



RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Outer Game Strategies

(with high return for low investment of time)

- Human connections count, even the quick ones:
 - $15 \times 2 > 1 \times 30$.
 - This can include noticing someone's presence, addressing another by name, making eye contact, congratulating them on professional and personal accomplishments, etc.
- Listen intently for at least 15 seconds after you ask a question. (Ask questions!)
- If you have something negative to say, say it directly. If you have something positive to say, say it directly and indirectly.
- Go +1 on your channel choices (a phone call or face-to-face conversation instead of an email exchange will often save time over the long run).
- Presume the relationship you want to have. (It's okay if they don't respond in kind.)
- "Hang a lantern on your problems." (This isn't about being a complainer; this is about letting people know what you're trying to accomplish and giving them opportunities to help you.)
- Reduce the amount of relational toxins you introduce into the environment (see reverse side).
- Don't blow up relationships over small things.
- "Never turn the faucet off." Drip relationships to keep them relevant and alive.

Inner Game Strategies

If you operate from any of these beliefs you may be better served by a replacement.

I don't have time for "the soft side" of business.	Relationships are the building block of business success.
I just want to come in and do my job.	In a complex, fast-moving environment, it's a lot easier to succeed when others are rooting for you. (It's very tough to succeed when they're rooting against you.)
Taking steps to elevate my Relating competencies is inauthentic.	Just because something doesn't come naturally or easily to you, and some relationships seem awkward, it doesn't mean you're being inauthentic in your effort to change. Like most important things in life, relating takes work and is something at which most people can get better. (The key is to get clear about and stay focused on the outcomes you want to create.)
Professional relationships are just a by-product of working with people on something. They last for as long as they last.	Maintaining your relationships (even when task interdependence has ended) is an investment that can pay dividends over the course of your lifetime, often in unexpected ways.



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“ ... a key aspect of becoming [a leader] is recognizing that your principal focus must change as you move up through the ranks. On the way up, priorities are 90% functional and 10% relationships. The higher you rise, the more this mix changes. In the [C-suite] it is more like 10% functional and 90% relationships ... ”

~ Gartner Research

The Four Relationship Toxins

- 1. Criticism:** Includes blame, uncharitable attributions and focusing on another's weaknesses.
- 2. Contempt:** Includes eye rolling, sarcasm, scoffing and other expressions of derision or disrespect.
- 3. Defensiveness:** Includes taking things personally, resisting tough feedback and rationalizing away deficits or mistakes.
- 4. Stonewalling:** Includes withdrawing, disengaging or bottling up resentments (until they finally spew).

Gottman, J. M. Various studies. (1980-2008). See also CRR Global's techniques for building awareness and counteracting the toxins.

Finding the Optimal Ratio

Research has found that the highest performing teams (in terms of productivity and results) average five positive communications (e.g., “Great job”) for every negative one (e.g., “That's not what I expected”). The medium-performance teams have a positive/negative ratio of 2:1. The average low-performance teams have a positive/negative ratio of 1:3 (more negative than positive).

Worth noting: When the positive/negative ratio goes much higher than 5:1, teams tend to become less effective. It makes sense, since some conflict and disagreement almost always accompanies real achievement and progress.

Losada, M. & Heaphy, E. (2004). The role of positivity and connectivity in the performance of business teams: A nonlinear dynamics model. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47 (6), pp. 740-765.