

Charlie Mechem: Welcome to 15 Minutes With Charlie. I'm your host, Charlie Mechem. I want to help you communicate more effectively, and I think that the use of anecdotes can really help. Explore this with me as I share anecdotes from my book, Total Anecdotal, and ask my guests to react to them with respect to their own career and experience.

Today's podcast features David Feherty. David played professional golf on both the PGA and European tours. More recently, he has hosted a highly regarded TV show on the Golf Channel, which features one-on-one interviews with notable figures in the golf industry. This series on the Golf Channel has become very popular. David's profound knowledge of golf and his incredible wit make for a show unlike any other. Listen here for my 15 minutes with David.

The first anecdote that I want to ask your reaction to appears on page 26 of my book under the heading of Adaptability and Flexibility, and the anecdote is designed to show how important flexibility and adaptability to an unexpected situation can help.

I was privileged to serve for more than 25 years on the board of the J.M. Smucker Company. Paul Smucker was the CEO and driving force throughout the years, an extraordinary man in many ways.

One year during the Q and A at an annual meeting, a woman got up, noted that she and Paul have known one another since they were in grade school, and she always loved the company and everything it stood for. "But," she said, "There's one little thing, Paul. All your jams and jellies are put up in such large jars. We older people, especially those of us living alone, don't need such big containers. Couldn't you put up your jams and jellies in itty-bitty jars?"

Well, the audience laughed and applauded and I thought, "Wow, how's Paul going to handle this one?" It was a good question. It was asked by a lovely lady and an old school friend. Well, Paul smiled and said, "Mabel, you're right. We've known one another for many years and I respect your judgment. It's a very good question that you've asked. Let me try to answer it this way. We could indeed, and maybe should, put up our jams and jellies in itty-bitty jars. But Mabel, if we did, then we'd have to pay itty-bitty dividends." Well, the audience roared, Mabel smiled, and the meeting went on.

Your thoughts, David, on the importance of adaptability and flexibility.

David Feherty : Well, the first part of my career at playing golf for a living. Adaptability is incredibly important to me. You're faced with situations where often what you've been trying isn't working, so you've got to adapt your game or your swing to compensate for the problems that you're having.

One thing that I would point out about that anecdote is I've gotten to the stage where, I'm 60 now, and my hands aren't what they used to be. I've had hand surgery on my right hand, I really need to have it on the left. And my problem with itty-bitty jars is I can't get the lid off.

Charlie Mechem: Oh, that's terrific. Well, Paul was a unique man, literally built the Smucker company from a very small company into a large one, and he was a master at this kind of thing. So thank you for that. The next anecdote is on page 52 of the book under the heading of ego. I'm sure in your world, David, you have run across many gigantic egos and you've run across many people with claims to major egos who have learned to manage it. But the one-line anecdote goes like this, "just remember, the cemeteries are filled with indispensable people." So I would like your thoughts.

David Feherty : Well there's one that my father used to tell me, and that was, "As soon as you think you've got the answer, someone will change the question." It's kind of similar, I suppose, but the ego is something Frank Chirkinian, the great producer used to say, "That talent isn't talent without ego." And I think you have to keep your own ego in check. If you want to communicate properly and ... Because part of communication is being likable. And the most likable people are often the best communicators. For me, communication is ... self-deprecation is a very important part of it. If you make people comfortable because of your own weakness. I tell people all the time that I ask questions from a position of weakness.

And that has always worked for me.

Charlie Mechem: I've always said that sense of humor is critical, but never at the expense of other people. That your humor should always be either self-deprecating, or the overall human condition, but never at the expense of another. And obviously you agree that.

David Feherty : well, I do. And it reminds me also of ... I don't go to church very often, because I don't like to be surrounded by sinners. And one of the last times I went to church was to listen to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is like the Episcopalian Pope, if you like, he's the head of the Church of England. He said one thing that sort of resonated with me, and that has done over the years, he said, and I will attempt to recreate his accent. He said, "People with no sense of humor have no sense of proportion, and shouldn't be put in charge of anything." That sort of stuck with me over the years.

