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# INDEX

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* Alan Fiske, an anthropologist at UCLA, finds that people engage in a mix of giving, taking, and matching in every human culture—from North to South America, Europe to Africa, and Australia to Asia. While living with a West African tribal group in Burkina Faso called the Mossi, Fiske found people switching between giving, taking, and matching. When it comes to land, the Mossi are givers. If you want to move into their village, they will automatically grant you land without expecting anything in return. But in the marketplace, the Mossi are more inclined toward taking, haggling aggressively for the best prices. And when it comes to cultivating food, the Mossi are likely to be matchers: everyone is expected to make an equal contribution, and meals are divided into even shares.

* Interestingly, in ultimatum games, it's rare for the divider to propose anything that's so lopsided. More than three quarters of dividers propose a perfectly even split, acting like matchers.

* In the computer industry study, when taker CEOs were at the helm, firms had more fluctuating, extreme performance, as measured by total shareholder returns and return on assets. They had bigger wins, but bigger losses. The takers were supremely confident in their bets, so they swung for the fences. They made bold, grandiose moves, which included more and larger acquisitions, as well as major upheavals to company strategy. Sometimes these moves paid off, but in the long run, the takers often put their companies in jeopardy.

* This is a nod to a “Weird Al” Yankovic song about nerds, which includes the line, “I’m fluent in JavaScript as well as Klingon.” For the record, Rifkin worries about the amount of time that he has wasted in his life typing two spaces after a period, instead of one.

* Technically, since LinkedIn employees have a host of advantages in connecting with people on LinkedIn, insiders were excluded from the *Fortune* analysis. Unofficially, it is noteworthy that Rifkin topped every LinkedIn employee except two: founder Reid Hoffman and board member and investor David Sze.

* Of course, when takers and matchers give to receive, they do so with different aims. Takers are usually looking to get as much as possible, whereas matchers are motivated to maintain equal exchanges.

* Although my focus is on George Meyer, it's important to acknowledge that the comedy on *The Simpsons* has always been a collective achievement. In particular, Meyer is quick to praise Jon Swartzwelder, who has written five dozen episodes, more than double any other writer in show history. Other contributors with many writing credits include Joel Cohen, John Frink, Dan Greaney, Al Jean, Tim Long, Ian Maxtone-Graham, Carolyn Omine, Don Payne, Matt Selman, and Jon Vitti. Of course, Meyer notes, this list doesn't include the creators and many other writers, producers, and animators who have shaped the show's success. Meyer started sharing credit early on. "In *Army Man*, I felt if people were going to write, they should get credit for it, especially since they were doing it for free." He used a unique Army symbol to acknowledge each writer's contribution. "It was a bad decision," Meyer says, laughing, "because I had to cut all of them out with an X-Acto knife, and rubber-cement them to this board I was using. It was hard to find them in the pattern on my bedspread."

* Many insiders believe that the credit-taking incident, coupled with the attention Salk gave to the media, was a major reason why the National Academy of Sciences never admitted Salk. But debate continues about why he wasn't awarded a Nobel Prize. Some scientists have argued that although the polio vaccine made an invaluable applied contribution to public health, it wasn't an original contribution to fundamental scientific knowledge.

* Is there a dark side to psychological safety? Many managers believe that by tolerating mistakes, they're sending a message that it's okay to make mistakes. Such mistakes might not be disastrous on a television sitcom, but consider a setting where lives are on the line: hospital units. Edmondson asked members of eight hospital units to rate how much psychological safety they felt in the unit, and how many medication errors they made. Sure enough, the higher the psychological safety, the greater the number of errors reported. In units where health care professionals felt their mistakes would be forgiven, they seemed more likely to deliver the wrong medication to patients, putting them at risk for ineffective treatment or allergic reactions. It makes intuitive sense that tolerance for errors would cause people to become complacent and make more errors, but Edmondson wasn't convinced. She reasoned that psychological safety was increasing comfort with reporting errors, not causing errors. Sure enough, the higher a unit's psychological safety, the more errors reported. But when Edmondson examined more objective, independent data on medication errors, the psychologically safe units didn't actually make more errors. In fact, the higher the psychological safety in a unit, the *fewer* errors they made. Why? In the units that lacked psychological safety, health care professionals hid their errors, fearing retribution. As a result, they weren't able to learn from their mistakes. In the units with high psychological safety, on the other hand, reporting errors made it possible to prevent them moving forward.

* Of course, my wife observed, our friends will love the candlesticks—they just didn't know that such an exquisite gift existed. If they did, the candlesticks surely would have been on their registry. And she was right.

