**How to Create A Workplace Where Employees Can Ask for Help When They Need It**

As a young woman, I was fierce about wanting to be independent. And that meant I didn’t like asking for help for anything. I had this old beater of a car that I was able to buy with my own money: a 1968 Chevy Nova. Oh, did I love that car. I wanted to be able to take care of it myself. I wanted to know how to change tires, change the oil, and do all the basic maintenance on my car.

One summer day after work, I got into grubby clothes, put on some work gloves, got a big pan, and went outside. I got under the car, unscrewed the oil plug, and let it drip into the pan. I was so proud of myself.

When the oil stopped flowing, I lifted the hood again, pulled out and looked at the dipstick. The engine was still full of oil!

Oh no, what did I do?

With a sinking heart, I moved over to the transmission fluid cap, unscrewed it, and pulled out the dipstick. Guess what I had drained instead: all the transmission fluid.

Now I had two new problems: I didn’t have any transmission fluid. And I was nowhere near a store.

I couldn’t drive a car that had no transmission fluid in it. That meant I had to ask for help. That was an upsetting realization because the only person who was home at three o’clock in the afternoon was my father. I really didn’t want to ask him for help. I was trying to be independent. But I had no choice.

So, I called my dad. He listened as I explained my problem. Then he said he’d be over in a half hour to take me to the store to get more transmission fluid, and would stay with me while I replaced the oil. He wanted to be available in case I needed him again.

I felt so humiliated to call him for help. I still felt that way when he drove up. But the moment that I got into the car and we started driving, I realized something. My dad was so happy to be able to help me. He was in his element. He told me he was proud of me for trying to change the oil by myself. He didn’t care that I emptied the wrong tank. He said that was part of learning.

*My mistake turned into a bonding experience with my dad that I remember to this day.*

An hour earlier, I wasn’t going to let that moment happen because I felt I had to be independent and do things for myself. I didn’t want to ask for help. Yet, making the effort, making the mistake, and asking for help turned into a rewarding growth experience.

## **Having the Confidence to Ask for Help**

That memory makes me think about the conversations I have with clients who have employees that don’t want to ask for help.

Those mistakes cost companies money as well as customers. All this could be avoided if employees felt comfortable and confident about asking for help. In fact, there is probably someone in the workspace who would be thrilled to be able to help them and grateful for the opportunity to share their knowledge (just like my dad). If an employee doesn’t feel, they won’t ask for help. They won’t give that other teammate a chance to help solve the problem before it’s too late.

## **How to Encourage Employees to Ask for Help**

What can managers do to help employees feel comfortable enough to ask for help as soon as they realize they need it?

1. Make sure the workplace is a safe environment, where everyone is comfortable.
2. Encourage employees to come to you with any concerns about their work.
3. Get to know the strengths and standout talents of employees on your team. You’ll know who to call on when another employee needs help with a project.
4. Put your own ego and pride aside — don’t take anything personally. Remind yourself that it is difficult for employees to show their vulnerability.
5. Help employees communicate with each other to learn more about their skill sets and to get comfortable working with each other. They will learn who the best person on the team is to ask when there is something specific, they need to know.

## **What can employees do to ask for the help they need at work?**

1. Consider who you feel confident going to for help.
2. Build relationships with teammates that you resonate with and identify who you’d feel safe going to with a problem before you need the help.
3. Put aside pride and admit that you don’t know how to do everything. How much worse it is if you don’t ask for help and you make a mistake so grave that you lose your job or chance for a promotion?

When employees know they can ask for the help they need, their confidence — and performance — will skyrocket. That’s a win for your company, the team, and the employee.

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