

# Bounce<sup>TM</sup> Forward

The ASK



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## **A Word from the Author**

This book has been in the making for many years. Through the years, I have discovered that life throws us curveballs and challenges to help us grow, to test us, to make sure we are on track with our purpose, and to ensure we learn our lessons.

While I have learned many lessons in life about resilience, my first memorable work-related lesson was when I worked in the correctional system...my first “real job”.

It was the first of several riots that I had to respond to and intervene that I learned about the importance of resilience and moving forward after life’s crises. In short order I also learned the importance of having a healthy team, effective communication and a culture that supported the team to learn and grow. These incidents also taught me about the importance of trusting myself, and my skills, and reaching out for assistance and mentoring.

It is my belief that all challenges are accompanied by a gift. The gift in this situation was that I strengthened my confidence, and I learned how to remove the “drama” from the situation. Most importantly, my eyes were opened to the importance of resilience.

As my career progressed, I quickly became aware of how many inmates, clients and colleagues were “stuck”; stuck in the past, stuck in a relationship that had ended years ago, stuck in fear, stuck in a conflict that had long since ended, and so the list went on.

I am grateful to have met these people. Each situation highlighted how difficult the process of letting go and recovering from life’s challenges, trauma, loss, change and adversity really is. For many years I wondered why some people seem to recover and bounce back, and some remain stuck. What is the difference between the people or the situation, I wondered? Eventually the answer came to me, but it was many years later, on an August day as I swam for my life.

Christopher, my now husband and I were in a sailing accident, and as we swam to make it safely back to shore, I discovered the difference between bouncing back and moving forward. It is in our mindset and in our resilience factor.

The discovery changed my life for the better, and it changed it forever.

## *Acknowledgements*

To my husband Christopher, my best friend, my grounding force and my quiet champion, in business and in life. One of my greatest gifts is not only to spend my life with you, but to work alongside you in our business.

Mom and Dad, for always championing my dreams and believing I could do and be whatever I want. Thank-you for providing me with so many moments to grow, to learn, and to experience life. Most importantly, thank-you for raising me to be resilient.

Adele and Melanie...we are not only sisters, we are friends. Thank-you for always being there when I least know I need you.

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My mentors have played a profound role in my life. Jack Canfield, thank-you for your support, encouragement and belief in my goals. Janet Attwood, you reminded me to be true to my passion. To my coach Gary Reid, thank-you for keeping me on track in my personal and professional growth.

Justin Hines, your music was always playing as I wrote, inspiring me to get the words out of my head and onto the paper.

And of course my precious Toby, my four legged friend. Your story inspired me to write my first book, and one year later, I am on my fourth book.

To my friends, family and colleagues, I am blessed to have such incredible friendships and support. I have learned something valuable from each of you!

To my clients who have allowed me to be a part of their world.

## *The ASK that Makes a Difference.*

If I were to reflect upon the many teams I have worked with or on, there is one struggle that I frequently observed. That would be what I call: *Making The ASK!*

In every career path that I chose, I found one common challenge (that I suffered from, too), and that was ASKing others for what I needed (resources, time, advice, help, etc.). For some, the concept of ASKing is so foreign, it would be difficult to create a list of “things” you could ask for. Here is an example of some of the many needs one could ask to be fulfilled.

- new clients
- permission

- closing the deal
- training to help you improve your skills
- forgiveness
- resources you need to do your job
- feedback
- support or assistance
- ask similar businesses to help you and be a business mentor
- promotion you want
- a raise
- change in schedule
- clarity about what management expects from you

This list could go on and on because there is so much that you could ASK for. ASKing can help you achieve what you need; being able to ASK can also help you serve others. And, in order to serve more people, you need to be able to ask. To be influential, you need to be able to ASK. When you learn to ASK and have confidence in doing so, you will discover that you grow, and the team will grow.

*If You Don't ASK, the Answer is Always NO*



Making an ASK (defined as a request) may not change your team, business, or life exponentially, but not ASKing will ensure the status quo remains. Making a request or an ASK can have a significant difference in the quality of your business, team, or life and help you quickly achieve what you need.

Take Mike's situation. He is the leader of a pretty effective team. This team has energy, passion and is meeting deadlines at warp speed. However, this team tends to work in isolation from one another. When they have sat back and pinpointed where the pinch points are, many have led back to not ASKing (for help, clarification, feedback, time and resources). What has been preventing the team members ASKing for help? The first response was, "We didn't know that we could (ask for help)." The pace of the work and the environment they worked in didn't really model asking one another for assistance. Their leader Mike rarely ASKed for help, so some felt that there was an unwritten rule about ASKing, and avoided it.

