



The DJC Newsletter

Inspiring
Meaningful
Workplace Cultures



July 2024

The Leadership Secret Weapon Building Bonds That Boost Your Business

Welcome to the July Edition of the DJC Successful Thinking Newsletter!

This month, we're ditching the stuffy leadership stereotypes and diving into something way more impactful: building real relationships. Because, let's face it, effective leadership is about more than just managing tasks and barking orders. It's about fostering genuine connections with your team, your colleagues, and the people who matter to your business.

In today's fast-paced world, those relationships are your secret weapon. They're the fuel that drives your team's energy, the foundation for successful projects, and the key to building a reputation that lasts.

Think about it:

- Clear communication becomes so much easier when you've got a solid rapport with your team.
- Empathy and understanding help you navigate challenges and build a stronger team culture.
- Strategic collaboration flourishes when you have authentic relationships with stakeholders.

Ready to discover how to cultivate these powerful connections? Let's dive in and explore the strategies that will take your leadership to the next level!

Relational Leadership - The Power of Connection in the Modern Workplace

Gone are the days when leaders could simply rely on their authority and position to get results. In today's complex and interconnected world, leadership is less about command and control, and more about building bridges of understanding and collaboration. Relational leadership, a style that prioritizes genuine human connection, is proving to be a game-changer for organizations and individuals alike.

The Heart of Relational Leadership

At its core, relational leadership is about recognizing the inherent value and potential in every individual. It starts with empathy – the ability to truly understand and share the feelings of others. When leaders take the time to put themselves in their team members' shoes, they gain valuable insights into their motivations, challenges, and aspirations. This understanding fosters a deeper connection and allows leaders to tailor their approach to meet individual needs.

Equally important is authenticity. People are drawn to leaders who are genuine, transparent, and approachable. Sharing your own experiences and vulnerabilities (within appropriate boundaries) can create a sense of shared humanity and strengthen bonds. When team members feel that their leader is someone they can relate to and trust, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and loyal.

A Personal Journey into Relational Leadership

Early in my career, as a newly appointed Workforce Development Director for a government organization, I had the exciting challenge of building a division from the ground up. I carefully selected experts in training and development, recruitment, onboarding, and compensation – each with their unique skill set. While their professional expertise was undeniable, I quickly realized that to truly empower them, I needed to understand them as individuals.

I made a conscious effort to get to know each of my team members beyond their job titles. I scheduled regular one-on-one meetings where we discussed not only

CONTINUED PAGE 3



their work goals, but also their personal aspirations, their families, their values, and their passions. I learned about their dreams of writing a novel, their love of hiking, their struggles with work-life balance, and their desire to make a difference in their community.

These conversations created a deeper level of trust and understanding. My team members felt seen and heard, not just as employees, but as whole people. This newfound connection translated into increased engagement, creativity, and a willingness to go the extra mile. We celebrated individual achievements, supported each other through challenges, and built a strong sense of camaraderie.

As a result, our division flourished. We launched innovative programs, attracted top talent, and became known for our collaborative and supportive culture. I realized that by investing in these relationships, I had not only empowered my team, but I had also unlocked their full potential.

My experience as a Workforce Development Director taught me the power of empathy and authenticity in leadership, which I carried into my Human Resource Director positions. When leaders genuinely care about their team members' well-being and aspirations, they create a foundation of trust and loyalty. This, in turn, fosters a more positive and productive work environment.

By sharing this personal story, I hope to illustrate the profound impact that relational leadership can have on both individuals and organizations. It's a leadership style that not only drives results but also creates a workplace where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

The Lifeline of Relationships

Now I'd like to discuss how effective communication is the cornerstone of any strong relationship, and this is especially crucial in a leadership context. Active listening is paramount – truly hearing what others have to say, not just waiting for your turn to talk. Ask clarifying questions, summarize what you've heard, and show that you value their input. This not only builds rapport but also helps prevent

CONTINUED PAGE 4



misunderstandings and conflicts.

Clarity and conciseness are also key. Avoid jargon, buzzwords, and overly complicated language. Be direct and to the point, ensuring that your message is easily understood by everyone. Regular communication is another essential element. Don't just communicate when there's a problem or a deadline looming. Schedule regular check-ins, team meetings, and one-on-one conversations to keep the lines of communication open and foster a sense of connection.

More Than Just Teamwork

Relational leadership goes beyond simply assigning tasks and expecting results. It's about fostering a collaborative environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute their unique talents. This involves encouraging teamwork, creating opportunities for people to work together, and celebrating team successes.

Empowering your team is crucial. Give your team members the autonomy and resources they need to succeed. Trust them to do their jobs, provide guidance and support when needed, and avoid micromanaging. Recognize and appreciate their contributions, both individually and collectively. This not only boosts morale but also reinforces the idea that everyone's input is valuable.

