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WHY HELPING OTHERS  
DRIVES OUR **SUCCESS**



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*and*  
**TAKE**

**ADAM GRANT**

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author of *Drive*, *A Whole New Mind*, and *To Sell Is Human*

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For generations, we have focused on the individual drivers of success: passion, hard work, talent, and luck. But in today’s dramatically reconfigured world, success is increasingly dependent on how we interact with others. Adam Grant, Wharton’s highest-rated professor and a writer whom Malcolm Gladwell describes as “one of my academic heroes,” examines whether giving is the secret to getting ahead. *Give and Take* was named one of the best books of the year by Amazon, Apple, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Financial Times*—as well as one of *O*, *The Oprah Magazine*’s riveting reads, *Fortune*’s must-read business books, *Forbes*’s most dynamic social innovation initiatives of the year, and the *Washington Post*’s books every leader should read.

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Cover design and illustration by *The Heads of State*

A Penguin Book  
Business/Psychology

U.S. \$16.00  
CAN. \$18.00

ISBN 978-0-14-312498-6



# 1

## Good Returns

*The Dangers and Rewards of Giving More Than You Get*

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*The principle of give and take; that is diplomacy—give one and take ten.*

—Mark Twain, author and humorist

On a sunny Saturday afternoon in Silicon Valley, two proud fathers stood on the sidelines of a soccer field. They were watching their young daughters play together, and it was only a matter of time before they struck up a conversation about work. The taller of the two men was Danny Shader, a serial entrepreneur who had spent time at Netscape, Motorola, and Amazon. Intense, dark-haired, and capable of talking about business forever, Shader was in his late thirties by the time he launched his first company, and he liked to call himself the “old man of the Internet.” He loved building companies, and he was just getting his fourth start-up off the ground.

Shader had instantly taken a liking to the other father, a man named David Hornik who invests in companies for a living. At 5'4", with dark hair, glasses, and a goatee, Hornik is a man of eclectic interests: he collects *Alice in Wonderland* books, and in college he created his own major in computer music. He went on to earn a master's in criminology and a law degree, and after burning the midnight oil at a law firm, he accepted a job offer to join a venture capital firm, where he spent the next decade listening to pitches from entrepreneurs and deciding whether or not to fund them.

During a break between soccer games, Shader turned to Hornik and

said, “I’m working on something—do you want to see a pitch?” Hornik specialized in Internet companies, so he seemed like an ideal investor to Shader. The interest was mutual. Most people who pitch ideas are first-time entrepreneurs, with no track record of success. In contrast, Shader was a blue-chip entrepreneur who had hit the jackpot not once, but twice. In 1999, his first start-up, Accept.com, was acquired by Amazon for \$175 million. In 2007, his next company, Good Technology, was acquired by Motorola for \$500 million. Given Shader’s history, Hornik was eager to hear what he was up to next.

A few days after the soccer game, Shader drove to Hornik’s office and pitched his newest idea. Nearly a quarter of Americans have trouble making online purchases because they don’t have a bank account or credit card, and Shader was proposing an innovative solution to this problem. Hornik was one of the first venture capitalists to hear the pitch, and right off the bat, he loved it. Within a week, he put Shader in front of his partners and offered him a term sheet: he wanted to fund Shader’s company.

Although Hornik had moved fast, Shader was in a strong position. Given Shader’s reputation, and the quality of his idea, Hornik knew plenty of investors would be clamoring to work with Shader. “You’re rarely the only investor giving an entrepreneur a term sheet,” Hornik explains. “You’re competing with the best venture capital firms in the country, and trying to convince the entrepreneur to take your money instead of theirs.”

The best way for Hornik to land the investment was to set a deadline for Shader to make his decision. If Hornik made a compelling offer with a short fuse, Shader might sign it before he had the chance to pitch to other investors. This is what many venture capitalists do to stack the odds in their favor.

But Hornik didn’t give Shader a deadline. In fact, he practically invited Shader to shop his offer around to other investors. Hornik believed that entrepreneurs need time to evaluate their options, so as a matter of principle, he refused to present exploding offers. “Take as much time as you need to make the right decision,” he said. Although Hornik hoped Shader would sign with him, he put Shader’s best interests ahead of his own, giving Shader space to explore other options.

Shader did just that: he spent the next few weeks pitching his idea to other investors. In the meantime, Hornik wanted to make sure he was still a strong contender, so he sent Shader his most valuable resource: a list of forty references who could attest to Hornik's caliber as an investor. Hornik knew that entrepreneurs look for the same attributes in investors that we all seek in financial advisers: competence and trustworthiness. When entrepreneurs sign with an investor, the investor joins their board of directors and provides expert advice. Hornik's list of references reflected the blood, sweat, and tears that he had devoted to entrepreneurs over the course of more than a decade in the venture business. He knew they would vouch for his skill and his character.

A few weeks later, Hornik's phone rang. It was Shader, ready to announce his decision.

"I'm sorry," Shader said, "but I'm signing with another investor."

The financial terms of the offer from Hornik and the other investor were virtually identical, so Hornik's list of forty references should have given him an advantage. And after speaking with the references, it was clear to Shader that Hornik was a great guy.

But it was this very same spirit of generosity that doomed Hornik's case. Shader worried that Hornik would spend more time encouraging him than challenging him. Hornik might not be tough enough to help Shader start a successful business, and the other investor had a reputation for being a brilliant adviser who questioned and pushed entrepreneurs. Shader walked away thinking, "I should probably add somebody to the board who will challenge me more. Hornik is so affable that I don't know what he'll be like in the boardroom." When he called Hornik, he explained, "My heart said to go with you, but my head said to go with them. I decided to go with my head instead of my heart."

Hornik was devastated, and he began to second-guess himself. "Am I a dope? If I had applied pressure to take the term sheet, maybe he would have taken it. But I've spent a decade building my reputation so this wouldn't happen. How did this happen?"

David Hornik learned his lesson the hard way: good guys finish last.

Or do they?

