

Building Good Work Relationships

Making Work Enjoyable and Productive

How good are the relationships that you have with your colleagues?

According to the Gallup organization, people who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be engaged in their jobs. But it doesn't have to be a "BFF." Gallup found that people who simply have a good friend in the workplace are more likely to be happy. What's more, good work relationships are linked to better customer engagement and increased profit.

In this article, you'll learn why it's important to have good working relationships, how to build and maintain them, and even find ways to work with people that you don't get on with.

Why Have Good Work Relationships?

Human beings are naturally social creatures. And when you consider that we spend one-third of our lives at work, it's clear that good relationships with colleagues will make our jobs more enjoyable.

The more comfortable co-workers are around one other, the more confident they'll feel voicing opinions, brainstorming, and going along with new ideas, for example. This level of teamwork is essential to embrace change, create, and innovate. And when people see the successes of working together in this way, group morale and productivity soars.

Good work relationships also give you freedom. Instead of spending time and energy dealing with negative relationships, you can, instead, focus on opportunities – from winning new business to focusing on personal development.

And having a strong professional circle will also help you to develop your career, opening up opportunities that otherwise might pass you by.

Defining a Good Relationship

A good work relationship requires trust, respect, self-awareness, inclusion, and open communication. Let's explore each of these characteristics.

Trust: when you trust your team members, you can be open and honest in your thoughts and actions. And you don't have to waste time or energy "watching your back."

"Respect: teams working together with mutual respect value one another's input, and find solutions based on collective insight, wisdom, and creativity.

Self-awareness: this means taking responsibility for your words and actions, and not letting your own negative emotions impact the people around you.

Inclusion: don't just accept diverse people and opinions but welcome them! For instance, when your colleagues offer different opinions from yours, factor their insights and perspective – or "cultural add" – into your decision-making.

Communication: all good relationships depend on open, honest communication. Whether you're sending emails or IMs, or meeting face-to-face or on video calls, the more effectively you communicate with those around you, the better you'll connect.

Work Relationships Are Important?

Although you should try to build and maintain good working relationships with everyone, some deserve extra attention. Like the relationship between a boss and employee. Gallup found that a manager alone can account for up to 70 percent of a team's engagement.

Regular **one-on-ones** let managers build relationships with employees. At these catch ups, you can show how an individual's work fits with the organization's "bigger picture," understand their strengths, and help them identify areas to develop.

You can also explore **managing upwards**, to analyze how your own manager prefers to work, anticipate their needs, and adapt your approach for a smoother relationship.

You'll also benefit from developing good work relationships with key stakeholders. These are the people who have a stake in your success or failure, such as customers, suppliers, and your team. Forming a bond with them will help you to ensure that your projects – and career – stay on track. A **Stakeholder Analysis** helps you to identify who these people are so you can devote time to building these partnerships.

How to Build Good Work Relationships

As you'll know from your oldest friends, building close connections with people can take time. But there are also steps you can take today to get on better with your colleagues.

1. **Identify Your Relationship Needs**

Do you know what you need from others? And do you know what they need from you? Understanding these needs can be instrumental in building better relationships.

2. **Develop Your People Skills**

Good relationships start with good people skills. Take our quiz How Good Are Your People Skills? to test how well you collaborate, communicate, and deal with conflict. The quiz will also point you toward useful tools to improve any weak areas.

3. **Focus on Your EI**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is your ability to recognize your own emotions, and better understand what they're telling you. By developing your EI, you'll become more adept at identifying and handling the emotions and needs of others.

4. **Practice Mindful Listening**

People respond better to those who truly listen to what they have to say. By practicing mindful listening, you'll talk less and understand more. And you'll quickly become known as trustworthy.

5. **Schedule Time to Build Relationships**

If possible, you could ask a colleague out for a quick cup of coffee. Or give a "one-minute kindness" by commenting on a co-worker's LinkedIn post you enjoyed reading. These little interactions take time but lay the groundwork for strong relationships.

6. **Manage Your Boundaries**

Make time, but not too much! Sometimes, a work relationship can impair productivity, especially when a friend or colleague begins to monopolize your time. It's important to set your boundaries and manage how much time you devote to social interactions at work.

7. **Appreciate Others**

Everyone, from your boss to the intern, wants to feel that their work is appreciated. So, genuinely compliment the people around you when they do something well. Praise and recognition will open the door to great work relationships.

8. **Be Positive**

Focus on being positive. Positivity is contagious and people gravitate to those that make them feel good.

9. **Avoid Gossiping**

Office politics and gossip can ruin workplace relationships. If you're experiencing conflict with someone in your group, talk to them directly about the problem. Gossiping with other colleagues will only exacerbate the situation, accelerating mistrust and animosity.

Handling Difficult Work Relationships

Sometimes, you'll have to work with someone you don't get on with. With the rise of virtual workspaces, many colleagues are benefiting from some time apart. But even communicating virtually can cause misunderstandings or tension.

While it's natural to avoid people who cause friction, it's not always feasible or for the good of your team. So, here are a few tactics to mend or maintain a professional relationship.

1. **Reflect on your positive history.** If a good relationship has taken a turn for the worse after an incident, research shows that reflecting on positive experiences with a co-worker can strengthen a broken bond. Another option is to use an impartial mediator to bridge the divide and find a quick resolution.
2. **Look to yourself.** When we feel negative about someone, we can become impatient, get angry, and demotivate others. And others can direct those negative behaviors back at us. The Betari Box can help to break this cycle of conflict, stopping these harmful attitudes and behaviors in their tracks.
3. **Find mutually beneficial goals.** Have you considered that a difficult relationship might be due to a power imbalance? You can use professor John Eldred's power strategies model to identify any conflicting goals or power imbalances, and devise a method to communicate better and improve your relationship.

Good Work Relationships FAQs

Why are relationships at work important?

Good working relationships will make your job more enjoyable. What's more, close-knit teams are more productive, which frees up time to innovate and focus on your personal development. The professional connections you make will also help you to further your career.

What are the three main working relationships?

You should build good relationships with all your co-workers. But focus on your manager to stay engaged with your job, the team members you work with day-to-day, and any stakeholders impacted by your work.

What is a professional relationship at work?

A professional work relationship is built on trust. Team members should also respect one another and be inclusive in considering different opinions. Self-awareness and open communication are key to making this work.

Key Points

Building and maintaining good working relationships will make you more engaged with your work, improve your career potential, and elevate the whole team.

Some work relationships will be more difficult than others. But with thought, time and effort these can become mutually beneficial, too.