

VENTRAX BE TIME WISE

JANUARY 2018 ISSUE



BUILDING GREAT 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. 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.

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.

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

Good relationships start with good people skills. Take our [How Good Are Your People Skills?](#) quiz to find out how well you score with "soft skills" such as collaboration, communication and conflict resolution. This self-test will point you to tools that will help you deal with any weaknesses that you have.



Look at your own relationship needs. Do you know what you need from others? And do you know what they need from you?

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

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





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.



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.

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.



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.

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.



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 you maintain a professional relationship with them.

When this happens, make an effort to get to know the person. It's likely that they know full well that the two of you aren't on the best terms, so make the first move to

improve the relationship by engaging them in a genuine conversation, or by inviting them out to lunch.

While you're talking, try not to be too guarded. Ask them about their 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 maintain 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.

Start by identifying the key stakeholders in your organization. These people, as well as your clients and customers, deserve extra time and attention. Then, devote a portion of your day to laying the foundation of good relationships. Even five minutes a day, if it's genuine, can help to build a bond between you and a colleague. Be honest, avoid gossip, and try to compliment people on a job well done. After all, the more you give in your relationships, the more you'll get back from those around you!

Building Relationships with Colleagues

When most professionals think about building relationships, they are often thinking about expanding their network of contacts with the people they encounter, and not necessarily with their colleagues. With remote work increasing, the ability to build strong relationships with your colleagues is a valuable skill. Furthermore, the ability to get along with the people with whom you work creates a harmonious and productive environment.



Get to know your colleagues and allow them to get to know you: Invite your colleagues to lunch, and get to know each other. Learn about their values and what they want to achieve in life. What knowledge skills and abilities do they possess? Talk to them about your expertise, knowledge, skills and abilities. In meetings, observe them and ask questions, and share ideas. And participate in outside activities, which is one way to build camaraderie and cement relationships.



Respect your colleagues: Respect everyone with whom you work, even the ones who you consider to be difficult.

Work to build trust: Trust and honesty are the foundation of positive and enduring relationships. When you make a mistake, promptly admit it, and find ways to make amends. When you do not have the answer to questions, or do not know how to approach a project, admit it, you will appear human and trustworthy.

Be positive: If you are serious about building positive relationships with your colleagues, never speak ill of them. Be the person who takes the high road and do not engage in office gossip. People will take note and recognize you as someone who is worth associating with.



Be supportive: There will be times when your colleagues are snowed in because of too much work. Offer to assist them, even if it means staying later a couple of evenings or showing up for work earlier for a couple of days. There are many ways to assist others without compromising or jeopardizing your work. By doing this, when you are in need of assistance, others will be there for you.

Collaborate: Find ways to include your colleagues when working on important projects, and make sure that you give them credit for the work that they do. Making people feel valued and important, are critical elements of positive and enduring relationships.

Say thank you: Find ways to demonstrate your appreciation and gratitude to your colleagues. Simply saying, "Thank you!" can go a long way to building positive relationships. Send written thank-you notes, since that isn't something that most people would ever think of doing.

Building relationships with your colleagues increase job satisfaction since you spend so many hours at work. And on top of that, it signals to the senior managers that you are able to get along with others.



A CHECKLIST FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Think of how often you communicate with people during your day. You write emails, facilitate meetings, participate in conference calls, create reports, devise presentations, debate with your colleagues... the list goes on.

We can spend almost our entire day communicating. So, how can we provide a huge boost to our productivity? We can make sure that we communicate in the clearest, most effective way possible.



This is why the 7 Cs of Communication are helpful. The 7 Cs provide a checklist for making sure that your **meetings, emails, conference calls, reports** and **presentations** are well constructed and clear – so your audience gets your message.

According to the 7 Cs, communication needs to be:

1. Clear
2. Concise
3. Concrete
4. Correct
5. Coherent
6. Complete
7. Courteous



1. Clear

When writing or speaking to someone, be clear about your goal or message. What is your purpose in communicating with this person? If you're not sure, then your audience won't be sure either.

To be clear, try to minimize the number of ideas in each sentence. Make sure that it's easy for your reader to understand your meaning. People shouldn't have to "read between the lines" and make assumptions on their own to understand what you're trying to say.

2. Concise

When you're concise in your communication, you stick to the point and keep it brief. Your audience doesn't want to read six sentences when you could communicate your message in three.

Are there any adjectives or "filler words" that you can delete? You can often eliminate words like "for instance," "you see," "definitely," "kind of," "literally," "basically," or "I mean."

