

GOOD FIRST

by Will Marré

Make helping others your primary motivation, and the gains will naturally follow.

When times are tough, it's hard not to be hijacked by fear. Thinking about how much good we can do becomes downright unnatural when we're genuinely afraid we won't have what we need. But what if we turn that fear upside-down? Imagine that the key to security, prosperity and happiness comes from doing good — as much good as possible. Just imagine.

Everyone has a prime motive. It's our orientation toward life. It determines how we see the world and how the world sees us. A prime motive is the fundamental logic that consistently drives our decisions. It is the theme music of our personality. Our prime motive seems to emerge from juggling three human desires: the desire to 1) gain, 2) grow and 3) do good. Over time, we begin to consistently prioritize these desires in a way that makes sense to us.

Unfortunately, it seems that the world has been operating from the prime motive of Gain, Grow, Good — in that order. First we gain as much as we can. Then we grow our power and wealth. And then, if there's any time, health or surplus left over, we do good for others.

Although this ordering may sound logical and even sensible, it is fraught with

unintended consequences. When gain is our first objective, we tend to treat everyone else as a tool to achieve whatever we want. We fall into habits of insincerity, white lies or worse: manipulation. Gain-first motives tend to lead to a lifetime of superficial relationships and inner feelings of social isolation. These feelings frequently produce obsessions to achieve goals that prove to the world we are somebody, and we buy things as stimulants to dull the pain of loneliness.

GAIN FIRST, GAIN LESS

Often people who have unconsciously adopted a "gain-first" motive end up with a lot of things that in the end have little value. And when they are ready to give to the people they most want to give to, those people have already left.

This gain-first prime motive is not only a problem for individuals. It turns out to be a serious drag on business growth. When businesses look at customers, markets or segments as ways to gain, there is a strong tendency to create customer relationship management systems of fake intimacy. Customer service reps and salespeople pretend they care about us with all the sincerity of a smiling undertaker. But all they really care about is what they can get

from us, rather than how they can better serve us.

This doesn't work, because we see through it. We are not merely a category or a label or a "wallet." We are all so much more than that.

PROSPERITY THROUGH GIVING

Research from the University of Pennsylvania suggests that a prime motive list prioritized as Good, then Grow, then Gain is a surer path to happiness. The Good/Grow/Gain model means that we think first of how much good we can do, knowing that the more real value we offer the world, the more we will responsibly grow our opportunities and gain the resources for everything we truly need.

While "gain-first" is fear driven, "good-first" is rooted in love. And love produces feelings of inner confidence and outer connection. Since we're not trying to manipulate others, we are free to be authentic. We are free to say what we sincerely think and feel. This is intellectual and emotional honesty, which is the basis of self-respect. And self-respect is the foundation of genuine giving.

When creating as much sustainable value as we can through doing good is our primary motive, we tend to

pay close attention to what is going on in the present moment, in order to see how we might add value. The accumulations of a lifetime of small, minute-to-minute words of kindness or offers of help create a magnetic character that engenders trust and intimacy. We are also motivated to grow our talents and skills for bigger purposes than just money. Our lives tend to burn with meaning.

In a business setting, good-first is proven to drive new growth based on real value creation. Just imagine sitting in a meeting where the agenda is to answer these questions: *How can we create the most value possible for our present and future customers? How much good can we really do?* Organizations that are constantly dreaming up ways to help their customers succeed become cultures of growth, which leads to gaining all the results they need to prosper.

This is not pie-in-the-sky thinking. Consider the growth of the wildly successful Grameen Bank and micro credit with eight million customers and a 98% loan repayment rate. This service exists because the bank's Nobel Prize-winning founder, Mohammed Yunus, reconceived banking as a good-first enterprise focused on lending money to the



world's poorest women, to help them become self-reliant entrepreneurs. He has succeeded in lifting more people out of poverty than anyone else in history, while gaining financial success for the bank. This is something to think about.

In tough, tough times like these, when the winds of fear howl and the smog of distrust fills our lungs, the world calls for people who are willing to transcend their fears and seek good first. By replacing taking with giving as a priority, we might truly gain more than we ever thought possible. And that is how the world will change.



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Marré recently received an Emmy Award® for his writing of the documentary, Reclaiming Your American Dream, aired on public television stations across the country. He is currently launching CitizenOne, an educational campaign designed to teach social entrepreneurship to high school and college students.

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