



BOOK REVIEW

Give and Take: Why helping others drive our success

Adam Grant

Reviewed by:
R. Sugant
SDMIMD, Mysore

Citation

Grant, A. (2013). Give and Take: Why helping others drive our success. Hatchette. ISBN: 978-1-7802-2472-5

Review

The author starts with saying that in general, ‘successful people have three things in common - motivation, ability and opportunity’. However, there is a fourth element: ‘how we approach our interactions with other peoples’. Based on these interactions, people are classified as ‘takers, givers and matchers’. Takers like to get more than they give by putting their interest more than others’ interests. On the contrary, givers tend to give more than they get. The matchers strive to maintain an equal balance of giving and getting. The author demonstrates with examples from business and politics on how the givers succeed more than takers and matchers. The entire context of this book is about how givers succeed more often than takers and matchers.

Using peacock and panda as analogies the author talks about how differently takers, givers and matchers network to succeed. He states that takers’ relationships are generally fake and moves towards exploiting. Also takers are adept at posing as givers. The author says that we can identify takers by their promotion of ‘self’, their extremely high compensation vis a vis other executives etc., and likens them to peacock whose glorious dance

is with a specific purpose. On the contrary, givers build their network by giving more than they get. They don’t build their network on ‘reciprocity’. Also the givers are relentless in their giving instead of being off and on givers and he equates them to pandas.

The author expounds that givers create ripple effect on people around them. The givers see interdependence as a source of strength. The givers always credit the team and people around them. Givers frequently undervalue their contributions vis a vis others. This contrasts with takers who overvalue their contributions, thus resulting in disintegration of professional relationships.

Givers, the author states, always seem to be surrounded by people with talent. He says that it is not because the givers have the knack of identifying talented individuals; instead they trust every one and support all to give their best. In this process since people are felt trusted and they have a feeling of warmth in their relationships, they give their best.

The author states that there are 2 paths to influence – dominance and prestige. Dominance is ‘when we gain influence because others see us as strong, powerful and authoritative’ and prestige is what we earn ‘when we become influential because others respect and admire us’. The author says that takers are prone to gaining dominance, whereas givers are prone to prestige. The taker’s communication style is powerful and overbearing. Givers tend to speak less assertively, take in lot of

advice and listens more, which the author defines as 'powerless communication'. The author challenges the traditional assumptions that powerful communicators always succeed, instead he argues that powerless communication style of givers helps in building prestige which in turn results in respect and admiration.

While givers rise to the top of the success ladder, there are equal or more givers who also end up at the bottom. This is because the losing givers are always others-centric and always in giving mode that they burn out and tend to become pushovers and doormats. The research has proved that the givers who rise to the top, while scoring high on others-interest also scored high on self-interest. i.e., they are as ambitious and achievement oriented as takers and matchers. Ability to see the impact of giving helps the givers not to get burnt out.

The author puts forward a proposition that, while giving propels one's career, it also stalls others'. The traps that plague many givers are being "too trusting, too empathetic and too timid." The givers are twice likely to be victimised compared to takers due to the high level of trust they repose on takers. The key to overcome this 'doormat' effect is for the givers to use their skills in 'sincerity screening' to avoid potential takers and become matchers in their dealing with takers. Also the givers must learn to be more assertive.

Scriptures of all religions uniformly advocate the power of giving, but the result of giving invariably results in salvation and not necessarily success or wealth. But in this book, the author emphatically states and proves through various case studies that givers succeed not only

in personal lives, but also in professional lives and also in generating wealth. At the end, the author also provides tools for how to increase the giver quotient. The book would have been more meaningful if the author had also conducted an empirical research on the success of givers from business perspective, rather than analysing select cases. Overall the book is an excellent read and more appropriate today when the world needs more givers to make the world a better place to live.

About the reviewer

R. Sugant is currently working as Associate Professor – Marketing at SDMIMD, Mysore and has handled diverse responsibilities during a career spanning over 25 years. Graduating in Engineering followed by MBA, he started his career in sales, and subsequently moved to Logistics and Commercial in Wipro where he spent over 7 years. Over the past 18 years, Mr. Sugant has been in education management and leadership role including that of a franchisee for a leading IT training institute. During his chequered career, he had also spent 4 years in academics –as a Head of the MBA program of a leading educational group in Bangalore. Prior to joining SDMIMD, he was with HCL Infosystems Ltd. for over 7 years in varied roles, the last being that of National Business Head at HCL Learning, a division of HCL Infosystems Ltd. His expertise areas include B2B marketing and marketing of services on which he brings in considerable industry experience. He has published several papers in conferences and journals. He can be contacted at sugant@sdmimd.com