

If you want it, go **GIVE IT!**

Transforming the I-win-then-you-lose mindset to a win-win one

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About me

- Formerly Business Times' *Show Me the Money* columnist
- The articles have been compiled into eight books
- Now a fund manager
- Sit on the board of two of non-profit organisations





- A team of Harvard psychologists led by Richard Hackman, wanted to determine what makes intelligence units effective
- Surveyed, interviewed and observed hundreds of analysts across 64 different intelligence groups
- Tried to identify the factors which led to the unit's effectiveness

They thought it's one of the below

Stable team membership

Right number of people

Clear, challenging, meaningful vision

Well-defined roles and responsibilities

Appropriate rewards, recognition and resources

Strong leadership

**The most critical success factor:
The amount of help that analysts gave to each other!**



In the highest performing teams

Analysts invested extensive time and energy in:

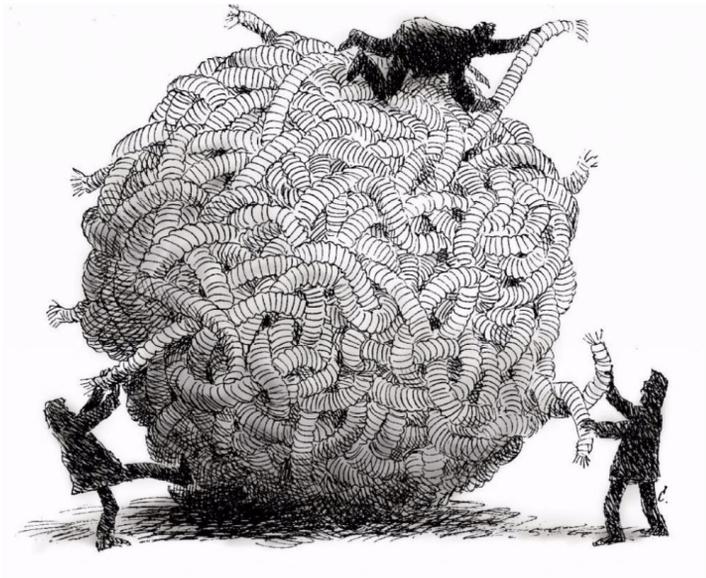
- Coaching
- Teaching; and
- Consulting their colleagues

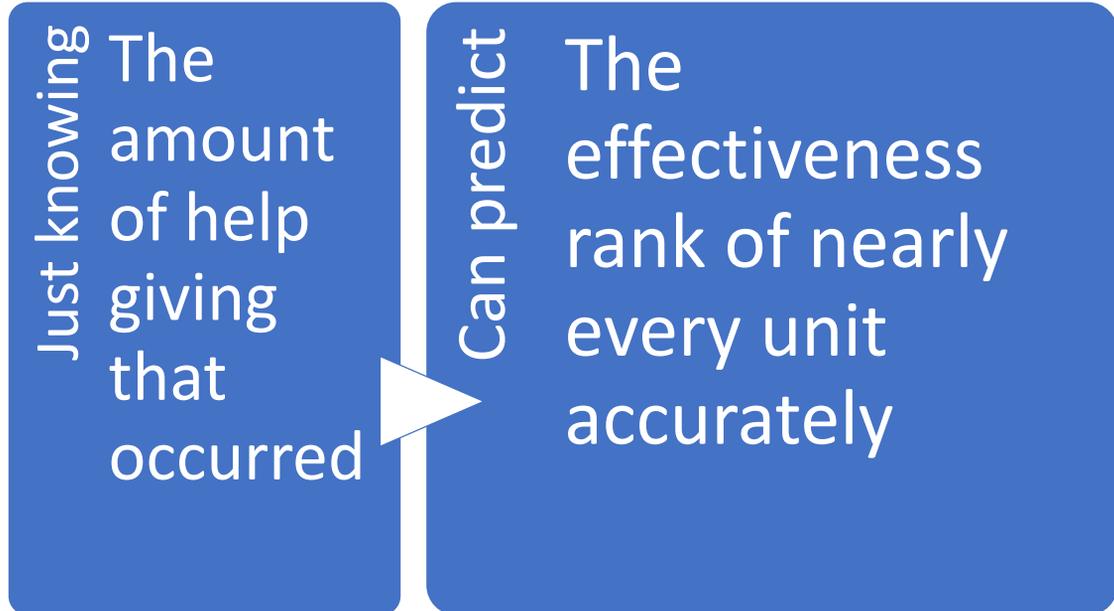
These contributions helped analysts:

