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*“Help me! Please!!!!” ****

*** Is a phrase I rarely uttered when I was in the corporate space. 😞

And it's a theme I've been hearing lately among some of my executive clients.

What they tell me about avoiding asking for help aligns with what often went through my head when I was in leadership positions:

😞 “I should know how to do this, and I don't.”

😞 “If I ask for support, I'll be seen as a fraud.”

😞 “It feels way too vulnerable to ask for help, so I'll just do my best to figure this out on my own.”

From my own experience, I can tell you what these unproductive thoughts led to: total and complete time sucks.

I spent so much energy attempting to avoid looking incompetent that I ended up going in circles, trying to figure things out on my own.

It took me a long time - too long if I'm being honest - to realize that just because I'm a leader does not mean I'm supposed to have all the answers at my fingertips.

So, what are some things you can do to make asking for help feel easier?

1 Think about your own manager (or other leaders you admire).

I often ask my clients: “Does your manager have all the answers?”

Nine times out of 10, the answer I get is, "No, not at all..."

For me, I began to grasp the fact that my manager, who was in a higher position and had way more responsibility than me, would often ask me questions related to my area of expertise.

Did I think he was incompetent when he asked me questions about my specialty? Hell no! In fact, typically I'd get excited, because I either knew the answer off the bat or knew how to get him the answer relatively quickly. This helped boost my confidence big time.

Ultimately, I never thought less of him when he asked me things that were part of my skill set. In fact, it reminded me that he was in his position in part BECAUSE he surrounded himself with people who could get him the answers he was looking for. And I admired him for it.

2 Who is someone you trust from whom you can get support?

If it feels just too damn vulnerable to put yourself out there, is there a resource in your organization - or even outside of it - with whom you feel safe? A colleague from another department, or even a mentor? Maybe there's someone who's been through what you're going through, or who you've noticed handles this specific situation in a way you admire.

And what if you took it one step further? I had more than one direct report during my time as a leader who was able to add value to projects I was working on, and I'd ask them for their guidance. If this is the case for you, and if asking for help directly feels too vulnerable, are there opportunities to frame it as a collaborative experience?

In any of the above scenarios, asking for help is a fundamental display of trust, a key ingredient to a healthy culture.

3 Don't undersell yourself!

It can feel tempting when asking for help to say what you assume others are thinking:

❌ “I’m totally freaking out because I have no idea where to start with this.”

Instead, let the person know why you are specifically coming to them for support:

✅ “I would love to get your input on this issue since you’ve had experience in this area before.”

By framing the ask in a way that highlights others’ strengths, you are giving them an opportunity to showcase their skills and expertise (see my example with my manager in [#1](#) above!).

And by not minimizing what you bring to the table, you may also minimize the feeling of embarrassment while maximizing your resources and connections with others.

Yes, it can feel daunting to ask for help. Yet taking that step can lessen wasted time while strengthening productivity, trust, and valuable leadership skills.

So, who’s ready to take the leap?

With admiration (and vulnerability), Tracy

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