

How to give without getting it wrong

Generosity builds better relationships, leads to learning and unlocks career possibilities, but giving without boundaries can backfire for your energy and impact.

When giving is good...

- ☞ you feel more connected to work. [Research](#) shows helping others at work makes you 10x more likely to be engaged in your role
- ☞ it builds stronger and more connected teams
- ☞ it makes you feel better about yourself, improving your mental health.

When giving goes wrong...

- ☞ it leads to burnout. Spending over 30% of your workweek helping others can [lead to exhaustion](#)
- ☞ it can reduce productivity and performance, as priorities and boundaries are overlooked
- ☞ it can leave you vulnerable to being exploited by takers.

How to give more effectively at work



1. If you're a people-pleaser...

Know your priorities

Keep your priorities visible to make sure that helping others doesn't compromise your own progress. Every 'yes' you give should align with what matters most to you.

Set a hurdle for your help

Before offering support, encourage others to take some initial steps themselves.

Ask them to share:

- ☞ *What have you already explored?*
- ☞ *What questions do you have?*
- ☞ *Where can I make the most difference?*

2. If you're an ad-hoc helper...

Be strategic with your strengths

Identify what you're naturally good at and look for opportunities to help others using those skills.

This not only benefits others but helps make your strengths stronger.

Create helpful how-tos

Share your expertise with others by setting up 'how-tos' or lunch-and-learn sessions.

This will help to pass on your knowledge and make a positive impact on your team or network.

- ☞ *What skill could you run a short-session on in your next team meeting?*

3. If you're a taker...

Start with a small give

If you've been in 'take mode' (e.g., relying on a mentor), find simple ways to give back, such as making introductions or sharing helpful resources.

Give outside the person

Instead of giving directly back to the person who's supported you, think about how you can contribute to the wider networks or communities they care about.

Acknowledge people's impact

Show gratitude by letting people know how their support has made a difference. This can be a rewarding way to give back.

Coach yourself question

Who do I admire for their generosity and why?



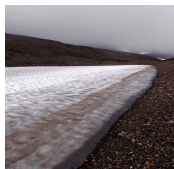
"Effective givers recognise that every 'no' frees you up to say 'yes' when it matters most."

[Adam Grant, author of Give and Take](#)

Recommended resources



Collaboration Overload Is Sinking Productivity
article in Harvard Business Review



Assessment: Generosity Burnout — Are You at Risk?

Take this test to assess the quantity of your giving



Helen and Sarah talk about how to say 'no', sharing their experiences of getting it right (and getting it wrong) on [#106](#) of Squiggly Careers.