- Question their own assumptions
- Fill gaps in their knowledge
- Gain access to novel perspectives; and
- Recognise patterns in seemingly disconnected threads of information

In the lowest performing teams

Analysts exchanged little help and struggled to make sense of tangled webs of data





Studies by Indiana University's Philip Podsakoff





Across these diverse contexts, organisations benefit when employees freely contribute their knowledge and skills to others



Helping-behaviour facilitates organisational effectiveness by:



solving problems and getting work done faster



enhancing team cohesion and coordination



expertise is transferred from the experienced to new employees



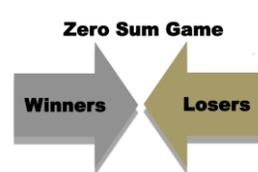
reducing variability in performance when some members are overloaded or distracted



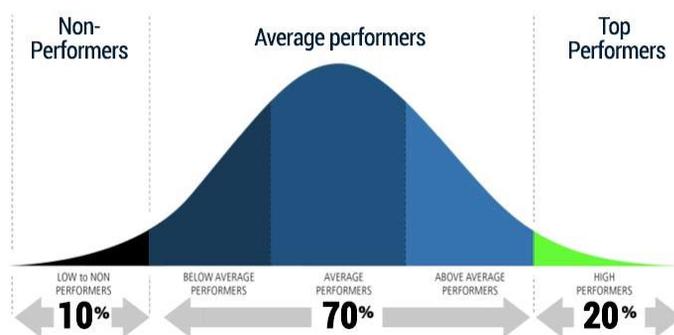
establishing an environment where customers and suppliers feel that their needs are the organisation's top priority

Company culture the barrier

- Too few companies enjoy these benefits
- One major barrier is company culture – the norms and values in organisations often don't support helping
- Many organisations are essentially winner-take-all markets, dominated by zero-sum competitions for rewards and promotions.



When leaders implement forced-ranking systems to reward individual performance, they stack the deck against 'giver cultures' – Adam Grant, management professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School





“Pitting employees against one another for resources makes it unwise for them to provide help unless they expect to receive at least as much – or more – in return. Employees who give discover the costs quickly: Their productivity suffers as takers exploit them by monopolising their time or even stealing their ideas.

“Over time, employees anticipate taking-behaviour and protect themselves by operating like takers or by becoming matchers, who expect and seek reciprocity whenever they give help.”



**What can you do as a leader
to encourage a giver
culture?**

1.



Facilitate help-seeking

2.



recognise and reward givers

3.



screen out takers

1. Facilitate help-seeking



In most modern organisations, people are reluctant to ask for help from their colleagues, because they:

1. don't know whom to approach;
2. don't want to burden their colleagues; or
3. don't want to appear vulnerable or weak.

“Reciprocity ring”

University of Michigan professor Wayne Baker and his wife, Cheryl Baker, at Humax Networks



30 reciprocity-ring participants from a professional-services firm estimated that they had received US\$261,400 worth of value and saved 1,244 hours.

The exercise generally gathers employees in groups of between 10 and two dozen members.

Each employee makes a request, and group members use their knowledge, resources and connections to grant it.

The first round of requests are personal requests, so that people begin to open up, and the second are professional requests. Since everyone is asking for help, people rarely feel uncomfortable.

Beyond any financial benefits, the act of organising people to seek and provide help in this way can shift cultures in the giver direction



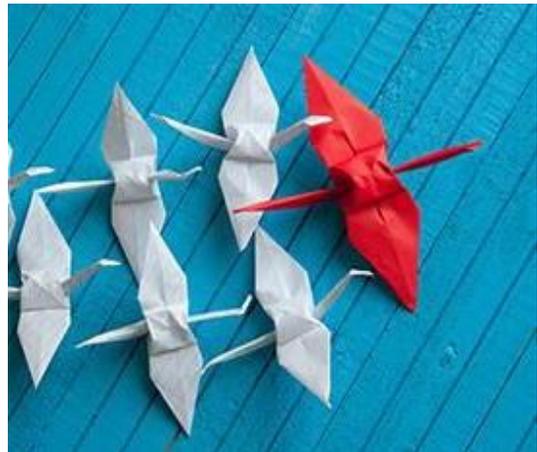
2. Recognise and reward givers



- It's difficult to eliminate zero-sum contests from organisations altogether
- Doing so risks extinguishing the productive competitive fires that often burn within employees
- To meet the challenge of rewarding giving without undercutting healthy competition, incentives should be small and spontaneous
- This is so that the rewards themselves do not undermine the intrinsic motivation to give
- Big and structured rewards may lead employees to provide help with the expectation of receiving

3. Screen out “takers”

Giver cultures, despite their power, can be fragile. To sustain them, committed leaders are required.





