

CONTRIBUTION TO OTHERS

What is contribution to others?

Contribution to others refers to the consistent mindfulness of your broader impact on others, and includes a demonstrated focus of effort towards helping others.

Why is it important to contribute to others?

Contribution to others is an act that enhances the life of the receiver and as a consequence ultimately enhances the life of the giver. An action that may be perceived as insignificant to the giver has the potential to change the life of the receiver. Contribution to others isn't necessarily obvious or grand in scale; it can be as simple as making eye contact and giving a smile to a stranger when passing them on the pavement; you never know what positive impact this little bit of human respect and connection might have on them and, for you, the giver, it costs nothing and most likely gives you an added bounce in your step.

In any area of life it is important to consider the needs of others. In a business environment, however, sometimes contribution to others is not considered essential to the needs of the business. But the fact is that we are contributing to others all the time, sometimes without even realising it, and the only question is if we are contributing in a negative or a positive way.

To illustrate this, consider a waitress; she's having a bad day, feels miserable and grumpy because she's not doing a job she's passionate about, and additionally she does not feel valued by management. On this day she's blunt and unhelpful to customers, delivers the food without a smile and, as a consequence, tips are down and she feels even more grumpy as a result. What contribution is she making? And is it only having an impact on others?

Almost certainly she's having a negative impact on the business, when she operates this way, it's unlikely that she's leaving the customers feeling happy and pleased with their dining experience. In addition she is not enhancing her own experience. On the other hand, if she understood her personal power to take some control of the type of impact she is having; if she appreciated that her role within the business is an integral part of its success; if she knew and was committed to the goals and visions of the organisation; if she felt valued and rewarded by management – all these would make it far more likely that she would deliver her service with warmth and professionalism. This would contribute to the success of the business, it would leave the customers feeling good and more likely to return and recommend the business, and to top it off, the waitress would very likely find herself gaining far more satisfaction from her work and changing a grumpy start to the day into a far better experience for herself.

Contribution to others is the ultimate win/win scenario. The giving of your self to others in the workplace can have a knock on effect. We get back what we give out and our actions flow out like ripples in a pond. Imagine working in an environment in which you fully understood your role in the success of the company; where you fully appreciated your own value and contribution to that success; where you had a clear knowledge of the vision of the organisation; where you were contributing openness and trust to the work environment; and where that was the norm such that

team members were not in competition with each other, but collaborated for the common good i.e. the growth and the success of the business.

These are powerful, positive knock on effects of striving to contribute to others. There are business stories abounding these days where this approach has been phenomenally successful in terms of increasing staff morale, boosting production and profit and hugely reducing absenteeism.

Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of contribution to others?

Some people, who may contribute to others outside of a work environment, do not see the workplace as conducive to giving. Sometimes people go to work more to get the bills paid, rather than as a way of finding fulfilment and meaning in their lives. When these attitudes are in place, there can be tendency to operate on auto-pilot at work, and fail to notice how a small shift in outlook could turn a job lacking meaning into one with a sense of purpose. If your job means you interact with people (and most do mean that) then the opportunity is there for you to make a contribution multiple times a day and boost the day, not only for other people, but for your self as well.

Some people might say that they are too busy doing their own jobs to think about how they can contribute to others.

Some people might think “why would I want to give more of myself when I’m not appreciated and valued at work - no one gives me anything so why should I bother?” The truth is, however, that we have no control over other peoples’ behaviours and actions, we are only responsible for our own attitude and behaviour, and these are the major drivers of our sense of well being or lack of it. So contributing to others, which is an action we can take, that will increase both our sense of personal power as well as our sense of being of value, is simple the most effective way to shift our own state.

Sometimes we can fall into a ‘victim’ mentality, and spiral into negativity and pessimism. If this occurs we need to do what we can for ourselves to get back into a positive spiral (nothing is ever static; growth or decay are the options!). The fact that giving to others helps our selves means this is simply a common sense course of action to choose. The beauty of this also is that when we give out what we want to receive, we very often find that we actually start to receive back exactly what we were looking for.

In today’s society, with the wealth of ‘things’ on offer to us, we can become over focused on acquisition and gain. If we are not experiencing satisfaction at work, or we feel undervalued, sometimes we fall into the trap of trying to get something to make us feel better; food, time off, affirmation and so on. This is natural, however it may be that we sometimes forget that shifting to a place of asking what we could contribute or give, would actually shift our state at least as effectively as getting something to make us feel better. In fact giving and contributing is often a more effective way of shifting our state to the positive.

