

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Jim Beckman
Mentor & Thinking Partner



David Freund
Chief Leadership Officer

A note from David Freund: We at MACNY are thrilled to have Jim Beckman as a strong MACNY supporter, a former MACNY Board Chair, and 2016 Wall of Fame Inductee. Jim is an example of what makes manufacturing in Central New York great. I am very pleased to announce that Jim has agreed to offer his services to our members as a mentor and thinking partner. I look forward to speaking with you about how Jim can help your team. Please feel free to call me at 315-474-4201 ext. 20 to discuss further.

Asking for Help

In a recent article titled *What is the Most Powerful Leadership Question You Can Ask?* Randy Wolken wove a wonderfully compelling argument for the response to be “How can I help you?” Upon reflection, a different question came to mind. As leaders, we rarely ask ourselves: *Do I know how to ask for help from others?*

As we move through our careers, we are taught that problems are best solved by teams. It is the fundamental approach to problem solving in any robust quality system and is typically found on page five of any Management 101 textbook. Even Aristotle knew, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

So why when we finally have the leadership role that we worked so hard to achieve, do we suddenly believe that we have to solve all of our problems ourselves? Did we suddenly, as a result of our new title or larger office, have an epiphany that blessed us with the wisdom to discern all and to act most wisely? And why are we brainwashed into believing that “it is lonely at the top?” Must we throw away the collaborative model once we reach the C Suite? The obvious answer is no. So why do we act this way?

A few years ago, Northwestern University did some interesting research on this subject. They referred to team collaboration as “knowledge sharing.” Their thesis proposed that knowledge sharing can greatly enhance an organization’s performance but only in the presence of trust. Trust among the team members allows for deeper and more significant sharing of knowledge, which leads to better solutions to problems. While it sounds simple, how do we take that leap?

Trust is the key word. Trust that others can be confided in and can give good counsel. And more importantly, trust that our relationship will not be negatively influenced by the sharing of knowledge or revealing our problems. We may know of someone we trust within our own organization, with whom we could share problems and seek help. However, this person is often a subordinate with whom we might be reluctant to share knowledge because we feel that this would burden them with larger problems, and ultimately that would not be good for the organization. This presents quite a dilemma.

As a solution, I propose that we have a great resource right here in Upstate New York – MACNY, with over three hundred member companies, all of which have leaders who, at some point, have wrestled with this very issue. Over the years, I have often asked for help from a trusted MACNY peer, and I became a better leader for it. But, most importantly, I was able to confidently share knowledge and end up with a better solution to a problem that truly helped improve my company’s performance.

If you are wrestling with a difficult problem, *do you know how to ask for help?*