

Quest

e-newsletter

Information and ideas for your quest

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On the Quest ...

Greetings Q Reader,

In the August issue of *Quest*, I tackled the challenge of feeling comfortable asking others for help (especially in a business setting) and I suggested ways of finding assistance through the development of a support system.

This month, I'm offering four additional strategies ([Building Support Systems: Part II](#)), including how to use technology to access assistance and the members of your support network ([Using Technology](#)).

Before wrapping up this topic, however, I need to mention the most vital component of my support system ... my personal relationship with God. My faith is the foundation of my life. It gives me hope, understanding, patience and joy.

And I'm not alone on this spiritual journey. According to a recent *FORTUNE* magazine cover story, "God and Business", spirituality in the workplace is exploding and as many as 95% of Americans say they believe in God. I've witnessed this trend in my professional life over the last couple of years. Often I find myself (sometimes unexpectedly) in conversations with colleagues and clients about God. It's also becoming increasingly common for me to receive requests for prayer, even via e-mail.

As you continue on your quest, please consider the vast supply of help that's available through God and prayer. This is the only support I know that's available anytime, anywhere. You could call it the "ultimate" support system ... I do.

Many successful quests,

Jennifer

Building Support Systems (Part 2)

Having a strong network of advisors and advocates is clearly one of the most valuable resources you can possess. The first step in building a support system is admitting that everyone needs help. The second is asking for it.

In the August issue of *Quest*, four strategies for building a support system were outlined. This month, four additional approaches are covered: Masterminds, Mentors, Networking Organizations and Writing Partners.

Masterminds – This is the process of using the “collective” brainpower of two or more people to create a stronger “third” mind known as the mastermind. The mastermind generates new ideas that could not be produced by members individually. Members share ideas and out of that synergy emerges an entirely new concept. The brainstorming process speeds up learning and allows you to accomplish more in less time. The group becomes a resource center for new methods and constructive feedback. It also serves as a forum to share frustrations and successes.

Things to consider when convening a mastermind:

- **Diversity** – Avoid the temptation of only masterminding with people who think like you. Create a mastermind that includes members with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, talents and vocations.
- **Rapport** – Keep in mind that candor, trust, support and encouragement are paramount.
- **Creativity** – Guard against becoming simply a networking group. This is a forum for innovative thinking and the generation of ideas. Members need to be willing to listen to new information and try different methods.
- **Full Participation** – Remember, input from every member is vital because the mastermind is the result of the group’s “combined” genius.

You’ll want to experiment with the size of the group and the frequency of the sessions. A group facilitator is recommended. You can select someone for this role, rotate the responsibility among members, or let a facilitator emerge naturally from the group. As for the session topics, these will vary. The group can decide to tackle universal issues shared by everyone (e.g. marketing, sales, strategic planning, customer service) or a specific challenge facing one of its members (e.g. conducting cold calls, negotiating a contract, overcoming writer’s block, setting up a product distribution system).

Mentors – A mentor is an experienced individual who takes on the role of teacher and trusted advisor. Through one-on-one communication, a mentor works with a protégé to provide guidance and important insight. A mentor is ideal for anyone wanting to advance their career, start or grow a business, or become more knowledgeable about their profession. When considering a mentor, select someone you respect and would like to emulate. Your mentor also needs to be someone you trust with sensitive business and personal information. As the protégé, you are responsible for integrating your mentor’s advice, keeping your mentor updated on your progress and learning as much as possible from your mentor’s mistakes and successes. If you’re looking for a mentor, consider these resources: local chamber of commerce, trade and professional associations, business journals, corporate and non-profit boards/committees, networking events and trade shows.

Networking Organizations – These types of groups provide a structured and supportive environment for members to meet business professionals, make contacts and share ideas. Through regular meetings and networking activities, members develop personal relationships and gain increased exposure for the companies they represent. If you are thinking about joining a networking organization, talk to several members first, especially those in your industry. Ask about their experience and the type of results they are getting. The next step would be to attend a couple of meetings as a guest. Evaluate the composition of the membership, the networking potential, your expectations and willingness to make a commitment. There are established networking organizations such as Business Network International (BNI) bni.com or you can start your own group. In this issue of *Quest*, you will find a list of [BNI members](#) from my local chapter. If you would like a personal introduction to any of these individuals, please contact me.

Writing Partners – A writing partnership can be established between two writers or a group of writers who share the same passion for their craft. Together you help each other with the writing process by reviewing each other’s work and sharing comments. (By the way, the best feedback is thorough, challenging and insightful.) Another effective partnership method is to jointly work through a set of writing exercises. Your partnership can sharpen your skills, give you a new perspective on your work, motivate you and keep you focused.

Before getting started, be sure to discuss the following topics with your partner:

- **Shared Goals** – What are the objectives and expectations? Do you want to concentrate on the technical or stylistic aspects of writing? Do you want to focus on a particular genre?
- **Level of Commitment** – How much time and energy are you willing to invest? Think about the frequency of meetings, duration of each session and the writing/review schedule.
- **Confidentiality** – Do you need a nondisclosure agreement to protect the ideas and written works of the members?
- **Format** – How will you structure your sessions and the process (e.g. writing assignments, critiques, exercises, etc.)?

You can also share articles and books with your partner and attend writing workshops and conferences together.

