



Article from

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# How to Ask for More Support at Work

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If you've ever found yourself overwhelmed by your to-do list at work, you're not alone. And while you quietly know you're *capable* of doing the things on the list, you might wonder whether you *should* be doing some of them—especially those things that aren't making the biggest difference for your company or for your career.

If that's you, then it's time to ask for more support at work.

Does the thought of asking bring up fears of being seen as incompetent, needy, not a "team player"? Consider that an old-school mentality. Today, identifying lower-value work activities and getting them handled elsewhere is an essential skill in increasing your value and contribution to the company without increasing your time and stress. A great business right-sizes the work to match the talent, so if that's not happening for you in your workplace, do it yourself and ask for help. Here's how:

## 1. KNOW YOUR VALUE

What's it really costing your company for you to do things that someone else could do? Do the math. For example, if you're being paid \$80,000 a year to serve three major customers,

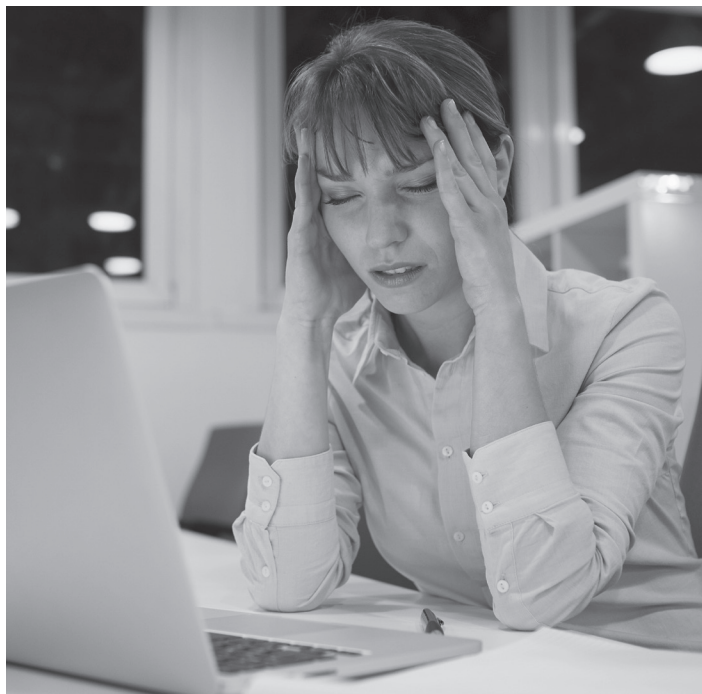
what's your total work worth to the company in their revenue, repeat business and referrals? (Hint: Over the course of a year, it's likely a lot more than \$80k.)

If one of those customers went away, how many dollars would go away, too? Or, if you had more time to do the great work you do for another customer, how much more money could the company gain? Before you request assistance, it's good to know the dollars and sense behind why helping you be more productive will be good business.

Not sure how your role helps the company succeed? Ask your manager or peers a question like, "From your point of view, how does my role here contribute to the results our company cares about most?" (Note: If you or your colleagues still can't see a connection, that's a danger sign—jobs with no clear value are the first to be at risk for change or elimination.)

## 2. KNOW IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU

The mistake many people make in asking for assistance is that they start with "I need it." As true as it may be, it's significantly more productive to focus on



how the company will benefit, not how you will. For example:

- **Using resources smarter:** "I've done the math, and it ends up costing us \$100/hour for me to do this, but if we shift it to our analyst Bob, we end up getting it done for about \$45/hour without sacrificing quality."
- **Ability to get it done faster:** "Based on my current commitments, I could do this after we deliver the Johnson contract in six weeks. If that's not fast enough, we'll need additional support. How would you like me to proceed?"
- **Connection to current goals:** "I know the most important thing in our department today is to increase revenue on product ABC. The time I'm spending on X is out of sync with that. My

recommendation is that I keep focusing on ABC, don't you agree? Let's talk about alternatives for X."

The only time it works to make the conversation about you is if you've been identified as a high-potential leader in the organization's eyes (not just yours or your boss's). You can then focus on the firm's goal of retaining and growing you for the future, saying, for example, "I appreciate how much you value my potential here, and in order to invest more time in becoming the leader the firm needs me to be and continue to create the results I do, we need to find another source to do X."

## 3. KNOW THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES

If you've asked and found it's truly impossible to move the work, hire, or even eliminate it altogether, you still have alter-

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natives. One is to propose that your company pay someone on a contract or project basis. This is done all the time with consultants and experts, so why not do it with an administrative assistant, clerk or specialist?

The world of virtual assistants and contract resources has exploded within the entrepreneurial world, yet is not yet leveraged within corporate settings. You even can hire someone for a single project (such as inputting business cards collected at a trade show into your customer spreadsheet or adding graphics to a presentation). Depending on the work, you

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may also be able to pay for such services on a corporate credit card, avoiding the complexity of interviewing or working with sourcing agencies.

Finally, if you find nothing can budge on the work front (and you're not interested in a change of job), consider increasing your support on the homefront. What other respon-

sibilities take your energy and time that you could hire, trade services for, or delegate? There are plenty of alternatives today to get support for homekeeping, shopping and meal prep, and life maintenance work we all have on our schedules. Write down five activities that drain you the most, and open yourself up to thinking how others might get those done for you.

THE BOTTOM LINE: ASK, DON'T SUFFER

No matter what approach you take, remember that if you are feeling overwhelmed and unsupported at work, you must take control to change it. A better you always makes a better contribution to your colleagues, your company and your community. ■



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