



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – April 2003

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji helps turn managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

Sho-u-gan-ai

Let's face it - stuff happens! - to us and around us - every single day! And some of it we have control over, and some of it not. If we have the ability to influence the outcome of this "stuff", then clearly, we should take positive action to correct it. However, sometimes, stuff happens that is outside our control. That's the stuff we can't influence - yet many of us spend hours agonizing over things that we have no power to change. It is for this very situation that the Japanese have a very interesting phrase.

The Japanese commonly use an expression *shouganai* (sho-u-gan-ai) that translates to "It is nothing", "No one is to blame", or "It is life". Whether it's missing the last bus home, an air-conditioner break-down on a scorching summer afternoon, or even the loss of a job, many Japanese often respond with the phrase *shouganai*. Some critics claim that the adage is too easy - it allows an individual to avoid taking personal responsibility for a difficult situation; however, there's a lot of truth (and good mental health) in this small phrase. If we can remember to use it only for situations over which we have no control, this philosophy can lead to reduced levels of stress, and release our energy so that we can focus on the things that we **have** the ability to influence or control.

So the next time someone cuts you off in traffic, or your flight is late, save your energy for the things that really matter, and say *shouganai*.