



Team Insights

– ENHANCE CULTURE AND INCREASE RETENTION THROUGH RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT –

Employees who feel frustrated about the relationship with management are more likely to have project delays, a lack of productivity and accountability, and increased absenteeism. McKinsey & Company listed the “relationship with management” factor as the top reason employees leave their jobs.¹ This can negatively impact retention and hiring costs and make it challenging to retain good talent. **Conversely, researchers found that organizations are more likely to perform financially well when employees have good relationships with management.**

This article outlines strategies managers can utilize to build strong relationships with their employees through our process of Emotional Connection, ultimately boosting retention and attraction rates, increasing employee engagement, and positively contributing to company culture.

Why Relationships

Over the years, we have had the privilege of working with various teams facing challenges in work relationships. Surprising as it may seem, **studies reveal that a staggering 85% of employees experience conflict at work, resulting in a massive loss of \$359 billion annually in paid hours due to workplace conflicts.**² The reality of workplace relationships cannot be ignored.

Why It Matters

When employees have poor relationships with their managers, it causes them stress, fear, and anxiety, which are leading causes of ill health and absenteeism. In a survey by Harvard Business Review, **75% of survey participants said that the most stressful aspect of their job is the relationship with management.**³ Building robust relationships, enhancing employee engagement, and leading cohesive and productive teams. For example, good relationships instill a sense of trust and confidence, with a clear set of goals and customer-focused thinking. As a result, employees start to feel empowered and confident to provide higher-level customer service.

Organizations that provide training and education to their managers on creating strong and connected relationships with their employees often experience vastly different results with employee engagement and productivity. **Most (74%) employees report being more engaged and effective when they have good relationships with their manager.** It's clear that good work relationships are crucial for productive and effective teamwork. Therefore, employees must act proactively to ensure managers create strong and nurturing relationships with their direct reports.

Help Managers Build Employee Relationships

It's crucial to build strong relationships where employees feel safe and connected to create a secure base for employees to grow and develop. Employers should consider the following strategies to equip managers with essential skills and techniques to navigate relationships effectively:



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1. Consistent support. Studies show that when managers respond consistently during times of stress, employees experience a felt sense of security and are more likely to move forward and be engaged at work. For example, when a team is working on a project, the manager depends on the team's collaboration and openness to expand on ideas and creativity. When employees don't feel connected with their manager, they tend to distance themselves from managers or become hyper-sensitive to feedback or other opinions; thus, the likelihood of their engagement and collaboration is reduced.⁵ Therefore, it's crucial that employers proactively nurture their relationship through multiple techniques, such as tuning into employees' emotions and being emotionally responsive.

2. Focus on emotional responsiveness. In the last decade, attachment theory and bonding science have shed light on the importance of emotional connection and responsiveness in manager-employee interactions. When managers can tune into their employee emotional experience and respond in a way where the employee feels heard, understood, accepted, then the employees perceive the manager as caring and concerned of their well-being. In contrast, managers who focused more on rewards and recognition were perceived as avoidant and not caring.⁶

3. Build emotional awareness. Manager-employee relationship plays a crucial role in employee retention, job satisfaction, and employee development. Educating managers on how to build and nurture their relationships through emotional connection, being more empathetic and compassionate, and responding to emotions, can ensure that employees feel connected and engaged. The best managers learn how to share their own emotions in a safe and vulnerable way. Doing so helps managers maintain emotional balance and build a closer relationship with their direct reports.



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CONCLUSION

When employees don't feel connected with their managers, employers may experience high rates of turnover, low employee engagement, and higher workplace conflicts. Proactively building and nurturing employee relationships that they matter, they are important, and they are valued. This can significantly impact employees' loyalty, trust, and connection with the company, ultimately improving the employer's bottom line.



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