\* \* \*

According to conventional wisdom, highly successful people have three things in common: motivation, ability, and opportunity. If we want to succeed, we need a combination of hard work, talent, and luck. The story of Danny Shader and David Hornik highlights a fourth ingredient, one that's critical but often neglected: success depends heavily on how we approach our interactions with other people. Every time we interact with another person at work, we have a choice to make: do we try to claim as much value as we can, or contribute value without worrying about what we receive in return?

As an organizational psychologist and Wharton professor, I've dedicated more than ten years of my professional life to studying these choices at organizations ranging from Google to the U.S. Air Force, and it turns out that they have staggering consequences for success. Over the past three decades, in a series of groundbreaking studies, social scientists have discovered that people differ dramatically in their preferences for reciprocity—their desired mix of taking and giving. To shed some light on these preferences, let me introduce you to two kinds of people who fall at opposite ends of the reciprocity spectrum at work. I call them takers and givers.

*Takers* have a distinctive signature: they like to get more than they give. They tilt reciprocity in their own favor, putting their own interests ahead of others' needs. Takers believe that the world is a competitive, dog-eat-dog place. They feel that to succeed, they need to be better than others. To prove their competence, they self-promote and make sure they get plenty of credit for their efforts. Garden-variety takers aren't cruel or cutthroat; they're just cautious and self-protective. "If I don't look out for myself first," takers think, "no one will." Had David Hornik been more of a taker, he would have given Danny Shader a deadline, putting his goal of landing the investment ahead of Shader's desire for a flexible timeline.

But Hornik is the opposite of a taker; he's a *giver*. In the workplace, givers are a relatively rare breed. They tilt reciprocity in the other direction, preferring to give more than they get. Whereas takers tend to be self-focused,

evaluating what other people can offer them, givers are other-focused, paying more attention to what other people need from them. These preferences aren't about money: givers and takers aren't distinguished by how much they donate to charity or the compensation that they command from their employers. Rather, givers and takers differ in their attitudes and actions toward other people. If you're a taker, you help others strategically, when the benefits to *you* outweigh the personal costs. If you're a giver, you might use a different cost-benefit analysis: you help whenever the benefits to *others* exceed the personal costs. Alternatively, you might not think about the personal costs at all, helping others without expecting anything in return. If you're a giver at work, you simply strive to be generous in sharing your time, energy, knowledge, skills, ideas, and connections with other people who can benefit from them.

It's tempting to reserve the giver label for larger-than-life heroes such as Mother Teresa or Mahatma Gandhi, but being a giver doesn't require extraordinary acts of sacrifice. It just involves a focus on acting in the interests of others, such as by giving help, providing mentoring, sharing credit, or making connections for others. Outside the workplace, this type of behavior is quite common. According to research led by Yale psychologist Margaret Clark, most people act like givers in close relationships. We help our families and friends without keeping score.

But in the workplace, give and take becomes more complicated. Professionally, few of us act purely like givers or takers, adopting a third style instead. We become *matchers*, striving to preserve an equal balance of giving and getting. Matchers operate on the principle of fairness: when they help others, they protect themselves by seeking reciprocity. If you're a matcher, you believe in tit for tat, and your relationships are governed by even exchanges of favors.

Giving, taking, and matching are three fundamental styles of social interaction, but the lines between them aren't hard and fast. You might find that you shift from one reciprocity style to another as you travel across different work roles and relationships.\* It wouldn't be surprising if you act like

\* Alan Fiske, an anthropologist at UCLA, finds that people engage in a mix of giving, taking, and matching in every human culture—from North to South America, Europe to Africa, and

a taker when negotiating your salary, a giver when mentoring someone with less experience than you, and a matcher when sharing expertise with a colleague. But evidence shows that at work, the vast majority of people develop a primary reciprocity style, which captures how they approach most of the people most of the time. And this primary style can play as much of a role in our success as hard work, talent, and luck.

In fact, the patterns of success based on reciprocity styles are remarkably clear. If I asked you to guess who's the most likely to end up at the bottom of the success ladder, what would you say—takers, givers, or matchers?

Professionally, all three reciprocity styles have their own benefits and drawbacks. But there's one style that proves more costly than the other two. Based on David Hornik's story, you might predict that givers achieve the worst results—and you'd be right. Research demonstrates that givers sink to the bottom of the success ladder. Across a wide range of important occupations, givers are at a disadvantage: they make others better off but sacrifice their own success in the process.

In the world of engineering, the least productive and effective engineers are givers. In one study, when more than 160 professional engineers in California rated one another on help given and received, the least successful engineers were those who gave more than they received. These givers had the worst objective scores in their firm for the number of tasks, technical reports, and drawings completed—not to mention errors made, deadlines missed, and money wasted. Going out of their way to help others prevented them from getting their own work done.

The same pattern emerges in medical school. In a study of more than six hundred medical students in Belgium, the students with the lowest grades had unusually high scores on giver statements like “I love to help others” and “I anticipate the needs of others.” The givers went out of their way to help

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Australia to Asia. While living with a West African tribal group in Burkina Faso called the Mossi, Fiske found people switching between giving, taking, and matching. When it comes to land, the Mossi are givers. If you want to move into their village, they will automatically grant you land without expecting anything in return. But in the marketplace, the Mossi are more inclined toward taking, haggling aggressively for the best prices. And when it comes to cultivating food, the Mossi are likely to be matchers: everyone is expected to make an equal contribution, and meals are divided into even shares.

their peers study, sharing what they already knew at the expense of filling gaps in their own knowledge, and it gave their peers a leg up at test time. Salespeople are no different. In a study I led of salespeople in North Carolina, compared with takers and matchers, givers brought in two and a half times less annual sales revenue. They were so concerned about what was best for their customers that they weren't willing to sell aggressively.

Across occupations, it appears that givers are just too caring, too trusting, and too willing to sacrifice their own interests for the benefit of others. There's even evidence that compared with takers, on average, givers earn 14 percent less money, have twice the risk of becoming victims of crimes, and are judged as 22 percent less powerful and dominant.

