

Leadership Talent SOLUTIONS

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY: BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS

Defining Characteristics

- Knows which individuals and teams in the organization are critical to achieving the vision and mission of the organization.
- Effectively uses communication and negotiation skills to manage conflict and disagreements.
- Builds a network of contacts for mutual assistance and support.
- Knows how his/her department's output affects others in the organization.
- Successfully promotes the interests of own department throughout the organization.
- Understands the needs, goals and perspective of other organizations, colleagues, customers and suppliers.

Development Activities

- 1) Think about which individuals could provide help to your group. Brainstorm ways in which your group could be of service to those individuals. Leverage off of your new alliance.
- 2) Schedule a series of lunches with individuals in your organization with whom you need to build a new relationship or enhance an existing one.

- 3) Approach any conflict as a potential partnering opportunity. Think of ways you can help each other accomplish both sets of goals.
- 4) Hire a leadership coach to help you set and achieve personal goals for enhancing your relationship-building skills.
- 5) Improve the quality and quantity of the relationship time you spend with people inside and outside of work. Try to keep track of how much time you actually spend on relationship building.
- 6) Set up interviews with all of your internal customers or strategic business partners to learn more about how you can provide better service to them. Your goal is to ensure a strategic, collaborative partnership with each one of these customers. Listen to their points of view and their concerns, suspending your own judgments as you listen. Based on what you heard, make clear commitments for the future, letting them know what you realistically can and cannot do. Let them know when and how you will get back to them and be sure to follow through on any commitments.
- 7) Attend staff meetings for groups with whom you work frequently. Present your group's vision. Make sure you understand the vision and values of the other group.
- 8) Attend social functions with key people with whom your organization needs to improve relationships.
- 9) To build stronger relationships with your customers or clients, make sure you:
 - Have clear and consistent processes for handling customer/client interactions
 - Develop a motivated, customer-oriented staff that comes across as helpful and well informed.
 - Provide ways for your customers/clients to get hold of the right person the first time, and that they are then given accurate, timely information.
 - Enable your customers to easily interact with your organization in a way that suits them best, whether in person, by phone, by email or by accessing a website.

Immediate Tips For Building Relationships

- a) Show an interest in the other person –what they are feeling, concerned about, or would like to see happen.
- b) Have a sense of humor.
- c) Understand each other’s expectations of the relationship – where do each of you want the relationship to go? What do each of you want from the other?
- d) Know and understand yourself and what you can bring to the relationship – what can you offer?
- e) Appreciate your colleague, remember to say ‘thank you.’
- f) Don’t overreact to trivial things.
- g) Listen, listen, and listen. Do not try to change your business colleagues.

Training Resources

- “Managing for Commitment.” The Center for Creative Leadership, (336) 545-2810. Develops skills in evaluating interpersonal effectiveness and creating a climate of commitment.
- “Exercising Influence.” Barnes & Conti, Berkeley, CA. This experiential program provides feedback and practice on using a variety of influence style for building relationships. www.barnesconti.com/ppreg1.php

Recommended Reading

- Bellah, Robert, et. al. Habits of the Heart. New York: Harper & Row, 1996.
- A book that looks at the basic foundation of building relationships.
- Bjorsath, Lillian, Breakthrough Networking: Building Relationships That Last, Duoforce Enterprises, 2003.
- Bradford, David, and Alan Cohen. Influence Without Authority. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991.
- Bradford and Cohen have excellent strategies for working on building relationships that support getting business accomplished.

- Bush, John B. and Alan L. Frohman. "Communication in a 'Network' Organization." Organizational Dynamics, Autumn 1991. Explains the need to move away from "up and down" relationships and to broaden communication and partnering across departments and functions.
- Doz, Yves L. and Hamel, Gary. Alliance Advantage: The Art of Creating Value Through Partnering. Harvard Business School Press, 1998. Strategy experts Yves and Hamel reveal the strategic analysis, processes and relationship-building necessary to create and maintain successful alliances.
- Heil Gary, Parker, Tom, and Stephens, Deborah, One Size Fits One: Building Relationships One Customer and One Employee at a Time, John Wiley, 1999. Has received critical acclaim by CEOs for how to build relationships.
- Yankelovich, Daniel, The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict Into Cooperation. Simon & Schuster, 2001. A practical guide on how to use dialogue to build relationships.