The second reason the ASK was avoided stemmed from a fear of what others would think.

The third was the fear of being perceived as incapable, unable to do the job, or weak. Fear and not knowing were at the root of their inability to ASK. This was a high performing team; imagine the results if they stepped out of their comfort zone to ASK...their results would be incredible!

Creating an ASK environment and giving yourself and others permission to ASK is an important step in creating the space for team members (and leaders) to step out of their comfort zone. The environment must be safe to ASK.

Jane worked for an educational institution that placed high value on innovation, engagement and learning - not just for students, but also for staff. This environment seemed to invite employees to ASK. Sam had the opposite experience. He worked for a paramilitary organization that had a long way to go in creating an ASK environment. As a new employee, he recalled having lots to learn. His first few requests for mentoring and guidance were met with a white binder being placed in his hands accompanied by, "It's in the manual. Read it!" Sam avoided ASKing for help for a long time.

Let's be real for a moment. Doing an ASK in no way guarantees that your request will be met. However, one thing's for certain. Not asking ensures that your request will not be met. As a professional in the business of helping individuals and teams exceed their potential and meet their needs, I am constantly reminded of how few people ask for what they need. And I am more surprised at how people sabotage the ASK the moment the words leave their mouth, or ask in a way that diminishes the importance of their request.

Let's talk about Sally, a long term employee in public service who has held the same position for

many years. Although she wanted to move up the corporate ladder, she shared that she was now just “putting in time”. I was curious to what happened to her goal. Sally responded with a simple statement: “I never got a promotion!”

Hesitant to ASK what was in my mind, I bit the bullet. “Did your supervisor know that you wanted to be promoted, to move up the corporate ladder?”

Sally looked at me as if I had three heads. She sighed and said, “Why should I have to tell her? She should know. I was here so long I was becoming part of the woodwork.”

Sally expected her supervisor to be a mind-reader. How sad! Sally had missed these opportunities and was now miserable at work. The more I spoke to Sally, the more I learned that this pattern was prevalent in her life. She expected her spouse to “just know” what she needed or felt, and was constantly disappointed when her expectations were not met. Sally had become bitter and blamed the company and her supervisor for not promoting her, but took no responsibility for changing her situation, or for letting her employer know her needs and goals. In fact, she didn’t even mention her goals during her performance reviews. It was almost as though she “tested” her supervisor to see if she could figure it out. How different Sally’s life and business may have been if she had dabbled her foot over that discomfort line in the sand, and let

people know her goals and ASKed for opportunities to grow with the organization.

Bob had a similar attitude and belief system as Sally. He identified enough “problems” to fill a sheet of flip chart paper during a facilitated brainstorming session on how to build a healthier work culture. Bob’s common response to many questions was, “Same s---, different day.” I watched the energy drain from his colleagues’ faces every time he made that statement, but Bob was completely unaware of the impact his words had on those around him. He looked at problems, not possibilities. He was so caught up in what was wrong, broken or not working to consider what it could be like. Bob’s way of being prevented people from ASKing him, too.

#### *Fear and Feelings Cloud The ASK*

There are many reasons that people avoid The ASK, however, the reasons I most commonly see are:

- fear of being told “no”
- fear of feeling embarrassed
- not wanting to feel that you owe someone
- worried about what other(s) will think

- past negative experiences with ASKing
- don't want to be selfish
- don't know how to do the ASK

It can be very helpful to think about your own comfort level with ASKing, and then reflect on your team environment and organizational culture with respect to the ASK. Look at what gets in the way of you ASKing.

For an ASK to be effective, especially in the eyes of the person you are asking, it must be stated confidently, and include the “what” (specifics about what you are asking for) and the “when” (a specific time frame).

There are many reasons why ASKs may not yield positive results. Here are a few:

- ***Asking the Wrong Person:*** Often people approach the individual they are most comfortable with. However, this person may not have the ability to approve what you are requesting. You will be better served to go to the person who has the authority or ability to give approval on what you need.

- ***Giving up Too Soon:*** Sometimes people give up in the middle of the ASK based on the other person's facial expressions or verbal response to the ASK. An assumption is made about what these reactions mean and then the person ASKing shuts down. Or, at the first sign of "no", the person gives up instead of taking a different approach.
- ***Ask with Disbelief and no Conviction:*** When you ASK while sounding like even you are not convinced of how important the ASK is, the listener will likely be less interested or even skeptical of helping you.
- ***Too Many ASKs at Once:*** Avoid taking a list of ASKs. You will come across as sounding pushy or greedy (ASKing for too much), and this will never serve you well.

