

"Learn how to 'ask outrageously' for what you want—  
and get what you need—with this bold guide to self confidence."

—Daniel H. Pink, author of *Drive* and *To Sell Is Human*

# ASK OUTRAGEOUSLY!

THE SECRET  
TO GETTING WHAT YOU  
REALLY WANT

LINDA BYARS SWINDLING

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## **Praise for *Ask Outrageously!***

"It's only outrageous if you don't ask! The bigger the ask, the bigger the reward. It all starts by digging in and reading *Ask Outrageously!*"

—**Mark Hunter, CSP, "The Sales Hunter," author of *High-Profit Prospecting***

"Linda Swindling's new book is a winner! If you read only one book this year, get it, read it, learn the content, and reap new rewards."

—**Don Hutson, CEO, US Learning, and coauthor of the *New York Times* #1 bestseller *The One Minute Entrepreneur***

"Linda has nailed the way to get better results: ask outrageously up front. Trust me—read the book!"

—**David Horsager, bestselling author and CEO, Trust Edge Leadership Institute**

"Love this book and the premise of 'just ask' and you shall receive. Asking for what you want translates across cultures."

—**Daisy Chin-Lor, President, Tupperware and Nutrimerics Australia and New Zealand**

"Linda understands how to ask—that's why she has my endorsement!"

—**Ed Brodow, author of *Negotiation Boot Camp***

"Wow! Linda's book whacked me between the eyes. I recommend it to all CEOs and C-suite leaders."

—**Stephen Tweed, CEO, Leading Home Care**

"Linda's book covers substantive content that can enable you to do more, be more, and achieve more. Read it to learn. Apply it to succeed."

—**Dr. Nido R. Qubein, President, High Point University**

"To reach your desired pinnacle, it is crucial to ask outrageously."

—**Frances Rios, founder of Latin America's Women Who Lead Summit**

"When you're ready to stop playing it safe, start asking outrageously."

—**Elizabeth McCormick, former US Army Black Hawk Pilot and author of *The PILOT Method* and the *Soar 2 Success Business Series***

"Follow Linda's advice. In one year, her strategies helped one of my companies add \$3 million to the bottom line."

—**David Irons, Senior Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Perfection Learning Corporation**

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"Linda provides the flight plan to ask when it matters most."

—**Howard Putnam, former CEO, Southwest Airlines, and author of *The Winds of Turbulence***

"Linda is a communication ninja and a master requester. Read this book."

—**Kevin Jost, President, J&S Audio Visual**

"Want to level the playing field? Then ask and get your message heard."

—**Kate Delany, NBC syndicated talk show host and sports commentator**

"Everything *is* negotiable. But you have to ask. Linda shows you how."

—**John Patrick Dolan, JD, author of *Negotiate Like the Pros***

"Asking feels so much better than constantly wondering *what if*."

—**Kip Eads, CAE, Vice President, Professional Development, Professional Retail Store Maintenance Association**

"To be financially successful, you have to ask the hard questions. This book helps you peel back the onion to the core issues holding you back."

—**Mitch Kramer, CFP, founder and CEO, Fluent Financial, Inc.**

"People will freely give their wisdom and support, but most of us won't ask. Read this book to squarely place you on your path to success."

—**Joseph Sherren, author and Professor, York University Business School**

"Outrageously good! To stand out, ask outrageously."

—**Connie Podesta, coauthor of *Ten Ways to Stand Out from the Crowd***

"Linda shows you powerful ways to ask for more...and get it!"

—**Roger Dawson, author of *Secrets of Power Negotiating***

"This book is a primer for your personal and professional life. Read it if you want to increase your earnings and make your customers proud."

—**Jim Eckelberger, Rear Admiral, US Navy (Ret.), Chairman of the Board, Southwest Power Pool**

"Ask boldly. Be outrageous; it's the only place that isn't crowded!"™

—**Mikki Williams, Producer, Speakers School, and Master Chair, Vistage**

"Ask outrageously? Yep. Linda is the expert. *Believe me*."

—**Gregg Swindling, Linda's husband of more than twenty-five years**

Ask  
*Outrageously!*

**Other books by Linda Byars Swindling**

*Stop Complainers and Energy Drainers*

*The Manager's High-Performance Handbook*

*The Consultant's Legal Guide* (with Elaine Biech)

*Passports to Success Series*

# Ask *Outrageously!*

The Secret to Getting What  
You Really Want

LINDA BYARS SWINDLING



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.  
*a BK Life book*

## Ask Outrageously!

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Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

1333 Broadway, Suite 1000

Oakland, CA 94612-1921

Tel: (510) 817-2277, Fax: (510) 817-2278

[www.bkconnection.com](http://www.bkconnection.com)

### Ordering information for print editions

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First Edition

Paperback print edition ISBN 978-1-5230-8271-1

PDF e-book ISBN 978-1-5230-8272-8

IDPF e-book ISBN 978-1-5230-8273-5

2017-1

Project management, design, and composition by Steven Hiatt, Hiatt & Dragon, San Francisco.

Copyeditor: Susan Lang. Proofreader: Tom Hassett. Indexer: Theresa Duran.

Cover designer: Susan Malikowski, DesignLeaf Studio.



To my outrageous family and friends, thank you for all you do and who you are. To my clients, to the wonderful professionals who attend my programs, and to those who read the words in this book, be courageous and seek those outrageous outcomes.