* Growing up as the oldest child in his family, Meyer had plenty of opportunities to practice perspective taking. Studies show that having younger siblings develops our giver instincts by providing experience with teaching, child care, feeding, and cleaning. Experts have long recognized that as older siblings, particularly if we're the firstborn, we're charged with taking care of our younger siblings, which requires acute attention to their unique needs and wants—and how they differ from our own. But Frank Lloyd Wright and Jonas Salk were firstborns: Wright had two younger sisters and Salk had two younger brothers. There's something else in Meyer's family background that may have nudged him in the giver direction. In a series of studies led by the Dutch psychologist Paul van Lange, givers had more siblings than the takers and matchers. The givers averaged two siblings; the takers and matchers averaged one and a half siblings. More siblings meant more sharing, which seemed to predispose people toward giving. It may not be a coincidence that George Meyer is the oldest of eight siblings. Interestingly, van Lange's data showed a sister effect, not just a sibling effect. The givers didn't have more brothers than the takers and matchers, but they were 50 percent more likely to have sisters. It is noteworthy that of Meyer's seven younger siblings, five are sisters.

* Skender compulsively makes lists of everything, from his favorite songs to the ten best days of his life, and arranges the dollar bills in his wallet according to the order of their serial numbers. He owns more than eight hundred pairs of suspenders, each of which has a unique name and number. He alphabetizes his socks and his underwear and lays out his clothes weeks in advance. For more than two decades, he has worn a bow tie every Monday, Thursday, and Saturday—even when mowing his lawn. He is religious about being the first to arrive in his parking garage at work, usually before five A.M., yet he is known for staying past midnight at review sessions to help students prepare for exams. He translates his advice about reciprocity into the language of accounting: "I'd rather have a large accounts receivable than a large accounts payable." To put his teaching load in perspective, a typical college professor teaches between three and eight classes a year. Over a career, that amounts to somewhere between one hundred and three hundred classes. Skender has nearly doubled this, and he recently told his dean that he intends to teach thirty-five more years. In calendar year 2012 alone, more than two thousand students took Skender's courses. To accommodate the demand, the university once moved his class to a special oversized room away from the main campus. Even when he teaches early in the morning, his classroom is packed, and many more students wish they could enroll. For one eight A.M. class, he had 190 students on the waiting list.

* To be fair, Bowie's career was hampered by injuries. In college, he missed two full seasons due to shin injuries. Before the draft, to make sure Bowie was completely healthy, Inman subjected him to a seven-hour physical examination. Bowie had a solid first season, but after that, injuries caused him to miss 81 percent of the games in the next four seasons, including nearly two entire seasons. And Inman and his scouts weren't the only ones to bet on Bowie over Jordan. In June 1984, after the draft, a *Chicago Tribune* headline read "Apologetic Bulls 'Stuck' with Jordan." The general manager of the Bulls, Rod Thorn, seemed disappointed. "We wish he were 7 feet, but he isn't," Thorn lamented. "There just wasn't a center available. What can you do? Jordan isn't going to turn this franchise around . . . He's a very good offensive player, but not an overpowering offensive player." Even Jordan seemed to endorse the Bowie selection: "Bowie fits in better than I would," he said during his rookie year, as Portland had "an overabundance of big guards and small forwards." Perhaps the best defense of Inman's choice was offered by Ray Patterson, who ran the Houston Rockets in 1984, having selected Hakeem Olajuwon first in that draft before Bowie and Jordan: "Anybody who says they'd have taken Jordan over Bowie is whistling in the dark. Jordan just wasn't that good."

* Interestingly, Jordan's basketball coach at the University of North Carolina, the legendary Dean Smith, had more of a giver style. Against his own interests, and strong resistance from his assistants, Smith advised Jordan to enter the NBA draft early, before his senior year. Smith had a rule: "We do what's best for the player out of season and what's best for the team in season." As NBA salaries skyrocketed, Smith encouraged every player who had a good shot at being picked in the top five or ten to leave college early and secure his financial future, as long as he promised to come back and finish his education later. In his thirty-six years as head coach, Smith sent nine athletes to the draft early, and seven made good on their promises. Although Smith was encouraging his best players to leave the team, putting his players' interests first seemed to help him recruit top talent and build trust and loyalty. Smith retired with 879 wins, then more than any coach in NCAA history; his teams made eleven Final Fours and won two national championships. As Chris Granger, executive vice president at the NBA, explains, "Talented people are attracted to those who care about them. When you help someone get promoted out of your team, it's a short-term loss, but it's a clear long-term gain. It's easier to attract people, because word gets around that your philosophy is to help people."

* It's worth noting that the pratfall effect depends on the audience's self-esteem. Powerless communication humanizes the communicator, so it should be most appealing to audiences who see themselves as human: those with average self-esteem. Indeed, Aronson and colleagues found that when competent people make blunders, audiences with average self-esteem respond more favorably than audiences with high and low self-esteem.