Another way that we slip up, in terms of contribution to others, is that we simply go overly fast through life and have our mind either busily planning or worrying about the future or churning over things from the past. Many teachers of life talk about the huge importance of this moment right now – how it is the only place where we can truly have an impact on our own lives and the lives of

others. We can't impact the past, and we can't directly impact the future in this moment, however we can impact this moment in this moment. If we can make that impact a positive one, for both our selves and others, then we are engaging our personal power in a constructive way that will benefit our experience of life.

Characteristics of people who make a contribution to others

- They realise the benefit of small contributions such as taking the time to acknowledge the presence of the people around them by making eye contact, smiling and truly connecting as they do this.
- They practise giving what they would like to receive; be that praise, validation, help, appreciation etc.
- They don't dwell in victim states of mind but instead move out of them as soon as they become aware of them by taking positive action to create a different experience for themselves.
- They have a sense that there is plenty to go around so they don't feel any need to guard what they have; rather they have experienced that they more they give the more they receive so they are established in this approach as a way of operating.
- They live by the same principles in their business life as they do in their personal lives.
- They then to have a trusting and open approach to life and people (this doesn't mean they are necessarily extravert - the trust and openness will not be so obvious in introverts).
- They give with expectation of receiving in return – though their experience has usually shown them that they do in fact receive in proportion to how they give – just not necessarily in a predictable way.
- They ask others what they need and about the way in which they would like to receive support.

Evaluate your own contribution to others

- What does "Contribution to Others" mean to you? How do you recognise the attitude AND behaviours when you see them in yourself and/or others?
- What actions do you take to improve your working environment for the benefit of others?
- In what ways do you help others in order to benefit them in high impact ways?
- How does it feel when you contribute with the hope of getting something in return and how does it feel when you contribute with no expectation of return?
- In what ways do you check in with others on what their needs are and if you have their permission (be that overt or covert) to help them meet those needs?

- What are your strengths in terms of contribution to others? How do you leverage these and for what purpose?
- What are your opportunities for improvement in terms of contribution to others? What specifically could change and who would benefit from the change and how?

Improve your contribution to others

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Notice others who may struggle in areas where you have a high level of skill or expertise and devise ways in which you can assist them.
- Seek feedback from colleagues, your employer and/or clients on your levels of contribution to others. You could ask for evaluation as follows:
 - Do your colleagues/superiors/clients feel you truly listen to their needs?
 - Do your colleagues/superiors/clients feel you offer to help them when you are able?
 - Do your colleagues/superiors/clients feel you give only what is asked for or that you exceed expectations?
- If you tend to be more giving in your personal life than in your working life, think about any of the ways you give outside of work that would be easily transferable to the work place. Try them out and see what the impact and effect is.
- If this is an area that you are only just starting to want to integrate into your working life, start in small ways. It is better not to over face yourself and remember that the point is not to be obvious about this in order to score popularity points; the point is to contribute positively to others and to watch the impact this has on your own life as well as on those you give to. Keep the emphasis on the positive impacts for others and the positive impacts on your relationship with yourself e.g. you may find you feel more empowered or fulfilled as a result of being more giving.
- If contribution to others is an area that you know you already take regular action in, think of ways you can raise the bar and set a new standard for yourself. Consider the ways in which you are currently contributing to others and think of one thing you can do in each area that will increase the positive impact you have.

Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of contribution to others, the following books, courses and consultants may be worth considering. Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources, the list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- **The Go-Giver** by Bob Burg and John David Mann – This is a brilliant little book about the transformation of a young man from a “go-getter” to a “go-giver” and the remarkable business results one can get from giving well and wisely. There are five “laws” in the book that are easy to explore in a relevant and practical way.
- <http://blogs.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-joy-giving> - The Psychology Today blog has a special section just on the Joy of Giving, written by a number of experts in the field, including Stephen Post who has been referenced in this document.
- <http://www.actsofkindness.org/> - This is the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation’s website, which has fantastic information on various ways of giving.
- <http://learningtogive.org/resources/folktales/> - Learning to Give is a wonderful site which includes a curriculum and training resources, including stories, which can help both children and adults understand the value and benefits of giving. It is a service of The League, found at <http://leagueworldwide.org/>
- <http://www.mindtools.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it is an incredible resource to assist people in developing their own professional skills regardless of whether they run their own business or work for someone else.
- <http://www.selfgrowth.com/> is a site High Ideals often refers people to as it offers both personal and professional self-development information and resources. You can type in any search word you want, such as “giving and receiving feedback” and you’ll get a list of articles, blogs, resources and links to other sites which could assist you in your own development.
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

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High Ideals would like to acknowledge and thank Sharon Chisholm for his work on this document. Sharon is the Promotions Manger for High Ideals as well as a professional coach with DreamEagles Life Coaching. To find out more about Sharon, please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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