

Advice on Advice

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2-3 minutes

Advice is often a double-sided marketplace for braindead people. The Advice Giver is usually an established, busy person. They have a lot of meetings. They have their own problems (which might be the same as yours, by the way). **The Giver isn't really thinking about your business. They're pattern matching. The Giver will often give you the advice that comes with the most cognitive ease.** The *simplest* advice, instead of *the most correct advice*.

The Advice Taker is often equally misguided, hoping to load six months of context into someone's mind in 30 minutes. Six months of blood, sweat, tears, thoughts in the shower, dreams, rejection, acceptance, and hope. In 30 minutes. Once you stuff their CPU with all your data, you're hoping they crunch it and return given you The Answer, like a computer from [a Douglas Adams novel](#). Exciting. The Taker isn't really seeking the perfect answer, because they know in their heart-of-hearts it doesn't exist. The Taker is seeking status, recognition, and inspiration.

And so this dynamic leads to the following exchanges:

Should we be focusing on fixing our bugs, or growing?
You should focus on growth. Growth is good.

My team wants to hire this person I think is bad. What should I do?
Fire them!

We don't have enough users. What should we do?
Thanks for asking. Having spent 60 seconds thinking about your business, here's the idea
I think you should implement.

Once in a while, you meet Givers that are truly awake. Someone who is aware of the game. Good responses look like this:

- Why are you even asking me this? Should this really be your focus?
- What's the answer you *thought* I would give you? Why are you here, really?
- Why don't you feel comfortable doing this yourself?
- I can't decide this for you. Here's a relevant story from my experience: [...]

Answers like these usually mean someone is really thinking about the interaction instead of just going through the motions.