

Playing Well With Others: Effective Work Relationships

“Eighty percent of life’s satisfaction comes from meaningful relationships.”

Brian Tracy

Strong, healthy relationships are the foundation upon which any great organization is built. These work relationships form the cornerstone for job satisfaction and success. As a leader your ability to lead is in direct proportion to your ability to establish strong and healthy relationships. It is all about relationships!

Most of us have experienced at least one challenging relationship in the work place. People often blame the other person for the state of the relationship. It is important for each person to assume responsibility for changing the way they react to the other person and his or her way of behaving. Keep in mind that you can only control your reactions and actions. The good news is that the one thing over which we have 100% influence and ability to develop is ourselves. No matter your education, experience, training, or level of expertise, if you can’t play well with others, you will never accomplish what you need to in the workplace. Let’s take a look at what you can do to create a positive, empowering and motivational work environment and what will help you become the type of leader people will seek out.

In an effective relationship parties **listen** to understand one another's positions and feelings, and they openly **express** their position and feelings. It is important to say what you need and not assume others know. Having **respect** for yourself and others is the core of any good relationship. Respect can be shown by listening to the other person and by trying to understand how they view things. You can respect others even though you may have difficulty understanding their behavior. You should acknowledge that they are doing the best they can by taking their circumstances into account. **Facing differences** directly and working toward solutions where all parties win is another key to forming effective relationships. If a person feels they have benefitted from resolving a difference then they will be more willing to cooperate again in the future.

Communicate, communicate, communicate! Verbal and nonverbal communication matters. Nonverbal communication includes facial expressions, posture, eye gaze, and tone of voice. Remember approximately 85% of communication is nonverbal. If you are sarcastic, or talk down to others you are showing disrespect, and creating a negative environment. You will not be a leader who people will comfortably seek out. Make sure you do not play the **blame game**. Putting blame on others will alienate supporting staff, coworkers, and supervisors. You can determine who is involved in a problem without publicly identifying and blaming others for failures.

When problem solving, be sure to bring suggested **solutions** along with problems to the meeting table. Sharing thoughtful solutions when presenting a problem will help you to stand out and earn you respect from coworkers and supervisors. Building an effective work relationship requires that your coworkers trust you. Under no circumstances should you **blind side** your staff, coworker or supervisor. Discuss problems first with the persons directly involved so they are aware and can participate in the solution.

Keeping your **commitments** and meeting your deadlines is crucial. Be realistic when committing to a deadline. Remember most work is interconnected. If you fail to meet your commitments and deadlines, you affect the work of others. If you can't keep your commitments, make sure affected employees know why. Provide a new deadline and make every effort to meet the new timeline.

Acknowledge and give credit for ideas, contributions and accomplishments: This is a no fail approach to building effective work relationships. Take the time to thank, reward and recognize specific contributions of the people who helped in achieving the task or goal. And, finally assist employees in harnessing their **talents**. Each employee has their own skill set, talent and experience. Helping employees harness their talents benefits not only the professional growth of the employee, but also benefits the entire organization.

Effective work relationships form the cornerstone for goal accomplishment, job satisfaction, promotion and pay increases. Practicing these suggestions will help you develop effective work relationships and, as a result, you will stand out as a leader who is valued by your coworkers, peers and supervisors.

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