Building Bridges with Stakeholders

Relational leadership extends beyond your immediate team. Building strong relationships with stakeholders – clients, customers, partners, and other key individuals – is essential for organizational success. Understand their needs, goals, and concerns. Look for areas of common ground and mutual benefit. Be transparent and trustworthy in your interactions.

The Ripple Effect of Relational Leadership

The impact of relational leadership is far-reaching. It creates a more positive and supportive work environment, where employees feel valued and empowered. This leads to increased engagement, productivity, and innovation. It also strengthens organizational culture, fostering a sense of shared purpose and commitment.

CONTINUED PAGE 5



In a world that's becoming increasingly complex and interconnected, relational leadership is more important than ever. By investing in authentic connections, fostering open communication, and prioritizing collaboration, you can unlock the full potential of your team and your organization.

Remember, leadership is not just about what you achieve, but how you achieve it. By prioritizing relationships, you create a ripple effect of positive change that extends far beyond the workplace.

**AS WE LOOK INTO THE NEXT CENTURY,
LEADERS
WILL BE THOSE WHO EMPOWER OTHERS –
BILL GATES**

The Leadership Secret That's NOT About Being Bossy

Ever had a boss who genuinely cared about you, your ideas, and your well-being? If so, you've experienced relational leadership firsthand, and chances are, you loved working with them.

Good news: recent research is proving what many of us have always suspected – this "people-first" kind of leadership isn't just nice, it's incredibly effective for the entire organization.

So, what is relational leadership, anyway?

Think less command-and-control, more collaboration-and-connection. Relational leaders prioritize building genuine relationships with their team members. They foster trust, value everyone's input, and create an environment where people feel safe to speak up and share ideas.

Why does it matter?

The research is pretty compelling:

- **Dream Teams:** Relational leaders create teams that actually work well together (shocking, right?). Less drama, more getting stuff done.
- **Happy and Productive Employees:** When people feel valued and supported by their leader, they're more likely to be engaged in their work, which means

CONTINUED PAGE 6

better results for everyone.

- **Adapting to Change:** Relational leadership builds trust, which is key when unexpected challenges arise. Teams are more likely to pull together and figure things out when they know they've got each other's backs.
- **Building a Strong Culture:** A workplace where everyone feels respected and heard? Sign us up! Relational leaders set the tone for a positive organizational culture.

The Multicultural Team that Crushed It

A recent study of temporary, diverse teams found that relational leadership was the magic ingredient that helped them collaborate effectively and achieve outstanding results. Even with different backgrounds, these teams thrived because their leader fostered a sense of shared purpose and connection.

What this means for *YOU*:

Whether you're a leader or aspiring to be one, here's the takeaway: focusing on relationships isn't just the "soft stuff." It's a powerful tool for boosting teamwork, innovation, and overall organizational success.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

- **Show genuine interest in your team members:** Ask about their lives, their goals, and their challenges.
- **Listen actively:** Really hear what they're saying, not just waiting for your turn to talk.
- **Give credit where it's due:** Recognize and celebrate individual and team contributions.
- **Foster collaboration:** Encourage teamwork and create opportunities for people to work together.
- **Be transparent and trustworthy:** Share information openly and be consistent in your actions.

Ready to up your leadership game? Give relational leadership a try – your team (and your organization) will thank you!

CONTINUED PAGE 7




July Reader Activity

The Connection Challenge

This month, we challenge you to strengthen one key relationship in your workplace. Here's how:

1. **Choose a Relationship:** Select a colleague, team member, or stakeholder you'd like to connect with more deeply.
2. **Schedule a Conversation:** Reach out and schedule a coffee chat, lunch meeting, or virtual conversation.
3. **Ask Meaningful Questions:** Go beyond work topics. Inquire about their interests, goals, or challenges they're facing. Listen actively and show genuine interest.
4. **Share Something Personal:** Open up about a hobby, a recent experience, or something you value.
5. **Follow Up:** Send a thank-you note or email after the conversation, highlighting something you learned or appreciated.

 **Bonus Points:** Repeat this exercise with a different person each week throughout July!



Why This Works:

By taking the initiative to connect on a more personal level, you'll be surprised at how quickly you can build trust, rapport, and a stronger working relationship. It's a small investment of time with potentially big rewards!

Share Your Experience: We'd love to hear how the **Connection Challenge** goes for you. Share your stories and insights on our social media channels using the hashtag **#DJCConnectionChallenge**. Let's create a community of leaders who prioritize meaningful relationships!



UPCOMING
EVENTS!

I'm
SPEAKING!