Charlie Mechem: I could not agree more. I've said this many times. I can't tell you how many times in business situations, or for that matter, personal situations, I've seen the

spell broken by a good laugh. It never totally solves the problem, but it makes it a hell of a lot easier to solve.

David Feherty : Well, yeah, you're right. And in a way, a sense of humor is a self-defense. Also, when you're faced with a situation that's filled with pressure or anxiety or something like that. I come from a place where ... I grew up in kind of an urban warfare environment, and the troubles in the 50's, 60's, and 70's in Northern Ireland. And I think one of the reasons that people from Northern Ireland are so funny is that you have to find ... It's absolutely compulsory, in a way, to find humor. Even in ... And you see it in Jewish humor, and Polish humor. [inaudible 00:08:02] place where there is suffering, you'll see a sense of humor unlike anything else, because it's the last defense of the human soul at times.

Charlie Mechem: You're so right. And one of my favorite standup comedians was Henny Youngman. And a lot of his lines are well known. One that I ran across the other day that I absolutely love. He said, "You know what it means when you come home at night and you're tired. A lady meets you at the door with a drink and a kiss. You know what that means? It means you're in the wrong house." He was a master.

David Feherty : Yeah, he was. And I love stand-up comedians, and Henny Youngman was kind of an older version of Rodney Dangerfield, if you like.

Charlie Mechem: That's true, exactly. [crosstalk 00:08:54] Exactly right.

Okay, well the next anecdote, speaking of funny people, is a quote from Yogi Berra. It comes on page 59 of the book under the heading of Forecasting the Future. And it goes like this, The world will miss the great Yogi Berra. His contributions to the English language are legendary. Consider this quote as it pertains to forecasting your future, "If you don't know where you're going, you're liable to end up somewhere else." Your thoughts on that?

David Feherty : Well, I was lucky enough to have met Yogi on several occasions over the years. And what an extraordinary man. He was so, so delightful to be around. He had that mischievous twinkle in his eye. And the great part about Yogi, also, was a lot of his quotes and things that he said were purely accidental. But there's a great beauty and naivety, especially in our children. We miss the days when they were young enough to be naive. There's an endearing quality to it, and I think Yogi kept that for his whole life, and was so charming and lovable because of it.

Charlie Mechem: Indeed he was, and his quotes and his image and, God knows, his talent will endure for a very long time.

David Feherty : Yeah. People forget too, that Yogi Berra was part of the D-Day invasion.

Charlie Mechem: I didn't know that. I actually did not know that until I read it [crosstalk 00:10:38] Yeah. The next anecdote comes on page 68 in the book under the heading of hard work. It goes like this, a man prayed and asked God to help him win the lottery. Every day he renewed his prayer, and finally said, "God, won't you please help me win the lottery?" To his absolute amazement, the skies darkened, lightning flashed, and a strong deep voice said, "Would you at least buy a ticket?" So often I think we forget how important hard work is to success. So your thoughts on that?

David Feherty : Yeah, it is. That there's no way to succeed without some kind of hard work. Whether it's thinking, or physical, or emotional, whatever way you want to think about it. You've got to put the effort in if you're going to reap the rewards. And I'm just at this point, Charlie, and I love the book. I really do, and I hope you don't mind, but I do a stand-up tour around the country myself, just tour show, and theaters, and I might steal a couple of these lines. I will give you credit for it.

Charlie Mechem: I would be honored if you did that, and I'd also love to know your schedule, because I'd like to plug into those somehow.

David Feherty : Oh, well if you go to fehertyofftour.com, you can find out the dates and the venues for that. Fehertyofftour.com.

