

7. Speaking Points

A talking point in debate or discourse is a succinct statement designed to support persuasively one side taken on an issue. Such statements can either be free standing or created as retorts to the opposition's talking points and are frequently used in public relations, particularly in areas heavy in debate such as politics and marketing.

A political think tank will strategize the most effective informational attack on a target topic and launch talking points from media personalities to saturate discourse in order to frame a debate in their favor, standardizing the responses of sympathizers to their unique cause.

When used politically in this way, the typical purpose of a talking point is to propagandize, specifically using the technique of argumentum ad nauseam, i.e. continuous repetition within media outlets until accepted as fact.

The framing of political discourse in terms of simple talking points has been criticized by media personalities such as comedian Jon Stewart for being a superficial examination of issues.

7.1 Follow up

Talking Points Memo (or TPM) is a web-based political journalism organization created and run by Josh Marshall, a journalist, liberal blogger and historian. It debuted on November 12, 2000. The name is a reference to the memo (short list) with the issues (points) discussed by one's side in a debate or used to support a position taken on an issue. By 2007, TPM received an average 400,000 page views every weekday.

History

During George W. Bush's first term, the blog frequently discussed foreign policy and was especially critical of administration policy towards Iraq and North Korea. After the 2004 election, posts began to focus on the Bush administration's proposal to privatize Social Security. In addition to criticizing the substance of the proposals, Marshall argued that a unified front in the Democratic Party would deny Republicans political cover and force a loss for them on the Social Security issue.

Talking Points Memo closely tracked the positions of members of Congress on the issue throughout 2005. It asked readers to monitor local media for comments from their own members of congress, and public categories were created for politicians on this issue: wavering Democrats were the "Faint-hearted Faction" and Republicans who doubted the President's plan were the "Conscience Caucus." Marshall also coined the term "Bamboozlepalooza", in reference to President Bush's 60-day (it was extended) tour promoting social security privatization. Other terms that Marshall has coined while criticizing the Bush administration include "Up-is-downism" and "Mumbojumbocrats."

Guest bloggers have included Matthew Yglesias, Robert Reich, Dean Baker, Michael Crowley, and, briefly, Vice-Presidential candidate John Edwards. Beginning in the summer of 2006, many weekend postings were provided by anonymous blogger DK. On November 11, 2006, DK was revealed to be lawyer David Kurtz, who now openly posts under his name.

On July 10, 2007, the site had a major overhaul, adding much content from its related sites to the main page. It is part of the effort to have more original reporting on the website.

In 2007, TPM won a Polk Award for its coverage of the US Attorney Scandal, becoming the only blog so far to win the award.

Related projects

A "spin-off" blog also created by Josh Marshall was a companion website called TPMCafe, which debuted on May 31, 2005 and was discontinued in June 2012. This site featured a collection of blogs about a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues written by academics, journalists and former public officials among others.

Marshall expanded his operation to a new blog, called TPMmuckraker, where journalists working for the TPM collective, such as Paul Kiel and Justin Rood, investigate political corruption.

TPMDC - In January 2007, the Horse's Mouth, a blog authored by Greg Sargent with a remit to cover how Washington politics was covered by the major news outlets, moved home from The American Prospect to the TPM Media family.[7]

Sargent had begun writing for TPMCafe in July 2006. In 2008, Sargent stopped posting to the Horse's Mouth blog and began posting to a new blog called TPM Election Central, which focused on covering the 2008 elections. In 2009, TPM Election Central was renamed TPMDC, to cover politics from Washington, D.C., and Marshall hired journalists based in Washington to report for the blog.

7.3 Discussion questions

Companies build strong workplaces -- ones that nurture their employees' strengths and use them to drive great outcomes -- one workgroup at a time. The more great managers your company has, the stronger it will be and the more it will grow and succeed.

But who determines the working conditions for your managers? Who recruits and develops them, and who focuses their efforts? Your company's leaders. They determine the broad conditions under which each team operates and define and focus each team's efforts.

