~**Dr. Seuss**

*"Go not to the
elves for counsel,
for they will say
both yes and no."*
~**J.R.R. Tolkien**

*"It's when things
get rough and you
don't quit that
success comes."*
~**Unknown**

*"You can judge a
good listener by
asking the talker at
the end of the
conversation what
the listener's
position is on the
topic. If the talker
doesn't know, then
the listener has
probably done a
good job of
listening."*
~**Unknown**

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At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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