

## **BUILDING SOLID RELATIONSHIPS**

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Most everyone liked being around Ronald Reagan because he loved people and connected with them. He understood that relationships were the glue that held his team members together –the more solid the relationships, the more cohesive his team.

- Just about everything you do depends on teamwork. It doesn't matter whether you are a leader or follower, coach or player, teacher or student, parent or child, CEO or nonprofit worker; you will be involved with other people. The question is, will your involvement with others be successful?
- Your best chance for leadership also depends upon connecting with those on your team. Here is how you know whether you have built solid relationships with others. Look for the following five characteristics in your relationships:

### **1. RESPECT**

When it comes to relationships, everything begins with respect, with the desire to place value on other people. Human relations author Les Giblin said, "You can't make the other fellow feel important in your presence if you secretly feel that he is a nobody."

- The thing about respect is that you should show it to others, even before they have done anything to warrant it, simply because they are human beings. But at the same time, you should always expect to have to earn it from others. And the place you earn it the quickest is on difficult ground.

### **2. SHARED EXPERIENCES**

Respect can lay the foundation for a good relationship, but it alone is not enough. You can't be relational with someone you don't know. It requires shared experiences over time. And that's not always easy to achieve.

- For example, right after Brian Billick, coach of the Baltimore Ravens, won the 2001 Super bowl, he was asked about the team's chances for repeating a championship season. He commented that it would be very difficult. Why? Because 25 to 30 percent of the team changes every year. Newer players don't have the shared experiences with the team that are needed to succeed.

### **3. TRUST**

When you respect people and you spend enough time with them to develop shared experiences, you are in a position to develop trust. Trust is essential to all good relationships. Scottish poet

George MacDonald observed, “To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.” Without trust, you cannot sustain any kind of relationship.

#### **4. RECIPROCIDTY**

One-sided personal relationships don’t last. If one person is always the giver and the other is always the receiver, then the relationship will eventually disintegrate. The same is true of all relationships, including those on a team.

- For people to improve relationally there has to be give-and-take so that everyone benefits as well as gives. Remember to ask your teammates, colleagues, and friends questions about their hopes, desires, and goals. Give people your full attention. Show others you care about them.

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#### **5. MUTUAL ENJOYMENT**

When relationships grow and start to get solid, the people involved begin to enjoy each other. Just being together can turn even unpleasant tasks into positive experiences.

How are you doing when it comes to being relational?

- Do you spend a lot of time and energy building solid relationships, or are you so focused on results that you tend to overlook (or overrun) others? If the latter is true of you, think about the wise words of George Kienzle and Edward Dare in *Climbing the Executive Ladder*: “Few things will pay you bigger dividends than the time and trouble you take to understand people. Almost nothing will add more to your stature as an executive and a person. Nothing will give you greater satisfaction or bring you more happiness.”  
Becoming a highly relational person brings individual and team success.

#### **WHY PEOPLE FAIL TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS**

Lack of understanding concerning others is a recurrent source of tension in our society. I once heard an attorney say, “Half of the controversies and conflicts that arise among people are caused not by differences of opinion or an inability to agree, but by the lack of understanding of one another.” If we could reduce the number of misunderstandings, the courts wouldn’t be as

crowded, there would be fewer violent crimes, the divorce rate would go down, and the amount of everyday stress most people experience would drop dramatically.

If understanding is such an asset, why don't more people practice it?

- **Fear**

Fear is evident in the workplace when it comes to employees' reactions toward their leaders. Yet in a healthy work environment, you give others the benefit of the doubt and replace fear with understanding.

- **Self-Centeredness**

When fear isn't a stumbling block, self-centeredness often is. People are not self-centered on purpose; it's just in the nature of humans to think of their own interests first. If you want to see an example of that, play with a two-year-old child. He naturally chooses the best toys for himself and insists on his own way.

### **A SHORT COURSE IN HUMAN RELATIONS**

The least important word: I

The most important word: We

The two most important words: Thank you.

The three most important words: All is forgiven.

The four most important words: What is your opinion?

The five most important words: You did a good job.

The six most important words: I want to understand you better.

- **Failure to Appreciate Differences**

The next logical step after leaving behind self-centeredness is learning to recognize and respect everyone else's unique qualities. Instead of trying to cast others in your image, learn to appreciate their differences. If someone has a talent that you don't have, great.

- **Failure to Acknowledge Similarities**

We all have emotional reactions to what's happening around us. To foster understanding, think of what your emotions would be if you were in the same position as the person you're interacting with. You know what you would want to happen in a given situation. Chances are that the person you're working with has many of the same feelings.