Think back to ASKs that people have made of you. What went into a powerful ASK? What made you feel less inclined to support the ASK? These answers are great clues to making your next ASK be powerful and positive.

*The ASKs That Don't Work*

Obviously there is a bit of a formula or approach to make the ASK more powerful. Let's look at a few examples to critique and learn from.

1. "Would you be able to give me some time this week to talk about how to take my business to the next level?"

Debrief: Let's dissect this ASK. First, "this week" is ambiguous. It is not specifying how much time is being requested, or when during the week. This level of specificity in the request makes it come across as not being as important as it really is. By not specifying how much time is needed or when the meeting will occur leaves a lot of room for unmet expectations and disappointments. If your ASK is not powerful, other people will not feel the urgency, excitement or necessity to help.

**Rework #1:** "Joe, I would like to meet this week for perhaps 20 minutes to get your ideas on how I can take my business to higher levels of success. Your experience and wisdom would be of great value to me. Would you be willing to set a time to meet? What time works best for you?"

Or, (you can write your rework of #1):

Let's create an ASK for Sally...

2. "Mary, one of my career goals is to progress through the corporate ladder. I would like to move to supervisor status in the next two years. Could we set a time to meet in the next two weeks to discuss what competencies I would need so I can begin to learn and develop to take steps towards my goal?"

Debrief: How did this ASK sound?

How could you rework this one?

Now it is your turn. What three ASKs could you do in the next week? Write your ASKs in the space below.



## *How Not To ASK*

Now that we have covered some of what DOES work with the ASK, let's explore what to definitely avoid.

- ***Exaggerating or Understating the ASK:*** If you say "I'll just die if you don't approve my training budget," can result in someone feeling manipulated or trapped into supporting your request. Often when people feel this way, their inclination is to do the opposite, in this case, deny the request.
- ***Over Amplify the Request:*** If you are worried that your request or ASK will be denied, there is a tendency to overstate the request.
- ***Fuzzy ASKs:*** A fuzzy ASK is an unclear ASK that gets fuzzier the more you try and explain it. An ASK should be a sentence or two, not a short chapter.
- ***Greedy ASKS:*** These kinds of ASKs tend to be manipulative. They can occur when the individual feels that you are ASKing from a place of greed, and not respect or appreciation.
- ***Back-Scratching ASKS:*** These ASKs come across as someone owing you something,

and usually do not result in a favourable outcome.

- ***Counting ASKs:*** Sometimes the ASK comes across as if the person is keeping a scorecard. Avoid ASKing in a way that sounds like you are counting the ASKs.

Just like buildings, relationships and teams need a foundation, you also need one in the ASK. The foundations of the ASK are:

1. relationship
2. create value
3. sincerity
4. a give

The Rules to ASK By

Here are a few pointers on creating effective and powerful ASKs. When you cover these specifics in your ASK, it will not only be more powerful, it will help the person become crystal clear on how he or she can help you.

- **Confidence:** ASKing for what you need does require confidence. Be bright and be bold. Believe in yourself, and in your ASK.
- **Courage:** Making an ASK can take you out of your comfort zone. Fill yourself with courage, and preparation, and your ASK will be delivered in a more sincere and respectful manner.
- **What:** Clearly state what it is you are ASKing for. People are not mind-readers. In many cases, people do not know what it is that you need or want.
- **When:** Be specific about the timing, not only when you ASK someone, but also in the timing related to the ASK.
- **Permission to ASK:** Give yourself permission to do the ASK, otherwise your ASK is accompanied by a feeling of a ball and chain or feet dragging.
- **Receiving:** How you receive is critical. Best advice is to be sincere, grateful, and thank the person (even if he/she says no). Be gracious.

## Get Out Of Your Own Way

Often the only thing that stands between you and a powerful ASK is...YOU! In reality, we are all experts at ASKing. We ASK at restaurants as we give the server our order. We ASK at the grocery store, when we cannot find the item we are looking for. Some of us even ASK for directions when we are lost! Think of ASKing as building upon a skill set that you already have and use. This will help you change your mindset and build your skill set.

## Creating the Clear ASK Begins In Your Heart, Then In Your Mind

If you have difficulty knowing what you want to ASK for or how to communicate it, give these steps a try:

1. Get clear on what you need or want, and then formulate your ASK. Before you approach the person, think about it and

ensure the ASK can be said in one clear sentence.

2. Create a positive ASK environment. Prepare before you ASK. Choose the right time, and the right place for the ASK. Create an environment that is conducive to the ASK.

