

WHAT EVERYBODY OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT BUILDING KEY RELATIONSHIPS

A ONE THING GUIDE



RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

There's no question that our relationships matter. In fact, they take precedence over most things. In *The ONE Thing*, we talk about using the Focusing Question in all the important areas of your life—that absolutely includes the people that matter most.

The key relationships in your life likely fall into one of two categories: those in your professional sphere and those in your personal sphere. It's clear that to achieve extraordinary relationships, special attention is needed. Read on to find out how to better develop relationships and reap the benefits of close interpersonal connections.

"What's the ONE Thing I can do
FOR MY KEY RELATIONSHIPS such
that by doing it everything else will
be easier or unnecessary?"

IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL WORLD

Strong workplace relationships make a positive impact on you and your place of employment. At the organizational level, for instance, positive relationships often contribute to higher job satisfaction, greater commitment, and lower turnover. And at the individual level, they can contribute to lower levels of stress and higher levels of motivation.^{1, 2}

For us, the key relationships that stand out as those that can make your professional world a better place are coworkers and peers, supervisors, and mentors.

COWORKERS AND PEERS

We spend many of our waking hours at work. (8.9 hours a day on work and related activities for the average employed person to be exact!³) So it's essential to cultivate healthy relationships with peers that are with you in the trenches day in and day out.⁴

If you're looking for a mutually beneficial relationship with a coworker or peer, make sure you're following these two important rules:

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Rule #1: Create an Invested Interest in Your Success⁵

According to research by Jim Dougherty, a onetime CEO, entrepreneur, and lecturer at the MIT Sloan School of Management, the identifying characteristic of a great business relationship is when each individual has an “emotional stake” in the other's success.⁶ In other words, this person truly likes you as a person and what you bring to the table and, because of that, they want to see you succeed. It takes time to create a true rapport where the other person knows that if they go out on a limb for you, you won't let them down. At the core is a shared trust, which researchers say is “a critical success element to most business, professional, and employment relationships.”⁷ While the need for trust and emotional investment is most often seen in relationships with family and friends, we believe both qualities are equally meaningful in a work setting. Develop it by doing the following:

Earn their professional respect. Actions speak louder than words in the business world. Hard work and follow-through go a long way toward creating a professional persona that others want to be associated with.

Behave reciprocally. Strategic business relationships aren't one-sided. Identify ways you can help others get ahead in the workplace without them having to ask for your help. When you provide others with real value, they will want to return the favor.

Don't make the relationship strictly business. Ask questions, learn about each other, and share interests. Show that you care about them and not only about what they can do for you professionally.

Make time for the relationship. Whether it be over a quick coffee in the break room, a lunch away from the office, or a quick walk around the block, time block one-on-one interactions where you can get to know each other better. Regularly scheduled breaks from the grind, if only for a few minutes, go a long way toward finding a common bond and establishing emotional connections.

FRIENDSHIPS AT WORK

Gallup's infamous workplace satisfaction survey shows that only 32 percent of workers in the United States are engaged in their work. While these are telling numbers on their own, what's more interesting is the question they ask to uncover these results: Do you have a best friend at work? It may seem a little paradoxical at first, thinking that getting to know other people on a personal level will improve your ability to actually work, but researchers have found that if someone's actually engaged with their coworkers, they're more likely to also be engaged in their work.

Being engaged in your work is a good thing—it leads to overall job satisfaction and a more productive you. But how do we go about intentionally finding friends at work? We pulled together research that shows the six main reasons we seek out friendships in the workplace:

1. **Work Safety/Trust:** Friendships are formed because an individual is trusted by others with work-related issues or experiences.
2. **Missing Role:** Friendships are formed with those who remind the individual of themselves or an important person in their life.
3. **Sanity Check:** Friendships are formed because the individual receives validation and reassurance on their way of thinking.
4. **Work Values/Life Interests:** Friendships are formed because individuals share similar work values or life interests.
5. **Proximity:** Friendships are formed because of working within a close distance with others in a workspace.
6. **Instrumentality:** Friendships are formed because of a belief that it will reward the individual in some way, such as a promotion, recognition, or other reward.



