



## **Solid Relationships The Key to a Successful Career**

Relationships are the one thing that everyone agrees makes or breaks a professional's career.

In today's economy – with changing career paths – the average manager will have more than five jobs before retirement. This figure alone makes a case for building solid relationships. Another interesting fact is that professionals are becoming more loyal to their profession than to the companies they serve.

That being said, accountants know the best accountants, marketing managers know the best marketing manager and when a company is in need of any talent, they go to their network to find the best for their firms.

Many of my clients want to know the keys to a solid relationship. The answer is simple and may resemble much of what we are used to seeing in our personal relationships. John C. Maxwell wrote in his book *Relationships 101* that respect, shared experiences, trust, reciprocity and mutual enjoyment are the keys to solid relationships.

Let's examine these qualities and rate our own relationships against these criteria. For many, it may come as a surprise that the relationships they have could use a little rescue.

### **Respect**

We all have been told that respect for others is important. The important thing is find something valuable – something worthy of respect – in everyone, even before they show respect to you. People know when you are sincere about your respect for them or if you are simply telling them one thing but then doing another.

Body language is a huge indicator of respect. Have you talked with someone and realized they are not paying attention to you? How about the other way around? It is not easy, and no one is expecting you to be a saint all the time, but by trying to find the good in everyone, you will feel better. You never know, some of the worst conversations turn into the best referrals.

### **Shared Experiences**

Shared experiences means spending time with others, most likely at more than one event.. The most important lesson to remember with shared experiences is that you have to invest in them to have them; there is no way

around it. Try and find the connectors that break down the barriers when meeting others. Think outside the box. Join a professional group or get involved in a community organization.

### **Trust**

Trust does not come overnight and it only occurs after you have had some shared experiences. Are you willing to give your valuable contacts and referrals to people whom you don't know? Most people would say no. Most people only give referrals to someone they feel will represent themselves well. When building trust, you know that an opportunity may not arise right away. It takes time.

While thinking about relationships and the keys to a solid one I am reminded of a quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes "Fame usually comes to those who are thinking about something else." This quote reminds me to do what I am passionate about and everything else will fall into place.

### **Reciprocity**

Don't you always want to help those who help you? And don't those that you help often want to help you in return? In stable relationships, reciprocity is important. If you do not have reciprocity in your relationships, you may want to look at the way you are forming them. Successful professionals realize that much like with clients, some relationships demand more effort and others need less. Ultimately it all works out and comes full circle. Don't keep tabs, just give. It will be a rewarding experience and empower you to reach new heights.

### **Mutual Enjoyment**

Sometimes it just boils down to liking those that you are with and realizing that not everyone will share your values. I often have clients evaluate the number of positive versus negative relationships they have. If they truly are doing what they love, the positives outweigh the negatives.

Use these five nuggets to evaluate the quality of your relationships. Don't be surprised if you realize that change is needed and it is you who needs to change, not the others in the relationships.

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