3. Simply and clearly state your ASK. Avoid starting with a lot of disclaimers – they make the other person feel uncomfortable and they begin to doubt where you are going in the conversation.

4. Listen respectfully to the answer. Whether the other person says yes, no, or maybe, listen carefully to what he or she says. Accept the answer (whatever it might be) graciously and respectfully.

And always end with a sincerely expressed Thank-You!

### Do You Receive With Open Or Closed Hands?

Charlie was clearly uncomfortable receiving...asking was not the problem. When

people offered their guidance, help or resources, Charlie would say things like, “No, really I am ok.” Or, “You really didn’t need to do that.” Or, “I don’t deserve your help.” Or, “Oh, you shouldn’t have bought me anything.” These statements demonstrate his discomfort in receiving.

Anna was a skilled receiver, she smiled warmly, and sincerely said thank you.

Too bad I hadn’t met Anna years earlier. I learned a valuable lesson from a client many years ago. I had provided mediation to her family and she wrote a beautiful card to thank me for the difference I made in her family. My response was something to the effect of, “No problem. Really, you and your family did all the work.”

She persisted and went on to thank me more and tell me what differences the process made in her family. I responded with something like, “You know, mediation is so powerful in helping people through conflict.” She just stared at me. Talk about feeling awkward.

Then she said one sentence that has stayed with me for years. “Charmaine, you need to learn how to accept a thank-you!” I realized what I had done in that moment. My own discomfort resulted in me minimizing their experiences and the role that I played in their lives.

Whether my role was part of the job or not was not relevant in this conversation. I did the ASK. "Can we try this again?" Smiling she waited with her hands on her hips. I said "Thank you. It was a privilege for me to work with your family."

For many people, graciously receiving recognition, positive feedback and compliments is difficult and uncomfortable. When someone says, "You look good!" or "You did a fabulous job on that report." or "I appreciate you picking up the slack at the last minute." Simply say, "Thank-you." Don't add "No worry!" or "Just doing my job." or "Really, it wasn't anything!" Simply say, "Thank-you!" The same rule applies when someone offers to pay for lunch. Don't argue over whose paying, and make an awkward moment. Simply say "Thank-you!"

#### Summary:

1. The ASK involves a process of creating a clear and powerful ASK, and also being in service to others.
2. When you ASK, you pave the way for others to do the same.

3. Most people want to be able to support and help others, however, if the ASK is not clear, people are uncertain how they can be of assistance.

Action:

1. Reflect upon what gets in the way of you comfortable ASKing others for what it is you need. Identify strategies to overcome these barriers.
2. Think of several ASKs that you could put into action. Write the ASK, practice the ASK then approach the person with your ASK.
3. Seek out an opportunity whereby you could support someone else or assist them with their ASK.
4. Model ASKing in the workplace, it sets an environment of engagement and support.



So, bouncing forward™ in life is a deliberate commitment followed by a series of conscious actions. Resilience is within each and every one of us, we simply need to remember every day to practice and take action. The more skilled you become at courageous dialogue, conflict management, dealing with stress, and doing the ASK, the easier life will be.

My challenge to you is this. Every day identify one action, a small action that you can take towards bouncing forward™ into resilience. In one year, that is 365 steps! Every step you take makes your team, workplace and the world a better place. And in doing so, remember to Make Your Moments Matter!

After giving great thought to how I wanted to conclude this book, it seemed appropriate that it would be with my most powerful life and business lessons. It is my hope that through my learnings, your team will be more resilient and inspired.

- Get rid of the notion of perfectionism, I strive for excellence. I am not perfect; in fact I now describe myself as a recovering perfectionist. The difficulty with perfection is that you miss opportunities to learn, grow and change.
- Life is too short to be unhappy at work. Focus on all that is good and influence what you can to change what is not. Your work environment will be much more positive.
- When you are working in your passion and purpose, life and work feels less effortless.
- Conflict is neither good nor bad, it simply is. An hour spent today having the courageous dialogue or the conversation that is mostly avoided but most important, will save you hours next week.
- Carefully choose your battles. Once words are spoken, you can never take them back. People remember how your words made them feel, even if they forget everything else.
- Sincerity and authenticity go a long way in building relationships and forgiveness after difficulty.
- Building a resilient and inspired team involves risks. If you never take the risk, you will never

get passed the start line. You and the team will miss opportunities to grow, build, change and connect.

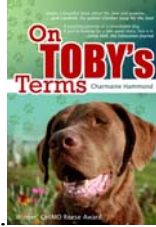
- It is important to learn to be comfortable doing the ASK. If you don't take the risk, and ASK, the answer is always NO.
- We spend a lot of time at work...make the moments matter!

