

The Art of the Ask

45-minute discussion with group of female VPs

Research shows that men tend to ask for more of their managers than woman do. A lot of woman complain that they don't know how to make the ask. Truth is, a lot of men don't either but our culture has taught them to be aggressive when it comes to managing their careers. So they ask for what they want anyway.

So you want something from your manager. How do you make the ask?

Think of an "asking capital account." It's just like a bank account into which you make deposits and out of which you make withdrawals. But here you're depositing "asking capital" and withdrawing "asks/requests."

Two most important points to take away from this discussion:

1. Just like your bank account, you need to make deposits *before* you can make withdrawals.
2. We spend our time thinking about how to make withdrawals. But making deposits is way more important...focus on that. If your account is fat enough, it doesn't really matter how you make the withdrawal.

Here are some ways to make deposits:

1. **Relationships:** Build a relationship with me on a platform of open, continuous communications.
 - The opposite of this is parachuting in with a request after 18 months... parachuters don't usually get what they ask for.
2. **Advance warning:** Give me a heads-up...Many times people tell me about issues that might require my eventual attention...I like that infinitely better than hearing about it when it needs my immediate attention. This includes promotions and comp and assistance and...
3. **Deliver on your commitments:** Don't ask me for a commitment if you haven't delivered on your own commitments.
4. **Gratitude:** Expressing gratitude to your colleagues, subordinates and manager...both in public and in private...builds way more asking capital than the effort required. It's a very leveraged way to build asking capital.
5. **Help others:** Helping others builds asking capital. If you're one of those people whom everyone wants to succeed because you've helped others succeed, then you'll have a lot of leeway to make requests on your own behalf.

How to make withdrawals

- a. **Size of withdrawal:** Be realistic; check with others whether your request is a pipedream or not. Ask for the opinions of your colleagues, but only ask colleagues who are very comfortable telling you you're wrong.
- b. **Frequency of withdrawals:** If every conversation I have with you is about another withdrawal, you start to get annoying.
- c. **Timing of withdrawal:** Don't expect a Y/N answer immediately. If you put me on the spot, the answer will be N.
- d. **Purpose of withdrawal:** The withdrawal is to help the company in some way; it's not all about you; we don't owe you anything.
- e. **The withdrawal request:**
 - Keep it fact-based.

- Leave the emotions at the door. The withdrawal request should be a conversation not a confrontation.
- Rehearse it.
- f. **Two useful tips:**
 - Give me control, don't box me in.
 - Sometimes better to ask about process... "What do I need to do to get promoted?" versus "Can I get promoted?"

Examples

Gave five examples of people who made requests of me

1. Wanted to run a team
2. Wanted an increase in comp
3. Asked to become Head of Currencies
4. Asked for a job in my group
5. Asked BLK to pay for his family's airfares to Europe

Won't put these on the website, obviously, but covered what each of these people did right and what they did wrong...which guidelines did they follow and which did they ignore?