

Help!

This outlook article is inspired by an old “Far Side” cartoon.

I have a couple of favorite cartoons that Gary Larson created. One is a cartoon of a dog that is leaving his house with this master. The dog is really excited because his master is taking him to get “tutored”. I could probably write something from that about better listening or the importance of having a clear picture of what you are getting yourself into but that is not the cartoon that is inspiring this article.

The one I am thinking about shows two people in an aircraft, clearly on a rescue mission looking down at a small island where two waiving people are standing beside a message that is spelled out with rocks. The message is spelled H E L P. The guys looking down don’t know what that means but they assume those must not be the guys who need help.

Shelley MacDougall and I were conducting coaching sessions at conference this year and this year it felt different. It wasn’t unusual that the coaching sessions were fully booked. That has happened before. This year there was a more serious tone to the coaching sessions. Out of 53 people coached 15 had lost their job. Another 6 or 7 thought they might lose their job soon. Beyond those statistics there was a general feeling of being unsettled. The economy or the constant barrage of bad news had seemingly taken its toll on people and even if they had personally not been affected there was a feeling of discomfort.

In this article I really want to talk about this concept of asking for help.

In my years as the coach for CMAA I have made the observation that generally speaking Club Managers are not very good at asking for help. It is something that seems to be uncomfortable. I know that is a generalization and they are in fact very good at asking for help when it comes to getting the job done but I am talking about asking for help personally. Maybe women are a little better at it than men, but both genders could stand some improvement in this skill. Maybe for men it is like asking for directions. Asking for help somehow implies that they don’t know everything and actually do not have everything under control. Well we can’t let people think that now can we?

Why don’t people like to ask for help?

For many it makes them feel like they are incompetent. It makes some feel weak and vulnerable. It makes some feel like they may be bothering people or imposing on them. Some are afraid that people might think the only time they call on others is when they need something. They may feel like a loser or worthless. They may feel that the price they will have to pay for the help may be too high over time. Many people have been taught not to ask for help, perhaps by the people who didn’t want to help them. The bottom line is that a lot of people have in their minds good reason to not ask for help.

How do you feel when people ask you for help?

When I ask this question people usually say they love it when someone they care about asked them for help?

Why do people like to be asked to help?

When someone asks you to help they are inferring you have the competence to do what they might not be able to do. They are being vulnerable and human enough to admit they can't do it all. They trust that you are the kind of person that will support them. Club Managers are brilliant in service and helping others is serving others. Some people love to be asked to help a friend. They feel like they have been given a gift when they have been asked for support. It is an honor to help someone in need. They also realize they may need the help someday or perhaps have needed it in the past.

When I am working with people who are reluctant to ask for help I ask them the question about why they like to be asked for you help. When they explain it is like receiving a gift I ask them why they won't give that gift to others.

In all giving there is receiving and in receiving there is giving!

I talked to conference attendees who donated some time and money to work on building homes in New Orleans. They were so moved by the opportunity to help. Cindy Williams told me that during the six months that she worked in New Orleans building homes she received more than she gave. Many people who had their lives changed by a storm had people from around North America and around the world reaching out to help them. In accepting the help they were receiving and giving a gift.

As you read this you may be someone who is going through a storm or you may be someone who is in a position to help someone who is going through a storm. I hope by reading this article you may be inspired to ask for the help you need or reach out to someone who may be asking for help, but you thought they said help.

There is a saying that "If you have achieved your dreams by yourself then you are not dreaming big enough!" People who have big dreams get lots of help! Please look at asking for help as an indication of strength not a sign of weakness.

CMAA members are eligible for one to three coaching sessions at no charge as a benefit of membership. Shelley and I are here to support CMAA members in achieving the big goals they dream of but sometimes people just need some support in getting their focus and energy back. Please know if you ask us for HELF we will be there for you.

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