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Expressions for Father Ed

by Arthur Sherman

## Some Thoughts on Being of Service

Recently I was enjoying a wonderful brunch with some new friends and one of them asked if my career goals included becoming the CEO of the company I work for. I'm a relatively successful Sr. executive at a fortune 500 Company. I work harder than I'd like to admit, and enjoy my work tremendously. It's a pretty common and probably sensible question - What is your goal? The answer that many in my position, and an answer I would have given a number of years ago is "of course". Isn't that why we work so hard? The opportunity to call the shots, gain incredible wealth, be in control of all of it seems the natural goal.

I thought about the question and thought of the many I knew, many at my company and others who spend their waking hours in that all-consuming quest for better sales, profits, results - be better perceived than the next guy. While many people produce great results focusing on those direct business metrics, in that competition for the next promotion, or even the aspiration for higher responsibility, I realized at that moment that my own approach is a little different and difference between my strategy / and goals and theirs. I explained to my new acquaintances that my first thoughts in how I have developed my career has been to first think of : How it is my responsibility to be of ever increasing SERVICE to those around me. A big component of this service is to share with and educate those who may not understand things that I understand (for when they know what I do they can do it themselves) , to seek, and acquire knowledge and improvement, in all aspects of life (professional and personal ( like nearly everyone, I am vastly ignorant and incapable of many things, in many fields). This perspective has guided not only my personal career development but also is the centerpiece of how I lead my company in serving our customers better and how I try to evolve as a person. It wasn't always there. I remember evolving from a more self-centered motivation, (do X to receive y, do it better than the competitor) to this ideal of service over time, and with that awareness came a responsibility to bring others along...

My customers / partners/ friends have evolving needs - to be good at this I need to be aware. Am I able to help? Am I developing skills which will help them in the future? How can I both directly help and teach? How can I mobilize more people to help solve their problems? These questions and their answers is my compass in deciding what to do next. I've used it to motivate myself to learn, get more training, develop new relationships, learn how to lead teams, how to be self-critical as a first reaction - when things don't go well. Sometimes recognizing our own weaknesses is the first step to a real improvement.

I can't say that this is the fastest path to making business success, but the pattern of asking myself how can I increase my ability to help others ( customers, co-workers, friends, family) and looking first to what I personally need to do, results in a very clear path and avoids a lot of excuses and mental traps. I have found increasing motivation and success as my skills of service have improved. I don't claim to be the brightest or most effective, or most helpful or happiest person - but I am happy with this framework and try to improve every day. The feedback that comes from knowing that you've made someone better off - whether acknowledged or rewarded or not - feeds my drive to do more. I hope you find this perspective useful in your quest for personal and professional improvement, happiness, and fulfillment in your life.