

# **Building Great Work Relationships**

**Making Work Enjoyable and Productive**



**By**

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### **Making Work Enjoyable and Productive**

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



**Having good friends in the workplace can boost your job satisfaction.**

Organization, people who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be engaged in their jobs. And it doesn't have to be a best friend: Gallup found that people who simply had a good friend in the workplace are more likely to be satisfied.

In this article, we're looking at how you can build strong, positive relationships at work. We'll see why it's important to have good working relationships, and we'll look at how to strengthen your relationships with people that you don't naturally get on with.

## **Why Have Good Relationships?**

Human beings are naturally social creatures – we crave friendship and positive interactions, just as we do food and water. So it makes sense that the better our relationships are at work, the happier and more productive we're going to be.

Good working relationships give us several other benefits: our work is more enjoyable when we have good relationships with those around us. Also, people are more likely to go along with changes that we want to implement, and we're more innovative and creative.

What's more, good relationships give us freedom: instead of spending time and energy overcoming the problems associated with negative relationships, we can, instead, focus on opportunities.

Good relationships are also often necessary if we hope to develop our careers. After all, if your boss doesn't trust you, it's unlikely that he or she will consider you when a new position opens up. Overall, we all want to work with people we're on good terms with.

We also need good working relationships with others in our professional circle. Customers, suppliers and key stakeholders are all essential to our success. So, it's important to build and maintain good relations with these people.

## Defining a Good Relationship

There are several characteristics that make up good, healthy working relationships:

- **Trust** – This is the foundation of every good relationship. When you **trust** your team and colleagues, you form a powerful bond that helps you to work and communicate more effectively. If you trust the people you work with, you can be open and honest in your thoughts and actions, and you don't have to waste time and energy "watching your back."
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- **Mutual Respect** – When you respect the people who you work with, you value their input and ideas, and they value yours. Working together, you can develop solutions based on your collective insight, wisdom and creativity.
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- **Mindfulness** – This means taking responsibility for your words and actions. Those who are mindful are careful and attend to what they say, and they don't let their own negative emotions impact the people around them.
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- **Welcoming Diversity** – People with good relationships not only accept diverse people and opinions, but they welcome them. For instance, when your friends and colleagues offer different opinions from yours, you take the time to consider what they have to say, and factor their insights into your decision-making.
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- **Open Communication** – We communicate all day, whether we're sending emails and IMs, or meeting face to face. The better and more effectively you communicate with those around you, the richer your relationships will be. All good relationships depend on open, honest communication.
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# Where to Build Good Relationships

Although we should try to build and maintain good working relationships with everyone, there are certain relationships that deserve extra attention.

For instance, you'll likely benefit from developing good relationships with key stakeholders in your organization. These are the people who have a stake in your success or failure. Forming a bond with these people will help you to ensure that your projects and career, stay on track.

To find out who these people are do a **Stakeholder Analysis**. Once you've created a list of colleagues who have an interest in your projects and career, you can devote time to building and managing these relationships.

Clients and customers are another group who deserve extra attention. Think of the last time you had to **deal with an unhappy customer**; it was probably challenging and draining. Although you may not be able to keep everyone happy 100 percent of the time, maintaining honest, trusting relationships with your customers can help you to ensure that if things do go wrong, damage is kept to a minimum. Good relationships with clients and customers can also lead to extra sales, career advancement, and a more rewarding life.

## How to Build Good Work Relationships

So, what can you do to build better relationships at work?

### Develop Your People Skills

Good relationships start with good people skills. Take our **How Good Are Your People Skills?** quiz to find out how your "soft skills" are. For instance, how well you collaborate, communicate and deal with

conflict. This self-test will point you to tools that will help you to deal with any weaknesses that you have.

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### **Identify Your Relationship Needs**

Look at your own 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.

### **Schedule Time to Build Relationships**

Devote a portion of your day toward relationship building, even if it's just 20 minutes, perhaps broken up into five-minute segments.

For example, you could pop into someone's office during lunch, reply to people's postings on **Twitter** or **LinkedIn**, or ask a colleague out for a quick cup of coffee.

These little interactions help build the foundation of a good relationship, especially if they're face-to-face.

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### **Focus on Your EI**

Also, spend time developing your **emotional intelligence** (EI).

Among other things, this is your ability to recognize your own emotions, and clearly understand what they're telling you.

High EI also helps you to understand the emotions and needs of others.

### **Appreciate Others**

Show your appreciation whenever someone helps you. Everyone, from your boss to the office cleaner, wants to feel that their work is appreciated. So, genuinely compliment the people around you when they do something well. This will open the door to great work relationships.

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### **Be Positive**

Focus on being **positive**. Positivity is attractive and contagious, and it will help strengthen your relationships with your colleagues. No one wants to be around someone who's negative all the time.

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### **Manage Your Boundaries**

Make sure that you set and **manage boundaries** properly – all of us want to have friends at work, but, occasionally, a friendship can start to impact our jobs, especially when a friend or colleague begins to monopolize our time.

If this happens, it's important that you're **assertive** about your boundaries, and that you know how much time you can devote during the work day for social interactions.

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### **Avoid Gossiping**

Don't gossip – **office politics** and "gossip" are major relationship killers at work. If you're experiencing conflict with someone in your group, talk to them directly about the problem. Gossiping about the situation with other colleagues will only exacerbate the situation, and will cause mistrust and animosity between you.

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### **Listen Actively**

Practice **active listening** when you talk to your customers and colleagues. People respond to those who truly listen to what they have to say. Focus on listening more than you talk, and you'll quickly become known as someone who can be trusted.

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### **Difficult Relationships**

Occasionally, you'll have to **work with someone you don't like**, or someone that you simply can't relate to. But, for the sake of your work, it's essential that you maintain a professional relationship with them.

When this happens, make an effort to get to know the person. It's likely that he or she knows full well that the two of you aren't on the best terms, so make the first move to improve the relationship by engaging him in a genuine conversation, or by inviting him out to lunch.

While you're talking, try not to be too guarded. Ask him about his background, interests and past successes. Instead of putting energy

into your differences, focus on finding things that you have in common.

Just remember – not all relationships will be great; but you can make sure that they are, at least, workable!

## Key Points

Building and maintaining good working relationships will not only make you more engaged and committed to your organization; it can also open doors to key projects, career advancement, and raises. Use the following strategies to build good working relationships with your colleagues:

- Develop your people skills.
- Identify your relationship needs.
- Schedule time to build relationships.
- Focus on your EI.
- Appreciate others.
- Be positive.
- Manage your boundaries.
- Avoid gossiping.
- Listen actively.

1. Presented by **Mudambi Richards April 12<sup>th</sup> 2018**