

Building Relationships

One of the biggest issues affecting the success of an individual in a role is the ability to build strong relationships with work colleagues, both inside and outside the business.

Many is the time I have heard individuals talk about ' *not getting on with my boss/ a peer/ my team/ my customer*' and this contributing to their decision to ultimately leave an organisation .

It is vital for longer term career success for individuals all round. Indeed as many people make the transition from managing to leading in an organisation, taking on more senior roles, this ability to build solid relationships becomes even more important.

Quite often the problem occurs when business people get stuck in the rut of focussing too narrowly on their targets, looking to only build relationships with senior colleagues or at least their own peers. There is real value in looking to cultivate good relationships both horizontally as well as vertically - across as well as up and down the hierarchy of an organisation.

Other problems occur and relationships falter before they have even started when the overt purpose seems to be self serving. True relationships are about mutuality, give and take, with no real expectation of return other than quietly enjoying the fellowship of like minded professionals. There should be no one way agenda.

Those with better developed relationship building skills spend more time asking and listening; more time understanding people's real needs. Consider what is really important to your colleagues, what their priorities are- and have you ever bothered to find out about the whole person? Have you ever uncovered anything personal about them, ie family, sports, interests or activities. Simply showing an interest and discussing personal topics with colleagues can kick start the process of cementing longer term ,valued relationships.

When things go sour , as they can often do at work, aim to build your reputation as one who understands the other persons perspective, right or wrong, and above all, ensure you focus on the issues not the personalities. Be supportive of people in their work and actively and publicly praise individuals when praise is due.

Think broadly. Who else should you start to build good relationships with? Which other functions, which other geographic locations, which other levels of the business?

Get in the habit of introducing yourself to as many new people as possible and don't leave it at that. Continue interacting on more than one occasion and nurture the more productive and receptive candidates. Find occasions to kick start a relationship, and try not to lunch alone !

Some people seem to do this naturally, for others it is more difficult. It is not a question of relative status or experience either. There are some really well skilled young trainees out there in many businesses who appreciate the value of support in their new roles and who actively go out of their way to continually build new relationships. They could certainly teach their bosses a thing or two!