

THE ESSENCE OF RELATIONSHIP IN THE WORKPLACE

RAFIU, JIMOH ANGO

Department of Library and Information Science,
School of Communication and Information Technology,
Federal Polytechnic Offa,
Kwara State.

Abstract

This paper takes a bird eye's view on the value of relationship in the workplace and emphasizes the need for a better relationship between employees and management. It also exposes the fact about human relationship as a process of training employees or between employees and management. This is with the aim of having a high level understanding of some of the ways human relation can impact the cost, competitiveness, and long-term economic sustainability of the nation through the secretarial administration professionals toward nation building. The methodology employed for this study is purely documentary in nature. Information was gathered through literature search of related sources on values of human relation to organizational settings. The study uncovered that human relations in the work place are a major part of what makes the business of an organisation to thrive, hence, the secretarial practitioners are admonished to frequently work together on projects, communicate ideas and provide motivation to get things done. The study also concluded that without a stable and inviting workplace culture, difficult challenges can arise both in the logistics of managing employees and in the bottom line. The study recommended that good work relationship is the only panacea to achieving professional reputation within an organisation. It allows workers to broaden their network of both personal and professional friends and contacts which is the key to a successful career management.

Introduction

Relationship is the way in which two or more people, group or countries behave toward each other or deals with each other. In this context however, the relationship that exist between individual members of a group such as institution, organizational settings will be the focus of this discourse, with a particular reference to the professional secretarial staff in polytechnics in Nigeria. Be it personal or professional, one is bound to build relationships in the workplace. However, the catch is how one handles these relationships as they can lead to success as well as downfall of an individual in his career. Here are a few aspects about relationships that one should consider so that bonding with a colleague does not boomerang.

It is a truism that workplace is where we put to use all the business acumen and skills that we acquire through training and experience. However, all of us know that work is not just numbers and negotiations. It is so much more about relationships - relationships with colleagues, with the boss, other employees and also with business partners. Besides relations that are based purely on professional grounds, getting emotionally close to co-workers at workplace is also a common occurrence. This should not come as a surprise. Given the fact that we spend so much time at the workplace and (at times) face difficult situations along with our colleagues, emotional closeness is bound to happen.

Camaraderie at workplace is desired by every management. However, romantic relationships with one's co-worker are still largely viewed as being against workplace ethics. This study will first deal with relations in the workplace that are purely platonic and then with those that cross the boundaries of being "just friends". Your performance at the end of the month may depend upon the targets achieved. However, it's not just your skills that decide your success. Your personality and the way you are perceived as a person in your workplace goes a long way in getting you the opportunities that you need to prove yourself and also to succeed in workplace. The following are a few tips that would help one in maintaining a positive image in the workplace.

Types Of Relationship

Dynamic Relationships

Be Professional but Approachable: Obviously you are at your office to work. Make clear to everyone that work comes first for you. However, don't be aloof. If others need help and you can help them, make that extra effort. However, stay away from delving into things that are of a very personal nature. This is a good way of building relationships that is enduring that will stand one in good position

Set Your Boundaries: Being approachable may be taken by many that they can come to you with any problem that they have. As long as the problems are professional, it's okay. However, be careful of the personal ones. Give a clear hint to your co-workers that you are approachable, but only up to a limit. Maintain your professional ethics. Guard your privacy carefully and stay away from personal affairs of others. Striking the right balance between professional and personal aspects is the mantra for success at workplace.

Stay Away from Gossip: Workplace communication is desirable. However, office gossips are very harmful for both an organization as well as for its employees. Indulging in gossip is good time - wasted. If ever a talk steers towards gossip, try to turn it towards a positive direction. If that does not work, politely excuse yourself out of the conversation.

Know Who to Trust: Despite having said about maintaining a professional

relationship in the workplace, everyone needs to share his/her thoughts that may not be absolutely of a professional nature. Each one of us has a friend in our workplace with which we share a close bond. However, before deciding on such a person, be sure that he is not one who would show sympathy to you and then talk about you behind your back. There are a lot of people in the workplace who wait on opportunities to tarnish the image of their co-workers for personal gain.

