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“FOCUS ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK”

Unfortunately, the basics of building positive relationships were never taught in college. Regardless of level of education, there are still many people who have achieved position, status and "success" in their careers despite their lack of interpersonal skills.

We have all experienced those who manage to get things done or have their own way solely by asserting the power of their personality, position or title. While this may get short-term results, the long-term impact is likely to be costly if the underlying relationships with colleagues, employees or vendors are not built on a foundation of mutual respect and trust.

The best way to ensure long term career and business success is by paying attention to the importance of relationships, and valuing and reinforcing them. Here are some ways that you can start improving your business relationships today:

Acknowledge the accomplishments and competencies of others. The very best leaders know how to showcase what others have done, and give credit where credit is due. Hire and surround yourself with the most talented people you can find. Their strengths will not make you look bad. To the contrary, people will see you as a smart person who understands the positive impact of complimenting your own abilities to build a strong and balanced team.

Be willing to admit to your imperfections. We all make mistakes or have knowledge deficits of some kind. Unfortunately, business cultures have developed which create the illusion -and the pressure - that people are not allowed to make mistakes in their jobs. Relationships become strengthened when we can see our mistakes or errors in judgment, and acknowledge them as lessons learned. Let go of your perfectionism and the need to be right. Allowing your vulnerabilities to show on occasion, ironically, is viewed by others as a strength.

Probe and ask questions to get the perspective of others. It is arrogant and unhealthy to assume that your way is the best way. There are always other points of view in any situation, and a good relationship-builder solicits them. It does not mean you must always agree, but it is important to at least stop to consider the input of others, particularly if they will be affected by the decision or outcome. This means being willing to listen openly, without making assumptions, pre-judgments or put-downs.

Develop a sense of genuine humility. Don't use your job title or status as a way to buffer your inadequacies or to build your self-esteem. We all have roles and responsibilities at work, but they should not define who we are as human beings. Our position on the organizational chart is never an adequate excuse for not treating others with courtesy.

Be willing to take responsibility for your role in the quality of your relationships. Take a look at the problematic relationships at work or your life. What is your role in the circumstances that surround you? It is all too easy to blame others as being the problem - and that attitude takes us off the hook for personal accountability. When you are willing to look at yourself honestly and accept your part in a relationship challenge, you have set the stage for the quality of that relationship to improve, regardless of the other person's willingness or ability to change.

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