Charlie Mechem: Okay, good, I'll do that. This next anecdote appears on page 88 of the book, and is under the heading of Passion. It's an excerpt from a speech by Neil Simon, the great playwright. And I've loved this since I ran across it some years ago. He said to a graduating class, "Whatever path you follow from the moment you take off those long black gowns, do it as though Gershwin had written music to underscore your every move. Romantic and idealistic, yes, but I can't think of anything worthwhile in life that was achieved without a great deal of desire to achieve it. Don't listen to those who say it's not done that way. Maybe it's not, but maybe you will. Don't listen to those who say you're taking too big a chance. If he didn't take a big chance, Michelangelo would have painted the Sistine floor, and would certainly have been rubbed out by today." Your thoughts?

David Feherty : Yeah. I think this one really resonated with me, because apart from anything else, I didn't graduate, not even from high school. But oddly enough, my high school invited me back several years ago to do a commencement speech like this, and they didn't realize that I hadn't graduated from that high school. Which was the first thing that I pointed out. The kids loved it, the teachers, not so much. But for me the subject of passion and ... Because I didn't do well at

school, I couldn't pass an exam. I was the classic Attention Deficit Disorder child. Although when I went to school, they called that "stupid."

Really, there was no pill for it. I was 17 years old, and I'm sitting in a geography class when they were teaching us about the average rainfall in Western Samoa, and I thought, "Well this is going to be useful later in life, if I want to be a Western Samoan weather forecaster." That was the day [inaudible 00:14:37] that I just turned 17, and I had a five handicap and I lied about that having happened in order to be able to turn professional, and if I hadn't had a passion for the game, if I hadn't ... And I'm not saying that I believed in myself particularly much, but I believed in the people around me that could support me, and help me to at least leave at ... Or make a short term goal, which was to be able to make some money, and make a living out of playing golf.

Charlie Mechem: And indeed you did. The next anecdote actually goes to the point of the people surrounding you. And it came from a conversation that I had with Joe Namath. I got to know Joe because we were members at the same golf club down in South Florida. And we were talking one day about a variety of things and I said, "Hey, who do you think were the two or three best quarterbacks in the history of football?" And his answer was not at all what I expected. I thought he would immediately list names like Unitas, Montana, Graham. Instead, he said, "You know, Charlie, it's impossible to answer that question because you'd have to understand and evaluate the strength of the offensive line that protected the quarterback, as well as the skill and number of his receivers. In other words, the quarterback might have a record that either enhanced or did not do justice to his ability, simply because of those who surrounded and supported him. This makes ranking by skill levels completely unfair."

And the anecdote closes by saying, "This, by the way, is a pretty good lesson for life in general, not just for ranking quarterbacks. You are never better than the people that surround and support you." This comes on page 120 of the book and under the heading of What's Really Important, I'd like your reaction to that.

David Feherty : Well, first, just thinking about Joe makes me smile.

Charlie Mechem: Yeah, right?

David Feherty : He is another one of those incredibly engaging personalities. And of course he was surrounded by a fantastic offensive line, and I think you'd have to put Joe Montana up there in that top level of quarterbacks. As little as I know about American football, I think I know that much, from having watched old footage, and having spoken to him, and spoken to those who played with him. The likes of Joe Montana, people like that. Just being around positive people and accepting help. And being aware of the fact that you need to be around

successful people, because successful people do the things that unsuccessful people don't want to do. And they want the responsibility that comes with success and you have to want to be in a place where you know you're going to be uncomfortable.

But having said that, you're going to be more comfortable if you're surrounded with people who have your best interests at heart. And I think part of it is actually being able to identify those people who have your best interests at heart.

Charlie Mechem: You're absolutely right. And I've always said, David, that in my mind there are three kinds of leadership. One is by intimidation, where a person follows the leader because he's terrified of not doing so. The second is leadership by bribery, which is to pay the person enough to keep them around even though they're miserable. But the third, and to me the only effective form of leadership, is leadership by example. That people follow you because they want you to succeed. They follow you because they care about your success, knowing quite well that that will help in their own success.