Corporate leaders should consider critical human-capital matters in their leadership actions and discussions every day. The 100-plus questions below will help you jump-start these discussions in your company. They address four broad areas of Gallup Path Management: Leadership, Finance, Strategy, and Workplace. They are designed to be used during leadership retreats, workshops, and planning sessions. Questions noted as "Roundtable discussion" should be answered by all participants. Other questions can be drawn and answered by individual participants.

Workplace

Item 1: Expectations

- What are your expectations of yourself? What do others expect of you? (Roundtable discussion)
- How do you use expectations to drive the performance of the people you manage? How do you know when to raise or lower the bar?
- Talk about your three best employees and what you expect of them. Does their pay plan complement or reinforce those expectations?

•How do you use your strengths to meet your own expectations? (Roundtable discussion)

Item 2: Materials and equipment

•Discuss your beliefs on "status items" at work. For example, how important are perks to you? How important are perks to other employees in our company? Are we too frugal in giving out perks? Are we too generous? How do we communicate our philosophy on perks and spending to our employees? (Roundtable discussion)

•How often do you review equipment needs with your employees? Do you tie their requests to measurable performance outcomes?

•Do you encourage your employees to think about equipment improvements that could enhance their productivity, the productivity of their department, or the company?

Item 3: What I do best

•Choose three group members and tell them what they do best.

•What do you do best? How do you use your talents and strengths to do what you do best? What prevents you from doing what you do best? How can we help you focus on your strengths?

•What are your priorities? How do you prioritize what you do best while ensuring that someone is accountable for what you can't do? What are some things you've put on the back burner?

•How does our company's growth -- or lack of growth -- affect your opportunities to do what you do best?

•Which individuals in our company seem to have the opportunity to do what they do best every day?

Item 4: Recognition or praise

- What is the best recognition you've ever received?
- What commitment can you make to increase recognition? What plan should we put in place to increase how we recognize employees formally or informally?
- Think about the people who are gathered here today. Which two people have helped you achieve a goal or have helped you grow? Recognize their contributions by sharing them with the group.
- How often do you recognize individuals outside your department or team? What plan can you put in place to recognize individuals like these regularly??
- What are your beliefs about recognition? How do you act on them? (Roundtable discussion)
- What are the most creative recognition ideas that you have read, seen, or heard about? What is the best recognition you've given or the best recognition event you've coordinated?
- Which groups within our company are the best at giving recognition? Which groups need help?
- How much bigger should recognition be? Would spending more on recognition help us increase employee retention and per-person productivity? What events or activities for clients or customers, vendors or suppliers, or employees could we dream up that would recognize what they contribute to our company?
- Are there times that you're better at giving recognition than others?

Item 5: Someone cares about me

- As a leader, how do you demonstrate or show that you care? How far does your "caring leadership" reach? How do those who don't work with directly you know that you care? What formal systems or plans are needed so that every employee in our company knows that we care?

- How do we ensure that every workgroup has a caring environment and a manager who cares?
- How do you know when someone needs more attention or caring? Give a specific example.
- When do you/we back a person to the hilt, even in times of weakness or wear-down?
- How do we keep a caring environment as we grow?

Item 6: Development

- What development do you need to excel as a leader or manager? What do you need from members of this group to aid in your development? (Roundtable discussion)
- What are your plans your own growth and development over the next year? List the people who help you think about your future and push you to greatness.
- Who has been your best mentor or supporter?
- How do you measure or describe your own development? How do you define development?
- Who are you developing to be a leader in the company? (Roundtable discussion)
- Who are the three people at our company, outside this group, that you spend the most time mentoring, guiding, and directing?
- Whose development have you delegated to others? Who have you paired with a mentor?
- What are the benefits of a formal mentor program?
- Which teams or groups are best at helping people grow and develop?

Item 7: My opinions count

- How do you manage your constituency's opinions while leading with yours?
- As a leader, what do you do to encourage employees to express their opinions?

