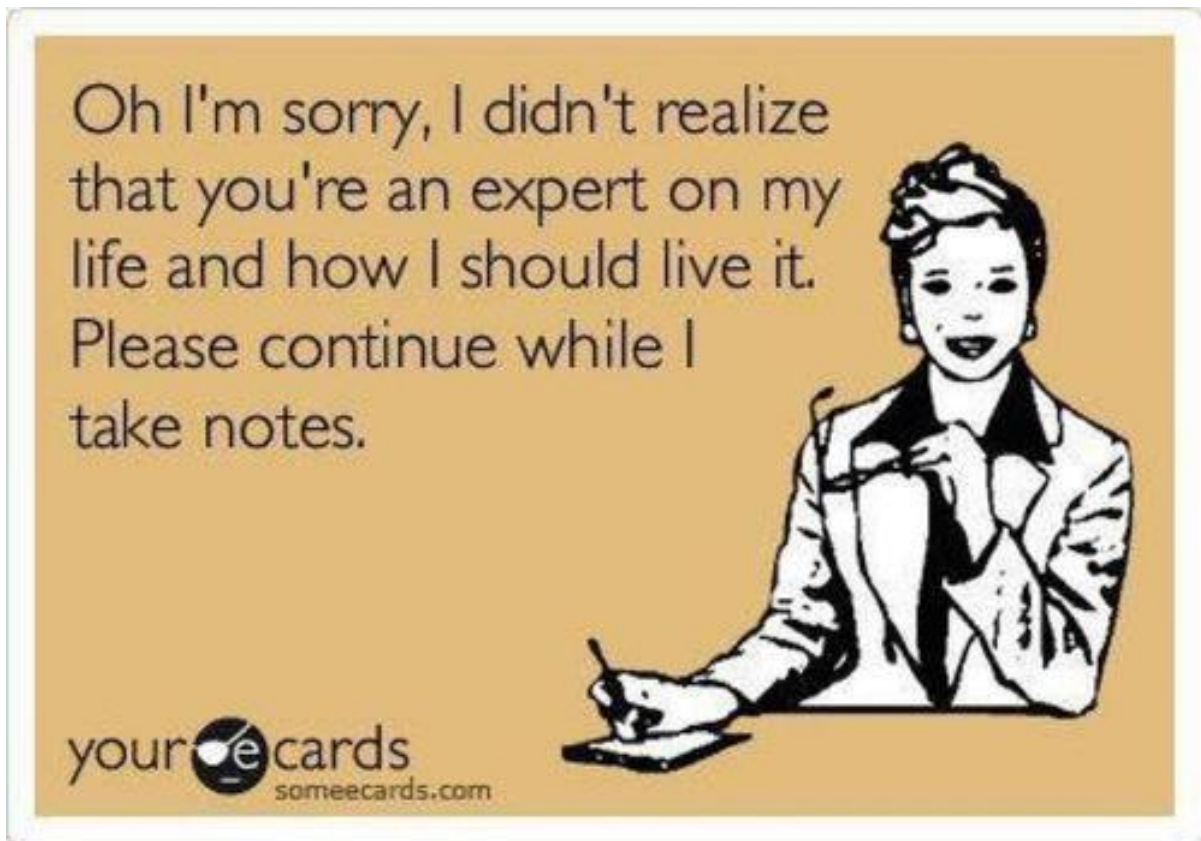


Be careful how you offer advice and critique



I recently attended a professional conference that was planned and hosted by a friend. Halfway through the conference, I saw him in the hallway and he asked me how I thought the conference was going. I said I was enjoying it, but then I added, "I do wish the sessions would start on time; and, it would be helpful to have a center aisle in the main meeting area."

While both comments were true, they were unnecessary and inappropriate. I was 94% pleased with the conference but my friend probably walked away from our conversation remembering my negative comments. It wasn't my place to micro-critique; his team would do that at the right time. I regret speaking those words.

Most unsolicited advice and critique is unappreciated and unproductive. Even when it *is* requested we need to be careful as to when and how we speak. To some degree, we're all thin-skinned and sensitive to criticism and review.

Consider:

- In any given situation, is it your responsibility or right to offer advice and critique? Just having an opinion is no justification for expressing it.
- When you *do* have the right to offer advice and critique, consider the proper timing. For example, suppose your child just played a violin recital and the family has just gotten in the car. Is this the right time and place to say, "You played out of tune; you should have been better prepared"? (This example comes from personal experience, I'm ashamed to say.)
- Following all events, schedule a debriefing meeting at which time the event will be analyzed. ("Our workshop is this Saturday. Let's meet next Tuesday morning to analyze and critique the event.") Both observers of the event and those who actually performed can anticipate having a fair, thorough, and productive examination of what took place.

I am a huge advocate of analyzing everything; all products, services, events...everything. Just be sensitive

Don McMinn

~~Think with me~~

to when and how you do it.