You deserve to get what you really want.

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## Introduction

# Ask Outrageously!

### *Can you keep a secret?*

If you don't have what you really want in your life right now, you probably haven't asked or you are settling for less than what is available.

### *Want to know more?*

The number of opportunities you miss concerns me. From my experience and research, I know you overlook possibilities well within your reach. When you make requests, you overprepare and focus on areas that don't get results or a yes. Despite your preparation, experience, and ability, you ignore what matters most.

### *Want proof?*

Examine the recent research. More than a thousand people (1,163 to be accurate) from a wide variety of professions participated in our Ask Outrageously Study. They revealed what prevents them from asking for what they want and the areas in which they weren't effective when asking. Their responses uncovered major flaws in what we request and how we ask. The

data spotlighted big misunderstandings about why people say no. One reason I wanted to write this book was to break these misperceptions and shed light on why your efforts don't work. I also wanted to let you know that you are not alone. According to our study, 80 percent of us say that we could enhance our results by improving how we ask. The remaining 20 percent say that they ask effectively. Many of their responses imply they wonder why the others do not ask when given the opportunity.

*What's the bottom line?*

You stop yourself from making better requests and getting better results. From my experience, backed by our research, I can tell you that you are getting in your own way. Instead, you need to feel the fear—and then ask anyway.

*Be the first to ask.*

Imagine sitting in the studio audience of *The Tonight Show* with then-host Jay Leno. Jay comes out before the taping and asks for questions from the audience. Surprisingly, he picks you to ask him a question first. This happened to me. I had two questions: first, I asked about his job, and then I was going to ask for a picture with him on the stage.

Jay responded to my first question. Before I could ask for my picture, he turned and answered another woman's question. She asked for what I really wanted, a picture with him. As she made her way to the stage, Jay turned back at me. He said, "That's what you wanted to ask for, isn't it? A picture." I nodded and started rising from my chair. He gestured for me to stay seated. Shaking his head, he said words I'll never forget: "Sorry. You didn't *ask*. She did."

Thinking about that day still gives me a sinking feeling. Instead of asking for what I really wanted first, I delayed and put

unnecessary effort into finding out information I didn't need. I'm not alone in failing to ask for what I really wanted. Our study showed that one-third of people wanted to ask for something big but didn't. They waited to ask for a raise, a promotion, moving expenses, and even spending money in college. Later, they saw someone else get what they wanted. Like me, they thought about making that request, but didn't follow through or waited to get more information.

*Do your own asking.*

When our daughter, Taylor, was four, we took her to a school carnival. There she spotted the face-painting booth and told us, "I want my face painted. I want a butterfly." My husband, Gregg, said, "Great. Here's a ticket. Go ask them for what you want. Your mom and I will wait." Taylor had a different idea. She wanted us to ask the booth volunteers for her. After much protesting and pleading on her part, my husband bent down. He looked her straight in the eye and told her, "Mommy and I don't want our faces painted. We don't want a butterfly. You do. If you want *your* face painted, *you* have to ask. We'll be here watching. You will be OK."

Reluctantly, Taylor walked over to the booth. When her face was painted, she skipped back to us. Taylor was happy about her purple and pink butterfly and proud of herself for asking. She spent the rest of the night asking for what she wanted at other booths. Although it would have been easy for us to ask on her behalf, our preschooler learned a valuable lesson that many adults struggle with: *you have to do your own asking.*

Asking is not a task to be delegated or avoided. You can't wait for someone to recognize that you deserve better or to speak for you. When I practiced law, I strongly negotiated and made requests for others. Rarely, though, did I ask for what I needed

or really wanted. Although I acted in the best interests of my clients, my attempts to avoid looking greedy or self-absorbed were not in *my* best interest. Honestly, people would have been delighted to help me if I had asked. My clients received great results. However, my failure to ask blocked me from possibilities that were appropriate and attainable for me.

*Ask outside your comfort zone.*

My first months in law school were miserable. Those days, I questioned my intelligence and decision to attend. Worse, I sat in classrooms with other students who appeared to understand the lectures. Many of my peers would nod intelligently. A few offered comments to show their grasp of the material.

My classroom strategy was different from that of those confident legal scholars. My plan was to hide my ignorance, avoid drawing attention to myself, and hope the professors didn't call on me to answer questions.

There was additional pressure to stay silent. Some of my peers reacted negatively to a student brave enough to ask "stupid" questions. This elite group would smirk. They rolled their eyes and shook their heads at the student's ignorance. The condescending looks created a chilling effect. Each day, I was afraid of professional embarrassment *before* I was a legal professional. So I hid, took copious notes, and prayed for enlightenment that never came.

One day in my contracts class I felt particularly frustrated and confused. After an internal debate, I decided it would be more expensive and embarrassing to fail law school than to ask a question. Timidly, I raised my hand and asked our professor about the concept of "promissory estoppel."

Guess what? He was happy to answer. He said it was "a fairly common question." With his explanation, the concept wasn't

confusing at all. After a month of sitting silently, avoiding eye contact, and feeling intimidated, asking a question finally helped me grasp a legal concept. Understanding was a tremendous relief. The results of stretching outside my comfort zone outweighed the embarrassment. A few professors became mentors once they saw I was interested in understanding the law. Surprisingly, I formed friendships with other confused classmates and several upper-level students. As an added benefit, I found that upper-classmen can tell you about professors and share notes from their first year.