So if givers are most likely to land at the bottom of the success ladder, who's at the top—takers or matchers?

Neither. When I took another look at the data, I discovered a surprising pattern: *It's the givers again.*

As we've seen, the engineers with the lowest productivity are mostly givers. But when we look at the engineers with the highest productivity, the evidence shows that they're givers too. The California engineers with the best objective scores for quantity and quality of results are those who consistently give more to their colleagues than they get. The worst performers and the best performers are givers; takers and matchers are more likely to land in the middle.

This pattern holds up across the board. The Belgian medical students with the lowest grades have unusually high giver scores, but so do the students with the *highest* grades. Over the course of medical school, being a giver accounts for 11 percent higher grades. Even in sales, I found that the least productive salespeople had 25 percent higher giver scores than average performers—but so did the most productive salespeople. The top performers were givers, and they averaged 50 percent more annual revenue than the takers and matchers. Givers dominate the bottom *and* the top of the success ladder. Across occupations, if you examine the link between reciprocity styles and success, the givers are more likely to become champs—not only chumps.

Guess which one David Hornik turns out to be?

After Danny Shader signed with the other investor, he had a gnawing feeling. “We just closed a big round. We should be celebrating. Why am I not happier? I was excited about my investor, who’s exceptionally bright and talented, but I was missing the opportunity to work with Hornik.” Shader wanted to find a way to engage Hornik, but there was a catch. To involve him, Shader and his lead investor would have to sell more of the company, diluting their ownership.

Shader decided it was worth the cost to him personally. Before the financing closed, he invited Hornik to invest in his company. Hornik accepted the offer and made an investment, earning some ownership of the company. He began coming to board meetings, and Shader was impressed with Hornik’s ability to push him to consider new directions. “I got to see the other side of him,” Shader says. “It had just been overshadowed by how affable he is.” Thanks in part to Hornik’s advice, Shader’s start-up has taken off. It’s called PayNearMe, and it enables Americans who don’t have a bank account or a credit card to make online purchases with a barcode or a card, and then pay cash for them at participating establishments. Shader landed major partnerships with 7-Eleven and Greyhound to provide these services, and in the first year and a half since launching, PayNearMe has been growing at more than 30 percent per month. As an investor, Hornik has a small share in this growth.

Hornik has also added Shader to his list of references, which is probably even more valuable than the deal itself. When entrepreneurs call to ask about Hornik, Shader tells them, “You may be thinking he’s just a nice guy, but he’s a lot more than that. He’s phenomenal: super-hardworking and very courageous. He can be both challenging and supportive at the same time. And he’s incredibly responsive, which is one of the best characteristics you can have in an investor. He’ll get back to you any hour—day or night—quickly, on anything that matters.”

The payoff for Hornik was not limited to this single deal on PayNearMe. After seeing Hornik in action, Shader came to admire Hornik’s commitment to acting in the best interests of entrepreneurs, and he began to set Hornik up with other investment opportunities. In one case, after meeting

the CEO of a company called Rocket Lawyer, Shader recommended Hornik as an investor. Although the CEO already had a term sheet from another investor, Hornik ended up winning the investment.

Although he recognizes the downsides, David Hornik believes that operating like a giver has been a driving force behind his success in venture capital. Hornik estimates that when most venture capitalists offer term sheets to entrepreneurs, they have a signing rate near 50 percent: “If you get half of the deals you offer, you’re doing pretty well.” Yet in eleven years as a venture capitalist, Hornik has offered twenty-eight term sheets to entrepreneurs, and twenty-five have accepted. Shader is one of just three people who have ever turned down an investment from Hornik. The other 89 percent of the time entrepreneurs have taken Hornik’s money. Thanks to his funding and expert advice, these entrepreneurs have gone on to build a number of successful start-ups—one was valued at more than \$3 billion on its first day of trading in 2012, and others have been acquired by Google, Oracle, Ticketmaster, and Monster.

Hornik’s hard work and talent, not to mention his luck at being on the right sideline at his daughter’s soccer game, played a big part in lining up the deal with Danny Shader. But it was his reciprocity style that ended up winning the day for him. Even better, he wasn’t the only winner. Shader won too, as did the companies to which Shader later recommended Hornik. By operating as a giver, Hornik created value for himself while maximizing opportunities for value to flow outward for the benefit of others.

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In this book, I want to persuade you that we underestimate the success of givers like David Hornik. Although we often stereotype givers as chumps and doormats, they turn out to be surprisingly successful. To figure out why givers dominate the top of the success ladder, we’ll examine startling studies and stories that illuminate how giving can be more powerful—and less dangerous—than most people believe. Along the way, I’ll introduce you to successful givers from many different walks of life, including consultants, lawyers, doctors, engineers, salespeople, writers, entrepreneurs, accountants, teachers, financial advisers, and sports executives. These givers reverse

the popular plan of succeeding first and giving back later, raising the possibility that those who give first are often best positioned for success later.

But we can't forget about those engineers and salespeople at the bottom of the ladder. Some givers do become pushovers and doormats, and I want to explore what separates the champs from the chumps. The answer is less about raw talent or aptitude, and more about the strategies givers use and the choices they make. To explain how givers avoid the bottom of the success ladder, I'm going to debunk two common myths about givers by showing you that they're not necessarily nice, and they're not necessarily altruistic. Successful givers recognize that there's a big difference between taking and receiving. Taking is using other people solely for one's own gain. Receiving is accepting help from others while maintaining a willingness to pay it back and forward. We all have goals for our own individual achievements, and it turns out that the givers who excel are willing to ask for help when they need it. Successful givers are every bit as ambitious as takers and matchers. They simply have a different way of pursuing their goals.