A film company facing financial pressure hired a new president. In an effort to cut costs, the president asked the two leaders of a division, Ed and Alvy, to conduct layoffs.

Ed and Alvy resisted – eliminating employees would dilute the company's value. The president issued an ultimatum: A list of names was due to him at nine o'clock the next morning.

When the president received the list the next morning, it contained two names: Ed and Alvy.

No layoffs were conducted, and a few months later Steve Jobs bought the division from Lucasfilm and started Pixar with Ed Catmull and Alvy Ray Smith.

Employees were grateful that “managers would put their own jobs on the line for the good of their teams”.

More than a quarter century later, this “still drives and inspires people at Pixar”.



“When it comes to giver cultures, the role-modelling lesson here is a powerful one: If you want it, go and give it,” concluded Prof Grant, organisational psychologist and Wharton professor.



He spent more than 10 years studying choices at organisations

Why helping others drive our success

Commonly accepted that someone's success is attributable to

Motivation/
Hard work

Ability/
Talent

Opportunity/
Luck

The fourth factor:

How we treat others, whether we are a giver, a taker or a matcher

Givers

- Contribute value without worrying what they receive in return
- E.g. giving help, providing mentoring, sharing credit, making connections for others
- Expand the pie for the benefit of all

Matchers

- Strive to preserve an equal balance of giving and getting
- Operate on the principle of fairness – when they help others, they protect themselves by seeking reciprocity

Takers

- Claim as much value as they can
- Put their own interests ahead of others
- Help others strategically, when the benefits outweigh the personal costs

Succeed first, then give back.

Givers reverse that

Those who give first are often best positioned for success later!

But if you do it to succeed, it probably won't work

Why givers succeed

- People root for them, support them, because when givers succeed, they create a ripple effect, expanding the pie and enhancing the success of people around them
- On the other hand, research shows that people tend to envy successful takers and look for ways to knock them down a notch



The story of Sampson

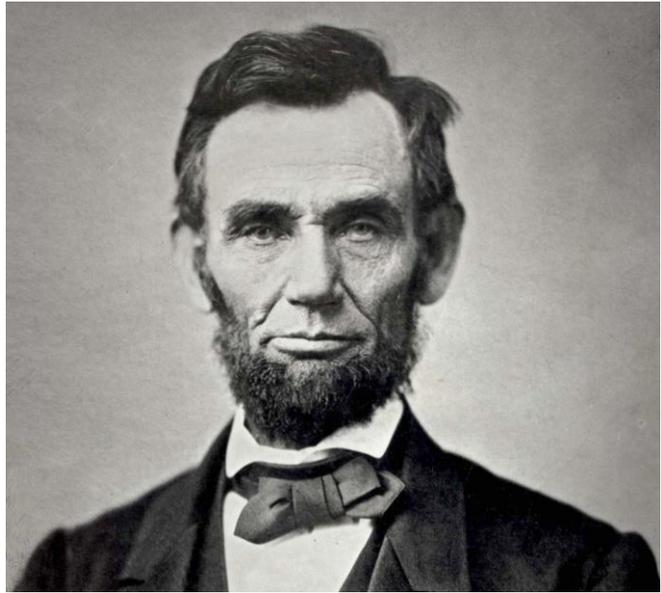


- Spent early years on a farm
- At age 23, ran for a state legislature seat
- Out of 13 candidates, he finished 8th
- After he lost, he set up shop with a friend
- Business failed
- Shortly after, his business partner died. Sampson took on the debts
- He owed 15x his annual income
- It took him years, and he eventually paid back every cent
- At age 25, made a second run for state legislature
- Managed to get a seat, served for 8 years, earned a law degree during that time
- At age 45, ready to pursue influence on the national stage