Yes, comments and jokes were made regarding my “stupid” questions and lack of intelligence. Know what? None of those snickering students had the power to give me a grade, grant me an internship, or pay my bills. Once unleashed, I began asking all the time. Outrageously, I asked two famous authors to attend receptions at our law school and *speak for free* when they came to our university. Guess what? Both feminist Gloria Steinem and Sarah Weddington, a former member of the Texas House of Representatives, agreed to my request. Asking questions and being vulnerable helped me make better grades, rank higher in my class, and land a job when I completed law school.

How does a preschooler’s reluctance to approach a carnival booth or a law student’s fear of asking questions relate to you? Turns out the answer is plenty. Asking outrageously feels intimidating and uncomfortable to the person making the request. Many of us stop ourselves before asking because the request doesn’t feel safe. We are concerned about what others think of us or how prepared we are.

*You don’t know what you don’t know.*

Elaine Morris, the business coach I hired to help me grow my law practice, asked me a question years ago. “We’ve doubled your



revenue. You spend more time with your family, yet you still don't seem happy. If you could do more of anything, without worrying about money, what would it be?" I answered that I loved presenting at conferences and the training I did for free. She replied, "You know, people get paid good money for that, right?" No, I didn't. I thought only teachers and professors were paid to teach. I figured the rest of the experts spoke for free to get more clients. Elaine sent me to the National Speakers Association. There, I met several professionals who had transitioned from other areas of business including law and now made a living by presenting, writing, and speaking.

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### **How can you know someone's answer to a question you haven't asked?**

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*Don't assume you know their answer.*

Years ago, I called a publisher to complain about a leadership program. I was transferred several times and finally was forwarded to "a leader who would be able to help fix my issue." After resolving the issue, he asked why a lawyer was interested in a leadership and communication program. During our conversation, we discussed my transition from practicing law to creating executive development programs. Before we hung up, I "outrageously" asked if he ever needed new authors.

Let's be clear. The request wasn't inappropriate or rude. However, it was outrageous *for me* because it was outside my concept of the norm. Asking the editor of a publishing house is not the traditional way books are submitted for consideration. I *know* you're *not supposed* to call up an editor and propose a book. There is a format to submit a proposal. And yet I asked even though I knew better.

Your comfort zone does not define how someone will respond to your request. My request was simply another question to the editor. Yet this outrageous ask gave me an outrageous outcome. This one request led to a published book and then several others. That conversation and the relationships that resulted from that one request became key to launching an executive development company and my professional speaking career twenty years ago. Imagine the power you could have if you felt the fear and asked anyway, without worrying or questioning yourself.

*Be courageous.*

The fearless have no problem asking. Our son, Parker, has always been a master at making requests. Once, while waiting at a restaurant, we turned around to find him missing. A few frantic minutes later, we saw him sitting in the restaurant eating pizza with a family who had a boy his age. When we went to reclaim our son, we asked how the two boys knew each other. School? Church? Scouts? “Nope.” The mom laughed. “We just met Parker. He asked if he could join us and told us he was hungry.”

As an adult and accountant-to-be, Parker continues his fearless requests. He asked his wife, Victoria, to marry him at a concert. More precisely, he asked her in the middle of the concert ... by singing a solo to her ... from the stage ... in front of a packed auditorium, including several of his friends and a live-streamed audience. There’s more to his outrageous request. A few days prior to the event, he asked the conductor and the band if he could interrupt *their* concert and propose by singing *his* favorite song. Oh, and could they learn the music to accompany him? Thankfully, the outcome was good. The band agreed. And she said yes.

Do you know people who ask all the time, without hesitation? Watch them. They may be young children who wear you

down with their questions until you say yes. Maybe they are friends, a significant other, or a salesperson. Perhaps they run their own businesses, are decision makers in associations, work as service providers, or request funds on behalf of non-profit organizations. *They regularly ask outside most people's comfort zone, and they often get what they want.*

### *Remember to ask.*

Conducting the research for this book required an outrageous ask from me. It was ten days before the meeting with the publisher and two weeks before my TEDxSMU talk on this topic. During both presentations, I was presenting the final findings of our Ask Outrageously Study. The problem was that we hadn't reached our goal of 800 research responses. After three months, 562 participants had given us great suggestions, but that total fell short of the sampling size I wanted. Unlike the past two studies for books I had written, this survey was not gaining ground and time was running out.

Finally, I posted my issue in a social media group. Putting all pride aside, I asked my female speaking colleagues what actions they would take to hit the 800 goal. And I confessed I had only a short time frame. Can you guess what question they asked me?

Yep. They wanted to know, "Have you just asked?" Honestly, my answer was no. Consider the irony for a moment. I was speaking and writing about how to ask outrageously, yet I hadn't asked others for help. My friends told me what I tell others: ask people directly for their help. Don't try to provide information and value first. Lose the fluff. Don't hide the request. *Instead, just ask for what you really want.*

In a matter of minutes, one of my speaking friends had drafted a sample request for me. She told me to tag friends and ask them to tag ten of their friends. Even though I didn't want

to bother people and I felt uncomfortable asking, I took a breath and posted my request. And then I witnessed the power of asking outrageously in action. Within days we hit the 800 mark and then unbelievably 1,000. A week later, we closed down the study with 1,163. My being a little vulnerable and asking more than doubled the results.

