

Listen to a trainer at the end of a management training session, summing up the importance of relationship building as a competency and reviewing ways of developing the competency.

Optional exercise Listen to the lecture and decide whether these statements are TRUE (T) or FALSE (F).

- 1 Relationship Building is the same as Team Building.
 - 2 One good idea to say “Good Morning” to three people you do not know.
 - 3 It is a good idea to target somebody that you want to build a relationship with.
 - 4 It is important to understand what is happening in the world so that you can talk about it.
 - 5 In a conflictive situation you should focus on the person.
 - 6 You should ask people open-ended questions.
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So as we have seen then, relationship building is not the same as team building. When we talk about relationship building we are talking about a competency in which we cultivate relationships both inside and outside the workplace, with individuals and groups.

I’m going to sum up by suggesting practical ideas of how you can all develop your relationship building competency ... tips that you can easily incorporate into your day-to-day lives in such a way that they will eventually become a habit.

I’m going to talk about informal relationships but as we discussed earlier – the ideas can be transferred to a more formal environment. First I’ll talk about initiating new relationships and then I’ll mention a few ways that you can practise developing existing relationships.

Let’s start off with the obvious. Common sense is always a good starting point. The first thing we should all do is to practise simple courtesies. This might seem like common sense to some people but in actual fact you’d be surprised at how few people do neglect these things. Set yourself a goal to say “Good Morning” to three people you normally wouldn’t.

We should also try to get to know colleagues outside the office. Ask people what their interests are. If you share an interest in tennis say, suggest a game. Plan an occasional social event with co-workers. It doesn’t have to be anything complicated, a coffee together or a picnic lunch for example.

Another thing you can do is to actually target somebody in your office – somebody you would like to know better. Make it your goal to talk to them. Small talk is fine. Listen to what they say and take notice of the information you learn about their interests. Make sure you keep yourself up to date on what’s happening in the world too. You won’t be very good at small talk if you don’t know about current affairs.

So let’s imagine that we have done these things and that we have started a few new relationships. What can we do to develop them further? How can we nurture the relationships so that they don’t just fizzle out or stay on a plain?

Well, for a start we should focus on a person’s good qualities and not on their deficiencies. Nobody’s perfect after all. We should also practise effective listening. We are all good at speaking but how many of us *really* listen? And people want to be listened to. They appreciate it and they respond. Try it!

If we are in a conflictive situation with somebody we should focus on the *issue* and not on the person. So we can hammer out a point of disagreement but then – shake hands and go for a coffee. Usually it is *an issue* that is the problem and *not* a person.

Choose somebody who you consider to be an acquaintance and make a point of learning something new about his or her interests. Think of some questions that you can ask them for when you next meet.

Finally, when you are talking to people with whom you have a relationship of some kind, get into the habit of asking open-ended questions. That way they’ll be able to give their points of view. Sometimes people just need to have the chance to say what they think ... and very often it doesn’t happen.

Answers: 1 F, 2 F, 3 T, 4 T, 5 F, 6 T