

1,390 views | Aug 28, 2018, 05:13pm

How Strong Leaders Ask For Help

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own. X



WomensMedia ⓘ
Women@Forbes

TWEET THIS



Leaving the person to retrace your thinking and footsteps is a waste of time. Let them know what approaches you've tried and what has or hasn't worked.

By Dianna Booher

You don't get bonus points for struggling. Only battle scars. When taking over a new job or project, or when the responsibilities or multiple deadlines push you to overload, it's time to collaborate for the input you need.



Strong leaders don't hesitate to ask for help. ICLIPART

Weak leaders hesitate to ask for help, fearing others will see them as incapable. Strong leaders, on the other hand, focus on more strategic issues of accomplishing the mission, developing team capabilities and confidence, and gaining buy-in for overall success.

So when you need expertise you don't have, here's how to go about getting it from others on your team or outside your area or organization:

Strong Leaders Ask for Help Rather Than Struggle and Miss Strategic Goals and Timelines

Forget the Face-Saving Balderdash

You've probably heard this quip about banks: "You have to prove to them you don't *need* a loan, before they'll give you one." Don't try that stunt at home—or

work—when you need help. Avoid all the long preambles about how you don't really need help with X or Y and how much you know about Z. Asking for help is no time to ramble on in an attempt to let others know how qualified and competent you are in other areas.

Case in point: A colleague of mine, who occasionally posts on a particular social media platform requesting input on a situation, spends at least half the post mentioning her latest, greatest feats before asking her question. This habit generally earns her a collective eyeroll response rather than answers.


MORE FROM FORBES

Be Specific About What Help You Need

Whether you're talking to a mentor or member of your team, a vague request gets a vague response. Be very specific about the kind of information, expertise, or input you're seeking. Do you need a list of three or four trusted suppliers to bid on an important project? Are you asking if someone is willing to spend a couple of hours with you to establish appropriate criteria for selecting the best supplier for a technical project? Or do you need someone to actually write the technical RFP to solicit bids?

State as clearly as you can what you need, any deadlines that apply, and the current status of the situation. Few people will be willing to commit when they don't know where the path leads. After all, you don't climb onto a plane if you don't know its destination. And if you delegate the project to a team member without complete information, they may board that plane because you're the boss and you said to—but they'll feel like a hostage.

Summarize What You Know and What You've Tried

Leaving the person to retrace your thinking and footsteps is a waste of time. Let them know what approaches you've tried and what has or hasn't worked.  At

the least, they'll know you're not lazy. At best, you'll have saved them time as they work toward solutions. Their goal is not to tell you what you already know. Your goal is to hook their expertise where your train of thought stopped.

Choose an Optimum Time

Consider your own emotional state as well as theirs. Don't barge into the office of a coworker, colleague, or manager asking for help when your hair's on fire. Chances are that they'll let you vent and dismiss any request for help as a fleeting moment of upset.

Instead, pick a peak period of calm for them as well as you so they're more likely to agree to take the time to provide their best input.

Give Them What They Need

Time is expensive; tools are cheap. If you expect someone to take their time to offer input, equip them with what they need to accomplish the mission: the data you have available, historical records, access to other experts, software, budget, or administrative support.

If you want to hear those mission-critical words, "Help is on the way," ask for it. That's what strategic-thinking leaders do.

Dianna Booher is the bestselling author of 47 books. Her newest is [Communicate Like a Leader](#). She helps organizations communicate clearly. Follow her at [BooherResearch.com](#) and [@DiannaBooher](#).

I'm Nancy F. Clark, author of [The Positive Journal](#), and curator of [Forbes WomensMedia](#). My team helps businesswomen succeed and live happier and more fulfilling lives.

I'm Nancy F. Clark the curator of [Forbes WomensMedia](#) and CEO of [PositivityDaily](#). After studying physics at Berkeley I started out in rocket science

with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and then computer technology for the University of California where I also worked with th... MORE