For years, I've watched myself, my clients, and people I love fail to ask or settle for less than we wanted. So, I started probing and did the research.

*I wrote this book on how to ask outrageously because:*

- I was curious and furious that the people I care about often go overlooked and unrewarded for their efforts and talents. I wanted to correct misconceptions about why their requests don't get a positive response and to help them focus on what really matters.
- I wanted to acknowledge those who taught me the power of being courageous, outrageous, and stretching outside my comfort zone. I also needed reminding of the power that comes from being vulnerable and asking for help.
- I wished that this book had existed years ago for me to read. Knowing how to request without reservation would have saved me thousands of dollars. The energy I spent could have been used in much more productive ways. Asking outrageously would have helped me avoid years of uncertainty, self-doubt, and the headaches resulting from trial and error.
- I learned through the years that leaders, mentors, and coaches want to help people they lead. They care about people's growth and development and about achieving success. (*Outrageous Request Alert: How much more effective*

could your people be if they understood how to ask? What would be possible if you gave a copy of this book to all those you manage and influence?)

I hope the strategies and insights will shortcut your learning. It's important to know you can dramatically improve your ability to make requests. Also, I know you can influence not only your situation but create opportunities for others in a way only you can.

*Ask Outrageously!*

Linda

## How to Get Outrageous Results from This Book

### **Define “Outrageous”**

According to Merriam-Webster, “outrageous” means “Exceeding the limits of what is usual ... Not conventional or matter-of-fact: fantastic.”

For the purposes of this book, “ask outrageously” is defined as making a request outside *your* comfort zone. There is a difference between outrageous and obnoxious. Nowhere will you see a suggestion to be negative or deceitful, or to take advantage of others. Instead, people who ask outrageously are surprised by the *positive* outcomes and *relationships* that result from requesting more than usual.

### *Where did this idea begin?*

Years ago, a client asked me to work with a group of high-level sales professionals. He was frustrated with several poor performers who argued, made excuses, and refused to ask clients to consider the company’s new product. Fed up, my client and I decided to create an “asking” contest. We added an extra hour to their lunch, split them into small groups, gave each group \$20, and sent them to an upscale mall next to the resort. Their challenge was simple: “Go ask for more and report your results to the group.”

When the teams displayed their results, the difference was shocking. One group opted out and went to a bar. Another

group added \$10 of its own money and took advantage of a cosmetics promotion. One group purchased a buy-one-get-one-free offer for a dinner and increased their amount to \$40. The last two groups returned with items totaling well over \$100. By asking for samples, discounts, and freebies, they creatively out-requested their peers. (Guess which two groups had the better sales professionals and were highly successful with the new product that year.)

The challenge has been refined. Although many of the reported results are small, some are remarkable. Under a short deadline with few guidelines other than “go ask and report your results,” attendees at all levels in a variety of professions achieved outrageous outcomes. For example, they:

- Asked for and were granted raises and promotions.
- Asked and repaired or elevated personal relationships.
- Asked and created a new business or established new lines of business.
- Asked for and received goods and services they could not otherwise afford.
- Asked for and recovered debt or reduced business expenses.
- Asked for and were given real estate property, including a house and a building.

With additional training, tools, and coaching, people continued to ask and received outcomes that surpassed anyone’s expectations. Most of them credited their successes to new insights about communicating powerfully and being challenged to ask outrageously.

### **If You Have No Difficulties Asking, Do You Need This Book?**

You may be among the 20 percent who say that they are already very good at asking and get what they want most of the time.

Perhaps you are thinking something like the following:

- “I already know how to ask for what I want and I usually get it.”
- “Really? People don’t ask for things? What’s their problem?”
- “What’s the bottom line? I have work to get done.”

You know how to identify and approach those with authority. And when it comes to asking, you have no fear. At times, you push the envelope with your requests. You may even treat asking as a challenge or game. You get great results and have a proven track record. If you have no difficulties asking, here are a few reasons to continue reading:

- You lead others. You can’t determine why your people won’t simply ask for a sale, close a deal, ask for a discount, or fix an ongoing problem.
- Someone you care about won’t address a conflict, talk to a leader, ask for a raise, solve an issue, or get what they deserve.
- You received feedback that people don’t always relate to, connect with, or trust you. Perhaps you’ve heard you are too tough on others, or you’ve received feedback about improving collaboration, growing your people, or forming better internal or external relationships.
- Agreements you thought were made and understood aren’t. You can’t let down your guard. You need to monitor details and watch people to make sure they uphold their commitments and promises.
- You know others could be more forthcoming, creative, or helpful. Yet you feel as if you are making all the effort with people who aren’t supportive and don’t care as much as you do.



Lead Others to Ask sections are found at the end of every chapter immediately before the Outrageous Reviews. Leaders may want to see the Outrageous Reviews at the end of each chapter as an executive summary complete with tools to help you implement.

After reading this book, you will be better prepared to determine when and what to ask. You will be exposed to the best ways to request what you want at work and in life with confidence and integrity. This book provides steps to reach breakthrough results and ask for more than you believe possible.