So I've always felt that the first two forms of leadership, intimidation and bribery, when things really get tough and you turn around to look for your army, there's nobody there. But if they follow you because they really genuinely care about you and want you to succeed, then there are thousands of troops right behind you. So that's my philosophy on leadership. Speaking of sense of humor, let me close with something that you may have seen in some of my writings, but Neil Armstrong was a dear friend of mine and I'm reminded of him particularly as we come upon the 50th anniversary of-

David Feherty : Armstrong is one of my heroes. I would put him up in the greatest Americans who have ever lived. He landed that thing on the moon with 17 seconds of fuel.

Charlie Mechem: Unbelievable.

David Feherty : Yeah, he had to make the decision that he was either gonna go back to the lunar module, or the mothership [crosstalk 00:20:17], or land it with just enough fuel to be able to take off again. And he did it manually, without the aid of the computer.

Charlie Mechem: People don't realize that he was one of the world's most successful test pilots before he even entered the space program. And the reason I bring it up is because Neil loved to laugh. Most people thought he was dower, removed and isolated, but he was anything but. In private, among his friends, he had a wonderful sense of humor. He loved to laugh, and his favorite joke was a joke

that he never finished because he would laugh so hard as the punchline came that he couldn't finish.

And I was honored to give a eulogy at his Memorial service and I actually told this story, and it goes like this. These two guys were walking down the street on a very hot, humid day, and the one guy said to the other ... They were walking their dogs, by the way. And one guy said to the other, "I'm dying for a beer. I'm so thirsty." And the other guy said, "So am I, what are we going to do?" They said, "Oh look, there's a beer parlor right there. There's a saloon." Well then, oh god, there's a sign in the window that says no dogs allowed.

Well, the one guy says, "Look, I got an idea. I'm going to go in and I'm going to tell him, if the bartender asks, that this is my seeing eye dog. And if it works and I'm not back out here in five minutes, then it's safe for you to come in." Worth a try. So the guy goes in, the bartender says, "Hey buddy, can't you read the sign? No dogs allowed." Guy says, "I'm so sorry sir, I'm blind and this is my seeing eye dog." And the guy says, "Oh, I'm sorry sir, I didn't realize that. Come over here. I'll buy you a beer." So the guy outside thinks this must have worked. So he goes in, and the bartender says, "What's going on today? Sir, there's a sign in the window, No dogs allowed." Other guy says, "Oh, I'm so sorry," he says, "but i really can't see, and this is my seeing eye dog." And the bartender says, "Come on, it's a Chihuahua." And the guy says, "What? They gave me a Chihuahua?"

Neil would ... He would get just about to the point where he'd say, "What? They gave ..." Then he would start to laugh. And when Neil laughed, he always kind of bounced up and down. So sense of humor was important to him and I completely share your view. This was one of the great heroes, not just of our time, but of any time.

David Feherty : Absolutely. And it reminds me of an Irish joke, a real short one. Fellow was in the supermarket with a Chihuahua on a leash. And he said the same thing. "This is my seeing eye dog." And the guy says, "Well, that's all right." And he's sort of got the dog hanging on the leash. He started spinning Miranda over his head. Fellow says to him, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm just taking a look around."

Charlie Mechem: That's terrific. Well I'll tell you, my friend, this has been absolutely delightful, and I can't thank you enough for taking the time, because I know how busy you are, to share this with me. I'm glad you enjoyed the book. It was fun to write. I'm being urged to do another one, and I might. And indeed I'm being urged to do an audio version, which would be fun, too.

## 15 Minutes with Charlie - David Feherty

David Feherty : Oh I think that would be a great idea. Absolutely. And lovely to talk to you, Charlie. I'm sorry I haven't had the chance to see you in a while. Hopefully our paths will cross soon.

Charlie Mechem: I hope so too. Continued good fortune, and good health, and so many thanks, David.

David Feherty : Thank you, Charlie.

Charlie Mechem: Bye bye.

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