- How good are we at listening to our clients or customers? Do they feel like their opinions are heard?
- How do we ensure that we encourage people to express informed opinions?
- Are you seen as an open person who will listen to anyone, or are you seen as a person who has strong beliefs who is unwilling to listen to others? How open are you to the opinions of others? (Roundtable discussion)
- Do you ever suppress opinions? When and why?
- Who is someone you admire for their ability to listen to controversial opinions and manage them?
- What systems or activities should be put in place for hearing employee opinions?
- How can we ensure that we are open with each other about ideas and issues?
- Which teams seem best at listening to team members' opinions? Who in the company is best at listening to the opinions of others?

Item 8: Mission or purpose

- What is this company's purpose in the world?
- What is the greatest impact this company has made on the world to date?
- What values or beliefs are important in creating sustainability?
- How will you communicate your mission in the coming year?
- How do we help communicate our corporate mission outside the company?
- What is your greatest contribution?
- How do you create opportunities to communicate and discuss mission?
- How is mission important in our workplace culture?
- Do we consider a strong mission to be an important trait in hiring new associates?
- How can we communicate what we have contributed to the world? What success stories can we tell?

- Which groups seem to be the most mission-oriented?

Item 9: Quality work

- How do we define quality at our company? What drives quality at our company?
- What needs to be changed or improved within your department or division to increase quality service to our clients or customers?
- How do you encourage quality performance from others in our company?
- How do you use our employee feedback measures?
- How do you regularly communicate the importance of value and quality service to the people you lead or manage?
- What ideas have you read, seen, or heard about quality service that we should consider implementing?

Item 10: Best friend

- In your opinion, what makes a best friend?
- Who are your best friends outside of work? How long have you know them? What are your common bonds? How do you stay in touch? (Roundtable discussion)
- What guidelines or promises should we make to each other to maintain trust?
- How do you help others create lasting friendships and bonds within our company?
- Think about a situation in which two or more people were disagreed about something important to them. How did you help bring them together?
- Which groups seem to have the most "best friends"?

Item 11: Progress

- Are you diligent about talking with your employees about their progress? Tell us what you do and how you do it. (Roundtable discussion)

- What measurements do you use to track your progress? The progress of your employees? (Roundtable discussion)
- How do you feel about your own performance over the last year? Over the last three years? How often do you want your performance reviewed? Who else do you want to be aware of your progress/achievements? (Roundtable discussion)
- How often should strengths coaching be done in conjunction with performance reviews?
- Do you combine performance reviews with salary reviews, or do you do review them separately?
- What do you believe is your greatest achievement at our company? How has your progress as an employee influenced the company's progress?
- Who are your greatest partners? Who helps you drive performance?
- How do we make performance a tried-and-true value in our organization?
- Which managers in our company seem to do the best job at talking with their employees about their progress?

Item 12: Learn and grow

- In your career, what have been your best opportunities for growth? (Roundtable discussion)
- Are "learning" and "growth" different?
- What are our "best practices" for learning?
- What are our "best practices" for stretching an individual's growth? How can we balance encouraging high productivity for new employees while pacing individual development?
- Which is more likely to increase learning: a winning moment with reflection and recognition, or a classroom training experience? Which is more likely to aid in development?

- Describe your philosophy on learning.
- Describe the systems you've implemented to enhance learning.
- Describe how you individualize learning.
- Which groups in our company seem to have the most opportunities at work to learn and grow?
- What are the best ways our company can use online learning or e-learning?
- Are there competencies that do need to be "trained in" at our company?

7.4 Suggested activities

Some people are born with leadership qualities and others learn them throughout their life from different leadership activities.

Many of these activities can help develop good leadership skills in those who need to learn them completely.

For those that need to refine their leadership qualities, these activities can build upon the skills they already possess.

When leading a group to reach a goal, there are many skills that are required besides leadership.

Some of the other good leadership skills that can be learned or refined from leadership games are: communication, cooperation, teamwork, listening, trust, risk-taking, decision-making, planning and problem solving.

