

Managing Key Relationships = Results

1.) Quick Quote To Consider

“Everyone gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense.”
Gertrude Stein

2.) A Formula For Success: Managing Key Relationships = Results

With lay-offs, staff being asked to do more with less, competition with other departments for resources, and other stresses, relationships can be strained in today’s workplace. More than ever, you need your staff to be innovative and engaged in solving your organization’s challenges. Since your success as an executive depends on your ability to motivate others, managing key relationships with your staff, colleagues, and your manager is extremely important.

Successful managers and leaders understand the importance of managing core relationships. According to Daniel Goleman in *Primal Leadership*, the feeling that employees have about working at a company accounts for 20–30% of business performance. “Getting the best out of people pays off in hard results,” says Goleman.

The Power of Strong Relationships

By investing time and energy in strengthening relationships with people who are key to your success, you will find it easier to get results, communicate with them, and introduce change. A client of mine recently learned the power of strengthening relationships with her staff.

When Chris was promoted to Vice President and asked to manage a division of a newly acquired company, she walked into an office full of mistrust and resentment for the parent company. Everyone was expected to put in 12–14 hour days, plus weekends, to deliver projects on time. And although project specifications were constantly changing, delivery dates did not. The office operated in crisis mode.

In addition, the previous owners of the company had misled the staff about what to expect from the parent company. When people were let go and the volume of work increased without any recognition of the extra effort being given, suspicion and anger grew.

Chris knew that to be successful in building a profitable company, she had to increase her effectiveness as a manager and to improve relationships with her management team. She suspected that her staff saw her as aggressive, unsympathetic and untrustworthy.

But before she could change this toxic environment, Chris had to better understand the nature of her relationships with her staff. To help learn more about these relationships, I asked her to start observing how other people reacted to her. Not to change any of her behavior! Just simply observe and record.

Chris is a very dynamic person with rapid-fire speech and physical movements. She started conversations before she entered the room. She didn't start with "hello," but jumped right into the subject of the meeting. You could hear the adrenaline pumping through her veins!

After several weeks of observing, she exclaimed: "I make people nervous! They avoid eye contact with me. People slump when I enter their office. And they immediately get defensive!"

Chris discovered that she had unintentionally created the atmosphere of mistrust. She knew she had to change how she interacted with her managers and staff. One change she made was to start conversations with a friendly greeting, rather than a demand. Also, instead of solving all of the problems in the office alone, she started involving her managers in developing solutions. Another habit she changed was eating a quick lunch alone at her desk. Several days a week she joined everyone in the lunchroom, so she could get to know people and they could get to know her. Gradually, people relaxed around her and started approaching her with suggestions.

When she decided that it was necessary to reorganize the division to improve productivity and decrease stress, she invited her management team to participate in creating the plan. Before she presented it to her manager, she had 100% buy-in from her staff. Implementation was easier and more successful by the time the plan was approved.

Chris is a living example of how managing key relationships can equal success.

Increase Your Success

By investing time and energy in developing relationships with the people who are key to your success, you will find it easier to motivate others, communicate and introduce change.

Start by identifying at least five people in your organization who are critical to your success. Is there one person in particular you'd like to improve your relationship with? Begin observing your interactions with this person. Don't change your behavior! Just observe and write down what you detect. Once you have some practice increasing your awareness skills, you can start observing your interactions with others.

How do you act when you're with this person or communicating with them? What physical sensations arise (i.e., your stomach tightens, you smile; you stiffen, you relax; etc.)? What emotions arise when you're interacting with him or her? Are you reminded of one of your parents, a cherished friend, or a former teacher?

How does the person react to you? What does his or her body language say? Do you make eye contact with one another?

After several weeks, do you see any patterns in your interactions? What differences do you see in your communication style when interacting with this person? What have you learned about yourself and your relationship with this person? What do you want your relationship

to be? When you understand the dynamics of the relationship and are clear about what you want it to be, then you can start taking action to improve it.

Managing relationships starts with self-awareness! Remember, you can't change other people. You can only change your own behaviors or attitudes.

If you're interested in learning more about improving your relationships, call Karen at 301.990.6331.