

Giving vs. Getting

by Mike Hawkins
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My second-oldest daughter, Angela, recently married. Several people have asked me what I said when giving my toast to the bride and groom. In my toast, I talked about the importance of giving verses getting. Giving is a timeless principle that always gratifies and delights, yet is easy for spouses to forget—especially in our “me society” that focuses on what we want.

Giving not only makes for good marriages, but also for good relationships in all aspects of life—personal and professional. The principle of giving applies just as much to customers, employees, partners, and friends as it does to spouses. Great leaders, top-performing sales people, and successful people in all domains apply the principle of giving. The power of giving, whether your time, attention, information, assistance, empathy, or material possessions, can’t be overstated.

The irony of giving is that even for people with selfish motives, giving pays off. The more you give, the more you receive. Of course, the most honorable reason to give is because it is an expression of your true compassion, caring nature, and unselfishness. You give because you are grateful for what you have and want to share it with others. You genuinely care about others and want to help them. But if instead you tend to focus on practical or self-centered considerations (the less honorable reasons), realize that when you give, it still benefits you. Giving makes you feel good. It creates a sense of indebtedness in the mind of the receiver who often repays the debt with interest. You usually get back even more than you give. Whether out of the goodness of your heart, or because you have selfish intentions, there is no reason not to have a giving nature!

If you work in a customer oriented role, give something of value to your prospects and customers on a regular basis. It might be your great service, an extra feature in your solution, an important connection to someone in your network, or valuable information. If you are a leader of people, find ways to give something of value to those in your circle of influence—whether public praise, encouragement, wise counsel, an enabling resource, or an empathetic ear. As a friend or spouse, give through an act of service, a small gift as a token of appreciation, or the comforting touch that is appropriate from a close companion. Whatever your role, find ways to give to those whom you want to enjoy good relationships with.

Here is the toast I gave:

“Marriage is something many married people don’t understand—including me for many years. Marriage isn’t about what you get. It is about what you give. When people first go into relationships, they do it because of what they want and get, but people stay in relationships because of what they give.

When you focus on what you need, what you want, and what you expect—you find disappointment. When you focus on what you have, can do, and can give—you find fulfillment.

Contrast two marriages. In the first, the spouses are each focused on what they expect to get out of the marriage. There is no giving because both are focused on getting. Neither is there any getting because there is no giving. In the other marriage, each spouse is focused on giving. Both spouses give and as a result, both spouses get. Because there is abundant giving, there is abundant getting. This is the marriage that lasts. These are the spouses who are fulfilled and happy.

I toast to my daughter Angela and son-in-law Adam. May your marriage be devoted to giving.”

Think as a giver, rather than a getter, and enjoy the wellbeing that results from it.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.activatingyourambition.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.alpinelink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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