What Leadership Games Will Do

Leadership Games

- Leadership games will teach a person to find their type of behavior and how to overcome any negative aspects and how to enhance the positive.

- Leadership games build confidence in those that take part in the different activities. Each person learns how to handle different groups of people as well as learn to lead others to do things for them.

- In addition, leadership games teach the participants how to work with each other as a team. These skills will help the leader work in any environment and build up the group as a whole so they can all move forward.

List of Leadership Games

These leadership activities can be used for people of all ages. They can help someone succeed in school, their career and in life.

I have listed a few games to get started. Many of the activities can be changed to meet different circumstances.

Pass the Hoop

For this game, everyone stands in a large circle. A hula hoop is placed on one person's arm and then everyone hold hands.

The objective of this game is to pass the hoop all the way around without letting go of hands.

---Leadership skill development learned are teamwork, problem solving and communication.

Pull Up

For this activity, pair people up in twos. Each pair sits on the floor with the soles of their feet together and holding hands. Both players need to stand up at the same time.

---Leadership skill development learned are teamwork, problem solving, cooperation and trust.

Blindfold Search

For this leadership activity, you separate into two groups. Half leave the room and are given blindfolds. The other half stay in. When ready, the blindfolded person comes back into the room.

The object of the game is for the person in the room to lead the blindfolded person around the room to identify two items in the room. Both people can only communicate using touch, not a word is to be spoken between them.

Afterwards, ask each group how they felt. The blindfolded group usually feels insecure at first, then becomes more confident in the leader's ability to lead and follows them without question.

The leader sometimes takes the blind person forcefully, not realizing they need to be cautious so they don't trip. After a few minutes, they become aware of the blind person's need and gives them more direction to get to where they want them to go.

---Leadership skill development learned are trust, problem solving, communication and teamwork.

Tallest Tower Built

Each team has four people. They must build the tallest tower using paper, glue, scissors and paper clips. Two team members have the left hand of one and the right hand of the other tied together. The other team members are blindfolded. Those that aren't blindfolded, each have one hand free to cut paper, etc. They also must give directions to the blindfolded players to build the tallest tower.

---Leadership skill development learned are team building, communication, working with limitations and cooperation.

Survival Game

Separate into groups. Each group must choose five items per group they would take to survive on a deserted island or on top of a mountain. Each team must work together and agree.

This activity shows what each person's priority is and whether they would give in or not budge on their decision.

---Leadership skill development learned are problem solving, working with limitations, planning, risk-taking, decision-making, communication and cooperation.

Paper Cup Race

This is one of the leadership games that takes a bit of thinking. You will need at least two groups of people. Each group needs two trays and ten paper cups filled with water.

Put five cups at each end of the room with about 20 feet or less between them. All cups need to be gathered and put on a tray in the center of the room. They can only get one cup on each trip to an end of the room. They must get a cup from one end and then go to the other end to get another cup.

Repeat this until all the paper cups are on the tray. The participants can only use one hand and one leg to gather the paper cups. They must retrieve the cups without spilling any water. If water is spilled, the team must start over.

Most people will hop around, but the team with the best leadership skills will stand in a line and pass the tray back and forth.

---Leadership skill development learned are problem solving, planning, decision-making, cooperation, communication and teamwork.

Animal Game

First hide about 15 candies around the room. Put people into groups with 5-6 people. Each group chooses an animal with a distinctive sound such as a cow, chicken or dog. Each team must choose a leader and blindfold them.

The object of the game is for each team to find the candy and lead the blindfolded leader to the candy by using animal sounds. The team with the most candy wins.

---Leadership skill development learned are listening, communication, cooperation, team building and trust.

The above is a start to different types of leadership games that will help in organizations, schools and groups of people. There are many more creative

leadership skill development games and each group can come up with innovative activities to meet their own needs.

Whatever type of activity you choose, leadership games help develop and refine the skills needed to be a successful leader.