**GST 101**

HOW TO TALK TO ANYONE, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

BY

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**Introduction**

There is the fear of saying the wrong thing, or saying the right thing in the wrong way. Someone once said, ‘It is better to remain silent and be presumed a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.’ When you are talking to a stranger or a lot of people at once, the fear is magnified. One thing is sure, there is nobody you can’t talk to if you have the right attitude.

***This lecture aims*** to help you approach any conversation with confidence and pass across your message.

**The Basics of Successful Conversation**

Talking may come naturally to some people, but you will agree with me that even those who have a natural ability of something have to work to develop it. That is what turns a talent to skill. **Here are some basics of successful conversation:**

* ***Honesty***
* ***The Right Attitude***
* ***Interest in the Other Person***
* ***Openness about Yourself***

**Honesty**

Honesty lets your listeners and viewers share your experiences and how you feel. For instance, if you have never done any public presentation before and you were given just a little time to prepare and present, be honest with your audience.

Honesty does not bore your listeners with a whole lot of your experiences.

When you are honest with your audience, you are free from anxiety. If you are anxious, your audience would find it difficult to comprehend what you have to say.

Let them know how you feel so that you can sail at the same pace.

**The Right Attitude**

The right attitude is the ***will*** to talk even when it might not be comfortable at first.

Decide to develop yourself when involved in a class discussion.

Share your view with as much clarity and distinctiveness as possible.

Improve your conversational ability by:

consulting books on public speaking,

watching videos on how to talk.

- talking out loud to yourself around the house or apartment.

standing in front of a mirror and talk to the image.

It works for everyday conversation.

**Interest in the Other Person**

***You cannot talk to people successfully if they think you are not interested in what they have to say or you have no respect for them***.

Make sure you maintain eye contact; this way, they feel you are paying attention to what they say. Will Rogers once said: “Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects.” This in other words shows that everybody is an expert on something.

You have a subject you love to talk about and while you are on it, your listeners will always be able to tell whether you respect them. If they feel you do, they will listen more attentively as you talk. If they don’t, nothing you say or do will win them back to what you are talking about.

**Openness about Yourself**

Remember the golden rule – Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It applies to conversation, too.

You should be as open and honest with your conversational partners as you would want them to be with you. This does not mean you should talk about yourself all the time. At the same time, you should ***be willing to reveal the kind of information that you would ask of another person***.

Telling people what your background is, what your likes and dislike are, is part of the give and take of conversation.

**Tips on Talking In a Variety of Settings**

There are several occasions for conversation and they range from small, comfortable gatherings, like dinner party among friends, to big, intimidating crowd scenes, like Presidential cocktail party, society weddings, funerals, etc. Although each one is different, the principles of conversation are the same**: be open. Find common ground with your partner and always listen**.

**Cocktail Parties, Dinners,   
Weddings, Funerals**

When you are in this kind of gathering,

do not be intimidated by the size of the group

look for someone to have a one-on-one conversation with.

you can also discretely join others in conversations already under way that sound interesting.

be sure you are not caught in the same place for a long period of time.

Hence, ***mingling is a necessary part of successful conversation*** in such settings.

**The Greatest Question of All Time**

Remember, ***asking questions is the secret of good conversation***. When you are curious about everything, you tend to know more. The surest way of keeping a conversation lively and interesting is by asking the question ‘Why?’

**Fail-Safe Ways to Get Out of a Conversation**

If you find yourself stuck with a real bore, or simple feel it’s time to end an ongoing conversation and move on, there’s always ***one guarantee way to get out of the conversation: “Excuse me. I have to visit the restroom.”*** Make it sound urgent enough so that your departure would not be offensive.

You can also ***make your escape by putting someone else you know nearby in your stead***. Just introduce the two, get them to start talking and take your leave.

You can just ***simply say “It was nice talking to you”*** and turning away can be graceful enough, as long as you sound as though you actually did enjoy the conversation.

**Eight Things the Best Talkers Have in Common**

Most successful people are successful talkers and vice versa. You can develop the ability to talk well in order to be successful. How would you achieve this? You do what the best talkers do which is:

***They look at things from a new angle***: Take unexpected points of view on familiar subjects.

***Broaden Your Horizons***: Think about and talk about a wide range of issues and experiences beyond your own daily life.

***Enthusiasm***: Display a passion for what you are doing with your life and an interest in what you are saying to them at that moment.