This brings us to my third aim, which is to reveal what's unique about the success of givers. Let me be clear that givers, takers, and matchers all can—and do—achieve success. But there's something distinctive that happens when givers succeed: it spreads and cascades. When takers win, there's usually someone else who loses. Research shows that people tend to envy successful takers and look for ways to knock them down a notch. In contrast, when givers like David Hornik win, people are rooting for them and supporting them, rather than gunning for them. Givers succeed in a way that creates a ripple effect, enhancing the success of people around them. You'll see that the difference lies in how giver success creates value, instead of just claiming it. As the venture capitalist Randy Komisar remarks, "It's easier to win if everybody wants you to win. If you don't make enemies out there, it's easier to succeed."

But in some arenas, it seems that the costs of giving clearly outweigh the benefits. In politics, for example, Mark Twain's opening quote suggests that diplomacy involves taking ten times as much as giving. "Politics," writes former president Bill Clinton, "is a 'getting' business. You have to get support, contributions, and votes, over and over again." Takers should have an

edge in lobbying and outmaneuvering their opponents in competitive elections, and matchers may be well suited to the constant trading of favors that politics demands. What happens to givers in the world of politics?

Consider the political struggles of a hick who went by the name Sampson. He said his goal was to be the “Clinton of Illinois,” and he set his sights on winning a seat in the Senate. Sampson was an unlikely candidate for political office, having spent his early years working on a farm. But Sampson had great ambition; he made his first run for a seat in the state legislature when he was just twenty-three years old. There were thirteen candidates, and only the top four won seats. Sampson made a lackluster showing, finishing eighth.

After losing that race, Sampson turned his eye to business, taking out a loan to start a small shop with a friend. The business failed, and Sampson was unable to repay the loan, so his possessions were seized by local authorities. Shortly thereafter, his business partner died without assets, and Sampson took on the debt. Sampson jokingly called his liability “the national debt”: he owed fifteen times his annual income. It would take him years, but he eventually paid back every cent.

After his business failed, Sampson made a second run for the state legislature. Although he was only twenty-five years old, he finished second, landing a seat. For his first legislative session, he had to borrow the money to buy his first suit. For the next eight years, Sampson served in the state legislature, earning a law degree along the way. Eventually, at age forty-five, he was ready to pursue influence on the national stage. He made a bid for the Senate.

Sampson knew he was fighting an uphill battle. He had two primary opponents: James Shields and Lyman Trumbull. Both had been state Supreme Court justices, coming from backgrounds far more privileged than Sampson’s. Shields, the incumbent running for reelection, was the nephew of a congressman. Trumbull was the grandson of an eminent Yale-educated historian. By comparison, Sampson had little experience or political clout.

In the first poll, Sampson was a surprise front-runner, with 44 percent support. Shields was close behind at 41 percent, and Trumbull was a distant

third at 5 percent. But the tide began to turn when a new candidate entered the race: the state's current governor, Joel Matteson. Matteson was popular, and he had the potential to draw votes from both Sampson and Trumbull. When Shields withdrew from the race, Matteson quickly took the lead. Matteson had 44 percent, Sampson was down to 38 percent, and Trumbull was at just 9 percent. But hours later, Trumbull won the election with 51 percent, narrowly edging out Matteson's 47 percent.

Why did Sampson plummet, and how did Trumbull rise so quickly? The sudden reversal of their positions was due to a choice made by Sampson, who seemed plagued by pathological giving. When Matteson entered the race, Sampson began to doubt his own ability to garner enough support to win. He knew that Trumbull had a small but loyal following who would not give up on him. Most people in Sampson's shoes would have lobbied Trumbull's followers to jump ship. After all, with just 9 percent support, Trumbull was a long shot.

But Sampson's primary concern wasn't getting elected. It was to prevent Matteson from winning. Sampson believed that Matteson was engaging in questionable practices. A year later, he was proven right when Matteson was indicted for fraud.

In addition to harboring suspicions about Matteson, Sampson believed in Trumbull, as they had something in common when it came to the issues. For several years, Sampson had campaigned passionately for a major shift in social and economic policy. He believed it was vital to the future of his state, and in this he and Trumbull were united. So instead of trying to convert Trumbull's loyal followers, Sampson decided to fall on his own sword. He withdrew and asked his supporters to vote for Trumbull. It was enough to propel Trumbull to victory, at Sampson's expense.

That was not the first time Sampson put the interests of others ahead of his own. Before he helped Trumbull win the Senate race, despite earning acclaim for his work as a lawyer, Sampson's success was stifled by a crushing liability. He could not bring himself to defend clients if he felt they were guilty. In one case, during a criminal trial, Sampson leaned over and said to an associate, "This man is guilty; you defend him, I can't." Sampson handed the case over to the associate, walking away from a

sizable fee. These decisions earned him respect, but they raised questions about whether he was tenacious enough to make tough political decisions.

Sampson “comes very near being a perfect man,” said one of his political rivals. “He lacks but one thing.” The rival explained that Sampson was unfit to be trusted with power, because his judgment was too easily clouded by concern for others. In politics, operating like a giver put Sampson at a disadvantage. His reluctance to put himself first cost him the Senate election, and left onlookers wondering whether he was strong enough for the unforgiving world of politics. Trumbull was a fierce debater; Sampson was a pushover. After the election, a local reporter wrote that in comparison with Sampson, Trumbull was “a man of more real talent and power.”

But Sampson wasn’t ready to step aside forever. Four years after helping Lyman Trumbull win the seat, Sampson ran for the Senate again. He lost again. But in the weeks leading up to the vote, one of the most outspoken supporters of Sampson’s was none other than Lyman Trumbull. Sampson’s sacrifice had earned goodwill, and Trumbull was not the only adversary who became an advocate in response to Sampson’s giving. In the first Senate race, when Sampson had 47 percent of the vote and seemed to be on the brink of victory, a Chicago lawyer and politician named Norman Judd led a strong 5 percent who would not waver in their loyalty to Trumbull. During Sampson’s second Senate bid, Judd became a strong supporter.

Two years later, after two failed Senate races, Sampson finally won his first election at the national level. According to one commentator, Judd never forgot Sampson’s “generous behavior” and did “more than anyone else” to secure Sampson’s nomination.

