

The Value of Postive Relationships at Work

By Paul Butler



I was once told by a boss that he was jealous of the positive relationships I had with the managers in our largest division. I was surprised by his comments at first, but, after some reflection, I began to understand where he was coming from. Although he had a long tenure with the company, he was new to his role and was getting his feet wet.

However, what surprised me most is that, even six months later, he had not worked to change his situation. That's when I knew that he was going to have a hard time succeeding in his job; he needed the help of those managers to be successful. As time went on, he found himself more and more isolated. This loneliness started to impact how happy he was at work, as well as his team.

No matter where you work or how high you are in the organization, building positive working relationships is critical to being productive. Our work shows that building a relationship is THE most important skill a leader can master for success. If you fail to create meaningful connections, it will derail you.

When leaders fail to invest time in building relationships, two things almost always happen: First, they are not effective. And, second, they are not happy.

Effectiveness

Building positive relationships with others in the organization is critical because, as a manager, you must rely on others to support you in achieving goals. The more you commit to developing and maintaining positive relationships with others, the higher the payoff will be, especially in terms of motivation and commitment and support.

The best leaders I work with aren't afraid to admit when they need help. Whether they rely on a peer, coach, or even an employee during a time of need, they gain strength from others. Admitting they need help is a sign of strength builds trust and allowing them to succeed.

Wellbeing (less stress more happiness)

An essential part of reducing stress at work is making room for others to contribute. Of course, this can only be accomplished by building relationships so that people feel

valued, appreciated and included. When this happens, it enhances self-esteem, empathy and involvement.

Positive relationships are fundamental to wellbeing. The experiences that contribute to wellbeing are through our relationships. We find the greatest joy, meaning, laughter, and pride when we are experiencing it with someone else.

So, where do you begin? The first place to start is identifying where you need to invest time in relationship building. Here is a tool that can help:

Tool: Relationship Diagram (See sample at the end of the article)

1. Draw a circle with yourself in the center.
2. Identify other key stakeholders (must be a person) in your organization. Once you know who they are, zero in on the ones (or one) who is most important to you. What do you do about them? How will they respond when you reach out? What can you do to win their support?
3. Draw a line between yourself and another person:
 - 1 line - low dependency
 - Two lines - moderate dependency
 - Three lines - high dependency
4. Next to each person, assess the level of effectiveness between you and them. Use 1, 2, or 3 stars:
 - 1 star - low effectiveness
 - Two stars - medium effectiveness
 - Three stars - highly effective

5. Wherever you have 2 or 3 lines and only 1 or 2 stars, you can be sure that this is impacting your work. But the good news is that means there's room for growth!

Action Plan

1. Reach out to the stakeholders you've identified and ask for time. Tell them why it is essential for you to meet.
2. Introduce yourself by providing a little about the background. I always begin by asking if it would be okay to offer a short introduction, so you start to set the foundation for a relationship. I always make sure I finish the conversation with something personal about me.

Then, ask them to do the same! Show interest in getting to know them better. Use questions like:

What would be helpful for me to know about you?

What information can I provide about me that would help you?

3. Afterward, thank them and then get the next date on the calendar to reconnect.
4. Reflect on how you can add value and then bring that information to the next meeting.

One of my best examples of building a positive relationship at work happened way back in 1993. I was new to Duracell, recently hired as the national sales training manager, and I knew that I needed help getting my feet wet. I heard about an individual in the corporate training group who was a forward thinker, and someone people turned to for help and support. His name was Jack Mastrianni, and he was so helpful to me in my early days in the organization.

We quickly formed a good working partnership and did some great work together (some of which known throughout the organization). This relationship became so unique that it

continues to this day; we are partners at my firm, The Executive Development Group. We have been lucky to be working together in one form or fashion for over two decades now. And I know 100% that I am more effective in working with an organization because of what Jack brings. It is defiantly less stressful knowing you have an expert who you can bounce ideas off, collectively problem-solve and enjoy the day-to-day.

Building positive relationships often provides increased resources to help you get your job done and to be more efficient. You'll enjoy greater satisfaction at work... and so will those around you.

SAMPLE

