

15 Minutes with Charlie - Mark Zecchino

Charlie Mechem: Welcome to 15 Minutes with Charlie. I'm your host, Charlie Mechem. And 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 recently published book, Total Anecdotal, and ask my guest to react to them with respect to their own career and experience. Mark Zecchino, is my very special guest on today's episode. Mark is the host and producer of Golf Talk Canada TV and radio and also the live play by play announcer for PGA Tour Radio on Sirius XM radio and PGA Tour Radio. Mark is from Toronto, Canada and a die hard Maple Leafs fan. So sit back and enjoy my 15 minutes with Mark.

Okay, the first one comes under the heading of Arrogance and it goes like this. One night at sea, a captain saw what looked like the light of another ship heading toward him. He had his signalman signal to the other ship and said, "Change your course 10 degrees south." The reply came back, "No, you change your course 10 degrees north." Well the captain answered, "I am a captain, change your course south." To which the reply was, "Well I'm a seaman. Change your course north." This of course infuriated the captain so he signaled back, "Dammit, I say change your course south. I'm on a battleship." To which reply came back, "I say, change your course north, I'm in a lighthouse."

Arrogance is something that I think we've all seen over the years, but I wonder if, how that resonates with you.

Mark Zecchino: Well, it's funny you mention it because obviously in my line of work, being in the media profession and being on television and radio and covering golf, I'm very lucky because I work with wonderful people and I work with a great team on PGA Tour Radio and my Canadian team, north of the border are good people as well. However, in this business you will bump into those people and sometimes you put a microphone in someone's face or a camera in their face and they start to think that they're very important. They start to think that the world doesn't operate without them. I have been very aware in my career to have time for everyone, to learn that you need help on the way up. You make friends on the way up and you meet the same people on the way down as you met on the way up. It never hurts to have time for people. If you can help someone, when you can, help them.

As we get older, we need to be aware of this male ego and arrogance and things that can creep into our psyche, into our personality. I find that so interesting and it's something that I think we all need to remind ourselves also once in awhile. And you and I, you especially, I've had the opportunity to be around legends and work with one of the biggest of all, you've learned from some of the best on how to carry yourself and how to be around people that have changed the world and have changed lives. And I get to be around these people

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on the golf course on the PGA Tour. And you run into some strange ones, but you run into some great ones too.

Charlie Mechem: Well, you're absolutely right. And my, I guess my thought in this regard is, in my life and my experience, the bigger the people that I knew, the more modest they were and the less arrogant. And that's probably one of the reasons they became major figures, is because they didn't let their ego get in the way.

Mark Zecchino: Yeah. I think you're a 100% right. I think the ones that you meet that you would expect or feel that maybe have the right to carry themselves that way or have a bit of ego are usually the ones that charm you immediately with how gracious and warm they are. And you're right, that's probably been a grateful moment for them to get to the top.

Charlie Mechem: The next anecdote, I think I really am anxious to get your reaction because my experience with you is that you are an optimist. You're forward looking. You try to see the best in people and things. And here's a great Winston Churchill quote, "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity. An optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." Your comments on that?

Mark Zecchino: That's bang on. I think, I have a friend that always used to say, "Just show up and keep saying yes and there are no real holes. There are no problems. There's challenges and opportunities." And being someone that kind of came to my career late in life, I was never scared to try new things. I was never someone to try to find build the walls that were impossible to get over. Just maybe somebody that had to ask more questions and find new ways of doing things. I think people in all walks of life, depending, no matter what they do, if they were just open to more things and stop putting limitations on themselves and stopped seeing just all the problems in everything they do, I think they could open up a whole new world to themselves with relationships, with work, with family, you name it. And that's something, that's a quote that they should take heart.

Charlie Mechem: I could not agree with you more and I've always tried to feel that way myself. The next anecdote in the book, comes under the heading of Brevity and I'm going to quote two of them here, quite different, but I think both very interesting and engaging. The first is an anecdote that relates, that a teacher was asking her fourth grade students to sum up the life of Socrates in four lines. And here's what one little guy wrote, "Socrates lived long ago. He was very intelligent. Socrates gave long speeches. His friends poisoned him." That's it. Simply a fact.

