

Introducing F.O.O.D.

(Fixing the Out of Office Dilemma)

G.A.R.L.I.C. provides you with strength to ask for help

The Hunger for the Topic

Asking for help sounds such a simple thing to do, doesn't it? Yet how many people do you know who are fearful of asking for any kind of support because they think it will be deemed as a short coming or a failure? Isn't it strange how such a simple act of trying to better ourselves or achieve greater things for our organisations can be seen in such a way? It only takes a couple of poor or unhelpful reactions to take place in our formative years for us to store 'asking for help' as a negative limiting belief. Isn't it fortunate that we can alter our perspective when we are able to view it in a different way?

And I should know because I've had to work extremely hard to shift this thought in my own head. In some ways it became more pronounced when I started my own business. In times when work was sparse, Ray would mention that I should ask my colleagues if they could help me out. You can imagine how my inner voice reacted to that! People will think I'm a failure de da de da de da. But you know what, he was right. If you don't ask the question in the first place, you're even less likely to get the help you require.

Layer this up with another fact that I learned last week, it will help us all to view 'asking for help' as a positive thing to do. In her research for Dare to Lead, Brene Brown said that they thought the number one indicator for developing trust would be people doing what they said they were going to do. They were wrong. Overwhelmingly, asking for help was top of the list

generating much greater levels of trust in the eyes of leaders. And this is because they saw it as a way to demonstrate that you're open to others' perspectives and don't feel that you need to have all the answers.

You might be asking yourself, why is this important? Throughout the last 18 months we've all suffered with periods of not knowing how to tackle certain things. When we feel alone or don't believe that we can reach out to people to ask for help it can knock our self-esteem as well as our confidence to work at our best. I remember feeling concerned that I'd be left behind as everyone started to jump online and seem to be such experts with their new technology prowess. Yet as I started to play with all the new tools and techniques and sharing my knowledge with people who in turn shared theirs with mine, I felt excited and motivated about what could be achieved sitting at my desk.

There have been so many articles on making sure we ask for help during last few months which is essential. However, I'd like to focus on our roles as leaders and managers in creating the environment for people to feel comfortable to ask. It's crucial for us to develop levels of psychological safety in our working environments so that everyone can feel okay to ask for help without fear of retribution. Not knowing all the answers creates opportunities for people to work together, build support networks and gain common understanding. At a time when people are returning from furlough there are all types of emotions being experienced so it's essential we find out what support people require to make them feel both confident and competent to fulfil their roles. It also means that we become more aware of some of our own biases or traits that may create barriers for our people to be open and honest.

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Using the superfood **G.A.R.L.I.C.**, I'd like to demonstrate how we can create an environment whether we're at work or home to help people to speak up and ask for help when they need it. Let's break down the judgement barriers and provide people with the support they require. I guarantee all our mindsets will be in better shape.

The Ingredients for Success

- When we ask for help, we learn. Let's develop **growth mindsets** in everyone around us so that we not only embrace our strengths but learn ways to overcome our challenges too. By adopting a growth mindset, we also increase our levels of wellbeing as we are able to navigate and challenge stress more effectively.
- When we have a greater **awareness** of ourselves and others, we can recognise the triggers that lead us to requiring support.
- When I do reach out, I reach out to people I **respect**. I see them as the font of knowledge, skills etc and so when people come to me, I'm delighted to help as I feel they do it for the same reasons.
- By asking for help we **lead by example!** We show that it isn't a weakness but a way of continuing to develop ourselves. The more we role model it for others, the easier it will become for everyone else to do the same.
- The **interactions** we have with others build our support networks and provide us with a sense of belonging. Think #yougotmethrough2020 and everyone who kept you buoyed up. I'm eternally grateful for all those interactions with people in my network whether it was a zoom call, phone call, virtual coffee, email, postcard. They all made such a difference.

- **Courage** to speak up. I hear it all the time I'll be judged as not able to cope if I raise this as an issue. Let's build environments that encourage people to share the load rather than feel they have to carry it alone.

The Methods to Blend it Together

As leaders and managers, it's our duty to create environments that enable our people to succeed. It is up to us to support everyone around us to build their mental muscles and take on bigger and better challenges. This can only be done when we create a workplace that allows everyone to have a voice and challenge the way we do things so that we achieve the best results for our people, customers and the organisation. Of course, this means that we may have to embrace challenges ourselves and seek out help to make the necessary changes, which can sometimes feel a bit scary.

Try taking a leaf out of Carol Dweck's book, Mindset. Think about ways in which you can help both yourself and others to develop a growth mindset by embracing challenges. Where might we need additional support to achieve the task in hand. Where might things go wrong and how might we overcome those issues? Who might we need to involve to maintain momentum? These are all good questions whether you are delegating work or having a check in with your people in your team. It starts to develop a feedback culture so that people feel safe to bring up issues that may be going wrong as well as when things are going well.

