

Elmers Corner: We Need More Elmers and Less "Experts"

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I ran across a post in an eham forum on the topic of Elmers where the person was contrasting Experts and Elmers. It was a well-written piece, and the follow-up comments were sometimes equally interesting. More often than not when a person asks a question in a forum or on a chat board or a mail room, experts jump in and (attempt) to show off their knowledge. Obviously, there are real experts in any field, and their input is always useful because it is more likely to be correct.

But the so-called experts to which I am referring are the people who do not have an encouraging word for anyone, rather they are typically consumed with trivialities which they hope will impress others. They seek attention, and therefore are *selfish* rather than *selfless*. An Elmer comes alongside to help, instructing when necessary, but always encouraging and allowing mistakes and the learning which comes from those mistakes.

Most of you know I host a newcomers and elmers net every Sunday night where we talk about different topics and answer questions of anything amateur radio related (calling all Elmers and Newcomers!). The goal of the net is to bring together newbies with people willing to be elmers, all in an encouraging atmosphere. We started this net with the goal of helping newcomers not only answer specific questions, but also to help them answer the big question: "Now that I have (or will have) my license, what can I do with it?"

As the host, I am always a bit reluctant to answer questions because I do not want to be seen as an expert or know-it-all. I always open up any questions first to the group and then, if no answers are forthcoming or if I believe I can add something meaningful to the discussion, will I provide my "2-cents worth." I am thrilled when Elmers or newcomers offer their advice based on their experiences, as this is the most meaningful aspect of helping one another as we have opportunity.

An article like this gives me a chance to get on my own little soapbox now and again (like I do on my blog for preserving shortwave radio!!) and talk about a topic of importance to me. Elmering is something very near and dear to my heart. We need **more** elmers and **less** experts in our hobby. If you are in a position to be an Elmer, even if only by offering advice or your experience, do it! Real Elmering comes out of a love for the hobby and a desire to help someone out along the path.

When someone posts something in an email, chat room, or forum talking about something exciting they have done or a "first" for them, give them a few words of encouragement. Regardless of how simple, or rudimentary an accomplishment, give them a verbal "pat-on-the-back" or, if in person, an actual pat-on-the-back!

We all took baby steps when first becoming an amateur radio operator, or shortwave listener, or broadcast DX chaser. Share the excitement *just for the excitement it brings to someone else*. And don't say something like, "Oh yeah, I did that a long time ago - it was simple" or some such life-sucking, trivializing comment. Share the moment!

If you read something useful from someone else take a moment and send them a "thank you" email or post a kind comment. On the air amateurs often refer to praise as receiving "flowers" – recently I heard a net control operator thank a person on the Maritime Net on 20 meters for the flowers, obviously someone had complimented him on his signal or operating skills.

And especially let's remember to compliment new radio enthusiasts on even the smallest successes -- it is how we will ensure our wonderful hobby continues, and all will benefit.

Sharing Successes

On a related note, don't be afraid to post a note about your successes – there really are no trivial successes if the accomplishment was meaningful to you. We can all enjoy the good news, and you might just inspire someone else to try what you did and expand their radio horizons.

We have hundreds of people connected through our OHKYIN email list – that's a perfect place to share your radio adventure, as is the newsletter. Don't assume "nobody will care" – you might just be surprised at how many people *do* care and those who might be inspired to share their story.

And speaking of stories, I would love to see folks write up a little paragraph or two telling their story of how they got into amateur radio, or significant events that happened early in their operating career. I know Brian would appreciate the content for the newsletter, and I bet such a thing might end up the most popular section of the newsletter!

I do not know about you, but after this crazy election cycle I have had enough from "experts" bloviating and pontificating; I for one am ready for some kindness to be shared. Let's make the most of every opportunity we can to bring some encouragement wherever we can! Very 73, Robert AK3Q