

The Most Powerful Question A Leader Can Ask

How can I help you do your job better?

John Baldoni, internationally recognized educator on leadership, author and Forbes blog contributor suggests this is one of the most potent questions a leader or manager can put to an employee. Offering such assistance is a recognition by the executive that their job is to help others do their jobs better. This is most commonly referred to as a servant leadership model.

Skeptics might say that when managers put themselves out to help their direct reports they are being too easy on them. The conventional wisdom says that such attitude will breed complacency and discourage people from doing their best. In reality, if that were true it would mean that not only was the manager foolish to offer help, he was misguided to hire people who would be content with the status quo.

When you hire people who are motivated to attain goals for themselves and their teams, you propel them when you provide support. Failure to acknowledge their efforts, or worse failure to support them with resources is what can be demotivating. Not words of praise.

Baldoni explains that when an executive offers help, it doesn't mean that they do the employee's job for them. As much as it's a leader's job to assist others, there is the expectation that the employee will deliver. The help a leader offers may be a reallocation of resources or it may be a reordering of priorities so that the employee and his team get what they need to do the work properly. This is not a handout; it's a call to action.

This type of partnering gets to the heart of employee engagement. People want to work for a manager and a company that supports what they do. At the same time, employees need to deliver on what management asks and expects. A leader who believes their job is to help others is a leader who knows what it takes to inspire others to do their best work.