

# The Power of Giving

Benefits of sharing your expertise with your team



BY CAROL BROOKS, SR/WA

I started giving my mom chocolates for Christmas when I was seven and every year thereafter. The cool thing is that she'd give the decadent box of Whitman's back to me and each year the box was bigger! One Christmas a few years later, my mom explained why she did this by sharing a strange concept with me: it's better to give than to receive. My jaw dropped. This was the dumbest thing my 10-year old mind had ever heard, but she explained that the act of giving was rewarding. She insisted that giving was a virtue, which brings happiness, fulfillment and a sense of purpose to the giver. Despite her patience with me, I couldn't help but think that my mom had surely lost her mind. Perhaps she should have eaten a few of the chocolates herself to help sort out her thoughts.

Of course, I eventually began to agree with her. In fact, scientific research provides compelling data proving that the act of giving is a powerful pathway to personal growth and lasting happiness. Through MRI technology, studies have shown that giving activates the same parts of the brain that are stimulated by food, entertainment or even completing a huge acquisition project. Experiments show evidence that altruism is hardwired in the brain—and it's pleasurable.

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Helping others may just be the secret to living a life that is not only happier, but also healthier, wealthier, more productive and meaningful. At the age of 10, I would have wondered if my mom had instigated these experiments. But as an adult, I've come to realize that she was right all along.

We are all blessed with different talents, creativity and ingenuity. It was never intended that we keep these attributes to

ourselves. We are meant to share them, helping others benefit, grow and become fulfilled. In other words, we are blessed so we can bless others. We were meant to give so that people from all kinds of places can be supported, challenged and made complete. Lending a helping hand to team members who need support, direction and encouragement can be a life-changing experience for both the giver and receiver. By lending a helping hand, you can make a difference in someone else's life. It has the power to enrich self-worth, collaboration and team effectiveness. The following are a few ideas to help you become alert to doing the right thing by discovering ways you can become a team giver.

### Make Giving a Habit

We all started out at some point in our career wrapped in a steep learning curve. Hopefully you felt relief when a team member rallied to your side to provide support, feedback and guidance. Could this be the time in your career to show that same kindness and make a difference in someone else's life?

Make giving a natural part of your life. You can do this by looking for opportunities to help someone. In other words, practice giving until it becomes a habit. Once a habit, giving becomes second nature and you'll be at the ready to give without thinking about it.

### Give Your Time

The gift of time is often more valuable to the receiver and more satisfying for the giver. We live in a hurried and busy world, but if we dig deep, we'll find that we all have time on our hands and can give some of our time to help others. As a novice right of way agent, I was deeply indebted to my mentor. Her patience and generosity to share her time—even though her workload was looming with critical deadlines—improved my own confidence and soon I was able to solve my own challenges and make a gratifying contribution to my team.

### Seek a Purpose-Driven Life

Giving kindles purpose, and a purpose-driven life makes for a happier person. Simple acts of kindness can spark a team's confidence, imagination and success. But thinking of these acts and knowing how to deliver can be a challenge.

I suggest that you do not allow ego to enter your office. Ego will grind acts of generosity into a shredder because all ego cares about is itself. It may have you believe that giving is silly or that others will think you are weak. Refuse to listen to these lies because your purpose has no room for small-minded egotism.

### In Summary

We all possess a large capacity to give. Our talents were meant to be shared with others and strengthened by your gifts of experience, encouragement and support. Search for opportunities to make giving a habit. The meaningful gifts of your time and expertise can solidify excellence within your team. And the bow on these gifts is a purpose-filled life. Don't cut others short. Don't cut yourself short. ✪



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