

3.1 Relating and Networking

Establishes good relationships with individuals and staff; relates well to people at all levels; builds wide and effective networks of contacts; uses humour appropriately to bring warmth to relationships with others.

Positive Impact:

- Individuals are quickly made to feel at ease
- Long-term relationships are established with useful contacts
- Relationships are built with a broad range of individuals within the organisation
- Good relationships are maintained across various organisational levels
- Disagreements are managed with tact and diplomacy
- Humour is used effectively to reduce tension and stress

Negative Impact:

- Individuals are not made to feel comfortable
- Working relationships with colleagues and clients are not well established
- Effective networks of individuals are not established, both internal and external to the organisation
- Peers and/or more senior/junior staff are not well related to
- No action is taken to reduce anger or frustration in colleagues and clients

To develop this competency:

- Become involved in cross-functional projects and interdepartmental committees, or establish joint working parties with other departments on common issues or concerns. Research a department that you consider particularly effective in delivering results. Identify the key strategies responsible for their success, and, with your team, consider how you could adopt these ideas within your own group.
- Set a specific target to increase your network of people within the organisation, and make definite plans to increase your interaction with particular individuals.
- Use social gatherings to build relationships with a broad range of individuals within the organisation. Foster a sense of shared success and cooperation by inviting managers from other departments to events celebrating your team's achievements. Likewise attend celebrations in other departments when appropriate.
- Identify key people within your organisation with whom you should build more effective and productive relationships. Identify how they impact on you and your department, and how they could be of benefit to you (and you to them). Contact them, and develop a strategy to maintain the relationship.
- Raise your profile within the organisation by being involved in networks wider than your normal scope of interaction. Seek opportunities to meet and interact with a broader cross-section of the organisation. When appropriate spend some time socialising with colleagues whilst at work.
- Practise developing rapport and putting people at ease in social situations. Use questions to show your interest in them and their work. If 'small talk' is a real problem try to mix and interact in small groups.

- Develop the skills of an effective mentor. Contact the relevant person in your organisation to identify programs in mentoring, coaching, or communication training, and enrol if necessary.
- Spend time with each member within your team and get to know his or her background, interests, pastimes and career aspirations. Be willing to share information about yourself in order to build the relationship.
- Identify colleagues who have common interests and agendas to you, and seek to build alliances with them in pursuit of your shared goals.
- Monitor your interaction patterns with specific people over a period of time. Analyse the results in terms of the quality of the relationship, the focus of the relationship and the power relationship. If required develop strategies to address any shortfalls. Identify and strengthen the relationships that are mutually beneficial, broad in focus, supportive and based upon a sense of partnership and equality.
- Practise introducing yourself to potential customers. Consider your body language, your voice tone and what you say in the opening phase of meeting someone for the first time. Seek feedback from a friend on how you can improve the initial impression you create.
- Consider your peer group, and rate each individual in terms of their personal impact. Try to determine why certain people have a greater level of credibility or visibility amongst the group, and note any specific behaviours that serve to increase or diminish their overall level of impact. Assess your own level of impact against your peers, and take steps to build your influence if necessary.
- Identify instances when you may have intimidated or overwhelmed others by virtue of your dominant or forceful style. Assess whether others may perceive you as 'loud', 'pushy' or self-centred at times, and consider how you may modify your style accordingly.
- Consider how you emotionally respond to situations of conflict or perceived personal attack, and if your response may negatively impact on your behaviour at times. If necessary discuss this issue with a mentor or behavioural coach in order to develop more effective reactions and conflict management strategies.