

## Share What You Know

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Every interaction you have with another person is a chance to make a difference in that person's life. Every piece of information you have about the world is unique to you. The more you share this information with others, the more others will share information with you. In addition, when you share information, you will be sought out by others.

I've noticed many, many people are extremely concerned about protecting every single piece of helpful information, such as a certain way of making a [sale in business](#), a good source of information, a contact who can get things done, or a special method of doing something.

The people and the companies that do the best, I have noticed, are those that do everything they can to share information. In fact, they empower people by sharing information. By doing this, a reciprocal pattern is developed. When there is useful information these people should know about, they are told about it as well.

The most important thing you can have inside a company and at work is information. You may be working for a company right now that is about to file for bankruptcy and lay off all of its employees. If you had this information, you could be looking for a job. There may be an incredible position opening up in your company for which you're qualified. If you had this information, you could start communicating and getting to know the right people inside your company. The benefits of having the right information are huge. Your work colleagues will seek you out to give you information if you start sharing information with them. You need to proactively be a source of information and never try to protect information. Every piece of information you put out in the world will come back to you with more information.

The information others give you could save your career, or get you a raise. There are so many benefits to having access to the right information it's hard to list them all. Information tells you what to do in order to get ahead. The only way you are going to get access to this sort of information, however, is if you get a reputation for sharing information yourself.

A couple of years ago I learned Mark Victor Hansen, the author of the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, was holding a three day business conference at the Westin near the Los Angeles Airport. A couple of people who'd written books I enjoyed were scheduled to be there and I was eager to attend.

When I got to the conference I immediately noticed huge rows of tables in the halls where vendors were set up, selling various courses. I'd arrived at the conference a bit early and walked from table to table talking to the vendors. In most cases, they were selling courses that cost anywhere from \$495 all the way up to a few thousand dollars.

The conference was organized so that each speaker would speak with the audience for about an hour. The topics the speakers discussed were about things like "How to double your business in 90 days" and "How to make everyone in the world buy your products." After a few hours, I quickly realized each of the speakers was offering the audience a small bit of information, but basically they were not giving us any substantial information whatsoever. They were only giving the audience a little taste of what they knew.

Each speaker would get up and tell the audience how smart he was and how valuable what he knew was. Then he would give people in the audience a small peek at the knowledge he had. This took about 40 minutes of the speaker's time. Then, for the next 20 minutes, the speaker would launch into a [sales presentation](#) about CD ROMs of him talking on tape, exclusive access to them via teleconference, and more.

About two days into it I realized how ridiculous I was being. I was at a conference basically being given little information and sold the promise of more information for a couple of days straight. I like Mark Victor Hansen and think he seems like a nice man, but I went to his seminar to gain information. In the end I felt like the seminar was all about trying to sell me more information.

This dynamic is very common in the world. In fact, there are tons of people who refuse to share the information they have with others. They fear if people get hold of the same information they have, they will gain an unfair advantage over them.

At the conference, what happened is that even if you purchased a set of CDs from one of the speakers, he or she would still try to sell you more and more. I enjoyed one of the speakers a great deal and after he spoke I went up to him and told him I liked his talk. He encouraged me to purchase a set of CD ROMs and workbook from him for \$3,000, essentially saying "If you liked my talk so much then purchase my set of CDs and workbook."

I told him that was fine but I was interested in having him consult for one of our companies. This person had a very good background in sales and I thought he could really make a difference if he analyzed one of the companies I was running at the time that specialized in student loans. He said sure, and a couple of days later called me.

He told me that for \$35,000 he would do extensive interviews and write a report about the company and the improvements it needed. I agreed.

A few days before he was scheduled to complete the report he called me and said for an additional \$5,000 and [travel expenses](#) he would present the report live. I discussed this with someone in our company and this person suggested we should go visit the guru to get the report personally. When I suggested this to the speaker, he said that this would not work because he worked out of his home. We agreed to have him come to our offices and give the presentation live.

The presentation he gave offered some interesting insights into our business but for the most part it was just another sales pitch. He was essentially trying to get control over various resources in our company to set up businesses using our people and make us give him a percentage of the revenue. In addition, he proposed what he called "CEO Coaching" at \$5,000 an hour in 40-hour increments. I did not buy anything. What had happened, of course, was he'd used the knowledge he'd gained through his research to try to sell us more and in addition was holding back even more knowledge for a proposed "coaching

engagement."

It is not a good idea in business, or in your professional life, to hold back knowledge. You need to make people aware of what you know and put information out there to try to help others do well as quickly as you can. The more you teach others how to do something, the better you'll end up becoming at what you do.

Another damaging dynamic set up by people who hold back what they know is others pick up on this and know you're not really interested in helping them. When every action you take is calculated and every piece of information you put out there is carefully apportioned, you are constantly guarding the fort instead of providing value to others. You need to be constantly providing value and not holding it back. When you are constantly holding back, people will choose to deal with others who are willing to provide more information and value than you.

When you are holding information back all the time and not sharing what you know, you start viewing every interaction you have with other people in a competitive sort of way. Your goal is to be on guard and only exchange information if it suits your best interest and you feel like you can get ahead. You need to be seen as someone who will freely provide the information needed to assist others and who will always be there to help.

You should volunteer information about how to do something if you see a co-worker doing something incorrectly, or if you've discovered a better way to do something. The more you volunteer information, the more people will look out for you and assist you with information as well.

The smallest piece of information you learn could make a giant difference in the overall course of your career. It is the same with the information you share with others. Many people are stuck in a rut of sorts and believe if they share information with others, those people will somehow think less of them, or the information they share will somehow diminish its value. When you do not share information with others you are preventing yourself from achieving personal growth.

You never want your personal agenda to become an obstacle to your progress. There are many people in the world who do everything they can to preserve their superiority in the eyes of others, and sharing information, they fear, will threaten this superiority. The truth is that the more information you share, the more people will come to you to reciprocate. Being on the receiving end of information is where you want to be.

### **THE LESSON**

Information is the most important thing you can possess; the more you share information with your colleagues, the more they in turn will share information with you. Never try to protect information, but share it freely lest others move away from you in favor of others more giving with their information. When you withhold information from others, you inhibit your own growth; the more you share, the more others will reciprocate.

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