Now the next one again from Churchill who said, "By its," talking about an overly long government report that he had come into possession, "By its very

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length, it defends itself against the risk of being read." What are your thoughts on keeping it short?

Mark Zecchino: It's tough because I am a talker. As you guys know, I am talker. As you know, and it's sometimes it is hard to be succinct and sometimes it's hard for me to wrap things up. I love to go, I like to be colorful. It's especially being in radio as well as TV. In radio, sometimes you need to add a little bit more color and add a little bit more flowery description and whatnot to things because you don't get to rely on the pictures of the world like we do when we work television.

But when you're dealing with people, and you're dealing with people's time, especially in the world of business, I think, get to the point and if there is a need and if there's a reason for people to be engaged, you got to find it right away. And you've probably only got a couple of seconds to make a first impression and to grab somebody. And if you don't do it in a short timeframe, you're probably dead meat. I guess it's a matter of knowing when to be that flowery guy and realizing you're wearing that hat, like I do on PGA Tour Radio or knowing when you're calling somebody up and asking for their time or asking for them to engage in something. You've probably got to get to the point a lot quicker. I love that second one by Winston Churchill. That's absolutely brilliant.

Charlie Mechem: It is just amazing. I once speculated, obviously without any basis in fact, but that 80% of all speeches and writings made anywhere in the world at any given time were too long. That's probably too many, but there are so many.

Okay, now the last area I want to get your thoughts on comes from the section in the book called Rigidity. And here again, I have two anecdotes and I'll read each of them and then get your thoughts on rigidity. And I point out in the book that from time to time we're all part of an organization or a culture that's not really known for innovation or imagination. There's much more rigidity than flexibility.

Now here's the first anecdote. Someone remarked that if Thomas Edison had gone to the Harvard Business School, we would all be reading by larger candles. The point is obvious. Sometimes we make life far more complicated than it needs to be. And we also frequently become rigid in what we regard as the way to accomplish something.

And here's the second one. Henry Ford is reported to have once commented, "If I had asked others what I should do, they would have suggested that I make faster buggies." Your thoughts on those?

Mark Zecchino: Well, I got to tell you, those speak directly to me and do very much directly to my life. Because I had a very successful career in the background in the golf

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industry, in an advertising capacity, in a marketing capacity. And could have stayed on that path for many years. But when I was 33, 34 years old, roughly 10 years ago now, I came to the decision that I wasn't happy doing that anymore and I didn't want to spend the rest of my life doing that. And I wanted to create content and I wanted to be a broadcaster and I wanted to get out there and walk inside the ropes with the best players in the world. And everybody told me I was crazy and everybody told me, "What you know about doing a radio show or a TV show or broadcasting golf?"

But it goes to show that people are so scared to make changes and people are so scared to listen to new ideas and you got to take a chance once in a while. And the one thing that drives me nuts more than anything else, sometimes in just in business and in life, it's just because you've always done something that way doesn't mean you're doing it the right way. And doesn't mean that you should keep doing it. You've got to reevaluate. You got to listen to people, you've got to be willing to go outside the box. And you're right, if we don't do those things, then we'd just be reading under a much bigger candle. That comes right to heart with me when I think of the last 10 years of my life and how happy I am now. And so glad that I did it just out of the big gamble.

Charlie Mechem:

Well, I think as you know, my career has been a poster child in a way, for flexibility because I've had five different careers and I've loved every one of them and didn't really seek any of them. They sort of came to me, but I happily had the "wisdom" - I put that in quotes because I didn't know how wise it was until later to not say, "Gee, I don't want to do anything different."

Thank you for joining me for today's conversation. If you'd like to listen to more episodes, please visit charliemechem.com or search for 15 Minutes with Charlie in your podcasting app. And if you're enjoying the show, you should check out my book, Total Anecdotal, the fun guide to help you become a better speaker and writer. Learn more at charliemechem.com/book. That's charliemechem.com/book. Or, you can acquire the book either through Amazon or Barnes and Noble. Thank you.