### *What's in the book?*

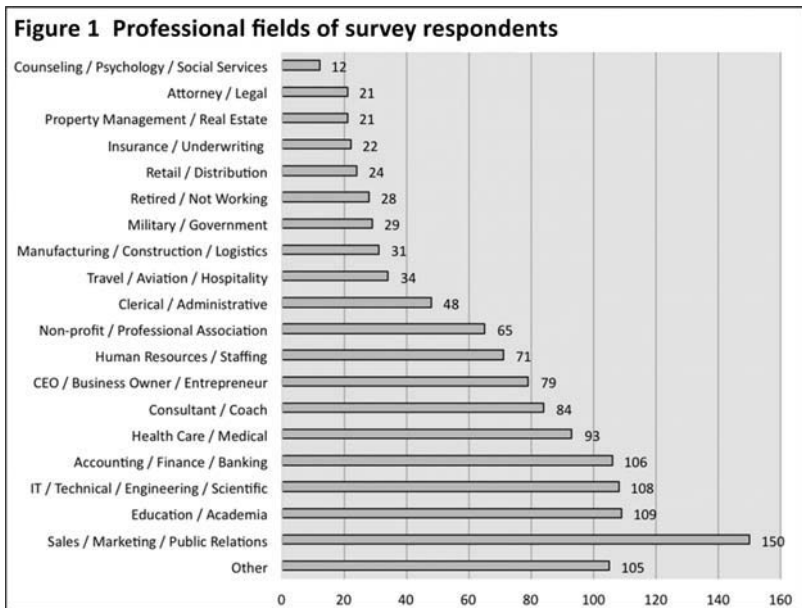
This book provides proven principles and ideas to help you show up powerfully and ask outrageously. These strategies and recommendations are supported by my more than twenty-five years' experience making high-stakes requests and helping people. Included are secrets and insights to help you understand the "why" behind some people's actions.

Each chapter offers engaging questions and actionable tips to help you get started. Instead of theories or philosophical ideas, you'll learn specific techniques and find tools to help you remember what to do under pressure. There are checklists to assist you in preparing and suggested conversations with scripted language to help you ask with confidence and in a way that makes people listen.

**Scenarios.** In the pages that follow, you'll find reports of the asking challenge, client stories, and other short, real-world examples of people who asked for and received more than they thought they deserved. In some cases, the names or details have been changed to protect the innocent (and the guilty), but the facts and outcomes are real and repeatable.

**Ask Outrageously Study.** Throughout this book, you'll see references to a study on how people ask and what holds them back. That study, conducted electronically over a four-month period, was designed to collect information about how people make requests. Respondents were given the option to take the survey anonymously. Their answers were insightful and reflected the difficulty most people have in making requests. Participants reported no significant differences in making personal and professional requests. Many provided encouragement to others to ask more powerfully and to receive better results.

The 1,163 survey participants came from professions within twenty-one occupational categories in a wide variety of industries (see Figure 1). The most common professional fields participating in the research were sales, marketing, and public relations—fields in which practitioners earn a living making requests.



The survey contained a mix of open-ended and multiple choice (single- and multiple-select) questions with an ability to provide optional comments. Survey responses are presented throughout the book in the form of graphs, respondent quotes, descriptions, suggestions, and experiences woven into scenarios. Unless otherwise designated, mentions of research, study findings, and survey participants refer to the Ask Outrageously Study. Full results are available at [AskOutrageously.com](http://AskOutrageously.com).

**Quotes.** Unless otherwise indicated, *italicized text* indicates quotes provided by participants in the Ask Outrageously Study as well as feedback from our program participants, audience members, and clients.

**Outrageous Review.** At the end of each chapter, you'll find an executive summary with highlights of the chapter. You can read the entire book and look at the summaries later as reference. If you prefer, skim through the book using the reviews and explore just the sections that interest you now.



**Smart Asks.** At the end of the chapters you'll find questions to help you ask with more confidence and have fewer regrets.



**Ask List.** Task lists are so last decade. Instead, add these outrageous asks to your to-do list. All of these requests are safe and proven to upgrade your results. When you practice asking outside your comfort zone, you prove to yourself that you can be more successful by asking outrageously. Accept these challenges to become a master of requests.



**Secret Success Tools.** In addition, you have access to supporting resources on the website [AskOutrageously.com](http://AskOutrageously.com). Use these tips, materials, and tools to dramatically improve your requests.



**Lead Others to Ask.** A twist on the often-recommended “Ask to Lead,” this section contains suggestions for developing the people you supervise, mentor, or coach to ask more powerfully. These techniques help you delegate request making. They are designed to address the question “I’m great at making requests. How do I coach *others* to ask and get the results I do?”

**Take the Assessment.** Before reading further, please take the free assessment *How Well Do You Ask?* on page 18. You can also take the assessment online at [AskOutrageously.com](http://AskOutrageously.com). The online version will direct you to additional tools.

If you think you already ask outrageously, the results will either confirm or challenge your perception. Now, are you ready for an outrageous request, or if you prefer, a dare? See if you are as good at asking as you think you are. Take the assessment. The results may surprise you.

Using proven strategies, you can dramatically improve your ability to be heard, to be seriously considered, and to influence powerfully.

Are you ready to be a smart ask and maximize your results? Great! Read on to ask outrageously!

## Assessment: How Well Do You Ask?

For each statement, choose rating that best reflects your current negotiating skill level. If you would rate yourself differently between work and home, select the lower rating. Then add up all the ratings for your total score.