In 1999, C-SPAN, the cable TV network that covers politics, polled more than a thousand knowledgeable viewers. They rated the effectiveness of Sampson and three dozen other politicians who vied for similar offices. Sampson came out at the very top of the poll, receiving the highest evaluations. Despite his losses, he was more popular than any other politician on the list. You see, Sampson’s Ghost was a pen name that the hick used in letters.

His real name was Abraham Lincoln.

In the 1830s, Lincoln was striving to be the DeWitt Clinton of Illinois, referencing a U.S. senator and New York governor who spearheaded the

construction of the Erie Canal. When Lincoln withdrew from his first Senate race to help Lyman Trumbull win the seat, they shared a commitment to abolishing slavery. From emancipating slaves, to sacrificing his own political opportunities for the cause, to refusing to defend clients who appeared to be guilty, Lincoln consistently acted for the greater good. When experts in history, political science, and psychology rated the presidents, they identified Lincoln as a clear giver. “Even if it was inconvenient, Lincoln went out of his way to help others,” wrote two experts, demonstrating “obvious concern for the well-being of individual citizens.” It is noteworthy that Lincoln is seen as one of the least self-centered, egotistical, boastful presidents ever. In independent ratings of presidential biographies, Lincoln scored in the top three—along with Washington and Fillmore—in giving credit to others and acting in the best interests of others. In the words of a military general who worked with Lincoln, “he seemed to possess more of the elements of greatness, combined with goodness, than any other.”

In the Oval Office, Lincoln was determined to put the good of the nation above his own ego. When he won the presidency in 1860, he invited the three candidates whom he defeated for the Republican nomination to become his secretary of state, secretary of the treasury, and attorney general. In *Team of Rivals*, the historian Doris Kearns Goodwin documents how unusual Lincoln’s cabinet was. “Every member of the administration was better known, better educated, and more experienced in public life than Lincoln. Their presence in the cabinet might have threatened to eclipse the obscure prairie lawyer.”

In Lincoln’s position, a taker might have preferred to protect his ego and power by inviting “yes men” to join him. A matcher might have offered appointments to allies who had supported him. Yet Lincoln invited his bitter competitors instead. “We needed the strongest men of the party in the Cabinet,” Lincoln told an incredulous reporter. “I had no right to deprive the country of their services.” Some of these rivals despised Lincoln, and others viewed him as incompetent, but he managed to win them all over. According to Kearns Goodwin, Lincoln’s “success in dealing with the strong egos of the men in his cabinet suggests that in the hands of a truly great politician the qualities we generally associate with decency and

morality—kindness, sensitivity, compassion, honesty, and empathy—can also be impressive political resources.”

If politics can be fertile ground for givers, it's possible that givers can succeed in any job. Whether giving is effective, though, depends on the particular kind of exchange in which it's employed. This is one important feature of giving to keep in mind as we move through the ideas in this book: on any particular morning, giving may well be incompatible with success. In purely zero-sum situations and win-lose interactions, giving rarely pays off. This is a lesson that Abraham Lincoln learned each time he chose to give to others at his own expense. “If I have one vice,” Lincoln said, “and I can call it nothing else—it is not to be able to say no!”

But most of life isn't zero-sum, and on balance, people who choose giving as their primary reciprocity style end up reaping rewards. For Lincoln, like David Hornik, seemingly self-sacrificing decisions ultimately worked to his advantage. When we initially concluded that Lincoln and Hornik lost, we hadn't stretched the time horizons out far enough. It takes time for givers to build goodwill and trust, but eventually, they establish reputations and relationships that enhance their success. In fact, you'll see that in sales and medical school, the giver advantage grows over time. In the long run, giving can be every bit as powerful as it is dangerous. As Chip Conley, the entrepreneur who founded Joie de Vivre Hotels, explains, “Being a giver is not good for a 100-yard dash, but it's valuable in a marathon.”

In Lincoln's era, the marathon took a long time to run. Without telephones, the Internet, and high-speed transportation, building relationships and reputations was a slow process. “In the old world, you could send a letter, and no one knew,” Conley says. Conley believes that in today's connected world, where relationships and reputations are more visible, givers can accelerate their pace. “You no longer have to choose,” says Bobbi Silten, the former president of Dockers, who now runs global social and environmental responsibility for Gap Inc. “You can be a giver *and* be successful.”

The fact that the long run is getting shorter isn't the only force that makes giving more professionally productive today. We live in an era when massive changes in the structure of work—and the technology that shapes it—have further amplified the advantages of being a giver. Today, more

than half of American and European companies regularly use teams to get work done. We rely on teams to build cars and houses, perform surgeries, fly planes, fight wars, play symphonies, produce news reports, audit companies, and provide consulting services. Teams depend on givers to share information, volunteer for unpopular tasks, and provide help.

When Lincoln invited his rivals to join his cabinet, they had the chance to see firsthand how much he was willing to contribute for the sake of other people and his country. Several years before Lincoln became president, one of his rivals, Edwin Stanton, had rejected him as a cocounsel in a trial, calling him a “gawky, long-armed ape.” Yet after working with Lincoln, Stanton described him as “the most perfect ruler of men the world has ever seen.” As we organize more people into teams, givers have more opportunities to demonstrate their value, as Lincoln did.

Even if you don’t work in a team, odds are that you hold a service job. Most of our grandparents worked in independent jobs producing goods. They didn’t always need to collaborate with other people, so it was fairly inefficient to be a giver. But now, a high percentage of people work in interconnected jobs providing services to others. In the 1980s, the service sector made up about half of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP). By 1995, the service sector was responsible for nearly two thirds of world GDP. Today, more than 80 percent of Americans work in service jobs.

