



WHY IT MATTERS

GENEROSITY TRANSFORMS OUR CULTURE

From a young age we're taught that selfishness succeeds—that those who place their own interests first come out ahead. We interpret "survival of the fittest" to mean survival of the ruthless, survival of those who run over others. Nice guys finish last. Or so we hear.

We don't imagine the fittest as the most generous, altruistic, and cooperative. Yet that is the untold story. Generosity enables groups to prosper beyond what's possible when each member acts only from self-interest. That's why we see it in everything from viruses to insects and animals. Researchers have gone so far as to say, "No selfish strategies will succeed in evolution. The only ones that are evolutionarily robust are generous ones."¹

Most organizations begin their journey into philanthropy wanting to attract the generosity of donors. But along the way they discover an even greater power—the power of a culture where people go above and beyond for each other. Generosity as culture, as a way of being in the world, is the ultimate advantage. It can do things money alone cannot.



GENEROSITY HEALS



Physicians in Grand Junction, Colorado, decided to average Medicaid and commercial payment so all of them would collectively carry the load of the lower-paying population. They also decided it wasn't in the community's interest to compete with the hospital. And they determined to collaborate more closely clinically for the benefit of patients. As a result of these generosity covenants, medical costs are a third of what they are in the most expensive communities.²

Many times each day we make decisions about whether to share our power, knowledge, connections, and resources. Some people consistently put their own interests ahead of other's needs and view the world as a competitive, dog-eat-dog place. They're **takers**. Others look first at what people need from them and contribute without keeping score. They're **givers**. In between these two are **matchers** who seek reciprocity, trade value, and believe in tit-for-tat.

Adam Grant, professor at The Wharton School, has analyzed the way these three styles influence success and prosperity. Nearly 40 studies show how generosity leads to business profitability, efficiency, satisfaction, lower cost, and turnover. Generosity isn't something that happens after we're prosperous—it's intrinsic to how we become prosperous.³

So we don't just want others to be generous toward us. We want to be generous ourselves. And we want as much emphasis on engaging people inside the organization to go above and beyond for each other as we have on engaging people outside the organization to go above and beyond for us.

Generosity matters because it advances our relationships and ability to pull together around difficult strategies without fracturing. It can resolve the most difficult dilemmas, drive the most potent transformations, and open the most unusual futures.

¹ Unger Baillie, Katherine. "Penn Biologists Show that Generosity Leads to Evolutionary Success," September 3, 2013.

² Mesa County received widespread attention with the publication of Atul Gawande's article *The Cost Conundrum* in the New Yorker, June 1, 2009. Michael Pramenko, M.D., described the generosity culture at the 2010 Kaiser Institute Program in Philanthropy.

³ Adam Grant, *Give and Take: A Revolutionary New Approach to Success*, Viking, 2013. See also Arthur Brooks, "Does Giving Make Us Prosperous?" *Journal of Economics and Finance* 31: 403-411.