

Building Good Workplace Relations

The basis of a good working relationship is found where employees are able to function on good terms so that they can work effectively together. This comes about when employees value each other, create an understanding and appreciation of each individual, their role and functions.

In today's working places, there are signs of a prevailing hostile environments. For the most part, this is attributed to competition for the few available opportunities for job promotion, access to training and retraining, instances where individuals who bring personal issues into the workplace, bad attitudes and dispositions displayed by individuals. On the other side of the coin, there are employees who have dominant personalities, those who tend to assume power and authority which they don't have, those who attempt to assume roles that are not their responsibility and employees who tend not want to cooperate or to lend support.

What can present itself as an obvious problem, would be practices of management. These can range from the practice of favouritism to the exercise of poor management and decision making. Some managers make the cardinal error of not including employees in the decision-making process, planning and organizing within the organization. There is also the problem of the clash of egos to contend with and in some cases, the dictatorial behaviour of some managers. This neither inspires nor motivates the employees. As a matter of fact, it goes even further in that it lends to the creating of hostility, resentment and sometimes defiance. These factors can all contribute to workplace tensions which invariably lead to a strained relationship between colleagues, staff and management. This kind of environment is not conducive to workplace productivity, stability and the promotion of a harmonious working relationship.

It is for both managers and employees to recognize the importance of team work in the process of the building out of good workplace relations. Teamwork is essential to ensuring cooperation, the building of morale, the stimulating of productivity, embracing change and innovation. It is in the interest of every workplace to reduce the time spent and energies exerted in attempting to cope with the fallout from relationship issues. Be that as it may, there is always the distinct possibility that

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there will be negative relationships to contend with, particularly so, where there are individual colleagues who have dominant personalities to deal with. It cannot be overlooked that there are those who believe that they command a greater sense of importance within the organization than others and consider themselves as indispensable. In most cases, such persons are self-centered, glory seeking and often tend to look down on others.

It may not be easy to turn around this way of thinking, attitude and outlook of such individuals, but it is management's responsibility to undertake to chart the way forward in the building of a professional relationship at the workplace. The professional relationship must be built on trust and respect. Employees and management must see themselves to be working as team and therefore should respect one another. Both parties ought to recognize that open communication is fundamental to the building of a good workplace relationship. While management is expected to manage, there must be a sensible application to the top down management approach. Management ought to be aware that by not including employees in the decision-making process and not respecting their opinions, would be one sure way of ensuring that the confidence and trust of members of staff is not won.

Those who see respect as being one dimensional, must be rebuffed. Such persons are encouraged to understand that mutual respect is to be practiced. Basically, it requires that each person values who the other is and understands the other person's boundaries. If trust is to feature in the building of a good workplace relationship, the way to achieve this, is for each partner to place trust in the other, and to give each other the benefit of the doubt. Back stabbing and undermining will never help the cause.

Workplace tensions though not desired are inevitable. Tensions where there exists, tend to be problematic as they sour the workplace relationship. These can be managed, provided that individuals attempt to manage their boundaries, appreciate others for what they are worth, remain positive, refrain from gossiping, avoid being aggressive, intimidating, controlling, domineering, overzealous, inconsiderate and overtly critical of colleagues or subordinates.

It is reasonable to conclude that a good workplace relationship is formed within an organization where there is a genuine commitment shown on the side of management and that of the employees. This eventuates into employee loyalty. A commitment to professionalism is most important in the building of the relationship. Setting good examples, such as being punctual for work, impartial and not taking sides in a matter, separating one's business and personal life, are critical things to be observed.

Management must understand that it is in its interest to have a good workplace relationship, as this will contribute to workplace peace, harmony and productivity. However, this is all dependent on management's transmitting to its employees that it cares. It can do this by way of demonstrating through acts of recognition that employees are accepted, valued and appreciated, by giving autonomy to employees so as to allow them to use their initiative, delegating of responsibilities, and by sharing credit for accomplishments, ideas and contributions.