Are there any unnecessary sentences? Have you repeated the point several times, in different ways?

3. Concrete

When your message is concrete, then your audience has a clear picture of what you're telling them. There are details (but not too many!) and vivid facts, and there's laser-like focus. Your message is solid.

4. Correct

When your communication is correct, it fits your audience. And correct communication is also error-free communication.

5. Coherent

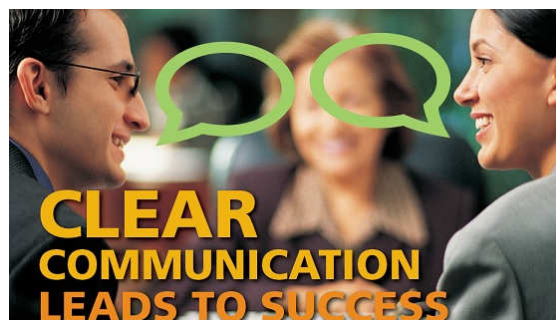
When your communication is coherent, it's logical. All points are connected and relevant to the main topic, and the tone and flow of the text is consistent.

6. Complete

In a complete message, the audience has everything they need to be informed and, if applicable, take action.

7. Courteous

Courteous communication is friendly, open and honest. There are no hidden insults or passive-aggressive tones. You keep your reader's viewpoint in mind, and you're empathetic to their needs.



WHAT CAUSES LOW SELF-ESTEEM?

Basically, self-esteem is how you feel about yourself and your abilities. Your self-esteem - whether it's high, low or somewhere in-between - can have a pretty huge effect on your life. If you have low self-esteem, an important thing to do is try and figure out what's causing it. It could be related to:

1. loneliness
2. bullying
3. poor academic performance
4. neglect or abuse
5. being unemployed
6. something going on at a deeper level

Sometimes it can be hard to identify the causes of your low self-esteem. Perhaps you've never really thought about it, or maybe it's difficult to determine when it first started. Whether or not you know exactly what's causing it, there are steps you can take to build your confidence and improve the way you feel about yourself.

10 STEPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR SELF-ESTEEM



1. Positive self-talk

If you keep telling yourself you're no good, you might just start believing it, even though it's not true. If you notice that you often engage in negative self-talk, check out some ways you can challenge your negative thinking and build your confidence levels.

2. Don't compare yourself to others

It can be tempting to measure your own worth against other people. So what if your friend is awesome at tennis? You just need to figure out what your niche is. Everyone is great at something. What are your strengths?



3. Movement and exercise

Moving your body helps to improve your mood. End of story.

4. Don't strive for perfection

It's great that you want to do things well, but keep in mind that perfection isn't realistic for anyone.

5. Don't beat yourself up when you make a mistake

Everyone on planet earth makes mistakes - it's basic human nature. Why should you be any different? When you stuff up, don't stress; just learn from it and move on.



6. Focus on the things you can change

There's no point wasting all your energy thinking about things that you can't change. Instead, have a think about some of the things that are in your power to control and see what you can do about those.

7. Do things you enjoy

If you do things you enjoy, you're more likely to think positively. Schedule time every day for fun and relaxation.

8. Celebrate the small stuff

You got up on time this morning. Tick. You poached your eggs to perfection. Winning. Celebrating the small victories is a great and completely legitimate way to feel better about yourself.

9. Be helpful and considerate

Being of help to someone is a great way to boost their mood, but you might also find that you feel better about yourself after you do something particularly excellent for someone else.

10. Surround yourself with supportive people

Don't hang around people who bring you down. Find people who make you feel good about yourself and avoid those who tend to trigger your negative thinking.



If you're really struggling

If you've tried putting these tips into action for a while and you haven't noticed any difference in the way you feel about yourself, talk about it with someone you trust, such as a close friend, family member, GP or mental health professional. Act now and get the necessary help before your low self-esteem turns into something more serious.



SELF DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR FEBRUARY 2018

Topic

How Approachable Are You? Building Relationships with Your Team

Date/Time

7th February 2018/6pm - 8pm

Venue

Banker's Club Kuala Lumpur (Amoda Building)
Jalan Imbi (Opposite Berjaya Times Square)



Topic

How To Support Employees' Learning Goals While Getting Day-to-Day Stuff Done?