Use this scale for rating:

**1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Usually 5 = Always**

Currently when I ask, I ...	Rating
Boldly request what I really want without fear or hesitation. Nothing stops or blocks me from asking.	
Make requests benefiting me with the same passion and confidence I make requests on behalf of others.	
Know people like and respect me. They trust my motives and know I honor my word. They willingly support our agreement even if I'm not present.	
Ask the right person, in the right way, and easily tailor my approach no matter whom I encounter. I am not intimidated by another's title, role, or experience.	
Know my request is appropriate, even if the request is unpopular, untried, or a new concept. I am certain the person I ask has the ability to approve my requests.	
Remain calm and in control despite others' reactions, negative behavior, or responses including no. I am fully prepared to deal with any tricks or unfair tactics.	
Regularly receive results that exceed what I wanted or thought possible. I am completely satisfied with my outcomes and confident I leave nothing on the table.	

**Total score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**35 = You get what you really want and what everyone else wants too!**

**28–34 = You usually get what you want.**

**21–27 = You sometimes get what you want and sometimes not.**

**13–20 = You want to get a whole lot more.**

**7–13 = You seldom get what you want and wonder why.**

## One

# Proof You Should Ask Outrageously

There is magic in asking. The people with the best results are those who have the courage to feel the fear and ask anyway. They win more by being willing to push the envelope. They learn to ask for a little more and explore possibilities. They become more comfortable with taking risks and even hearing no.

People in history—from politicians to rock stars to Nobel Peace Prize winners—have had great success making outrageous requests. Having the courage to ask creates unbelievable results. A simple request can challenge injustice in the name of human dignity, generate significant medical advancements, create new ways of doing business, and impact communities. Consider these historic requests.

Rosa Parks *asked*, “Why do I have to sit at the back of the bus?” and her request led to changing racial segregation laws to protect the rights of all citizens regardless of race.

Louis Pasteur *asked*, “What causes wine to sour?”—a request that led to the discovery of how to destroy bacteria, which evolved into pasteurization technology to keep food safe.

Mary-Ellis Bunim and Jonathan Murray *asked* MTV, “Can we create an unscripted television show that follows the life of strangers in a house?” The result led to *The Real World* and the genre of reality TV. (Arguably, some results are more notable than others.)

### Outrageous Outcomes

There is a snowball effect when you begin to ask outrageously. What may be a simple request often grows into several requests. Asking can evolve into negotiations involving bigger stakes than you thought possible.

Want a secret only those who make high-stakes requests know? Asking outrageously feels the same, no matter the dollar amount or the consequences. The adrenaline rush, the fear, the excitement, the quickening heartbeat, the change in breathing, and the concentrated attention *feel the same*. And people who ask outrageously receive unbelievable results in all areas of their lives. Often, the most meaningful outcomes are personal ones.

*After years of no communication, I called my son and apologized. I asked if we could start over. He let me speak to my grandson for the first time. My grandson is four years old.*

*I asked my boyfriend when he thought we should get married. He proposed the next week. He had paid for the ring six months ago but didn't think I was ready and was waiting.*

*I asked my parents if I could borrow the money to make a down payment on a house. Instead of loaning it to me, they **gave** me the money. They had wanted to help me but didn't know how. I'd still be living in an apartment if I hadn't asked.*

Other outrageous outcomes begin with requests that are business related:

*I asked my partners if they were willing to expand by opening an office in San Antonio or Austin. They agreed and we opened offices in both cities.*

*After seventeen years of thinking about it, I approached physicians in other medical practices. I asked if they were interested in how we handled our back office and our methods for collecting payments. That request led to an entirely new business, which has generated millions of dollars.*

*In the past, a supplier and I did a lot of business together, but we had a falling out. I went to her booth on the trade show floor and asked if we could put our grievances aside and do business again. We just filled our largest order yet.*

*During a break in the negotiations seminar, I went into the hall and made a call to ask for a reduction in our medical equipment rental fees. We now are paying 30 percent less for the same equipment. I locked down the price for the next three years, and it only took one phone call.*

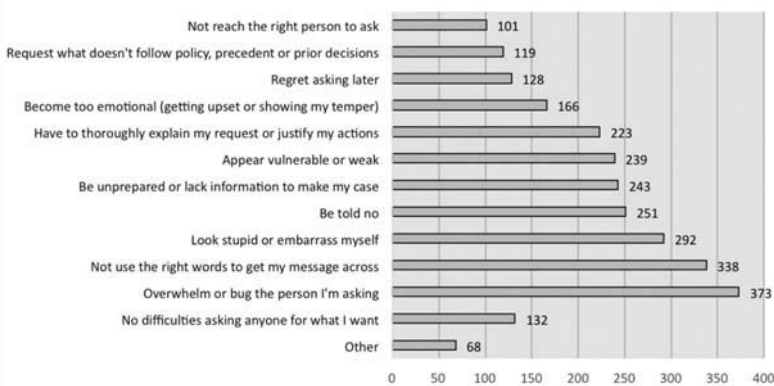
### **What's Difficult about Asking?**

More than 96 percent of those surveyed said they could have improved their results by asking for a little bit more or by taking more of a risk (see Figure 2). Almost a third said they could have increased their results by at least 50 percent. According to the study, the top reasons people hold back or don't ask are:

- *I will frustrate or bug the person I'm asking.*
- *I will use the wrong words.*
- *I will embarrass myself or look stupid.*
- *I will be told no.*

This self-monitoring and reluctance to ask prevents you from receiving results well within your grasp. And “overwhelm or bug



**Figure 2****The most difficult thing about asking others for what I want is that I may ...**

the person I'm asking" ranks as significantly more difficult than "be told no." Seems odd, right? People would rather be told no than feel they are bothering someone to get what they want.