Awareness of self and others is critical to making any step change. I've always loved the story about Churchill having the awareness that leaders were often only told what they wanted to hear rather than full disclosure!

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He set up a department called The Bad News Department as he wanted to be a leader who made decisions based on the full information rather than partial!

If you've been known to fly off the handle in the past, people will be much less likely to be open and honest with you. I know that there are certain triggers I become aware of when I feel that someone is being critical of me. If I'm sitting in a chair, I feel my back push against the frame as well as the floor on my feet. It's a time when I know that I need to take a few breaths. Concentrating on my breathing, creating some positive self-talk and remaining curious are my three go to activities.

What triggers are you aware of that make you realise you are about to react rather than respond? Is there one thing you can do to make sure you help people to speak up rather than feel in fear of what you might say or how you might react?

And being aware of others is just as essential. How do you know when people are requiring your support and help? If you really know them, you will hear it in their voice or notice it in their body language. I know this has been much more difficult when we've been working in a zoom world, but like anything, relationships take time to build. Asking questions and really taking time to listen to the answers, picking up on gestures or small clues, helps us to check in with people properly and show our concern.

And if I've found myself starting to rush things along, I think it's good to remember the quote from Buddha that says I'm not learning if my mouth is open!

At first, I found it hard to articulate why **respect** was a word that I used in asking for help. But the more I think about it, I realise that I reach out to people who I respect when I need help. I see them as the masters of their trade, they have wisdom or are good decision makers. All these things make me want them to guide me in some way or another. So, when people come to me, I feel really happy to help as I think they must admire me in some way for my expertise.

As leaders and managers, we have so many opportunities to bring in our team's expertise. Whether it's situational leadership, where someone with the knowledge can manage a project of gaining input from everyone in the team on a certain approach, it's amazing when we surrender our own thoughts on a matter to what fantastic options are out there. The next time you feel that you have all the answers, or perhaps you're acting in a way where it's your way or the highway, gather the team together and find out from them what approach they might take and facilitate the discussion. I'm sure you will be filled with nuggets of creativity and innovation that you never realised existed.

As with everything I've mentioned so far, we won't create an environment for people to feel at ease to speak up and ask for help if we're not congruent with our actions and words. It's therefore up to us all to **lead by example**. By asking for help, we help others to see that it's not a weakness. It's helping everyone to get it right rather than have a feeling of being right.

We all know that we are more productive when we feel valued for what we bring to the party. Being able to create the best results often means that we need to gain clarity of what is required ie checking our understanding

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and making the adjustments where necessary. How are you showing your people that you value their contribution? What can you do to create a culture where giving and receiving feedback is the norm and seen as a way of continually improving what we do?

This leads into our next ingredient of **interactions**. The interactions we have with others builds our levels of trust. When you are with someone who is trying to work out a new way of doing something and they are curious to find out how you might approach it, involve you in the process and keep you up to date, you know they'll succeed. How can you be fostering collaboration not only with your immediate teams but more widely across the organisation? Building strong internal networks creates a better understanding of what others do as well as helps us to appreciate one another's worth.

The final ingredient is **courage**. If we feel vulnerable or think we'll get shot down by voicing concerns, ideas etc, we'll never do it. Our role is to encourage our people to be fully engaged, candid in discussions and able to collaborate fully with those around them. When you provide an environment for people to act in this way, your results will soar through the roof.

Gone are the days where leaders talk about only being interested in results. Leading through fear, doesn't do anyone any good and probably leads to a higher turnover rate in staff and levels of dissatisfaction. When your people know that you have their best interests at heart, they will help you find ways to improve the organisation. They'll highlight problems, raise their concerns in meetings and feel more happier to try new things.

The seasoning to make it your own

There is a lot to think about here so as with any garlic, don't be too heavy handed! Perhaps start by gathering some feedback from those around you on your own style in creating a culture where people feel safe to raise their head above the parapet. You might like to use one of my favourite feedback mechanisms of WWW and EBI – what works well and even better if as it steers clear of strengths and weaknesses. Or, you could ask people to finish the sentence – when you ask for help in this organisation you

Either way, you'll get plenty of information to get you started.

About Jane

Jane Hirst is an engaging and all-encompassing facilitator as well as a pragmatic and results oriented coach. The F.O.O.D. series came to life during the pandemic when Jane became aware of how difficult people were finding it to adapt and work remotely from their teams. She created bite-sized learning that would be easy to digest and put into use straight away. Something people are finding even more important as they return from furlough.



We have now adapted the menu to create both team and one to one coaching sessions utilizing the ingredients. Please do get in touch if you think our workshops would nourish you and your people.

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