* The same pattern showed up in another study, where more than six hundred salespeople responsible for women's products completed a questionnaire that revealed whether they were givers: did they try to offer the product that was best suited to customers' needs? When researchers tracked their sales revenue, the givers initially had no advantage. As they came to understand their customers, the givers pulled further and further ahead. By the third and fourth quarters, the givers were bringing in significantly more revenue. The givers gathered more information about customers' needs and were more flexible in how they responded to customers.

* Part of the reason that intention questions work is that they elicit commitment: once people say yes, they feel compelled to follow through. But interestingly, research suggests that intention questions can work even when people initially say no. The questions trigger reflection, and if the behavior is attractive, some people change their mind and decide to do it.

* Disclaimer: Certain types of disclaimers are riskier than other forms of powerless communication. For example, it's common for people to start a sentence with "I don't mean to sound selfish, but . . ." Psychologists have shown that this type of disclaimer backfires: it heightens the expectation that the speaker is going to say something selfish, which leads the listener to search for—and find—information that confirms the speaker's selfishness.

* Interestingly, when leaders and managers delivered the same message, it didn't work. The scholarship students were able to speak from firsthand experience about the importance of the callers' work, and what it meant to them personally. Although we often look to leaders and managers to inspire employees, when it comes to combating giver burnout, there may be an advantage of outsourcing inspiration to the clients, customers, students, and other end users who can attest to the impact of givers' products and services.

* Research shows that on the job, people who engage in selfless giving end up feeling overloaded and stressed, as well as experiencing conflict between work and family. This is even true in marriages: in one study of married couples, people who failed to maintain an equilibrium between their own needs and their partner's needs became more depressed over the next six months. By prioritizing others' interests and ignoring their own, selfless givers exhaust themselves.

* The salutary effects of being otherish may even be visible in our writing. The psychologist James Pennebaker has been able to trace gains in health to the words that people use in their journal entries. “The writings of those whose health improved showed a high rate of the use of I-words on one occasion and then high rates of the use of other pronouns on the next occasion, and then switching back and forth in subsequent writings,” Pennebaker explains in *The Secret Life of Pronouns*, such that “healthy people say something about their own thoughts and feelings in one instance and then explore what is happening with other people before writing about themselves again.” The people whose journal entries are purely selfish or selfless, on the other hand, are much less likely to show health improvements.

* The optimal number of hours per year may drop below one hundred as we age. In one study of American adults over sixty-five, those who volunteered between one and forty hours in 1986 were more likely to be alive in 1994 than those who volunteered zero or more than forty hours. This was true even after controlling for health conditions, physical activity, religion, income, and a host of other factors that might influence survival.

* Interestingly, the emotional boost from giving doesn't always kick in right away. When psychologist Sabine Sonnentag and I surveyed European firefighters and rescue workers, we found that on days when they had a substantial positive impact on others, they were energized at home after work, but not during work. Seeing their impact helped them experience greater meaning and mastery, but it was only after reflecting on the impact of their actions that they experienced the full charge from giving.

* There's a catch: as people get richer, they give more money in total, but they give smaller fractions of their annual income. In one study, psychologists demonstrated that merely thinking about socioeconomic status is enough to change the amount of charitable giving that we think is appropriate. When people thought about themselves as somewhere in the middle of the wealth ladder, they felt obligated to give 4.65 percent of their annual income to charity. But when they imagined themselves at the top of the ladder, they only reported an obligation to give 2.9 percent of their annual income to charity. Similar trends can be found in the real world: in the United States, households making less than $25,000 a year donate 4.2 percent of their income to charity. Households making more than $100,000 a year donate just 2.7 percent of their income to charity.

* New research shows that these tendencies are heavily influenced by biological forces. In one study, psychologists used MRI to scan the brains of people who reported being agreeable versus disagreeable on a survey. The agreeable people had greater volume in the regions of the brain that process the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of others, such as the posterior cingulate cortex. According to behavioral geneticists, at least a third of agreeableness, and possibly more than half, is heritable—attributable to genes. Whether people have an agreeable or disagreeable personality seems to be at least partially hardwired.

* Psychologists originally made the same mistake, including characteristics such as being altruistic within the broad trait of agreeableness. More recent research has shown that (a) compassion and politeness are two separate aspects of agreeableness, (b) the compassion dimension is more related to honesty and humility than to agreeableness, and (c) agreeableness can be distinguished from giver values. Throughout the book, I've taken care to focus primarily on studies that were explicitly designed to investigate giving, taking, or matching. At a few points, though, I have used studies of agreeableness to capture givers in places where survey items directly reference giving, like "I love to help others."