

Seven Simple Strategies for Better Working Relationships

SPECIAL REPORT



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Do you manage a team of people and want to encourage great working relationships within your team? Working relationships can be very different to social and romantic ones because there are different boundaries within the team.

As a manager, you are in a position of authority and power compared to other members in the team and this will have a definite impact on the relationships you build with the team members. You cannot expect to have the same working relationship with someone you manage as with a colleague of equal status within the organisation.

Due to this simple difference, the working relationship needs to factor in some different rules to what would be appropriate in other sorts of relationships. In romantic relationships, both parties are considered equal and both want to please the other. As a manager, your position of power means that your employees will 'interpret' your communication differently.

Below I've listed my seven simple strategies for building great working relationships within your team. These tips will help you to build and maintain working relationships where your employees feel valued and will work in the most productive manner.

Strategy 1 – Treat Your Employees as Individuals

While you obviously want to build a great team, you need to remember that each person in the team is unique, and will bring different skills, experiences and even expectations to the table. However, if you show a genuine interest in your team members, finding out what's important to them, what they enjoy doing and their ambitions, you will be given the clues to what motivates them best.

You may then consider different informal rewards for different people in your team. Also, some people will need close supervision, others will appreciate being able to get on with their job independently and some people prefer lots of recognition as a motivator to perform well.



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Strategy 2 – Maintain Employee Dignity

Belittling any member of your team will certainly destroy good working relationships. You do not need to make a person feel worthless, just to make yourself look good. Good managers will always maintain an employee's dignity. You may need to back them publicly and point out their errors in private.

Strategy 3 – Set High Standards with Clear Expectations

Don't settle for second best, set a high standard that you expect your team to reach. However, be very clear about what you do expect. This way, you will not have anyone saying "I didn't know what you wanted". Give clear directions on your expectations. If you want a half page summary, tell the employee so. This will prevent them from experiencing frustration and wasting time in compiling a 12 page report when you only wanted a few paragraphs.

Strategy 4 – Maintain Open Channels of Communication

Make yourself available to your team and develop ways of informal, as well as formal, communication. Don't just limit communication to giving directions or telling them what to do. If you do this, they may feel that you are not interested in what they have to say. You need to develop ways of making the team members feel they are able to come to you with problems or issues they want clarification on when they need it.

Strategy 5 – Give Feedback

Everyone likes to go home feeling like they have achieved something important in their workday. Give positive feedback and recognition when people do well. The simplest comment of "well done" is often enough to motivate an employee for hours.

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In the same way, people also need to know when they have not met your expectations, so they can improve. A good rule of thumb is to give negative feedback privately and positive feedback in public. Giving feedback along the way means the annual performance review is much easier too, because everyone has an idea of how they have been performing.

Strategy 6 – Seek Feedback

Talk openly and honestly with your team and accept their comments and contributions. This helps to build trust and confidence and lets your team members know their opinions are valued. If a task wasn't done well, seek the employee's thoughts on what they think would improve the situation for next time. Seek feedback on how you can better support and help your team members. You may also like to ask for feedback from your manager.

Strategy 7 – Listen

This tip should really be number 1, it is so important to building great working relationships. Make sure you understand what people are saying and what their concerns and issues are on their tasks. You can't effectively manage people if you are unwilling to listen to them. employees to complete their jobs.

If an employee raises an issue with you, work with them to find a solution so they know they have been listened to. You may need to consider solving the issue in another way, but at least report back to them in some way when the issue is resolved. This way, the employees will feel empowered and by knowing that you listen to them, will be far more motivated to perform well for you.

You need to be able to give directions to your staff, but a good manager will also listen and work to resolve conflicts or concerns to enable the employees to complete their jobs.



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Value Your Employees and They Will Value You

The best managers are guides, friends and mentors to their employees in their team and will always have the most productive teams. Why? People will always work harder when they feel valued and that they play an important part to the business. Give your employees this gift, and you will reap the benefits of great working relationships with your team.

**For practical advice on working with your team, call us at
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We look forward to assisting you!