- Made a bid for Senate
- Up against James Shields and Lyman Trumbull, both had been Supreme Court justices, from backgrounds far more privileged than Sampson's
- First poll, Sampson was the surprise front runner, with 44% support
- Shields was close behind at 41%
- Trumbull a distant third at 5%
- In the next poll, Sampson gained ground, climbing to 47% support
- But the tide began to turn when a new candidate – the current governor, Joel Matteson who was very popular – entered the race
- When Shields withdrew, Matteson took the lead with 44% votes
- Sampson was down to 38% and Trumbull was just 9%

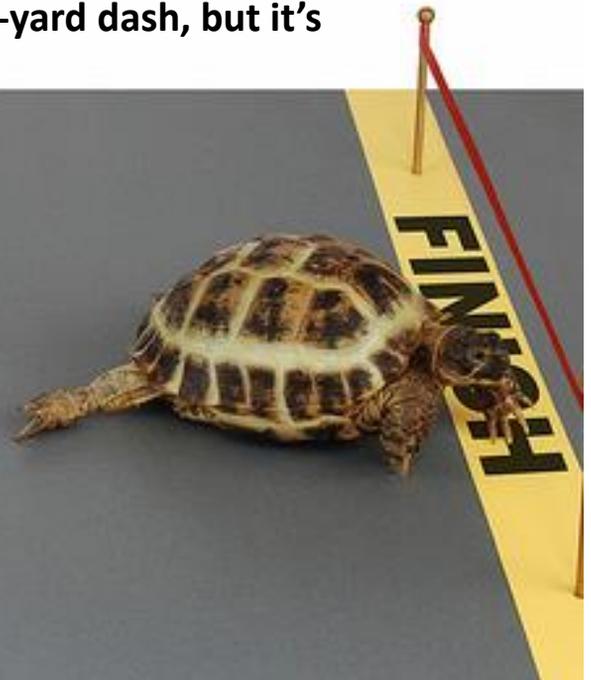
- Hours later, Trumbull won the election with 51%, narrowly edging out Matteson's 47%
 - What happened?
 - When Matteson entered the race, Sampson began to doubt his own ability to garner support to win. He knew that Trumbull had a small but loyal following who would not give up on him.
 - Most people in Sampson's shoes would lobby Trumbull's followers to jump ship
 - But Sampson's primary concern wasn't getting elected. It was to prevent Matteson from winning. Sampson believed Matteson was engaging in questionable practices, e.g. bribing influential voters
 - Also, Sampson believed in Trumbull, they had common stance on issues
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- So Sampson decided to withdraw from the race and asked his supporters to vote for Trumbull
 - Four years later, Sampson ran for the Senate again
 - He lost again!
 - But in the weeks leading up to the vote, one of his most outspoken supporters was Lyman Trumbull
 - Another strong supporter was Norman Judd who was behind Trumbull in the earlier election. He never forgot Sampson's "generous behaviour"
 - Two years later, Sampson finally won his first election on the national level
 - Sampson became one of America's top politicians
 - Any guesses who's Sampson?

Sampson was Abraham Lincoln



“Being a giver is not good for a 100-yard dash, but it’s valuable in a marathon.”

- When we initially concluded that Lincoln lost, we hadn’t stretched the time horizons out far enough
- It takes time for givers to build goodwill and trust
- Eventually they establish reputations and relationships that enhance their success



Technological and organisational changes made giving advantageous today

1. The long run is getting shorter – in today's connected world, relationships and reputations get established and spread faster 
2. In work places, companies use teams to get work done – in teams, givers have more opportunities to demonstrate their value. Givers thrive in interdependent roles where collaboration matters. 
3. There are more service jobs today – we all want to be served by people who have our interests first. Studies have shown that service personnel who are givers are the best performers 

Concluding thoughts

- You don't have to be a jerk to get ahead
- If your interactions are ruled by generosity, your rewards will follow suit. Givers gain over time.
- It doesn't have to be a I-win-then-you-lose situation. It can be a win-win for all if we put away our self-centredness and self-seeking tendencies and think about what's good for everyone. Eg instead of stressing over their kids' education in order to get ahead in a competitive schooling system, parents can focus their energy on advocating for a system that's more inclusive and fairer to all.
- There is enough resources in this world for everyone. If only those who have more than they will ever need share more.

