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## Professional Growth Articles



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### - *Ask for Help* - Before it's Too Late

March 2021

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*Have you ever felt like you were overwhelmed with responsibilities, not at the top of your game for any number of reasons or that you were missing knowledge, skills or a clear understanding of exactly what is expected of you?*

**You're not alone and these issues can happen anytime throughout your career.**

There can be a number of causes too:

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**Be strong enough to stand alone,**  
*smart enough to know when you need help*  
**and BRAVE ENOUGH TO ASK FOR IT.**

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Asking for help doesn't make you weak - it reveals strength, even when you don't feel strong.

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1. Multiple people are feeding your list of tasks or responsibilities without being aware of what the others are putting on your plate
2. You may be missing some training
3. You may not have as much experience as would really be helpful in your situation
4. You don't clearly understand the expectations, of either the big picture or the details

So, do you put your head down and just work harder and think that will make it all come out OK in the end? Do you become discouraged and stop trying? Do you put things off because you really don't know what to do so you get further behind? Do you put in a ridiculous number of hours and suffer the toll it's taking on you physically, mentally and emotionally?

None of those choices is really the best solution.

Here's what may be a much better solution – it's called *asking for help!*

While asking for help demonstrates wisdom and strength, some view it with negative connotations. Some may think that it is showing weakness, incompetence, the inability to figure things out or that you just aren't very smart, creative or \_\_\_\_\_ fill in the blank.

The various causes I listed in the first paragraph, are specific situations where it makes sense to ask for help. I titled this article "Ask for help **before it's too late**", because the last thing a manager needs, is to find out that an employee he/she thought was working along smoothly toward the desired outcome isn't anywhere near hitting the target, let alone hitting it in the way it needs to be done, in the timeframe with the pieces all in place. That's when it's too late to ask for help and when it will likely cost you a poor annual review or worse.

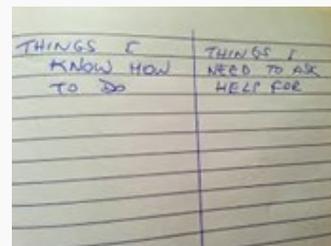
So ***HOW*** do you ask for help?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. I do that every day. Asking for help isn't a sign of weakness, it's a sign of strength. It shows you have the courage to admit when you don't know something, and to learn something new.

— Barack Obama —



1. If you have multiple people giving you tasks or assignments and you are overloaded and can't get it all done with quality without working more hours than is expected of you, then *it's time to speak up*. The best way in this situation is to start with the person to whom you report. Let them know what is on your plate. Quantify the time it will all take to show that it's more than you can reasonable do and ask, if the individuals giving you work, are aware of what the others are assigning you. It may also be helpful when one of them assigns you something that's more than you can get done, to talk your supervisor to ask if he or she along with the person assigning you the work would help you to prioritize all these responsibilities with reasonable timelines. Another solution may be to ask for additional staffing, temporary or permanent, if the ongoing workload warrants it.
2. You may be *missing some training*. Maybe your manager falsely assumed that you have had certain training. Maybe you did have the training, but it was quite some time ago and you need a refresher. Ask for it and let them know that while you are trying, the lack of training in this area is holding you back from being able to do what is needed or what is being asked of you. Let them know you want to do a great job and to do that you need to be properly trained. You can share the advantages that training will bring in terms of your efficiency, the quality of your work product, etc. If funding isn't available, then ask if they can spare some time from another employee with the expertise to give you some training.
3. You may have the training, but your *lack of experience* in implementing the training is getting in the way of your progress. In that situation, ask for a mentor or some time to observe, shadow, or spend time with a person who does have the expertise to pick their brain and get some really helpful



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tips by watching them or talking through the issues involved.

4. If you don't ***clearly understand the expectations, that may not be your fault*** for not **listening carefully**. Some managers aren't highly skilled at communicating expectations. So how can you create questions before you meet with your manager that will help them realize what they haven't been communicating or what assumptions they may be making? They may assume that you know more than you do or have training or experience that you do not. They may have the objective clearly in their head, but it's easy, when you are experienced, to forget what others don't know. Help them out with well thought-out questions.

**So, before it's too late and you're going to miss the target or not meet quality standards, ask for help.**

Couch your request with an attitude that you care about your work, want to produce quality results, want to be sure you are hitting the goals and providing as much benefit to the organization as you possibly can and to do that, you need to request some help. Then ask. And don't apologize or demean yourself in the process – that will not get you the right attention. Saying you are stupid or you aren't very good at something or degrading yourself in some other way, can actually be seen as manipulative and seeking someone to tell you you're wrong. Don't do that to yourself. Be positive and confident in your intent and your care for the organization without blaming yourself. Remember, asking for help appropriately is wise and shows strength of character.

**Good luck and *if I can help,*  
reach out to me.**

your goals and  
direction

Recognize  
and capitalize on  
your strengths

Think through  
complex and sticky  
issues

Re-examine  
your perspective when  
appropriate

Create a plan  
you can confidently  
embrace to move  
forward



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## Joy Conley Kacik

**Joy is a conference speaker, team and leadership development consultant, customized trainer and facilitator and a Certified Professional Coach with expertise in personal career coaching, job offer and salary negotiations and executive coaching.**

As an Insights Discovery® licensed practitioner, Joy provides clients the added value of the Discovery® Portfolio of tools when working with individuals, teams, leaders and organizations to create inspiring visions for collaborative, cohesive teams to produce superior results.

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