

JUST ASK: WHY SEEKING SUPPORT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH

By Andy Lopata

Most people have faced professional and personal challenges that are tough to navigate alone, particularly over the past year. We are seeing an increase in conversations surrounding mental health, employee wellbeing and vulnerability, however many people still struggle to ask for the support they need from others. Within "Just Ask: Why Seeking Support is Your Greatest Strength", Andy Lopata explores the power of embracing the support of others and the benefits this can have on success.

Andy argues that strength, determination and resilience are not incompatible with a more empathetic and vulnerable approach. Leaders who have the strength and confidence to share their flaws and learn from those around them are more likely to inspire people around them long-term. A particularly important lesson as we look to rebuild.

The book opens with Andy's own "Just Ask Journey". He discusses the challenges he faced regarding the rejections of early drafts of his book, but he remained undeterred. By consulting his network for honest support, he was able to uncover the perfect format for the book.

The book is grounded in unique insights from more than 50 hours worth of exclusive interviews Andy conducted with over 30 business people, psychologists, coaches and inspiring individuals including politicians Jo Swinson and James Cleverly, acclaimed rugby coach Sir Clive Woodward, MD of Brother UK Phil Jones MBE and Co-owner and Head of Talent Engagement and Corporate Social Investment of Hong Kong Broadband Network (HKBN), CY Chan.

Andy covers practical tips such as finding the courage to open up, setting the strategy, asking the key questions to get what they need and finally, taking action. Andy and his interviewees lay bare their own personal experiences to support the reader. In one example, Dawnna St. Louis shares her story of a difficult upbringing, homelessness and suicidal thoughts, going on to reveal how she eventually broke the learned barriers and asked for the support she needed to help turn her life around. She then founded her own tech consultancy.

How readers can inspire vulnerability and transparency in others is another important theme, revealing how people can offer support as friends via techniques such as Semantic Differential Questioning. Similarly, Andy shows how to be there as leader and create an open organisational culture, including the power of failure, with reflections from former Board Member of now liquidated Thomas Cook Phil Gardner on how he

offered support during that difficult process.

"Just Ask" concludes with Andy's "10 Rules of Asking", providing a clear framework for readers to be able to access their own support network. He suggests breaking down what might be holding you back, evaluating who to approach, how to communicate with them and how to digest the feedback.

"Vulnerability doesn't need to be framed as a sign of weakness. Saying 'I don't know' doesn't mean you're not a star performer, high achiever or ambitious. Changing your mind or admitting your mistakes shouldn't indicate weakness. It's a strength and, in fact, humility is becoming increasingly important as a business skill. People do want to help you. We enjoy helping people we care about." Andy says.

Just Ask is an ideal read for any individual seeking the confidence to ask for support and any leader who wants to create a supportive and collaborative workplace for their team.

"Just Ask: Why Seeking Support is Your Greatest Strength" by Andy Lopata is available now from Amazon and is published by Panoma Press. ♣



About the Author

A specialist in professional relationships and networking for over 20 years, Andy Lopata was called 'One of Europe's leading business networking strategists' by the Financial Times. Andy is President of the Fellows' Community, a two-time board member of the Professional Speaking Association UK & Ireland and a Fellow of the Learning and Performance Institute, as well as a Master of the Institute for Sales Management.

Andy is the host of the Connected Leadership podcast and is the author of five books.

A percentage of royalties from each sale of Just Ask are being donated to My Black Dog, a peer to peer online support service for people struggling with their mental health in England and Wales.