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The Power of Relationships

The power of relationships is immense! I typically partner with clients to accomplish significant bottom line results on a wide variety of topics ranging from organizational change and culture projects to process projects such as service improvement, inventory reduction and lean programs to technical projects such as leveraging and implementing ERP systems, and there is one common element across all of them - the power of relationships. To add fuel to the fire, it also holds true for personal success.

As tempting as it might be for executives to think that "all will be fine" if only they implement the latest fad (even if it is a "good" fad such as lean, green or whatever will be the next fad, probably rhyming with "een"), technical bell and whistle or best practice process, don't fall in the trap! Although many of these might be valuable from one perspective or another (which is why it is so common to take a trip down this rabbit hole), the 80/20 to achieving bottom line results goes back to people. So, why waste so much time, money and resources on the "20" of the 80/20?

In addition to the traditional aspects of people (hiring exceptional people, valuing your employees, following a simple yet effective performance management process etc.), there is nothing more critical to success than developing and leveraging the power the relationships. Thus, a few tips include: 1) Take stock. 2) Build relationships. 3) Value your relationships.

1. **Take stock** - It sounds silly but it is not bad to start with simplicity - what relationships do you have currently? Which are those you consider long-term partners (customers, suppliers, trade association members, brokers, other people at your company or client, etc.) and/or people you'd like to stay connected to for the long term? Which are shorter in nature yet critical for a period of time? Which are already on a solid track? Which need help? Take a step back and think about how you'd prioritize? For example, as a leader, it is typical to spend the majority of your time on your non-performers yet your top performers deliver 80% of the results - where should you focus?
2. **Build relationships** - I'd be surprised if you didn't find someone you need to build a relationship with and/or a relationship to nurture. So, how do you begin? How about taking a step back and thinking of how you can provide value to your employee, your boss, your customer, your supplier or whoever you've identified? No point in starting with what you want - how is that interesting to the other person? It's not! Instead, ask compelling questions and listen - you'll learn everything you need to know in order to build a relationship.
3. **Value Your Relationships** - My neighbor across the street from my house passed away suddenly recently - such a nice man. 15+ years ago, I remember him always wandering by to check on things if need be, and he really liked and appreciated my parents as they were whirlwind gardeners (and he didn't even know what they did in the house!) - they came for a long weekend, and my garden/ landscaping could go from so-so to great in 8 hours flat! It makes you think - do you take your relationships for granted or do you value them? The same is true of your best, low-maintenance customer or supplier that you always overlook for your high-maintenance, low profitability customer.

There is only one nugget of wisdom which spanned every role in my 20+ year career without exception which ranged from roles of Production Planner to Project & Transition manager to VP of Supply Chain & Operations to Business Consultant, Entrepreneur and President of LMA Consulting Group, Inc. and APICS Inland Empire (and non-profits do throw a few wrenches into the mix) - it is the undeniable power of relationships. Think of it this way - who is there for you when the unexpected occurs? What are you doing to build and nurture your relationships?

Lisa's Tips: Job Search Tips

A significant percentage of my trusted and valued friends and business colleagues have gone through some sort of job transition or search in the last 3 years, and I've picked up a few tips I thought I'd share.

1. **Stand out in the crowd** - if you are one of 1,000 (which hasn't been unusual), there is NO other way to proceed. What can you do to differentiate yourself from the competition?
2. **Be there first** - by the time an ad shows up on-line (as newspapers are a thing of the past too), it is usually too late. Instead, you need to find the job openings before they show up in the typical places.
3. **The power of relationships** - undoubtedly, 80%+ of my contacts achieved success through relationships (a referral, a recruiter they kept in touch with, a business colleague who remembered them after receiving a note etc.)
4. **Linked In** - there is an amazing trend towards Linked In. Not only are recruiters searching Linked In, but it is a great repository for your profile, references/ recommendations, etc.
5. **Provide value** - the most successful job seekers provided value. One poured through search engines and sent appropriate leads to other colleagues searching for a job. One provided referrals. Etc.....

Recommended Reading

"*Patricia Fripp's Speaking School*" although not a book exactly, I thought it just as appropriate for this section. Patricia Fripp has several articles, CD's and/or events available on [her website](#), and I've found her to be an exceptional speaker, and so why not learn tips on a "must-have" skill in today's corporate environment from one of the best?

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