The Ask Outrageously Study reveals people are worried about the wrong things. For instance, people think their requests are denied because:

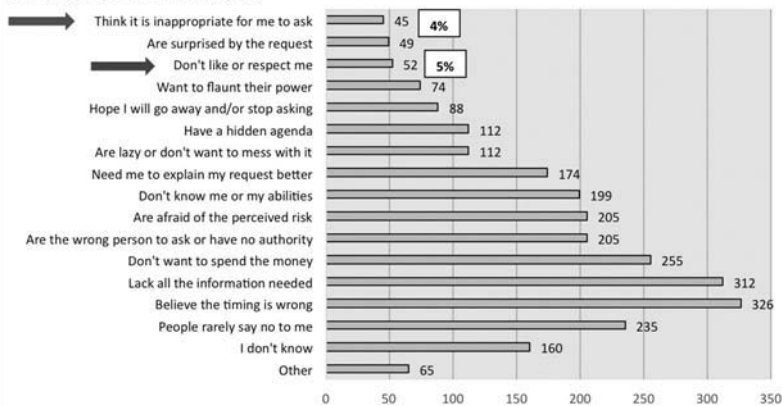
- *The other person lacks all the information needed.*
- *The timing is wrong.*
- *The person I'm asking doesn't want to spend the money.*

Actually, the top two reasons people report saying no when approached are that the person making the request:

- *Is asking for something that is inappropriate.*
- *Is someone I don't like, respect, or trust.*

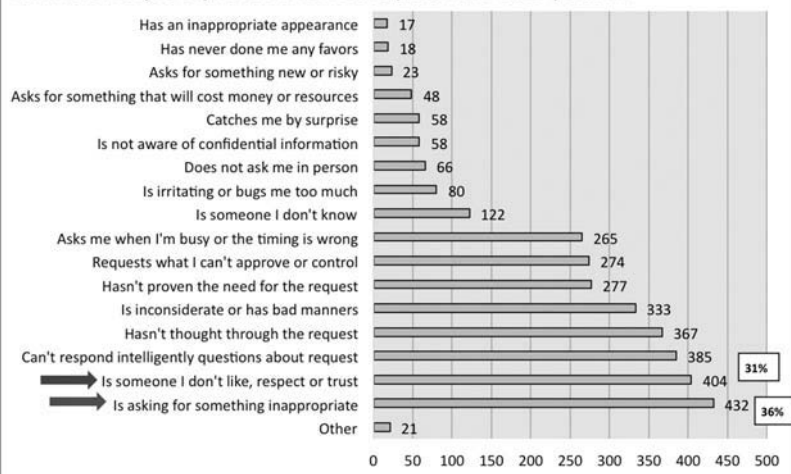
News flash: We are focusing on the wrong things. The research shows that there is no correlation between why people *say* no and why people *think* they are told no. Most people don't know the true reasons that their requests have been denied.

**Figure 3**  
When people say no to what I ask (personally or professionally),  
it is usually because they ...



The primary reason people *say* no is when a person “is asking for something inappropriate” (with 36 percent reporting it as the primary reason). However, when given the opportunity to select “inappropriate” as a reason their requests are denied, only 4 percent of people *thought* it was the answer. (See Figure 4.)

**Figure 4**  
I am more likely to say no to someone's request if the other person...



To further support this disparity, 31 percent of respondents report saying no if they “don’t like, trust, or respect” the person making the request. However, only 5 percent of people *think* that they’re told no because the people they’ve asked “don’t like or respect me.”

The study also showed 79 percent of people feel more confident and prepared when they have all the information needed.

What a tremendous disconnect between perception and reality! What good is preparing with all the information needed when you are asking the wrong person for the wrong thing? How does all that research data help when the person you ask doesn’t like, respect, or trust you?

### ***What are the consequences of not asking?***

Not getting what you want or living with outcomes determined by someone else is draining. Patiently waiting for someone to recognize your talents or give you a break is frustrating for you and those around you. You miss out when you don’t ask. Do any of these situations seem familiar?

- You’ve seen a promotion or your dream job handed to someone without your credentials or experience.
- A coworker is given opportunities to travel or be involved in a project you would love to do.
- You decide a person is too popular or good-looking to date someone like you. And that person ends up dating one of your nerdy friends.
- A friend receives a better hotel room or an upgraded airplane seat. You took what you were assigned.
- Someone else makes a major life decision for you without consulting you.

Not making requests works to your disadvantage in other ways too. When you repeatedly *consider* making a request and fail to ask, you send the message that you are satisfied. You signal that you're not ready to move forward right now. It's like preparing for a journey and stopping just steps away from your destination. Here's what some of the survey respondents said about their reluctance to ask.