Source: Dotan, Hilla. *Workplace Friendships: Origins and Consequences for Managerial Effectiveness*. *Academy of Management Proceedings*. August 2009

Rule #2: Maintain the Relationship Over Time⁸

Meaningful relationships do not exist temporarily in your professional world. When you put the time and effort into establishing a key business relationship, you cannot let it falter over time. Trust is equally as necessary for sustaining relationships over time as it is when establishing them.⁹

Take note of differences in personality. Much is said about understanding your own personality type to excel in the office place. However, it's equally important to understand the personality types of those people you interact with at work day in and day out. Understanding who they are will help you figure out what makes them tick and the best way to communicate with them.

Show your true self. Are you living a life worthy of others' respect? By sticking to your true north, there are no surprises in a long-term relationship. Others will main-

tain a steady understanding of your emotions, values, and intentions. Attempting to shield core aspects of yourself from another person may work for a short period of time, but as relationships grow, it becomes near impossible to hide foundational aspects of what makes you, you.

Continue the business relationship. Coworkers leave and job duties change. Maintain relationships with your peers even if you are not in daily contact anymore. When you are genuine and trustworthy, your relationships hum along consistently.



SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS

At some point in your professional career, you will likely find yourself on the path to being a boss. You'll see the vulnerability of those who report to you and you'll also experience others who look up to you for advice. Good supervisors can share the insights they've accumulated over the years with the people who look to them for guidance and can help these individuals avoid the pitfalls that they themselves have experienced.¹⁰

If you're looking to be the best you can be in a supervisory role, treat those who report to you the way you want your supervisor to treat you. Get to know the people around you and show that you genuinely care for their well-being, interests, and life outside of work. Then, follow these two noteworthy rules.

Rule #1: **Be Active and Transparent with Your Leadership**¹²

All too often, supervisors are thought of as purely result-seeking rather than human beings with feelings, thoughts, and concerns. When you have employees, show you truly desire for them to succeed. This means remembering to show your human side.

Set achievable expectations. Everyone wants to succeed at a high level, but if you aren't clear about what you want accomplished, you're setting others up for failure. Clearly communicate your mission as well as reasonable expectations and directions for getting the job done right the first time. The employee's skill set, company resources, and time frame need to be considered when setting expectations.

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Offer and accept constructive criticism. Constructive criticism is rooted in pointing out what is being done right, as well as what needs more work. Be specific, offer direction, and keep encouraging. If you've clearly stated your expectations for a job or project, it's up to the employee to deliver. Feedback should go both ways. Great supervisors should seek out constructive criticism for themselves, because they understand that improvement comes from knowing what needs to be worked on.

Be solution-oriented. When others are looking to you for advice and guidance, you need to put on your problem-solving hat. That means being able to fully assess a situation, think outside of the box, and not let negativity creep in if something doesn't go as expected. Whether it's a system malfunction, an unproductive employee, or even a mistake on your part, it's imperative that you correct mistakes as soon as they happen and get back on track.

Praise privately and publicly. Giving credit where credit is due is a crucial part of your role. Praise enables your employees to take pride in the work they do and it encourages them to be more productive. Praise should be made in one-on-one and public environments to show you appreciate the work being done and highlight the wins that are worth celebrating.

Rule #2: Be the Leader They Want to Become¹³

Good supervisors continuously look for ways to improve their own leadership skills, build rapport with their employees, and help them as they climb the professional ladder.

Do unto others. To get respect, you need to give respect. Nothing is more demoralizing for an employee than feeling like their supervisor doesn't respect them or appreciate their hard work. Treat every employee the way you want to be treated.

Set a good example and moral standard. If you expect the people who are looking to you for guidance to be honest, forthright, and caring, you need to lead by example. Set the tone for what's acceptable and be someone that others can look up to.

Be a mediator, not an instigator. Being a good supervisor means building bonds and creating harmony in the workplace. Engaging in work gossip, clearly favoring friends over other deserving employees, and not taking time to understand all sides of a situation will not earn you the respect of subordinates or peers.

Encourage professional development and delegation. Good supervisors aren't scared by the thought of other people advancing their careers and becoming the boss—in fact, they encourage it. Leaders surround themselves with people that have the skills they themselves lack and encourage employees to use these strengths to improve the business as a whole. Employees want supervisors who help them move forward in their career, so delegate tasks to employees that give them more responsibility so they can grow professionally.

