

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/asking-for-help-effectively>

The entrepreneurial community is full of people who want to help new founders, says Meirav Oren, CEO and co-founder of Versatile. She shares a time she effectively asked for help early in her founder's journey, and explains what she looks for in requests for help as an experienced CEO.



Transcript

- Everyone wants to help you.. 00:00:05,010 Like even those advices that I was talking about, like people really want to help.. The entrepreneurial community is incredible.. There's so many people that have been on this journey before me and, and before you and, and they really wanna help.. The, the big problem is time.. That's the one thing that we all don't have enough of.. And when I was just getting started, I had time, but (chuckles) whoever wants to help me doesn't necessarily have it.. And I remember just being extremely accessible myself, I would go anywhere that the other person would be willing to meet me at.. I literally be times on agnostic.. I would meet anywhere, anytime, any, anyone that would be willing to help me..

I would just make myself, I remove all constraints.. And I think that's a big part of it.. Another part of it, I'll tell you a story.. So (chuckles) I'm a storyteller, so, and I, I think people learn really well from, from stories.. So this is me pretty much at the beginning of our journey.. Mind you, everyone tells me that I'm, I'm probably wrong.. And this can't be done.. Like I've heard a lot, but we've gone through MassChallenge.. I don't know if you've heard of the accelerator, but it's, it's a great one.. And, we just graduated and we actually won..

We won MassChallenge and, and the CEO of MassChallenge congratulated us.. And, and I kind of said, I'm gonna make it to Boston and then I'm gonna ask for help.. And he was like, anything you need.. So I sent this email, and I thought I was completely over the top.. Like, it was a well structured but relatively long email that said, hey, I've done the research.. I'm coming to Boston.. These are the dates, this is what I need and here is why I need it.. And here are the people, here are the, the like, a little snippet of, of what I would want you to, to forward to these people.. And like, I would really love for you to do this for me.. I was specific..

I I, I did the research.. I wanna say a word about doing the research and I asked for very tangible things.. I knew he had the connections and all I asked for is literally forward my email or forward the snippet to the person.. And, and I explained why.. He delivered on all of those.. And when I actually made it to, to Boston, he, he came out and, and he shook my hand and was like, this is the best founder, kind of like, help email I've ever received.. I was like, I, I thought I was completely over the line and he was like, no, cause I really wanna help, and most people will, will confuse me or will tell me, hey, please introduce me to investors.. Do not do that.. Like no one has the time to think for us.. Who's the right investor for us? Who, who do they know? What is your business about? And, and why would that connection even make sense? So if I wanna help, I need to know

exactly what you are asking me to do..

So if I were to say, hey, I'm, I'm not even fundraising yet, which is what I did at the time, but I want to understand what it would take to get their money.. And here is my question and here's my why.. Then they would know whether to say yay or nay to, to even the meeting itself.. And if I don't have a product yet and I wanna talk to customers, then again, I need to be very clear about the fact that what I'm asking for is to, to give them a glimpse of what the future looks like.. And I was, I was kind of out there, I was like, they need to know what's coming and that's what I have to offer in exchange for their time.. And that worked like a charm, so.... Today, when I get emails and, and, and founders do contact me for help, I think that's the first thing I say, be specific, make it easy for me to help you.. And if you make it that easy, then people will help.. Be specific.. Do your research..

Show me that, that you know exactly why you're, you're even asking for my help and for my time.. And chances are that, that I will help just like everyone helped me earlier on in the journey and hopefully will keep helping me after I spill all my secrets.. (Interviewer laughs)..