

HELP
WANTED
(and needed)

tim milburn

HELP WANTED (and needed)

“When you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

- Yogi Berra

While most Yogi Berra quotes don't make sense, this one is clear in encouraging the reader to do one thing...keep moving.

As a student leader, you will have a lot of decisions to make and many opportunities to get other people involved. Before a situation or decision becomes overwhelming you might want to consider seeking advice, requesting guidance, or simply asking for help.

Getting the assistance of others may be just the thing you need to keep moving forward.

It's okay to ask for help. I highly recommend it.

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There is a difference between asking for help and being helpless. The difference is in your attitude and perspective.

Look at the following comparisons:

Ask For Help: Seeking resources
Helpless: Has no resources

Ask For Help: Intentional
Helpless: Reactive

Ask For Help: Draw people to you
Helpless: Pushes people away

Ask For Help: Leader
Helpless: Victim

Ask For Help: Better because others do help
Helpless: Bitter because others don't help

Ask For Help: Focus on strengths of others
Helpless: Focus on own weakness

Ask For Help: Hopeful
Helpless: Hopeless

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I think the last comparison says it all. When you are willing to ask someone else for help, it will provide a sense of hope. Hope that you aren't in this thing alone, hope that you can rely on someone else, and hope that your work will be better because of the strengths of someone else.

**A helpless person is
a hopeless person.
Doesn't that just sound sad?**

I've seen too many student leaders squander their opportunities because they felt like they had to do everything themselves.

Unfortunately, if you are doing it by yourself...you're not leading.

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Most student leaders should realize right off the bat that they're working in a volunteer organization. The students they invite to come alongside and assist them in various roles and capacities will probably not be paid (with money\$\$).

That means a student leader will need to rely on the other person's intrinsic motivation when inviting them to get involved.

An intrinsic motivation is something that connects with the other person's passions, interests, motives, and values.

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This is important to remember.

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When you are asking another person for help, it's not one-sided. There are intrinsic benefits to helping another:

- It could be something as simple as a **heartfelt thank you**.
- It could be knowing that they used their **strengths and giftedness**.
- It could be a sense of helping someone else **move forward**.
- It could be the good feeling of **solving a problem**.
- It could be the feeling of **being needed**.
- It could be a **stronger relationship with you**.
- It could be the satisfaction of **accomplishing something**.
- It could be the sense that **they belong**.
- It could be understanding that their help will **make something great happen for others**.

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There are many ways to tap into the intrinsic motivation of someone else. When you identify what it is for an individual, you can connect it to the task your needing help with. People want to do meaningful work for meaningful reasons.

People will do more and work harder because of intrinsic motivations then they will if they're simply receiving money for their work.

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As a student leader, there will ALWAYS be times when you will need to seek the help of someone else. Consider some of these scenarios...

You find yourself in a situation where you know you are capable of taking action, but you're unable to focus for the required amount of time necessary to complete the action.

You find yourself in a situation where you feel like your organization will be in serious TROUBLE if you don't do the right thing.

You find yourself in a situation where you shouldn't tackle an issue on your own regardless of whether you have the time or not.

You find yourself in a situation where you know you're capable of taking action but you feel like you would be better off if someone else got involved to think through the options with you or take the action on themselves.

Of course there are many more scenarios that could warrant a student leader going to someone else for help. Yet each scenario has the possibility of paralyzing student leaders when they feel like they *have to do everything themselves*.

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WARNING:
Some student leaders
will never reach out and
ask someone else for help.

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Don't let that be you.

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Here's a true story...

Sally (I changed the name) was our yearbook editor. She was fun-loving, easy to work with, and confident. Throughout the year, she would give update reports to the executive student leadership team about her progress on the yearbook. When the end of the year came and summer arrived, she stated that she'd have the whole yearbook turned in within a week.

At the beginning of the next school year, the new Student Government President and I sat down to talk about the plans for the upcoming year. He asked me when the yearbook would be arriving. I told him to call our yearbook company and check on the shipping date. He came back into my office a few moments later. Our yearbook company had received NOTHING from our school.

Unfortunately for us, the previous year's yearbook editor did not return to school. As we worked to solve the mystery, one thing became increasingly clear...

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This student had become overwhelmed with her responsibilities and was fearful of asking for help because she felt like people would think she was incapable.

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Some student leaders will never reach out and ask someone else for help.

And it makes me wonder...why?

Why would a student leader choose to end up failing rather than face the fact they need help?

Maybe it's because of...

INSECURITY

When a student accepts a student leader position, he wants to be perceived as a student leader. He wants people to think that he's capable of accomplishing all of the things that the position requires. But doing all of the tasks simply makes him a student worker. The reality is, he's not a student leader until he gets others involved. A student leader doesn't have to be able to do everything...he just needs to find the right people to accomplish the tasks.