Date/Time

28th February 2018/6pm - 8pm

Venue

Ventrax Management Sdn Bhd
No. 37 & 39 Jalan TPP5/17
Taman Perindustrian Puchong
47160 Puchong
Selangor Darul Ehsan

Timely Inspiration

Many people live without a sense of direction. Do not be like them. Focus on your future. Value your dreams. For yesterday is a dream, tomorrow is only a vision. The today we live makes every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well to this day. You need to develop a personal vision for your life if you are to live a quality life. We all have dreams. Dreams have changed the course of history. Write these dreams down. Walt Disney, before he built Disneyland said, "I have a dream." He made it come through. Now it's your turn to transform your dreams into reality.

Ask yourself the right questions. "How will I know I am making progress?" Set clear targets for yourself and push yourself to meet those targets. This target could be your expectations or desires which you must translate into clear statements of what you want to achieve.

Establish priorities. Absence of priorities leads to confusion of how to manage your activities. You have many important responsibilities and many urgent demands on your plate. You must make choices. What should you do first? What can wait? What should be left alone? Remember that many parts of your life are planned, but each part is planned in isolation. Prepare plans for what you want to achieve. Whether it is to put a man on the moon or to put your meal into the microwave, both require preparation, commitment, action and thought. Organise your resources – your talents, gifts, people, friends, family, home, possessions and your time.

(Extracts from "How long can you wait for results")

NEWS AT VENTRAX..... Venga's journey

Dr Venga this year has endeavoured into a journey to meet his clients from time to time. These are mainly the users of the planners for more than 15 years.....



Y'Bhg Datuk Radzali bin Hassan

TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR WORK LIFE ORGANIZED

Do you need to organize your work life? Are you frequently overwhelmed by the workload and information overload? Are you frustrated that you don't know how or where to start? Don't worry. We've all been there and help is possible. Let's look at the areas of your work life that need organization and tackle them one at a time.



Organize Yourself

Perhaps the most important of the time management secrets is to do the right things first.

It's easy to lose focus and spend a lot of time on things that are urgent, but not important. The trick is to stay focused on the important things and not waste your limited amount of time on anything else. Here are some ways to do that.

- **Read the 80/20 Rule**, also known as Pareto's Principle. This article explains the rule in detail and tells how you can use it to more effectively manage time and many different aspects of your life.
- **Get A To Do List That Works**. Somehow there never seems to be enough hours in the day to accomplish all the things on your to-do list. Here is the system that has worked for me. It can work for you too.

Organize Your Desk

Every day more information is thrown at you. Too busy to deal with it right away you let it pile up. Now you can fight back.

Organize Your Office/Cubicle

It doesn't really matter whether you have a corner office with an expansive view or are in a windowless cubicle, there are always things you can do to organize the rest of your office (beyond your desk as discussed above) that will help you be more productive.



- **Pick furniture that works for you**. I have always preferred to work standing up so a desk built into my cubicle that I could raise or lower electrically allowing me to work either sitting or standing was nice. I also couldn't work without my erasable white board. I make lists, sketch flow charts, and brainstorm on the board so I can erase and adjust as needed.



Organize Your Incoming Info

- Most email programs give you tools to manage your email and reduce clutter. This article will show you how to use them to get your email under control and avoid the email avalanche.
- When you've cleaned up your desktop, it can seem like a losing battle to keep it clean. But you can keep the paper flow on your desk from getting out of hand.



Organize Your Storage

There are two parts to this issue - what to keep and how to store it so you can find it when you need it.

- Filing systems
Mastering Your Filing System
- How Long to Keep State Tax Records - by State



Organize Your Team/Organization

- Up, down, or sideways, the better you manage the other people in your organization, the easier your job will be. You need to be able to successfully network, not just with your peers, but also with your bosses and your employees.
- Don't put The Right People in the Wrong Jobs
- Creating an org chart for your department or for an entire company is pretty easy. Here's a quick guide on How to Build an Org Chart
- We all want to get the Boss to agree when we present a request. Often he or she says "no". The problem may not be in what you asked for. Instead, it may be in how you asked for it.

WHAT IS ASSERTIVENESS?

It's not always easy to identify truly assertive behaviour. This is because there's a fine line between assertiveness and aggression, and people can often confuse the two. For this reason, it's useful to define the two behaviours so that we can clearly separate them:

- **Assertiveness is based on balance.** It requires being forthright about your wants and needs, while still considering the rights, needs and wants of others. When you're assertive, you are self assured and draw power from this to get your point across firmly, fairly and with empathy.
- **Aggressive behaviour is based on winning.** You do what is in your own best interest without regard for the rights, needs, feelings, or desires of other people. When you're aggressive, the power you use is selfish. You may come across as pushy or even bullying. You take what you want, often without asking.