Consider employees your wealth determiners. Remember the important role that subordinates play in your success—there is a mutual obligation that exists with this business relationship. You are one another's wealth determiners. You cannot achieve your vision without the right people to help you get there—and they depend on you to plot the course toward reaching a vision they are passionate about.

TRUST IN PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Researchers have found the evolution of three types of trust contribute to the development of a business relationship.

1. DETERRENCE-BASED TRUST

The lowest level of trust, it exists because there are rules in place that we believe others will follow to do the right thing.

2. KNOWLEDGE-BASED TRUST

Once you have enough information about someone to understand them well enough to predict their behavior.

3. IDENTIFICATION-BASED TRUST

When there is a mutual understanding of one another, each party can anticipate each other and act freely in each other's absence.

Where do your professional relationships fall and how can you move them all toward identification-based trust relationships?

Source: Shapiro, Debra L., Sheppard, Blair H. Cheraskin, Lisa. "Business on a Handshake." Negotiation Journal. Vol 8 (4). Oct 1992. pp. 365-377.

MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

The role of mentor is another key one you may seek out or become to others. Being in a position that others look to for guidance is not a new phenomenon. It's a role that has existed since virtually the beginning of time. In fact, the word mentor means "wise adviser" and stems from Greek mythology when Mentor was the friend of Odysseus and the advisor of Telemachus in *The Odyssey*.

For a beneficial mentorship, adhere to the following rule:

Rule #1: Be Respectful of Others' Time

This role is different than what you experience in the workplace because mentors, unlike supervisors, are under no obligation to help anyone. It's not part of a job description. Mentors, to the contrary, voluntarily take time out of their schedules to help others. This is time that must be used wisely.

Ask learning-based questions. Intelligent questions are essential to any mentorship relationship. For the mentor, a simple question like "What are your goals?" can mold the entire path the relationship takes. And for the mentee, questions like "What would you do if you were me?" and "Who do you know that I should know?" put the mentor in the position to both share their experiences as well as share the role with others that can similarly aid the mentee.

Match their kindness with your own. Author Meg Jay describes what she calls the Ben Franklin Effect in *The Defining Decade*, where Franklin wins the favor of a

fellow politician by asking to borrow a rare book, and then expressing appreciation for the favor. Franklin believed once you recognized someone's kindness, they were willing to do more for you. The same rule applies to mentorship. When you recognize a mentor's generosity, they will be more willing to invest additional time in your success.

Take action on advice. Show you value your mentor's advice and time by acting on the advice they provide. Whether it's reading a recommended book, reaching out to a suggested connection, or doing something else suggested by the mentor, demonstrate you are willing to heed the advice you sought out.

The importance of mentors in one's professional life should not be underestimated.

IN YOUR PERSONAL WORLD

The importance of the many relationships you'll experience in your personal life should not be underestimated. Studies show healthy relationships have a positive impact on everything from our self-esteem and mental and emotional health to our physical health.¹⁴

With all of the time we spend at work and in pursuit of other lofty goals, we're overly busy people. And when we're too busy, our personal relationships are punished. Counterbalance becomes a necessary tool for us to use in order to avoid the consequences of a big life.

Counterbalancing, that is, making sure the right things take precedence at different times, allows you to focus where and when it's needed. There will be times when the vast majority of your focus will need to be on work, but you can never neglect your personal relationships for too long.¹⁵ And when it comes to your most important relationships—those with your family—counterbalancing is essential.

When we're too busy, our personal relationships are often punished.

FAMILY IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Today we'll focus on making two specific types of relationships the best they can be: your spouse and your children. Spouses are the people you choose as family—and we feel they are worthy of some special attention. And, as for kids, we're hard-pressed to name a relationship that is more important than the one that exists between a parent and child. As we've said in the past, of all the mentorships in life, none is more important than the relationship between parents and their children. Truth be told, parenting is like being every type of mentor rolled into one.¹⁶

So if you want to get your personal relationships in tip-top shape, follow these relationship rules:

Rule #1: Constantly Improve Your Interpersonal Communication Approach¹⁷

Communicate their way. Learn what makes the important people in your life feel loved and secure, and focus on getting really good at those things. Discover how they feel safe, supported, and appreciated by listening to what they say and from picking up on subtle cues when you're with them.

Be aware of your actions. How you act, whether consciously or inadvertently, has both positive and negative consequences in your key relationships. Your behavior

also serves as an example to the people around you. Observe your behaviors from their perspective to improve your interactions.

