

Do the Right Thing: Why Helping Always Pays Off



How many times a week do you receive a call or email from someone who is out of work and looking for a job? Do you respond to those messages or do you purposefully ignore them because you are

too busy? I know all of us who are fortunate enough to be working are likely to be performing more than one job. Frankly, all of us are thinly stretched and our daily schedules can be overwhelming.

Let me tell you why I think it is important to answer that call or email. First of all, it is the right thing to do. Secondly, all of us may find ourselves in that same place at some time in the future - looking for our next job and hopeful that others are willing to talk to us.

Believe me, there are days when I feel overwhelmed and don't have one minute to devote to talking to someone who is looking for a position. However, whenever I do take the time for the conversation, I always feel it was worthwhile. I hopefully gave them a new resource, job search strategy or direction to approach in their job search efforts. In return, I usually gain some interesting, new perspective about the market. At the same time, I've added someone new to my network. Basically, I feel energized afterwards and in retrospect, I am glad I made the time.

When you do make the time to help someone network, what advice can you offer? I have found the following to be helpful questions to ask:

- **Why did you leave your last position?** The reason should not be unclear or too long. The worst thing is to

state a long, convoluted reason for leaving; this appears ambiguous and leaves a cloud of suspicion trailing behind. The best gift you can give is feedback suggesting a well thought out reason for departing the most recent job.

- **Tell me about your career interests. What do you want to be doing in your next role?** The answers to these questions should also be crisp, clear and well thought out. Otherwise, it will be difficult to obtain valuable assistance.
- **Share your target list of companies.** Create a list of at least five to ten potential employers which could help elicit referrals.

In order to give time to help someone while ensuring you still have time to complete your daily tasks, put boundaries around the meeting. Limit a conversation to 30 minutes to help manage your time and make the meeting most efficient. Even on a busy day, everyone has an extra half hour to spare. You've extended yourself to help someone else; it will help you stay connected and also make you feel good all at the same time. What's not to like?

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