***Don’t just talk about yourself***: Be sure not to centre the conversation only on yourself at all times.

***Be curious***: Be free to ask questions like ‘Why?’ Desire to know more about what you are being told.

***Show empathy***: Try to put yourself in the speaker’s place in order to relate to what they are saying.

***Show your sense of humour***: Do not be sceptical about using some humours on yourself. In fact, the best conversationalists frequently tell stories on themselves.

***Your own style matters***: Be original. Develop your own style of talking

**Business Basics**

There are some basic guidelines to follow when involved in a business conversation.

Just like in social conversation, be direct and open; ***be a good listener if you want to be a good talker.***

***If*** *you are talking within your own industry or profession*, ***you can assume the people you are talking to know the technical terms you are using***, but you still have to make yourself clear.

*If you are talking to people outside your own field*, ***you have to assume*** just the opposite – ***that your audience or other meeting participants do not know your technical terms***, so you have to speak in lay language.

***Time is money. Don’t waste the time of the people you are talking to*** ***with frivolous subjects***. Try to lay down the purpose of the meeting within five minutes of your discussion. And don’t try to be the life of the meeting with a twenty-minute monologue when everybody else is anxious to get down to business.

**The Art of Selling**

Everybody is selling something. **You are selling yourself and your education and experience everyday in your job, whether you are a salesperson or something else. *In learning the art of selling***, there are certain things you need to know. ***You have to learn your products or services – and what works and doesn’t work in selling them.***

**Selling Yourself**

In selling yourself, you ***make yourself very attractive***. For instance, you can show prospective employers what you can do for them.

***Tell them how you are going to do this job better than anyone else will;***

***Make them think about how good the boss who hired you will look.***

***Sell your advantages and not your features. You do that by talking about your knowledge and skills – the expertise and contacts you have developed in your field and the abilities you have developed over your career***.

***Maintain an open attitude by communicating your enthusiasm for the job***; it is a refreshing characteristic that employers don’t always find in job interviews.

***Be prepared***. Make sure you go over the key points you want to make about yourself. You can go as far as jotting them down on a paper and reviewing them several times before the interview.

***Do not forget to ask questions***. It shows your interest and care towards the other person or company.

**Talking To The Boss**

Now that you have worked so tirelessly and have finally got the job, you have much more talking to do. ***We do not talk the same to everyone and in every setting***.

***You talk to your boss differently from the way you talk to your peers or your subordinates***. That’s just human nature – because, by definition, your boss is not your peer.

**Talking To Your Subordinates**

***Talk to those who work for you the same way you want your boss to talk to you***.

***Give clear instructions***. If time is a factor, make sure they understand that, and give them a deadline.

***Encourage them to ask questions so you can be sure they understand***.

**Meetings**

There are a few simple points we need to know about meetings.

**When You Are Running the Meeting**

Endeavour to start on time.

Avoid letting the small talk get in the way.

Be decisive

Be firm.

***When You Are a Participant***

The best way to save time? Don’t go. If your presence is not really necessary, ask to be excused or invent a conflicting engagement.

***The less said the better***. Avoid the temptation of jumping into the conversation just for the sake of being noticed.

***Don’t put other people down***. That’s a short-term way to make a long-term enemy.

***Be willing to ask ‘dumb’ questions*** when everyone else has joined a runaway bandwagon.

***Make notes beforehand*** if you know ahead of time that you are expected to speak, or if you feel strongly about wanting to say something in particular.

By all means, ***don’t be afraid to use humour.***

**Presentations**

***Presentation*** is a form of public speaking, which ***involves the use of language, delivery and*** until recent, ***the use of visual aids***. At the point of presentation, it is assumed or taken that the speaker has consulted some works to help in the actual presentation.

**Use of Language:**

It should be noted that language is important and the appropriate use of language to convey thoughts and ideas is also necessary. Therefore, ***a speaker***, during presentation, ***should endeavour to know the meaning of the choice of words in their scripts***.

Another thing to bear in mind is that ***one should use language accurately and clearly too***. Do not strive to impress. Use words you are familiar with and concrete words you can relate with.

**Delivery:**

How do you deliver your presentations? ***What is your manner of presentation, vocal inflections, facial expressions, gestures*** and so on?

***A good delivery conveys the speaker’s ideas clearly, interestingly and without distracting the audience***.

Some methods of delivery may include:

Reading from a manuscript

Reciting from memory

Speaking impromptu

Speaking extemporaneously

**Visual Aids:**

Of recent, there is hardly any presentation without the use of visual aids. Visual aids offer several ***advantages***, the primary advantage being ***clarity*** and the secondary, ***interest*** and ***retention***.

