

Mastering the Art of Healthy Business Relationships

10 Don'ts that Destroy Life-Changing Connections at Work

By Van Moody

Let's face it, business relationships can be tough and some even adversely impact careers and the bottom line. Although relationships are a fundamental aspect of the human experience, our dealings with co-workers and superiors as well as clients and customers are often riddled with strife and consternation. Difficult workplace relationships are far more than a nuisance, as they can cause anxiety, burnout, clinical depression and even physical illness. What's more, highly toxic workplace affiliations can undermine your professional success and threaten your livelihood at large.

The bottom line is this: the right relationships can propel you to great heights of achievement; the wrong ones will tether you to mediocrity and mire you in disappointment. With this in mind, in striving for rewarding connections with others, it's essential to evaluate relationships intelligently: What *makes* a great relationship? How do you *keep* a relationship great? What are the *warning signs* of trouble? While it's so very easy to blame the other person in a distressed relationship, it's far more effective to consider and assess the situation objectively and build your Relational IQ.

What is Relational IQ?

Relational IQ is the mindset that helps us to better understand and control our professional relationships to maximize happiness and realize life-changing success. Relationships are an art, and most of us lack the skill and mastery to help break—or all together avoid—destructive patterns, disrespect, and deception. Far too many people also lack the ability to have productive connections with others—those that help you achieve goals, sharpen your mind, and generally uplift and enrich your life.

There are, in fact, fundamental principles for interacting with others in the complex and ever-changing dynamics of today's culture that, if adhered to, can best assure relational success in business. Choose not to and suffer the consequences.

Naysayers might ask, "Is it really possible to master relationships?" The answer is an unequivocal "yes"—if you're willing to learn skills and proactively apply tactical techniques, that is.

To help kick-start your Relational IQ so that you can better navigate, and begin to master, your own professional affiliations, here are 10 pitfalls to avoid when seeking to develop and manage positive business relationships that will result in greater success and overall enjoyment in the work environment:

1. **Don't hide:** While secret identities might be fun in the movies, a person who harbors secrets, and hides their fears, and beliefs from others will never be able to enjoy an authentic relationship. Being *real* and *authentic* with others and even making yourself vulnerable from time to time can foster tremendous emotional connections, including all-important trust, and forge unbreakable bonds.
2. **Don't tweak the truth.** Studies show that 10-30% of applicants admit to “tweaking” their resumes—that’s certainly no way to start an engagement with a new employer. Even small white lies will do nothing but undermine and compromise any relationship. Even slightly altering the truth is one of the most destructive forces that can permanently damage a personal or professional relationship. Keep your work relationships transparent and honest to build trust with your superiors, colleagues, and customers.
3. **Don't rush and miss critical red flags.** Understand that a relationship is a journey with changes in direction, twists and turns, and roadblocks along the way. It's imperative to pass through certain experiences and navigate through difficulties to learn from these situations and create a healthy outcome. Resist the desire to take shortcuts or race through certain aspects of a relationship. Even if it is painful or boring, embrace it, knowing that it offers a healthy purpose for the big picture of a relationship.
4. **Don't force it.** There's an old R&B lyric that says, “If it don't fit, don't force it.” Despite the poor grammar, it is quite insightful in its simplicity. Relationships that create positive synergy through mutual respect and shared values are worth your investment.
5. **Don't repeat the past.** The past should not define a person, and there is no reason to keep looking back. While previous events and actions might be a life lesson, the nature of every journey is to move forward. Don't repeat those actions that did not produce the intended results; instead, focus on new choices that will “effect” a more desirable outcome.
6. **Don't be a “taker.”**All relationships involve give and take, so it is important to recognize when each relationship could use more of a giving spirit. When we think about what we can do for others instead of what they can do for us, we get to the very heart of healthy, successful interactions. In a strong relationship, both people willingly give far more than they take.
7. **Don't stay in an unhealthy relationship.** Unfortunately, sometimes we make a poor choice and enter into relationships that will never be healthy no matter what actions are taken. Part of Relational IQ is knowing when and how to end a toxic relationship. If someone is not able to accept a change in the status or direction, is not loyal and stable under pressure or in the face of challenge, or had once been dependable but now is unreliable, these are strong clues that the relationship may not be worth saving. Whether it is a customer or client, a

colleague, or your workplace, don't let feelings of misplaced guilt or sympathy get in the way of making good personal choices.

8. **Don't lose personal power.** There are situations in the work environment where healthy relationships with unhealthy people are necessary. Developing a higher level of Relational IQ will help to identify those unhealthy people and harness personal power to not let those people hurt, disrespect, or transmit negativity such that you are affected by these attempts. Instead, personal power can be used to turn the tide on those unhealthy people and maintain your resilience and composure to stay the course.
9. **Don't forget who and what really matters.** The most valuable people aren't always the most visible. People of true value bring fulfillment, not frustration. All too often, those taken for granted or overlooked are veritable lifesavers or ones that silently help us achieve goals, provide encouragement, or offer important insights and connections.
10. **Don't accept everyone.** The people around you right now are setting the course for next week, month, year and possibly the rest of your career. Accordingly, there must be a qualification and selection process for those you choose to surround yourself with. Blocking the wrong people is the only way to make room for the right people who help you achieve your dreams, enrich your lives, and create a happy, satisfying experience.

Fundamentally, every relationship you have influences you. There are no neutral relationships; each one lifts you up or weighs you down. They move you forward or hold you back. They help you or they hurt you. Only by cultivating your Relational IQ—knowing which is which and how to turn the tide on those that are negative—can you then take the appropriate action. Not to be taken lightly, these actions and decisions can make the difference between a great, happy work life or one that is riddled with disappointment, failure, and regret.

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