So, a boss who places a pile of work on your desk the afternoon before you go on vacation, and demands that it gets done straight away, is being aggressive. The work needs to be done but, by dumping it on you at an inappropriate time, he or she disregards your needs and feelings.

When you, on the other hand, inform your boss that the work will be done but only after you return from vacation, you hit the sweet spot between passivity (not being assertive enough) and **aggression** (being hostile, angry or rude). You assert your own rights while recognizing your boss's need to get the job done.

Warning:

Assertive behaviour may not be appropriate in all workplaces. Some organizational and national cultures may prefer people to be passive and may view assertive behaviour as rude or even offensive.

Research has also suggested that gender can have a bearing on how assertive behaviour is perceived, with men more likely to be rewarded for being assertive than women. So, it pays to consider the context in which you work before you start changing your behaviour.



Assertiveness

THE BENEFITS OF BEING ASSERTIVE

One of the main benefits of being assertive is that it can help you to become more self-confident, as you gain a better understanding of who you are and the value that you offer.

Assertiveness provides several other benefits that can help you both in your workplace and in other areas of your life. In general, assertive people:

Make great managers. They get things done by treating people with fairness and respect, and are treated by others the same way in return. This means that they are often well-liked and seen as leaders that people **want** to work with.

Negotiate successful "win-win" solutions. They are able to recognize the value of their opponent's position and can quickly find common ground with him.

Are better doers and problem solvers. They feel empowered to do whatever it takes to find the best solution to the problems that they encounter.

Are less anxious and stressed. They are self-assured and don't feel threatened or victimized when things don't go as planned or as expected.

How to Become More Assertive

It's not easy to become more assertive, but it is possible. So, if your disposition tends to be more passive or aggressive, then it's a good idea to work on the following areas to help you to get the balance right:

1. Value Yourself and Your Rights

To be more assertive, you need to gain a good **understanding of yourself**, as well as a strong belief in your inherent value and your **value** to your organization and team. This self-belief is the basis of **self-confidence** and assertive behaviour. It will help you to recognize that you deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, give you the confidence to stick up for your rights and protect them, and remain **true to yourself**, your wants and your needs.



Tip:

While self-confidence is an important aspect of assertiveness, it's crucial that you make sure that it doesn't develop into a sense of self-importance. Your rights, thoughts, feelings, needs, and desires are just as important as everyone else's, but not **more** important than anyone else's.

2. Voice Your Needs and Wants Confidently

If you're going to perform to your full potential then you need to make sure that your priorities – your needs and wants – are met. Don't wait for someone else to recognize what you need. You might wait forever! Take the initiative and start to identify the things that you want now. Then, set goals so that you can achieve them.



Once you've done this, you can tell your boss or your colleague exactly what it is that you need from them to help you to achieve these goals in a clear and confident way. And don't forget to stick to your guns. Even if what you want isn't possible right now, ask (politely) whether you can revisit your request in six months time.

Find ways to make requests that avoid sacrificing others' needs. Remember, you want people to help you, and asking for things in an overly aggressive or pushy way is likely to put them off doing this and may even damage your relationship.

3. Acknowledge That You Can't Control Other People's Behaviour

Don't make the mistake of accepting responsibility for how people react to your assertiveness. If they, for example, act angry or resentful toward you, try to avoid reacting to them in the same way. Remember that you can only control yourself and your own behaviour, so do your best to stay calm and measured if things get tense. As long as you are being respectful and not violating someone else's needs, then you have the right to say or do what you want.

4. Express Yourself in a Positive Way

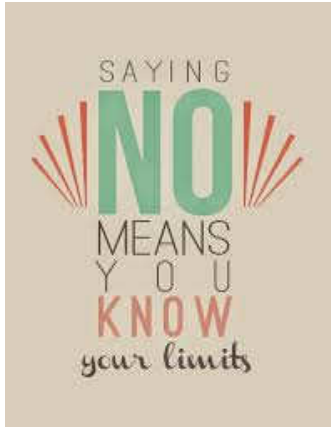
It's important to say what's on your mind, even when you have a difficult or negative issue to deal with. But you must do it constructively and sensitively.

Don't be afraid to stand up for yourself and to confront people who challenge you and/or your rights. You can even allow yourself to be angry! But remember to control your emotions and to stay respectful at all times.