As the service sector continues to expand, more and more people are placing a premium on providers who have established relationships and reputations as givers. Whether your reciprocity style is primarily giver, taker, or matcher, I’m willing to bet that you want your key service providers to be givers. You hope your doctor, lawyer, teacher, dentist, plumber, and real estate agent will focus on contributing value to you, not on claiming value from you. This is why David Hornik has an 89 percent success rate: entrepreneurs know that when he offers to invest in their companies, he has their best interests at heart. Whereas many venture capitalists don’t consider unsolicited pitches, preferring to spend their scarce time on people and ideas that have already shown promise, Hornik responds personally to e-mails from complete strangers. “I’m happy to be as helpful as I can independent of whether I have some economic interest,”

he says. According to Hornik, a successful venture capitalist is “a service provider. Entrepreneurs are not here to serve venture capitalists. We are here to serve entrepreneurs.”

The rise of the service economy sheds light on why givers have the worst grades and the best grades in medical school. In the study of Belgian medical students, the givers earned significantly lower grades in their first year of medical school. The givers were at a disadvantage—and the negative correlation between giver scores and grades was stronger than the effect of smoking on the odds of getting lung cancer.

But that was the only year of medical school in which the givers underperformed. By their second year, the givers had made up the gap: they were now slightly outperforming their peers. By the sixth year, the givers earned substantially higher grades than their peers. A giver style, measured *six years earlier*, was a better predictor of medical school grades than the effect of smoking on lung cancer rates (and the effect of using nicotine patches on quitting smoking). By the seventh year of medical school, when the givers became doctors, they had climbed still further ahead. The effect of giving on final medical school performance was stronger than the smoking effects above; it was even greater than the effect of drinking alcohol on aggressive behavior.

Why did the giver disadvantage become such a strong advantage?

Nothing about the givers changed, but their program did. As students progress through medical school, they move from independent classes into clinical rotations, internships, and patient care. The further they advance, the more their success depends on teamwork and service. Whereas takers sometimes win in independent roles where performance is only about individual results, givers thrive in interdependent roles where collaboration matters. As the structure of class work shifts in medical school, the givers benefit from their natural tendencies to collaborate effectively with other medical professionals and express concern to patients.

This giver advantage in service roles is hardly limited to medicine. To help support her family, Kat Cole started working at age fifteen. She carried two service jobs throughout high school, selling clothes at a mall store and serving food at a restaurant. She continued working as a waitress

through college, and she was always stepping in to help out. When they were short a cook, Cole pitched in. When a manager left, she organized the schedule. Eventually, she was so busy helping her colleagues that she failed her classes and dropped out of college.

Although giving was inefficient in the short run, it proved productive in the long run. At age thirty-two, Cole became the president of a brand called Cinnabon, Inc. Just three years later, in 2013, under her leadership, the brand was worth \$1 billion.

Cole's rise began at age nineteen, when she was tapped to open up her company's first restaurant in Australia. There were other candidates with more education and experience, but Cole was one of the only people who had worked almost every job in the restaurant. "When the cook quit, I learned how to run the kitchen, and when the manager quit, I learned how to run a shift," Cole says.

The time she invested in solving other people's problems ended up being an investment in her own development. Her career skyrocketed from there: after Australia, she opened restaurants in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, and became the head of corporate training. Along with building strong relationships and reputations, Cole's experience reveals that givers gain a learning advantage. Solving other people's problems can expand their own knowledge and skills.

While Cole was in Australia, a bank executive named Steve Jones wanted to know what made financial advisers successful. His team studied key factors such as financial expertise and effort. But "the single most influential factor," Jones told me, "was whether a financial adviser had the client's best interests at heart, above the company's and even his own. It was one of my three top priorities to get that value instilled, and demonstrate that it's in everybody's best interests to treat clients that way."

One financial adviser who exemplifies this giver style is Peter Audet, a broad-shouldered Aussie who once wore a mullet and has an affinity for Bon Jovi. He began his career as a customer service representative answering phones for a large insurance company. The first year after he was hired, Peter won the Personality of the Year award, beating out hundreds of other employees based on his passion for helping customers, and became

the youngest department supervisor in the whole company. Years later, when Peter joined a group of fifteen executives for a give-and-take exercise, the average executive offered help to three colleagues. Peter offered help to all fifteen of them. He is such a giver that he even tries to help the job applicants he doesn't hire, spending hours making connections for them to find other opportunities.

In 2011, when Peter was working as a financial adviser, he received a call from an Australian client. The client wanted to make changes to a small superannuation fund valued at \$70,000. A staff member was assigned to the client, but looked him up and saw that he was a scrap metal worker. Thinking like a matcher, the staff member declined to make the visit: it was a waste of his time. It certainly wasn't worth Peter's time. He specialized in high net worth clients, whose funds were worth a thousand times more money, and his largest client had more than \$100 million. If you calculated the dollar value of Peter's time, the scrap metal worker's fund was not even worth the amount of time it would take to drive out to his house. "He was the tiniest client, and no one wanted to see him; it was beneath everybody," Peter reflects. "But you can't just ignore someone because you don't think they're important enough."

Peter scheduled an appointment to drive out to see the scrap metal worker and help him with the plan changes. When he pulled up to the house, his jaw dropped. The front door was covered in cobwebs and had not been opened in months. He drove around to the back, where a thirty-four-year-old man opened the door. The living room was full of bugs, and he could see straight through to the roof: the entire ceiling had been ripped out. The client made a feeble gesture to some folding chairs, and Peter began working through the client's plan changes. Feeling sympathy for the client, who seemed like an earnest, hardworking blue-collar man, Peter made a generous offer. "While I'm here, why don't you tell me a bit about yourself and I'll see if there's anything else I can help you with."

The client mentioned a love of cars, and walked him around back to a dingy shed. Peter braced himself for another depressing display of poverty, envisioning a pile of rusted metal. When Peter stepped inside the shed, he gasped. Spread out before him in immaculate condition were a

first-generation Chevy Camaro, built in 1966; two vintage Australian Valiant cars with 1,000-horsepower engines for drag racing; a souped-up coupe utility car; and a Ford coupe from the movie *Mad Max*. The client was not a scrap metal worker; he owned a lucrative scrap metal business. He had just bought the house to fix it up; it was on eleven acres, and it cost \$1.4 million. Peter spent the next year reengineering the client's business, improving his tax position, and helping him renovate the house. "All I did was start out by doing a kindness," Peter notes. "When I got to work the next day, I had to laugh at my colleague who wasn't prepared to give a bit by driving out to visit the client." Peter went on to develop a strong relationship with the client, whose fees multiplied by a factor of a hundred the following year, and expects to continue working with him for decades.