Wishing you well on your daily journey to bounce forward....and do The ASK!

*Charmaine*

To order the complete Bounce Forward book, contact our office [www.hammondgroup.biz](http://www.hammondgroup.biz)

*Other books by Charmaine Hammond*



**On Toby's Terms** (published by Bettie Youngs Books) was released September 27, 2010 and has been signed to become a motion picture.

When Charmaine and her husband adopted Toby, a five-year-old Chesapeake Bay Retriever, they figured he might need some adjusting time, but they certainly didn't count on what he'd do in the meantime.

Soon after he entered their lives and home, Toby proved to be a holy terror that routinely opened and emptied the hall closet, turned on water taps, pulled and ate things from the bookshelves, sat for hours on end in the sink, and spent his days rampaging through the house.

Oddest of all was his penchant for locking himself in the bathroom, and then pushing the lid of the toilet off the tank, smashing it to pieces.

After a particularly disastrous encounter with the knife-block in the kitchen - and when the couple discovered Toby's bloody paw prints on the phone - they decided that Toby needed professional help. Little did they know what they would discover about this dog.



***On Toby's Terms*** is an endearing story of a beguiling creature who teaches his owners that, despite their trying to teach him how to be the dog they want, he is the one to lay out the terms of being the dog he needs to be. This insight would change their lives forever.

*Simply a beautiful book about life, love and purpose. —Jack Canfield, Co-author of Chicken Soup for the Soul*

*A captivating, heartwarming story and we are very excited about bringing it to film. —Steve Hudis, Producer, IMPACT Motion Pictures*

*Toby has been one of my all time favorite interviews, right next to Bob Barker and Gordie Howe! —Mindy Tweedle, Producer / Host*

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To find out more about On Toby's Terms visit [www.ontobysterns.com](http://www.ontobysterns.com) or Charmaine's website at [www.hammondgroup.biz](http://www.hammondgroup.biz)

*More Books by Charmaine*

Charmaine is writing a three part children's series based on the adventures of Toby, published by Bettie Youngs Books.

Charmaine and her colleague Debra Kasowski are co-authoring *GPS Your Best Life*, published by Bettie Youngs Books, scheduled for a 2012 release.

She is also co-authoring *In Other Words* with colleague Michele Luit, scheduled for a 2012 release.

## About the Author



Charmaine Hammond is an international transformational speaker, trainer and facilitator, helping businesses to build inspired and resilient teams.

As the President of Hammond International Inc., Charmaine helps individuals, teams, businesses, government departments, and corporations improve resilience and inspired performance. An expert in team relations, resilience, communication, and conflict resolution, Charmaine helps identify and resolve what gets in the way of success and bouncing forward™!

An interesting career path would be one way of describing Charmaine's background. Her first careers were as a Correctional Officer and Mediator. Following her passion for conflict resolution, Charmaine received a Master's Degree in Conflict Analysis and Management, mediating family, community and corporate disputes. She has owned her business for fourteen years.



In addition to being author of *On Toby's Terms*, she is a contributing author to *Chicken Soup: What I Learned from the Dog* featuring her dog, Toby. Charmaine is conducting book signings throughout the US and Canada.

Charmaine is passionate about paying it forward. She volunteers at a local hospital with her dog, is active with many community projects and enjoys being full-on in service to others.

*To Book Charmaine for Speaking or Training*

Resolving conflicts and building teams behind bars and in boardrooms as a former Correctional Officer and Mediator, Charmaine helps you overcome the three most challenging workplace issues: conflict, communication and team relationships.

Charmaine is a well sought-after speaker, these topics being the most popular:

- The Resilient Team: Igniting Resilience at Work
- Courageous Dialogue
- Teamwork by Design, Not by Default
- Turning Confrontation to Conversation
- Conflict Management for Supervisors/Leaders - Leading Through Conflict
- SUCCESSION Planning
- The ASK that Makes the Difference
- Bounce Forward™ in Business - The Resilient Business

Charmaine also co-presents a PAWsitive series with her dog Toby, the star of her new book, and soon to be made motion picture!



- Toby on a PAWsitive Attitude
- Toby on Working with Passion

- The 4 PAWS Team - Toby Builds Healthy Teams

To book Charmaine to speak or train, contact her office by visiting [www.hammondgroup.biz](http://www.hammondgroup.biz).

Sign up for her FREE e-newsletter! It is full of free information to boost your business and build your team.

### **Listen to Charmaine's Radio Shows:**

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## Notes and Action Plan

