



Stop Asking How—and Start Asking Who

Key Takeaways:

- Gather the right people around you so they can do some of the work for you, or do it in collaboration with you.
- Look for all the areas in your life that you could outsource to someone else—from dealing with your email inbox to scheduling your appointments to running any number of errands.
- Be radically clear about what you want—and communicate that to others.

The self-made multimillionaires we have worked with directly or indirectly over the years have taught us a great deal about the foundational principles of becoming—and staying—extremely successful. Certainly that’s true from a financial perspective, but we’ve also seen how they adopt the very same ideas and strategies in other areas of their lives.

As a result, they are able to essentially set up systematic pathways to successful outcomes—professionally, financially, personally and socially.

One of the most powerful systems we see these highly successful people and families use centers on the concept of Who Not How™—the ability to consistently enlist other people to help them achieve a goal instead of spending their time figuring out how to accomplish the mission by themselves.

Recently, Dan Sullivan—co-founder and president of Strategic Coach® and creator of The Strategic Coach® Program—spelled out this powerful approach to getting things done in his book, appropriately titled *Who Not How*. As someone who has helped thousands of accomplished entrepreneurs reach new heights of success and happiness, Sullivan has seen this system propel business owners beyond where they ever thought possible.

The good news: Developing the ability to ask “who?” instead of “how?” is a lesson we all



can learn and incorporate into our own lives as we seek to accomplish big things.

A SHIFT IN MINDSET

The first step is to understand the mindset at the core of the Who Not How approach to achieving goals. It's one that rejects the idea of the lone wolf who has a eureka moment. It similarly throws cold water on the "I built that!" claim made by so many self-important successful people.

Instead, says Sullivan, it acknowledges that when it comes to results—which should be the main concern when seeking any outcome—the most important step you can take is to gather the right people around you so they can do some of the work for you or in collaboration with you.

This is not the go-to mode of most driven people, who tend to feel they have to bear the entire load to show that they are in control, hardworking and hugely capable. When confronted with a problem or presented with a goal, they—like most of us—ask, "How can I fix/accomplish this?" That shouldn't come as a surprise: As a culture, we've been told repeatedly to focus on the "how" and then work ourselves to the bone—in isolation—to make it happen.

In stark contrast, the really successful self-made professionals we know tend to ask a very different question in those circumstances: "*Who* can help me achieve this goal?" They focus on finding the right people—the right "Whos."

THE BENEFITS OF FINDING WHOS, NOT LEARNING HOW

Why, exactly, is a focus on "who" instead of "how" a better recipe for success? It turns out there are some major benefits to this approach—including:

- **Time freedom.** By bringing in the right people to handle certain tasks that are currently on your plate, you

potentially can free up a lot of time. While that may seem obvious, the pro tip here is to go big: Look for all the areas in your life that you could outsource to someone else—from dealing with your email inbox to scheduling your appointments to cooking healthy meals to running any number of errands. A Who Not How approach becomes particularly effective when people decide to focus their time on only those activities that are the highest and best use of their time—that is, the things they can do that others around them cannot do or cannot do better than they can.

- **Greater success.** If you focus on doing everything yourself, you limit the number of resources you can direct toward your goals. When your resources are limited, so is your potential. But if you build relationships—have Whos in place—your potential to produce results grows. Once you maximize your ability to pay attention to tasks that generate the most value, you position yourself to make more money or create more success as you define it. That's because you now have the space to think and act more creatively. Sullivan points out research showing that only 16 percent of creative insights happen while you are at work. Most come in other environments. So you need to be able to take the time away from work so those ideas can rise up and become clear. That won't happen if you're a lone wolf control freak!
- **An expanded vision and purpose.** Success breeds and fosters success. As your Whos enable you to achieve greater revenue or other success metrics, you likely will envision greater success possibilities—and, fueled by your past results, have the



confidence to pursue more audacious goals that reflect a bigger sense of purpose for your company, your family and yourself.

KEYS TO MAKING IT HAPPEN

Despite benefits that we think are pretty clear and compelling, it's hard for many driven people to buy into the idea that they'll be better off by seeking Whos rather than always asking how. The myth of American individualism is just too strong in some people's minds—and as a result, they continue to believe that in order for something valuable to exist or occur, they must be the ones to do it. They're stuck on the idea of effort rather than results.

Yet there are others who *do* see the value of a Who Not How approach—but never seem to get the results they expect. What we've found is that the most successful entrepreneurs and others who leverage Who Not How to the fullest make sure to implement the approach using three key guidelines and action steps.

1. Empower your Whos with autonomy

If you're going to apply higher levels of collaboration, teamwork and outsourcing in your life, you will need to relinquish control over how things get done.

Give your Whos the power to manage themselves—to have responsibility for how they handle doing the job you hired them to do. Empower them with the full authority to execute your vision in whatever ways suit them. If you instead try to micromanage them and insist they do their job a certain way, you will almost certainly not get the results you want.

Always keep in mind that what matters is results. Presumably, you hire or partner with a particular Who because of his or her ability to get results. Don't get hung up on controlling every aspect of how they pursue

those results for you. As Sullivan puts it, let your Whos do the hows their way.

2. Be explicit about your vision and what success looks like—with yourself and with your Whos

However, autonomy without clarity is a recipe for disaster. You must be radically clear about what you want—and be able to communicate that to others. Only when you are extremely clear about your vision can you give a Who the information needed for them to successfully accomplish their part of it.

Being clear means you focus on a project's purpose, importance, ideal outcome and success criteria—that is, what has to be in place and be true at the end of the road in order for you to consider your efforts a success. The right Who is always out there—but you have to express all this information clearly to attract that person and empower him or her to deliver.

The upshot: It's not your role to explain how a job gets done. Your job is to be crystal clear on what “done” looks like.

3. Choose Whos to whom you can bring great value

Once you identify a person you want to enlist to help you, you need to get that person engaged and executing your vision. To do that, you need to ensure your vision matches their vision for themselves and that you can become a powerful Who *to them* just as they will be a powerful Who to you.

Essentially, you want to select people with whom you have an enlightened self-interest—that is, by helping you, they reach their own personal or professional goals. You need to seek not just to “take” from your Whos but also to add value to their lives in some way. A common mistake among people who use the Who Not How approach is their attitude of “What's in it for me?” That attitude leads to a transactional approach to



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working with people—which means you will attract transaction-minded people who will stick around just long enough to suck whatever value they can get from you before moving on.

Surrounding yourself with transaction-minded people will lead not to great outcomes but to subpar results and a constant search for more people to replace the ones who leave.

Don't offer someone a role in your vision unless you have something to offer to them in return. When that happens, says Sullivan, you move from transactional to transformational—that is, you both have the ability to transform each other's lives and situations for the better. That, in turn, will help you find,

attract and retain Whos capable of delivering truly great results, time and time again.

CONCLUSION

Sullivan believes outsourcing, teamwork and collaboration will increasingly be the key factors that separate those of us who achieve great results from those of us who work extremely hard but fail to cross the finish line. By adopting a Who Not How mindset and taking the right action steps now, you can potentially position yourself for tremendous success as you define it—in whatever endeavor you pursue.

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