*I wish I had the courage, but being told no cripples me.*

*Ninety percent of the time I'd rather go without than to ask for a favor.*

*I was taught to be happy with what I have.*

By not following through with your request, you never know for sure what is possible. And the people with authority to grant or deny your request have no idea of your preparation or desire to have something different. By not asking, you've removed that person's chance to consider your request and give you an answer.

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### **Asking is a brave act.**

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#### ***What if you were brave?***

Asking outrageously requires vulnerability and giving up some control. Sometimes you have to risk looking stupid or hearing the word "no." The best results come from minimizing the unknowns, structuring the elements you can control, and then simply having the courage to make your request.

If you are worn out from thinking about requests you don't make, tired of just accepting what you are given, and ready to improve your results, you might want to try asking for what you really do want.

### If I Were Brave

The lyrics from the song “If I Were Brave” by Jana Stanfield and Jimmy Scott describe the courage it takes to ask outside your comfort zone:

*What if we're all meant to do what we secretly dream?  
What would you ask if you knew you could have anything?...  
If I refuse to listen to the voice of fear  
Would the voice of courage whisper in my ear  
What would I do today if I were brave?*

You can download this song for free at [AskOutrageously.com](http://AskOutrageously.com). (Reproduced by permission of Jana Stanfield and Jimmy Scott.)

### Top Ten Reasons to Ask Outrageously

1. **Shockingly good outcomes.** It's not unusual for people to ask for something they feel is outrageous and then report the person on the receiving end wasn't shocked at all by the request. Often the person asked is delighted to help or wondered why the request wasn't made sooner.
2. **Evidence of passion.** When you clearly show your interest, it is contagious. People will know you are engaged and invested in getting better results. By asking, you indicate that you know what you want, are ready for a change, and want to achieve big goals.
3. **Powerful appearance.** People who make bold requests improve their chances of being heard. By asking powerful questions, you improve your ability to influence and show confidence, no matter what the subject.

4. **Receive an answer.** By asking, you obtain a reply, even if it's "no" or "not yet." With an answer to your request, you can adjust, adapt, and move ahead. You can save time, resources, and mental effort. Most importantly, you stop wondering what could be if only you had the courage to ask.
5. **Build trust.** When you request what you want up front, people stop searching for your hidden agenda. Others want to help you more because they trust you more.
6. **Level the playing field.** Asking questions helps decrease any real or perceived power imbalances. Instead of accepting what is presented, asking questions lets people know you do your homework and are prepared to debate if needed.
7. **Avoid wasting time.** Asking allows you to avoid spending time with the wrong people. You'll quickly determine who can and will assist you in achieving the outcomes you want.
8. **Receive more than requested.** When you find the courage to ask outside your comfort zone, you discover the limitations you imagined aren't always real. Asking allows you to maximize the possibilities and gives you more options.
9. **Feel fantastic.** Perhaps the most remarkable result is how people feel after they ask. When you feel the fear and ask anyway, you gain confidence and a greater sense of worth.
10. **Earn respect.** People enjoy dealing with others who encourage them to think bigger. People with high potential want leadership models who successfully take risks, impact others, make effective decisions, and exceed expectations.

### **Make Asking a Habit**

Condition yourself to ask outside your comfort zone on a regular basis. Start with safe requests. Ask for more in your personal life and watch your results improve in business too. And get comfortable with the word “no.” In fact, if you are not hearing no, you are probably not asking for enough. Keep asking until you get the no.

When you concentrate on making requests as a habit, asking becomes second nature. If you can become more comfortable asking everywhere, you’ll ask when it really counts. In the heat of a big request, you will achieve results others can’t conceive at the time. Stay open to receiving results that surpass your greatest expectations.



### **Lead Others to Ask**

Ask the people you are leading or coaching to take the free assessment “How Well Do You Ask?” (page 18) or online at [AskOutrageously.com](http://AskOutrageously.com). Review the results of their assessment and the Top Ten Reasons to Ask Outrageously (page 26). Ask them, “Where would you like to focus on asking for more?” “What reasons resonated the most with you?” and “What results would be possible if asking became a habit?”

### **Outrageous Review**

- Simple questions in history have led to outrageous outcomes.
- Most people don’t ask. They wish they had the nerve to ask for something big but don’t ask or settle for something safe. They wait too long to ask and watch someone else ask and get what they really wanted. They feel stuck when it is time to move on or advance.

- There is a disconnect between why people think they are told no and why they are actually told no. The success of your request is not just about gathering more information, timing, and funds.
- Your precise word choice, fear of bothering someone, or looking foolish should not be your primary concerns.
- Improve your outcomes by focusing on the real reasons people are told no, which are 1) the request is inappropriate; and 2) the person being asked doesn't like, respect, or trust the person making the request.
- You can increase your wins and improve your results by asking outside your comfort zone. When you concentrate on making requests as a habit, asking becomes second nature.



### Smart Asks

- What would I ask for if I were brave?
- What am I unsatisfied with at work or home?
- When I fail to ask, what message am I sending?
- How can I develop trust and respect from the person I'm asking?



### Ask List

- If you haven't taken the assessment "How Well Do You Ask?" (page 18), please take it now. Then look at the results to determine your current skill level.
- Look through the "Top Ten Reasons to Ask Outrageously" (page 26). Identify the top two reasons that resonate with you.



### Secret Success Tools

Download the song "If I Were Brave" by Jana Stanfield and Jimmy Scott for free at [AskOutrageously.com](http://AskOutrageously.com).



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