

COLUMN

Momentum Project

Beware of Garbage Trucks

Successful people let the garbage go by

by **David J. Pollay**

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How often do you let other people's nonsense change your mood? Do you let a bad driver, rude waiter, curt boss, or an insensitive employee ruin your day? Unless you're the Terminator, for an instant you're probably set back on your heels.

However, the mark of a successful person is how quickly she can get back her focus on what's important.

Sixteen years ago I learned this lesson. I learned it in the back of a New York City taxi cab. Here's what happened. I hopped in a taxi, and we took off for Grand Central Station. We were driving in the right lane when all of a sudden, and I mean without warning, a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, skidded and missed the other car's back end by just inches.

Here's what happened next. The driver of the other car, the guy who almost caused a big accident, whipped his head around and he started yelling bad words at us. How do I know? Ask any New Yorker, some words in New York come with a special face.

Now, here's what blew me away. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the guy. And I mean, *he was friendly*. So, I said, "Why did you just do that? This guy almost ruined your car and sent us to the hospital!" And this is when my taxi driver told me what I now call, "The Law of the Garbage Truck."

Many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it. And if you let them, they'll dump it on you.

When someone wants to dump on you, don't take it personally. You just smile, wave, wish them well, and move on. You'll be happy you did. I guarantee it.

So this was it: The "Law of the Garbage Truck." I started thinking, how often do I let Garbage Trucks run right over me? And how often do I take their garbage and spread it to other people: at work, at home, on the streets? It was that day I said, "I'm not going to do it anymore."

I began to see garbage trucks. Like in the movie "The Sixth Sense," the little boy said, "I see Dead People." Well now "I see Garbage Trucks." I see the load they're carrying. I see them coming to drop it off. And like my Taxi Driver, I don't make it a personal thing; I just smile, wave, wish them well, and I move on.

One of my favorite Football players of all time, Walter Payton, did this every day on the football field. He would jump up as quickly as he hit the ground after being tackled. He never dwelled on a hit. Payton was ready to make the next play his best. Good leaders know they have to be ready for their next meeting. Good parents know that they have to welcome their children home from school with hugs and kisses.

Leaders and parents know that they have to be fully present, and at their best for the people they care about.

The bottom line is that successful people do not let Garbage Trucks take over their day. What about you? What would happen in your life, starting today, if you let more garbage trucks pass you by?

Here's my bet. You'll be happier. I guarantee it.



David J. Pollay is the founder of the Momentum Project, an organization whose mission is to help leaders and their organizations build and sustain powerful momentum to achieve their goals. The promise of The Momentum Project is to enable leaders to mobilize their teams to reach levels of performance never before achieved. The Momentum Project fulfills this promise by teaching leaders how to put into practice the principles of Strengths-Based Positive Psychology Leadership Development™.

David has led, spoken to and trained thousands of people in his career, and has personally managed hundreds. David's roles have ranged from chief executive officer to sports-team captain. He is best known for his

focus on developing and utilizing the best talents and strengths of his employees and those in his client organizations.

David is launching the Young International Leaders Organization (YILO) in Applied Positive Psychology in 2006. YILO is dedicated to bringing the cutting-edge research of Positive Psychology to young leaders worldwide. YILO's membership will include leaders from every country around the globe. YILO's vision is to help Young Leaders shape a world in which strengths are valued and applied, and lesser strengths are overcome through partnership. Martin Seligman Ph.D, Fox Leadership Professor of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, former president of the American Psychological Association, and co-founder of Positive Psychology; and Christopher Peterson, Ph.D, world-renown Strengths Researcher, author, and professor at the University of Michigan; and Karen Reivich Ph.D, acclaimed Resilience Researcher, author, and teacher at the University of Pennsylvania, are three outstanding YILO advisors.

Prior to founding the Momentum Project and his work with YILO, David was the director of Learning and Development at Yahoo! Inc. in Sunnyvale, California. David introduced and led Yahoo!'s first management development program, working with the president and chief financial officer. He was well known for helping leaders and managers increase their performance through focusing and developing their employees' talents. David's team, known as the Yahoo! Talent Channel, was responsible for providing training and new-hire orientation to employees worldwide.

David joined Yahoo! in May, 1998 to initiate and develop Yahoo!'s Customer Care organization. David was successful as an early advocate for internet companies to provide outstanding service to their customers. Reporting to the president, he rapidly built a team of more than 130 associates worldwide, with an infrastructure capable of supporting customer service via email and telephone in more than 10 languages. His team responded to nearly one million email and phone calls per month. Known company-wide for developing talent, David helped promote forty of his Customer care associates into roles in marketing, sales, legal, and operations.

Prior to Yahoo!, David directed the Atlanta-based customer service center for Global Payment Systems, a subsidiary of National Data Corporation in

Atlanta. He served in leadership roles at MasterCard International in New York, including director of planning and administration for MasterCard's Automated Point of Sale Program (MAPP), the most profitable division of MasterCard. David was also president and chief executive officer of AIESEC in the United States, the largest student-run business exchange program and management development organization in the world. He was recently inducted into the AIESEC International Alumni Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Agra, India.

David is a graduate of Yale University with a B.A. in Economics. He is currently pursuing his Masters in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) at the University of Pennsylvania, the only post-graduate program of its kind in the world. He was recently chosen to serve as the first president of the MAPP alumni association. David directs the Momentum Leadership Program at the Village Academy, an inner-city elementary school in Delray Beach, Florida. The program teaches the principles of Positive Psychology Leadership Development to emerging leaders in the 6th and 7th grades.

David resides in Florida with his wife Dawn and their two young daughters, Eliana and Ariela. Email David your comments and stories at David@TheMomentumProject.com or call 561.265.1165