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## Proving a point vs making a point

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In a British production of Shakespeare's play Macbeth, a senior actor was cast as the protagonist Macbeth, while a junior actor was enjoined to play a lackey. Throughout rehearsals, the senior actor kept taunting the younger, junior artist, teasing him and making him feel small and inadequate. The junior artist was troubled by this and was waiting for an opportunity to get even with the senior actor. The opportunity presented itself during a commercial performance of the play.

A scene required the young actor to approach Macbeth in a tense moment to inform him, 'The Queen, My Lord, is dead'. On hearing these words Macbeth launches into his famous soliloquy. The junior artist saw, in his having to speak these words, a chance to prove a point. He did this in one performance by announcing, instead of the words he should have said, by saying, "The Queen, My Lord, is improving," This threw the actor completely off and he was left floundering. The young actor had proved his point. Proving one's point is about establishing your correctness against what you believe is the other's flaw. You want to prove you are right while the other is wrong. You want to have the last word.

Therefore proving a point is most often a punitive way of establishing one's ascendancy in a transaction. Making a point however is different. It is not done with the intent to put down or prove but merely to clarify and support intent. Thus it embodies respect and mutuality.

The next time we are compelled to say our bit, let us pause and ask ourselves 'if we are making a point or attempting to prove a point'. The pause will help us assess the truth of our utterance.

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