

“If You Don’t Ask, You Don’t Get”

Robert Zimmerman, July 2023

What common characteristic does a successful Mass Properties Engineer share with a moderately successful 1970’s rock band? Both have benefited from a philosophy that can be summed up as “If You Don’t Ask, You Don’t Get.” This was a favorite phrase of my father’s, useful in many aspects of his life. He used it to get into college at an early age, he used it when he wanted a more desirable route while flying in the IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) system. He used it to expand his areas of expertise in his chosen field. And he used it when he acquired automobiles, when choosing a life partner, and even in his final days to go the way he wished.

To say that anyone can’t learn from this is to ignore sage advice. The SAWE has taken this philosophy and used it to create a means for transferring knowledge – The SAWE Mentoring Program is in essence a way for our membership to ask for aid in increasing their knowledge and skills. The program went live at the end of May, we have highly experienced members who volunteered their time and expertise as Mentors. Now we are actively seeking not only more Mentors, but members who are seeking to expand their own expertise as Mentees. Even experienced members can find benefit as a Mentee and request a Mentor. Don’t be shy – be Mentee!

I have been both a Mentee and a Mentor. One situation I had that pushed me to seek a Mentor I have already written about (A Mentoring Odyssey first published in issue 77-2 of Weight Engineering – article available at <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/3z1d5szp7724wk8nimdxi/A-Mentoring-Odyssey-extracted.pdf?rlkey=9iaj2qg06l1a8pfpvhj4wcf7j&dl=0>). The mass properties problem I was trying to solve was definitely a case where “If You Don’t Ask, You Don’t Get” in action. I asked, became a Mentee seeking Mentor, and the rest is history.

What about that rock group mentioned above? In 1967, Berkeley dropout Jann Wenner founded a music and counter-culture magazine called Rolling Stone. It quickly became THE magazine for coverage of the music scene and cultural commentary by writers such as Hunter S. Thompson. To be featured on the cover of the magazine was a measure of an artist’s prestige. The very first cover, establishing the magnitude of the featured artist, was John Lennon, then the acknowledged leader of the Beatles. Thereafter, the cover was a tangible indication that an artist had “arrived”. By 1972, a group fronted by one-eyed singer Ray Sawyer had seen modest success, with a Shel Silverstein composed song, Sylvia’s Mother, which hit the Top 5. The group wanted more, and Sawyer and Silverstein hit gold with the next song, a classic case of If You Don’t Ask, You Don’t Get: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuvflePDbgY>. The song parodied the life of a rock band, but it was basically a request to be featured on the cover of Jann Wenner’s magazine. Wenner took notice – it was certainly free advertising for him, and the band was featured on his magazine’s cover in March 1973.

What do you need help with? Contact the SAWE and click the Apply as a Mentee button.