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NAIVENESS

Sometimes, a student leader won't realize all of the things that a position will require of her. She just thinks it will be fun. She doesn't realize that every position requires a price to pay in order to be able to play. If a student leader pays on the front end, she'll be better able to play on the back end. But if she plays up front...she'll have to pay at some point. And the cost keeps going up throughout the year. Simply ignoring a problem or deadline doesn't make it go away.

EGO/ARROGANCE

The term "student leader" infers that the one who is leading is also a student. That means that the leader is a learner. If a leader stops learning, the leader stops leading. A student leader who refuses to ask for help may be suffering from an overinflated ego. Even though a student leader NEEDS help, he may be reluctant because he doesn't want to look HELPLESS. But failing to ask is just asking to fail.

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PAST BETRAYAL

I'll be the first to admit that it's often easier to simply do things yourself. A student leader may have asked someone for help in the past and that person let her down. But that's how it goes sometimes. Rather than give up on people, why not learn how to spot better, potential leaders? Take the time to learn from the experience and create systems that help to keep people accountable and intrinsically motivated.

NOT SURE WHO TO ASK

Sometimes a student leader won't ask for help because he doesn't see anyone whom he feels is capable. That's okay. One of the first things a student leader must decide is what are the things that only he should do. Then he can work toward delegating the other tasks and getting others involved. Is there someone whom you can train? Perhaps you need to look outside of your circle of friends? Have you asked your advisor whom he or she would recommend? If a student leader doesn't think anyone is qualified, he may have to reevaluate what he's asking for or his own perception of people.

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Hopefully, you're beginning to understand that asking for help is not a bad thing. In fact, it can be the best thing you do as a student leader. What is it that scares you about asking for help? Is it the word itself - help?

Student leaders often don't ask for help because they feel like it makes them look helpless.

Does that describe you?

If it does, there is hope. There is a better way. There is a way to ask for help without using the actual "H" word. There is a way to ask for help that makes the other person feel valued, appreciated, special, unique, qualified, needed, and motivated to help.

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I've come up with a few reasons to engage someone in the big ASK!

- We ask because we **need help**.
- We ask because we want to **get others involved**.
- We ask because someone **can help us**.
- We ask because it's **what leaders do**.
- We ask because we **can't** and **don't** want to **do it all by ourselves**.
- We ask because it actually **empowers others**.
- We ask because it shows others where there **is an opportunity**.

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So try some of these ideas. Some of them are simply statements that you can lead with. Others are direct questions that ask for help.

- I've noticed you did a really great job on that project. What do you think about doing something similar for us?
- We need someone like you on our team.
- When we started this project, I immediately thought of you.
- Would you be willing to partner with us?
- Would you be willing to take the lead on this?
- Could you recommend someone who is as talented as you who could assist us?
- You were recommended as someone who could assist us with this.
- If you were in my position what would you do?

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- Do you want to be a part of something remarkable?
- I know you're overqualified, but can you give us a bit of your expertise?
- I know you're really busy, but can you give us an hour of your time?
- I know you're interested in making this the best year ever, can you jump on board this project?
- We just need one more person to make this thing a huge success.
- We'd all feel a lot better about this project if we knew that someone like yourself was on board with us.
- This is going to make a huge difference on our campus. I know you'll enjoy working on this.
- I've seen you do this kind of thing before. Can you show me how you did it so that I can how as well?
- Just imagine how great everyone is going to feel if we can pull this off. Don't you want to be a part of making that happen?

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- Hey! Could you look at something for me? What do you think?
- I am useless in this area. Would you be able to do anything to help move things forward?
- You're the most (insert adjective here) person I know. And I'm looking for a (insert same adjective here) person.

What do you think?

Are you ready to go and recruit the people you need to make your student leadership year the best ever?

Don't just lay general invitations out there through mass emails or a flyer. Ask individual people...those whom you feel would do a great job.

Help them see why they'd be great and what they'd get out of it.

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It will take some *discernment*.

It will take some *courage*.

It will take some *humility*.

It will take some *time*.

It will actually make you a better student leader. So go ahead and ask for help.

It sure beats being helpless.

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ABOUT

Tim Milburn currently serves as the Director of Campus Life at Northwest Nazarene University, located in Nampa, Idaho. He develops resources and tools that equip students to become student leaders, both on their campuses and in their communities.

If you've found this ebook helpful, you can feel free to pass it along to others. The only thing you can't do with it is sell it or offer it without proper credit. You can also find other helpful resources designed for student leaders at timmilburn.com.

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