

It's Okay To Ask For Help

BY ROBYN HENDERSON



One of the biggest mistakes people make when they are trying to grow their business or their career, is to avoid at all costs asking for help. So if asking for help is the most obvious way to solve a problem, why do many people resist to the point of failing themselves, rather than take that perceived gigantic step?

Would fear possibly contribute to their dilemma? Fear of being indebted to someone, fear of looking or sounding stupid by not knowing how to do something in the first place. And even frustration that although they consider

themselves to be a smart, intelligent person – how come they can't do something as apparently easy as master computer technology, program a video recorder, change a paper cartridge fax machine, without tearing their hair out.

Asking For Help Is The Answer To Most Questions.

As Harvey Mackey says, "it's not what you know, but who knows what you know." Master networkers spend a lifetime gathering useless pieces of trivia and information. They store it away, sometimes in a recorded format (if they are really organised). More often than not, it is in their head. Their mastery comes in being able to connect two or three seemingly obscure pieces of information and making them relevant. We are in a knowledge economy – information is the new currency.

I recently met a trade delegation of women from Canada. Being very conscious of their financial outlay in coming to Australia, I wanted to be sure that they "got their moneys worth" so to speak. As I befriended the women, I asked the specific question, "When you return to Canada, what is one thing you really hope you will have achieved from your visit to Australia?" Armed with these answers, I was then able to connect them with relevant people within Australia, who definitely had the answers for them. Some even may be in a situation where they could form a strategic alliance or put them in touch with another person who could. Master networkers always treat people the way they would like to be treated.

Let's look at some of the asking for help options available to savvy networkers:

Fee For Service:

This is by far the most popular – engage a tradesperson, service provider or professional who will normally quote for the job or service to be provided and charge accordingly. Yes we will pay more for this service, and the job will be done exactly how we want it. This is more often than not the most time efficient and in the long run economical way to ask for help.

Undertaking Training:

Most skills can be learned and there are hundreds of courses available at TAFEs, evening colleges, BECs, universities, schools etc. . The choice is really –

what value do we place on our time spent in mastering the skill versus the cost of paying someone to do the job for us?

A friend recently bemoaned the fact that she was having terrible trouble mastering web site building. I asked the question, why wouldn't you go to a recommended web master and get the job done in a quarter of the time? Her response was that she wanted to learn how it was done – even though she knew it would be a one off and she had no intention of embarking on a web site building career. Each to his or her own – my thought was her time could have been spent better elsewhere, rather than mastering a one off skill.

Barter Services:

What skills in your area of expertise, do you have to trade with another service provider, who has the skills that you want? One hour of your time giving some marketing advice, may be considered a fair swap for someone who can give you a lesson in mastering technology.

Bartering always works when it is win/win – that means when both parties gain from the experience. This gain may not necessarily be financial –rather the experience of learning and mastering another skill and the opportunity to extend your network.

Volunteer:

With the global trend towards people wanting to give back to the community – there is no shortage of people looking for groups that they can become involved with. Maybe gardening or renovating houses is something you are keen to learn about – seek out those charities who provide working bees at restoring homes or looking after pensioners premises. This is definitely a win/win for you – as you are doing something good for the community and learning at the same time.

Find A Mentor:

Sometimes we are so busy working in our business and career, that we lose sight of the bigger picture. Finding a mentor for a short or long term role, can give you a very fresh perspective on your situation. Often a mentor has the ability to give you a hand up so to speak, in connecting you with key players who can open doors for you. Try asking the specific question, I am looking for a mentor who can assist me with my time management skills, who would you suggest I seek out for this role?

Over ten years ago when I started my own business, I re-invented the wheel month after month, rather than ask people to show me a better way to do things. Not only did I waste time, money and energy, my business was stifled because of my fear of looking stupid by admitting I didn't know something, that I thought everyone knew – except me. It was only when I developed enough courage to mention some of the things I needed help with, that I found there were dozens of people in similar situations – we all needed help and we could help each other.

So the next time you feel stuck, not skilled enough to complete a task, and frustrated at your perceived incompetence – be courageous. Speak up, ask for help and become a role model for so many people, too afraid to ask for what they want.

Always remember it's okay to ask for help.

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