Listen. Pay attention and respond accordingly in the moment. Whether it's a laugh, a deeper conversation, or an understanding hug, your relationships will respond positively when you create an environment of ultra-safe, nonjudgmental communication within them.

Rule #2: Acknowledge That Actions Speak Volumes¹⁸

Recognize the little things that go a long way. Spending time together doesn't have to be extravagant. What matters is using that time to focus on the person or people who matter. It can be as simple as determining a small daily task to do together (like a trip to the mailbox) or a meal around the kitchen table. The key is to find a moment or two in your day where you can commit to giving undivided attention.

Give the gift of experience. Experiences take on a whole new level of importance when you establish goals or projects to work on together. Whether it's reading a book, running a 5K, or signing up for a volunteer event, the main objective is to take part in and enjoy the experience together.

Take time off. Many people feel they can't afford to take time off because they're too busy at work. However, if you're investing too much time trying to get ahead at the office at the expense of family time, you're focusing on the wrong thing. The people that matter most in your life are your inspiration for succeeding and they can't be sacrificed in the process. Getting everything done on your to-do list might feel productive, but it's not the best use of your time if loved ones are left out for too long.

Invite them into your world. Let your spouse or your children get a glimpse of your professional world. Take them to work and show them what you're doing when you're away from home. It's a chance to explain the importance of finding a profession you're passionate about when you're away from family. Just seeing their picture on your desk can help your family understand that at the end of the day, you're working for them.



PUTTING *THE ONE THING* TO WORK FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Whether you have found your relationships with your coworkers, peers, employees, or mentors could use some extra attention, or that you aren't giving your personal relationships the focus they deserve, downloading this guide shows you're ready to improve your key relationships and acknowledge they could stand for some attention.

The first step is to ask yourself the Focusing Question. The next step is to put it into action.

Start where we began: the Focusing Question. Ask yourself, *"What's the ONE Thing I can do such that by doing it everything else will be easier or unnecessary?"* And make it about the relationship you wish to work on. Answer the question, and be prepared to wake up ready to take action on it tomorrow.

For my [key relationship],
what's the ONE Thing I can
do to [improvement you'd
like to make]?

Then, take the Goal Setting to the Now exercise on the next page and customize it for the relationship you wish to see an improvement in.

When you vocalize the relationship goal you'd like to achieve, your direction becomes clear. This is your ONE relationship goal. Then, backtrack your answers to the Focusing Question with what you'd like to achieve on each step of your journey.

Incorporating your ONE relationship goal into your life takes work, but establishing and maintaining strong bonds with the people that matter in your professional and personal life are worth the effort. By starting each day with the Focusing Question, this approach will become a habit. Set up reminders to work on that ONE relationship goal, whether it be a calendar appointment or note to meet a coworker for coffee, train for a 5K with a friend, or cook a family dinner. And, finally, let the people around you know about your Big Goal and encourage them to help you succeed in reaching it.

Now it's time to take the necessary steps to get your professional and personal relationships where they deserve to be. Once you determine how your key relationships can improve, hold yourself accountable and take ownership of the outcomes. Your relationships will thank you.

EXERCISE

GOAL SETTING TO THE NOW FOR KEY RELATIONSHIPS

SOMEDAY GOAL:

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I want to do someday to [_____]?

FIVE-YEAR GOAL:

Based on my Someday Goal,

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I can do in the next five years to [_____]?

ONE-YEAR GOAL:

Based on my Five-Year Goal,

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I can do in this year to [_____]?

MONTHLY GOAL:

Based on my One-Year Goal,

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I can do this month to [_____]?

WEEKLY GOAL:

Based on my Monthly Goal,

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I can do this week to [_____]?

DAILY GOAL:

Based on my Weekly Goal,

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I can do today to [_____]?

RIGHT NOW:

Based on my Daily Goal,

For my Key Relationships, what's the ONE Thing I can do right now to [_____]?

Source: Adapted from Keller, Gary and Papasan, Jay. *The ONE Thing*, 2013.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read *The ONE Thing* and refer to the resources at www.the1thing.com to develop the insights, skills, and habits that will help you take each step of your journey with power and passion. Find up-to-date information on seminars and coaching programs, as well as exclusive ONE Thing tools that will keep you on the journey you want to be on. It matters. It's your life.



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