5. Be Open to Criticism and Compliments

Accept both positive and negative feedback graciously, **humbly** and positively. If you don't agree with criticism that you receive then you need to be prepared to say so, but without getting defensive or angry.



6. Learn to Say "No"

Saying "No" is hard to do, especially when you're not used to doing it, but it's vital if you want to become more assertive. Knowing your **own limits** and how much work you are able to take on will help you to manage your tasks more effectively, and to pinpoint any areas of your job that make you feel as though you're being taken advantage of.

Remember that you can't possibly do everything or please everyone, so it's important that you protect your time and your workload by saying "no" when necessary. When you do have to say "no," try to find a **win-win solution** that works for everyone.

7. Use Assertive Communication Techniques

There are a number of simple but effective communication techniques that you can use to become more assertive. These are:



Use "I" Statements

Use "I want", "I need" or "I feel" to convey basic assertions and get your point across firmly. For example, "I feel strongly that we need to bring in a third party to mediate this disagreement."

Empathy

Always try to recognize and **understand** how the other person views the situation. Then, after taking her point of view into consideration, express what you need from her.

For example, "I understand that you're having trouble working with Arlene, but this project needs to be completed by Friday. Let's all sit down and come up with a plan together."

Escalation

If your first attempts at asserting yourself have been unsuccessful, then you may need to escalate the matter further. This means becoming firmer (though still polite and respectful) with the person who you are requesting help from, and may end in you telling him what you will do next if you still aren't satisfied.

For example, "John, this is the third time this week I've had to speak to you about arriving late. If you're late once more this month, I will activate the disciplinary process."

However, remember that, regardless of the consequences that you communicate to the person in question, you may still not get what you want in the end. If this is the case, you may need to take further action by setting up a **formal meeting** to talk about the problem, or escalating your concerns to Human Resources (HR) or your boss.

Ask for More Time

Sometimes, it's best not to say anything. You might be too emotional or you might not know what it is that you want yet.

If this is the case, be honest and tell the person that you need a few minutes to compose your thoughts. For example, you might say "Dave, your request has caught me off guard. I'll get back to you within the half hour."

Change Your Verbs

Try using verbs that are more definite and emphatic when you communicate. This will help you to send a clear message and avoid "sugar-coating" your message so much that people are left confused by what it is that you want from them.



To do this, use verbs like "will" instead of "could" or "should," "want" instead of "need," or "choose to" instead of "have to."

For example:

"I **will** be going on vacation next week, so I **will** need someone to cover my workload."

"I **want** to go on this training course because I believe that it will help me to progress in my role and my career."

"I **choose** this option because I think it will prove to be more successful than the other options on the table."



Be a Broken Record

Prepare the message that you want to convey ahead of time.

If, for instance, you can't take on any more work, be direct and say, "I cannot take on any more projects right now." If people still don't get the message, then keep restating your message using the same language, and don't relent. Eventually they will likely realize that you really mean what you're saying.

For example:

"I'd like you to work on the Clancy project."

"I cannot take on any more projects right now."

"I'll pay extra for you to do it."

"I cannot take on any more projects right now."

"Seriously, this is really important. My boss insists that this gets done."

"I cannot take on any more projects right now."

"Will you do it as a personal favor?"

"I'm sorry, I value our relationship but I simply cannot take on any more projects right now."

Tip:

Be careful with the broken record technique. If you use it to protect yourself from exploitation, that's good. But if you use it to bully someone into taking action that's against their interests, it can be manipulative and dishonest.

Scripting

It can often be hard to know how to put your feelings across clearly and confidently to someone when you need to assert yourself. The scripting technique can help here. It allows you to prepare what you want to say in advance, using a four-pronged approach that describes:

1. **The event.** Tell the other person exactly how you see the situation or problem.

"Janine, the production costs this month are 23 percent higher than average. You didn't give me any indication of this, which meant that I was completely surprised by the news."



2. **Your feelings.** Describe how you feel about the situation and express your emotions clearly.
"This frustrates me, and makes me feel like you don't understand or appreciate how important financial controls are in the company."
3. **Your needs.** Tell the other person exactly what you need from her so that she doesn't have to guess.
"I need you to be honest with me, and let me know when we start going significantly over budget on anything."
4. **The consequences.** Describe the positive impact that your request will have for the other person or the company if your needs are met successfully.
"If you do this we will be in a good position to hit our targets and may get a better end-of-year bonus."

reflections

