

Payoff comes from adding value for others

by Michael_Kinsman

Anyone who has begun an exercise routine has probably bumped up against a common frustration.

Day after day, you do cardio and resistance training and watch your diet. A week goes by and you feel like you are spinning your wheels. But three or four weeks into your exercise routine, you look and feel better and have more energy. You're convinced that the exercise program was worth the effort.

That's sometimes a hard sell in our instant-gratification society. You have to believe you're doing the right thing long before there is any payoff.

That's part of what Bob Burg and John David Mann are suggesting in their new book, "The Go-Giver" (Portfolio Hardcover, \$20), a parable about finding success in life. They believe the generosity of spirit people espouse on an everyday basis to others is a key to success.

"A lot of people start off by asking what's in it for them," says Bob Burg. "We have a culture where we want to see a payoff before we will commit ourselves."

Yet, Burg and Mann contend the real way to success is the relationships we build with other people and that by adding value to other people's lives is not only nice, but fulfilling. "That's sort of counterintuitive when we live in a world where we think the nice guy or nice girl finishes last and that the people who make money are evil," Burg says. "Go to the movies - that's the script.

"We think most people are giving people and they like to think they can succeed by being nice. You don't have to live by the movie script."

In their world, your true worth is determined by how much you give in value to others, rather than what you expect in return. Because people only pay for a product or service if they see value in it, the more value you give them and the wider audience you can offer that value, the better chance you will have for success.

"I love to say that if you add value to other people's lives that you will get your reward the next day, but you won't," Burg says. "You have to believe in your own mind that you are doing the right thing."

Burg and Mann's concept is one of unlimited scope. They argue that helping others attain success leads to your own success as others begin to help you through their own generosity. They view this as a self-perpetuating theory.

They contend their theory works as well for rank-and-file workers as it does for entrepreneurs or high-level executives. "Within an organization, you can often have a lot of levels of bureaucracy," Burg says. "Sometimes the value you have will not be noticed by the people around you. You need to find ways to demonstrate that you are adding value so your supervisor or someone else notices."

That can sometimes mean putting your networking skills to work inside your current employer. The authors argue that those who truly add value to others will ultimately reap their own rewards.

"There is no faster, quicker or better way to make somebody feel good about you than to help someone else succeed or feel better about themselves," Burg says. "Those people look on you more favorably and will be more willing to help you."

That's not to say that everyone who succeeds is going to possess a generous spirit. History is marked by immensely successful people, who were not necessarily nice individuals.

Automaker Henry Ford and oil magnate John D. Rockefeller were often seen as callous opportunists who built empires ruthlessly. In Burg's view, though, both would not have succeeded unless they were contributing something of value to the community.

Ford made cars accessible to middle-class Americans for the first time and Rockefeller helped develop and provide oil at prices that allowed American industry and consumers to have better lives. "I guarantee they had to add value, or they wouldn't have had those successes," Burg says.

Many people laugh at the notion that the generosity of spirit that leads to giving and supporting the interests of others first is an effective success tool.

Then, again, most people are nowhere as successful they wish they were.

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