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COLUMNIST

Breaking Down Your Roadblocks: The 4 People You Need To Help

You can be the one to take control of the relationship and create those positive relations with others, regardless of the differences you may have.



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IMAGE: Getty Images

When it comes to facing roadblocks, or any obstacle in the way of your success in business, popular speaker Kingsley Grant said:

"You overcome roadblocks by first identifying the roadblock. Assess the situation, the roadblock, and then look at your options to bypass it. Focusing on overcoming the roadblock

can consume so much energy that you are depleted in finding ways around it. Roadblocks can lead to very creative solutions that you would not have thought about had it not been there."

So how do we get to that action step, allowing us to bypass that roadblock? It all comes back to the people we surround ourselves with that keep our learning at a higher level, which I discussed in my last column where I shared some of [Yahoo! CEO Marissa Mayer's strategies](#).

Essentially, there are four different types of partners you need in your life to keep you learning at a higher level. The way you improve your learning is to work with others who know more than you in various areas, to help you expand your field of knowledge. Having partners in learning can help remove roadblocks that you can't always remove yourself.

For example, I recently worked with an entrepreneur who came to me seeking a coach because she was facing a major roadblock--namely, a Strategic Plan. She knew she needed a better strategic plan, but she didn't know how to create one. Having wasted many hours trying to find the right approach, template or system for strategic planning, she became overwhelmed. It dawned on her that trying to eliminate this roadblock on her own would be an enormous time sink--and frankly, she wasn't sure she could do it on top of everything else in her business, especially since she would be relying on a frustrating process of trial and error to try to figure it out.

I helped her to understand that tackling this goal, which would ultimately help her to grow her business, would be greatly eased by looking for partners to help her move the roadblock.

Whether you're looking for a new Strategic Plan, trying to reorganize your business, tackle a major challenge, or to stretch into an exciting new goal, there are four main types of people you can look to for help.

Advocates. Advocates cheer you on as you move roadblocks for yourself. Surrounding yourself with advocates is important to help remind you of your commitment to your goal and the importance it holds for you.

To follow from our earlier example, if the entrepreneur above decided to tackle that strategic plan in a Do-It-Yourself spirit, she could minimize the frustration and overwhelm by getting the support of her advocates. In this case, it might be her work team, who would understand the importance of the task and encourage her to complete it, with reminders of how helpful it would be to the business.

Running a business is hard work. A little support and encouragement can help.

Mentors. Mentors play a different role than advocates. Whereas your advocates cheer you on as you move the roadblocks, your mentors actually show you how to move it. They've been there. They've done it. They can show you how they moved their own roadblocks. As your "older and wiser" counterparts,--they've been where you are, and can coach you by using their own experience. They can tell you how they got over a roadblock, and how they were able to navigate the unexpected along the way.

For our entrepreneur creating a strategic plan, getting a mentor would shorten the learning curve and eliminate the time-consuming task of starting from scratch. There's nothing like a great example to get you on the right path, and a mentor can be that example for you.

Sponsors. Sponsors move roadblocks *for* you. Unlike mentors, sponsors have a responsibility for you being successful. A sponsor might be someone like your boss, who has a vested interest in your success. Or it might be an angel investor, whose success is tied with yours financially. In addition to the motivation provided by your advocates and the role modeling provided by your mentors, your sponsor actually gives you *help*. Your sponsor will open the door for you and get you the next job, or make an introduction, or in some other way move you forward in a way you can't do for yourself.

If you want to move further, faster, you need a sponsor.

Imagine what would change for our entrepreneur who needs the strategic plan if she not only had the plan, but also a well-connected investor who was committed to helping her achieve her goals. Now she's playing at a whole new level. Even the assistance of a sponsor, however, does not complete the set of partners she will need to be successful. It will still be up to her, ultimately, to do the work, and two more partners will help.

Coaches. Coaches help you move your roadblocks alongside you. Even with the best of partners to help you with the roadblocks, the ownership for moving forward *past* the roadblocks stays with you. A sponsor may be able to get you opportunities...but you have to take those opportunities and make sure you excel. This is where your coaches come in. Your coach will roll up her sleeves and help you do the heavy lifting related to taking action, overcoming new barriers, defining the process and the plan, and so on. She will help you implement the plan help you make the decisions that are right for you.

For the entrepreneur who wanted the strategic plan, coaching involved designing the specific plan that would lead to her ideal future - keeping her unique vision in mind and allowing her to lead her business, her way while still striving toward the end result.

Succeeding in business--especially when you're the leader, responsible for defining vision, strategy, goals, plans, actions and all the rest--is no easy task. Let's not make it harder than it has to be by trying to do it all yourself. Keep your eyes open for the roadblocks, and when you find them, don't spend your time and effort insisting on moving them all single-handedly. You can move them more easily, faster and more effectively--with the help of your partners: your advocates, your mentors, your sponsors, and of course, your coach.

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