If you are discussing an object, ***you can make your message clearer*** by showing the object or some representation of it. Note that ***the interest generated by visual images is so strong*** that visual aids are now used routinely in many areas, not only in speechmaking. Also, ***visual images often stay with us longer than verbal ones***.

**Kinds of Visual Aids:**

We have visual aids such as ***objects, models, photographs, drawings, graphs, charts, video,*** etc.

You can follow these **guidelines when preparing visual aids:**

***Prepare visual aids in advance***

***Keep visual aids simple***

***Make sure visual aids are large enough***

***Use fonts that are easy to read***

***Use a limited number of fonts***

***Use colour effectively***

**Guidelines for presenting visual aids:**

***Avoid using the chalkboard for visual aids***

***Display visual aids where listeners can see them***

***Avoid passing visual aids among the audience***

***Display visual aids only while discussing them***

***Talk to your audience and not to your visual aids***

***Explain visual aids clearly and concisely***

***Practice with your visual aids***

**Public Speaking**

**Know Your Audience and Vice Versa.**

In public speaking, you are expected to know your audience and get your audience to know you.

This enables you to establish a rapport with them early on in the speech by showing you understand their point of view.

If you don’t already know the group you are going to be speaking to, part of your preparation is to ask questions beforehand. Questions like this could help:

What is your organization?

Who are its members?

Where are they from?

What are the big issues facing you?

What would you like to hear about me?

**Public Speaking (Cont’d)**

And very important –

How long do you want me to talk?

Will the audience want to ask questions after I finish?

Again, ***do not assume that the people sitting out there in front know you, either. Therefore, there is the need to either be introduced or you introduce yourself***.

**When to Do the Unexpected (i.e. Going Against The Grain).**

There are instances when you must have been expected to say something and you took off in another tangent. In such situation, you may have taken the decision just to wake up the crowd. For instance, the last speaker spoke about the advantages of education and that topic has been well-exhausted because the audience is educated people. Then you mount the podium to tell them that ignorance/illiteracy could be better. I bet you, your audience would pay more attention to hear what you have got. But be sure you have enough facts to keep such audience. This is called ***‘going against the grain’***.

**The Value of Brevity**

There is this story of a man who received a lengthy letter from a friend that ended with an apology. “Please excuse such a long letter,” his friend said. “I didn’t have time to write a short one.” ***It’s not easy to be brief, especially on a topic you know a lot about. In any case, take the time to boil down your message to its essentials.***

The emphasis on brevity applies even more when you are delivering a speech. ***It is not the longest speech that matters but the speech that made the most impact***. Brevity is the first thing we learn from speakers such as Lincoln, Kennedy, and Churchill, who are willing to keep it short to maximize their effectiveness as speakers. We should be smart enough to do the same thing.

**THE SUMMARY ON GOOD CONVERSATION**

A good conversation should be two way with both parties equally involved and interested.

It is a shared experience.

It is a partnership like a dance: you respond to each other’s movements and are both winners.

Build them around respect: treat other people the way you want to be treated yourself.

Create a comfortable atmosphere: like plants, conversations need good ground to take root and flourish.

***Talk about mainly positive things***

People who talk about good news tend to cheer people up whereas people who always talk in negatives tend to depress the people they are talking to!

Obviously there must be a balance, as sometimes we must talk about unhappy events, but make sure you don't do this too much.

You won't go far wrong if you use the old adage: "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all!"

***There should be a willingness to be open on both sides***. Each person has the opportunity to express their point of view and feelings. Relationships develop through conversations where we open up and exchange details to create closeness.

Always address someone by their first name if you know this. It shows that you are treating them as an individual. "

A good conversation makes a difference; something useful happens and it has a satisfying conclusion. ***Nod your head from time to time to encourage the speaker.***

***Leave spaces: stay silent for a few seconds.***

***Don't talk for too long***: your attention only lasts a few minutes before we need a break.

Cut your story into bite sized chunks to allow breathing space.

***Make descriptions specific:*** don't generalise or use clichés. Be precise and concrete.

***Ask the speaker to elaborate on major points***.

***Regularly summarising can improve the quality and accuracy of your conversations***.

Feed brief summaries back into  the conversation.

***When starting conversations show that you value the other person's  attention***: "I'd really like your opinion about .....