Over the course of his career, giving has enabled Peter Audet to access opportunities that takers and matchers routinely miss, but it has also cost him dearly. As you'll see in chapter 7, he was exploited by two takers who nearly put him out of business. Yet Peter managed to climb from the bottom to the top of the success ladder, becoming one of the more productive financial advisers in Australia. The key, he believes, was learning to harness the benefits of giving while minimizing the costs. As a managing director at Genesys Wealth Advisers, he managed to rescue his firm from the brink of bankruptcy and turn it into an industry leader, and he chalks his success up to being a giver. "There's no doubt that I've succeeded in business because I give to other people. It's my weapon of choice," Peter says. "When I'm head-to-head with another adviser to try and win business, people tell me this is why I win."

Although technological and organizational changes have made giving more advantageous, there's one feature of giving that's more timeless: when we reflect on our guiding principles in life, many of us are intuitively drawn to giving. Over the past three decades, the esteemed psychologist Shalom Schwartz has studied the values and guiding principles that matter to people in different cultures around the world. One of his studies surveyed reasonably representative samples of thousands of adults in Australia, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Malaysia, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. He translated his

survey into a dozen languages, and asked respondents to rate the importance of different values. Here are a few examples:

*List 1*

- Wealth (money, material possessions)
- Power (dominance, control over others)
- Pleasure (enjoying life)
- Winning (doing better than others)

*List 2*

- Helpfulness (working for the well-being of others)
- Responsibility (being dependable)
- Social justice (caring for the disadvantaged)
- Compassion (responding to the needs of others)

Takers favor the values in List 1, whereas givers prioritize the values in List 2. Schwartz wanted to know where most people would endorse giver values. Take a look back at the twelve countries above. Where do the majority of people endorse giver values above taker values?

All of them. In all twelve countries, most people rate giving as their single most important value. They report caring more about giving than about power, achievement, excitement, freedom, tradition, conformity, security, and pleasure. In fact, this was true in more than seventy different countries around the world. Giver values are the number-one guiding principle in life to most people in most countries—from Argentina to Armenia, Belgium to Brazil, and Slovakia to Singapore. In the majority of the world's cultures, including that of the United States, the majority of people endorse giving as their single most important guiding principle.

On some level, this comes as no surprise. As parents, we read our children books like *The Giving Tree* and emphasize the importance of sharing and caring. But we tend to compartmentalize giving, reserving a different set of values for the sphere of work. We may love Shel Silverstein for our kids, but the popularity of books like Robert Greene's *The 48 Laws of Power*—not to mention the fascination of many business gurus with Sun

Tzu's *The Art of War*—suggests that we don't see much room for giver values in our professional lives.

As a result, even people who operate like givers at work are often afraid to admit it. In the summer of 2011, I met a woman named Sherryann Plesse, an executive at a prestigious financial services firm. Plesse was clearly a giver: she spent countless hours mentoring junior colleagues and volunteered to head up a women's leadership initiative and a major charitable fund-raising initiative at her firm. "My default is to give," she says. "I'm not looking for quid pro quo; I'm looking to make a difference and have an impact, and I focus on the people who can benefit from my help the most."

To enrich her business acumen, Plesse left her job for six weeks, enrolling in a leadership program with sixty executives from companies around the world. To identify her strengths, she underwent a comprehensive psychological assessment. Plesse was shocked to learn that her top professional strengths were kindness and compassion. Fearing that the results would jeopardize her reputation as a tough and successful leader, Plesse decided not to tell anyone. "I didn't want to sound like a flake. I was afraid people would perceive me differently, perhaps as a less serious executive," Plesse confided. "I was conditioned to leave my human feelings at the door, and win. I want my primary skills to be seen as hardworking and results-oriented, not kindness and compassion. In business, sometimes you have to wear different masks."

The fear of being judged as weak or naïve prevents many people from operating like givers at work. Many people who hold giver values in life choose matching as their primary reciprocity style at work, seeking an even balance of give and take. In one study, people completed a survey about whether their default approach to work relationships was to give, take, or match. Only 8 percent described themselves as givers; the other 92 percent were not willing to contribute more than they received at work. In another study, I found that in the office, more than three times as many people prefer to be matchers than givers.

People who prefer to give or match often feel pressured to lean in the taker direction when they perceive a workplace as zero-sum. Whether it's a company with forced ranking systems, a group of firms vying to win the

same clients, or a school with required grading curves and more demand than supply for desirable jobs, it's only natural to assume that peers will lean more toward taking than giving. "When they anticipate self-interested behavior from others," explains the Stanford psychologist Dale Miller, people fear that they'll be exploited if they operate like givers, so they conclude that "pursuing a competitive orientation is the rational and appropriate thing to do." There's even evidence that just putting on a business suit and analyzing a Harvard Business School case is enough to significantly reduce the attention that people pay to relationships and the interests of others. The fear of exploitation by takers is so pervasive, writes the Cornell economist Robert Frank, that "by encouraging us to expect the worst in others it brings out the worst in us: dreading the role of the chump, we are often loath to heed our nobler instincts."

Giving is especially risky when dealing with takers, and David Hornik believes that many of the world's most successful venture capitalists operate like takers—they insist on disproportionately large shares of entrepreneurs' start-ups and claim undue credit when their investments prove successful. Hornik is determined to change these norms. When a financial planner asked him what he wanted to achieve in life, Hornik said that "above all, I want to demonstrate that success doesn't have to come at someone else's expense."

