

Relationship: The Essence of Leadership

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“Today we are faced with the pre-eminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships.”

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1 day before his death)

“Leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow.”

Kouzes & Posner

Introduction

How do you define leadership? Is ‘relationship’ found in your definition? In his new book, *Vital Friends*, Tom Rath asserts that people who have a “best friend at work” are seven times more likely to be engaged in their job. Jim Collins in *From Good to Great*, states that great leaders put “a high value on people.” Again, the first point in John Maxwell’s *(The 360⁰ Leader)* “Leader’s Daily Dozen” is to “place a high value on people.” As leaders, how do we foster these relationships at work? Do you agree it is an important practice? How do we develop those vital friendships that enhance productivity and satisfaction? In this session we will discuss how leaders can set the tone for co-workers and offer suggestions on how to move ‘relationship’ into your definition of leadership.

Opening Discussion Questions (Think/Pair/Share)

“Should leaders strive to be liked by their work team?”

“Should leaders have close friends within their work team?”

“How does a leader’s relationship with individual team members affect the team as whole?”

Interesting Facts (from Tom Rath’s “Vital Friends”)

- Only 18% of people work for organizations that provide opportunities to develop friendships on the job.
- Only 30% of employees report having a best friend at work.
- People with best friends at work are seven times as likely to be engaged in their job.
- Without a best friend at work, the chances of being engaged in your job are 1 in 12.
- People with at least three close friends at work were 96% more likely to be extremely satisfied with their life.

Discussion Question (Whole Group)

“Do you have different types/categories of friends at work?”

- Who gives you advice if you're having problems with a colleague at work?
- Who sticks up for you at work?
- Who sits down and truly listens to you?
- Who pushes you to do your best? To move forward? Try new things?
- Are the individuals you have identified the same person in each case?

Reflection Activity - Friendship/Relationship Types (Tom Rath)

Builders –	friends who lead you to achieve more each day
Collaborators –	friends with similar interests
Connectors –	bridge builders who help you get where you want, introduce you to others
Mind Openers-	friends who expand your horizons and encourage you to embrace new ideas, opportunities, cultures, and people
Champions –	friends who stand up for you and what you believe in
Companions –	friends who share an unbreakable bond, always there for you regardless of circumstances
Energizers –	fun friends who give you a boost
Navigators –	friends who give you advice and keep you headed in the right direction
Other roles to be added (e.g. analyzer)	_____

Activity – Connectors - 6 Degrees of Kevin Bacon

The game requires a group of players to try and to connect any film actor/personality in history to Kevin Bacon as quickly as possible and in as few links as possible.

Examples:

Val Kilmer: Val was in the movie *Top Gun* with Tom Cruise, Tom Cruise was in the movie *A Few Good Men* with Kevin Bacon : Bacon number of 2

Elvis Presley: Elvis was in the movie *Change of Habit* with Edward Asner, Edward Asner was in *JFK* with Kevin Bacon: Bacon number of 2

Robert DeNiro: Robert DeNiro was in *Analyze This* with Billy Crystal who was in *When Harry Met Sally* with Meg Ryan who was in *Sleepless in Seattle* with Tom Hanks who was in *Apollo 13* with Kevin Bacon: Bacon number of 4

Tips/Best Practices for Building Relationships/Friendships at Work

Discussion Questions (whole group – brainstorm)

“How do you develop relationships/friendships at work?”

“How do you foster healthy, productive relationships while avoiding jealousy, favoritism, gossip, and other pitfalls?”

“How can you create an environment of fun and productivity?”

Fun/Productive Activity	Pitfalls

Examples:

- “Cooking” Up a Better Team
- Fun Retreat (e.g. pro baseball game)
- Mentor Program/New Employee Program
- Team Building activity at every meeting
- Meetings over lunch
- Weekly notes/birthday cards
- Ropes/Outdoor Experiential Course
- Holiday gatherings/open house
- Appreciate diversity / cultivate forgiveness
 - ✓ Distinguishing the diverse gifts of each employee
 - ✓ Taking opportunities to give mini-speeches on the value of a diverse team
 - ✓ Overt role modeling of forgiveness
 - ✓ Using performance evaluations to value diverse gifts