Using Technology

Communicating regularly with members of your support system is essential. Thanks to technology, staying connected is easier and faster than ever. Here are several options to consider.

E-mail

LISTSERV – This is an e-mail distribution list. A variety of professional associations and business organizations provide a LISTSERV for their membership. It serves as a forum for sharing ideas, asking for advice, and staying informed via e-mail. You simply send your message (question, announcement, idea) to a designated LISTSERV e-mail address and your message is distributed to everyone on the mailing list.

Standard E-mail – You can create your own e-mail distribution list (colleagues, associates and friends). Whenever you need a sounding board or want to spur a debate about something, send an e-mail message to the group. I've also been known to send messages to sources mentioned in newspaper and magazine articles. It's an excellent way to get expert advice and establish a new contact.

Internet

Discussion Forum – This is a “live” on-line dialogue between forum members. You can discuss strategies, exchange information or conduct meetings. The Internet is riddled with every kind of discussion group imaginable. You can join an existing group or create your own. Try bringing together an editorial committee to discuss a report you're writing or keep an appointment with your mentor while traveling. Prior to a scheduled on-line discussion, you can send members an agenda via e-mail, including any background information or drafts you want the group to review. A discussion forum offers flexibility and a cost-effective way to communicate. Most on-line discussion forums or chat rooms are free. Two of the most popular providers are MSN <http://chat.msn.com/> and Yahoo! <http://chat.yahoo.com/>. You might also want to explore <http://web.icq.com/>. ICQ is a unique on-line chat that allows you to communicate in “real” time. As you type your message, others in your group can read it instantly – there's no time delay and no hitting the “Enter” key to send your message. The ICQ program is free via download.

Voice

Telephone Bridge Line – An inexpensive conference calling solution. Depending on the service provider, you can conduct a conference call with as many as 150 people for about \$20 per hour. Each caller incurs a standard long distance charge. No operator is required and no special equipment is needed. Used primarily for teleclasses, this technology is excellent for Mastermind and Advisory Board meetings. To learn more, visit <http://www.teleclass.com/bridgerental.html>.

Three-way Calling – Many telephone companies offer this as a standard service. For a nominal fee, you can use one phone line to connect three individuals on a call. Perfect for small-group discussions.

Telephone Headsets – A headset allows you to keep both hands free when you're on the phone. The best resource I've found for headsets and other telephone accessories is Hello Direct – 1-800-444-3556 or www.hellodirect.com.

Telecoaching – Conduct your personal or executive coaching sessions via the telephone. Be sure to find a quiet office or conference room where you won't be interrupted or distracted.

Networking

To learn more about Business Network International or to locate a chapter near you, visit www.bni.com. Below is a list of members from my local chapter. If you would like a personal introduction to any of these individuals, please contact me.

Business Network International Downtown Dayton Chapter *As of August 22, 2001*

| Professions Represented | Representative |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Accountant | Bob Lewis, Thorn Lewis & Duncan |
| Advertising Agency | Debby Sibert, Willis Case Harwood |
| Appraisers | Cindy Hatton Tepe, Gem Real Estate Group |
| Architect - commercial | Jay Gearon, Ferguson Construction |
| Attorney – corporate law | Barb Sager, Coolidge Wall Womsley & Lombard |
| Attorney – estate planning | Barb Sager, Coolidge Wall Womsley & Lombard |
| Banker | Ed Gross, Fifth Third Bank |
| Business Support | Ann Berger, Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Computer Networking & Service | Bill Diederich, Lastar |
| Contractor – commercial | Jay Gearon, Ferguson Construction |
| Employment Agency | Jack Moore, CBS Personnel Services |
| Engineering Testing | Randy Dew, Bowser-Morner |
| Financial Planner | Kathleen Carlson, Parker Carlson & Johnson |
| Graphic Designer | Debby Sibert, Willis Case Harwood |
| Investment Securities | Kathleen Carlson, Parker Carlson & Johnson |
| Laboratory Testing | Randy Dew, Bowser-Morner |
| Life Insurance | Dan Driskell, Baldwin & Whitney |
| Marketing Consultant | Debby Sibert, Willis Case Harwood |
| Mortgage Lender | Ed Gross, Fifth Third Bank |
| Office Furniture | Tom Shafer, Everybody's Workplace Solutions |
| Packaging – bulk | Paul Heinrich, Poff Plastics |
| Payroll Service | Jack Moore, CBS Personnel Services |
| Plastic Injection Molded Products | Paul Heinrich, Poff Plastics |
| Property Management | Cindy Hatton Tepe, Gem Real Estate Group |
| Property & Casualty Ins. | Dan Driskell, Baldwin & Whitney |
| Public Relations | Debby Sibert, Willis Case Harwood |
| Realtor - commercial | Cindy Hatton Tepe, Gem Real Estate Group |



Jennifer is a professional speaker, author and president of CommuniQuest, Inc. Through her seminars and keynotes, she delivers practical insight on how to communicate with confidence and manage time effectively. To learn more about her workplace strategies and entrepreneurship programs, visit www.communiquest.com or call 1-888-866-0821. Please share *Quest* in whole or in part with copyright and attribution included. To be added or removed from the subscription list, or to change your e-mail address, send e-mail to: Quest@communiquest.com. © 2001 Jennifer S. Beavers. All rights reserved.