In an attempt to prove it, Hornik has broken two of the most sacred rules in the venture business. In 2004, he became the first venture capitalist to start a blog. Venture capital was a black box, so Hornik invited entrepreneurs inside. He began to share information openly online, helping entrepreneurs to improve their pitches by gaining a deeper understanding of how venture capitalists think. Hornik's partners, and his firm's general counsel, discouraged him from doing it. Why would he want to give away trade secrets? If other investors read his blog, they could steal ideas without sharing any in return. "The idea of a venture capitalist talking about what he was doing was considered insane," Hornik reflects. "But I really wanted to engage in a conversation with a broad set of entrepreneurs, and be helpful to them." His critics were right: "Lots of venture capitalists ended up reading it. When I talked about specific companies I was excited about,

getting deals became more competitive.” But that was a price that Hornik was willing to pay. “My focus was entirely on creating value for entrepreneurs,” he says, and he has maintained the blog for the past eight years.

Hornik’s second unconventional move was ignited by his frustration with dull speakers at conferences. Back in college, he had teamed up with a professor to run a speakers’ bureau so he could invite interesting people to campus. The lineup included the inventor of the game *Dungeons & Dragons*, the world yo-yo champion, and the animator who created the *Wile E. Coyote* and *Road Runner* cartoon characters for Warner Bros. By comparison, speakers at venture capital and technology conferences weren’t measuring up. “I discovered that I stopped going in to hear the speakers, and I would spend all my time chatting with people in the lobby about what they’re working on. The real value of these events was the conversations and relationships that were created between people. What if a conference was about conversations and relationships, not content?”

In 2007, Hornik planned his first annual conference. It was called *The Lobby*, and the goal was to bring entrepreneurs together to share ideas about new media. Hornik was putting about \$400,000 on the line, and people tried to talk him out of it. “You could destroy your firm’s reputation,” they warned, hinting that if the conference failed, Hornik’s own career might be ruined. But he pressed forward, and when it was time to send out invitations, Hornik did the unthinkable. He invited venture capitalists at rival firms to attend the conference.

Several colleagues thought he was out of his mind. “Why in the world would you let other venture capitalists come to the conference?” they asked. If Hornik met an entrepreneur with a hot new idea at *The Lobby*, he would have a leg up on landing the investment. Why would he want to give away his advantage and help his competitors find opportunities? Once again, Hornik ignored the naysayers. “I want to create an experience to benefit everyone, not just me.” One of the rival venture capitalists who attended liked the format so much that he created his own *Lobby*-style conference, but he didn’t invite Hornik—or any other venture capitalists. His partners wouldn’t let him. Nevertheless, Hornik kept inviting venture capitalists to *The Lobby*.

David Hornik recognizes the costs of operating like a giver. “Some people think I’m delusional. They believe the way you achieve is by being a taker,” he says. If he were more of a taker, he probably wouldn’t accept unsolicited pitches, respond personally to e-mails, share information with competitors on his blog, or invite his rivals to benefit from The Lobby conference. He would protect his time, guard his knowledge, and leverage his connections more carefully. And if he were more of a matcher, he would have asked for quid pro quo with the venture capitalist who attended The Lobby but didn’t invite Hornik to his own conference. But Hornik pays more attention to what other people need than to what he gets from them. Hornik has been extremely successful as a venture capitalist while living by his values, and he’s widely respected for his generosity. “It’s a win-win,” Hornik reflects. “I get to create an environment where other people can get deals and build relationships, and I live in the world I want to live in.” His experience reinforces that giving not only is professionally risky; it can also be professionally rewarding.

Understanding what makes giving both powerful and dangerous is the focus of *Give and Take*. The first section unveils the principles of giver success, illuminating how and why givers rise to the top. I’ll show you how successful givers have unique approaches to interactions in four key domains: networking, collaborating, evaluating, and influencing. A close look at networking highlights fresh approaches for developing connections with new contacts and strengthening ties with old contacts. Examining collaboration reveals what it takes to work productively with colleagues and earn their respect. Exploring how we evaluate others offers counterintuitive techniques for judging and developing talent to get the best results out of others. And an analysis of influence sheds light on novel strategies for presenting, selling, persuading, and negotiating, all in the spirit of convincing others to support our ideas and interests. Across these four domains, you’ll see what successful givers do differently—and what takers and matchers can learn from their approach. Along the way, you’ll find out how America’s best networker developed his connections, why the genius behind one of the most successful shows in television history toiled for

years in anonymity, how a basketball executive responsible for some of the worst draft busts in history turned things around, whether a lawyer who stumbles on his words can beat a lawyer who speaks with confidence, and how you can spot a taker just from looking at a Facebook profile.

In the second part of the book, the focus shifts from the benefits of giving to the costs, and how they can be managed. I'll examine how givers protect themselves against burnout and avoid becoming pushovers and doormats. You'll discover how a teacher reduced her burnout by giving more rather than less, how a billionaire made money by giving it away, and the ideal number of hours to volunteer if you want to become happier and live longer. You'll see why giving slowed one consultant's path to partner but accelerated another's, why we misjudge who's a giver and who's a taker, and how givers protect themselves at the bargaining table. You'll also gain knowledge about how givers avoid the bottom of the success ladder and rise to the top by nudging other people away from taking and toward giving. You'll learn about a ninety-minute activity that unleashes giving in remarkable ways, and you'll figure out why people give things away for free that they could easily sell for a profit on Craigslist, why some radiologists get better but others get worse, why thinking about Superman makes people less likely to volunteer, and why people named Dennis are unusually likely to become dentists.

By the time you finish reading this book, you may be reconsidering some of your fundamental assumptions about success. If you're a self-sacrificing giver, you'll find plenty of insights for ascending from the bottom to the top of the success ladder. If you endorse giver values but act like a matcher at work, you may be pleasantly surprised by the wealth of opportunities to express your values and find meaning in helping others without compromising your own success. Instead of aiming to succeed first and give back later, you might decide that giving first is a promising path to succeeding later. And if you currently lean toward taking, you may just be tempted to shift in the giver direction, seeking to master the skills of this growing breed of people who achieve success by contributing to others.

But if you do it only to succeed, it probably won't work.