Volunteer for Extra Responsibilities: Some unexpected work (by this is meant only those that are of professional in nature) always comes up at the workplace. If you think you can solve the problem, volunteer to help, even if that means that some extra efforts have to be made. However, be sure that the extra responsibility won't hurt your targets. This attitude will surely make your seniors perceive you as an asset for the organization.

Romantic Relationships

A recent survey has shown that almost one-third of the working population in the United States is in a relationship with their co-workers. Well workplace relationships are inevitable. But how safe or worthwhile are they? The first drawbacks of such relationships are the effects on both the parties in case such a relationship fails. Workplace break-ups can be quite disruptive, personally, no doubt about that. But what raises a grave concern is that such break ups can be harmful for one's career as well. There are a number of instances when one has had to give up a lucrative job because of break up with a colleague. No wonder then, that most seasoned professionals always advice to keep professional and personal lives separate.

Not to forget office gossip! Although a couple may be absolutely committed to each other, office gossip can definitely take a toll on the most sincere relationship. Besides this, there is the added danger of being perceived as a flighty, foolish and irresponsible person as affairs in office are still largely considered as inappropriate relationships at the workplace. In many cases for those who date their senior, success is often viewed more as a result of favor from their partner rather than their personal efficiency. One needs to be careful about these affairs as instances of using consensual relationships as charges of sexual harassment, are not unknown.

In case you are attracted to someone in the office, think carefully how much you feel for him/her. If you really think that the relationship has to be taken further, be sure that you both agree that in office, the relationship between the two of you will be strictly professional. It may seem absurd, but it would be wise to consider if working together would be possible in case the relationship does not work out. Be it professional or personal, relationships in the workplace are inevitable. It is very important to portray the right image in office as that can ensure one's success. On the other hand, getting embroiled in an emotional relationship and inability to handle it can spell disaster for one's career.

Workplace Relationships

These are unique interpersonal relationships with important implications for the individuals in those relationships, and the organizations in which the relationships exist and develop. Studies have showed that workplace relationships directly affect a worker's ability to succeed. Because workers are spending an average 50 hours a week in the workplace, these long work hours are resulting in the formation of workplace friendships. These connections can be both positive, and have the potential to become harmful. Since these relationships are becoming more common I will briefly show the overview of relationships in the workplace.

Workplace Friendships

Friendship has been defined as a "voluntary interdependence between two persons over time that is intended to facilitate social-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection and mutual assistance". According to Lee and Park (2000), friendships that develop in the workplace called blended friendships.

Gordon and Hartman (2010) reported that people spend approximately 50 hours per week in the workplace. Because so much time is spent at work, people often develop friendships within the workplace. Individuals are more likely to have more workplace friendships than any other kind of relationship in the workplace (ex: boss-subordinate, mentor-protégé).

Blended friendships can have a positive impact on an employee's productivity. Workplace friendships lead to more cohesive work groups, more satisfied and committed employees, greater productivity, greater goal attainment, increased positive feelings about the organization, can make both good and bad jobs better, and are a factor in preventing employee turnover and employee desire to leave the company. However, although workplace friendships tend to have a positive impact on the employee's overall production and attitude toward the job, they can also lead to competition, envy, gossip, and distraction from work related activities because there is a more tightly webbed emotional, and occasionally physical, connection that goes beyond a typical co-worker relationship.

Boss Subordinate Relationships

The Hawthorne effect grew out of a series of studies. The theory states that participants will act and react in different manners because they are aware they are being watched. Specifically in McGregor's X and Y theory states that the manager's approach affects the outcome of the worker. "If you give your employees even a little attention, they will equate that attention to "special" treatment that is different from the treatment that others receive." The basic understanding to boss subordinate relationships lies in the foundation that the habits of the managers hold the power to create productive or counterproductive environments Kohn and O'Connell point out 6

major habits of highly effective bosses. Habit #3 Following 'Golden Rule'.

This habit is fundamental in many relationships stating that you should treat others as you wish to be treated. If workers know that their bosses are treating them with the same respect and dignity then they feel less of a condescending subordinate relationship. Habit #4 Maintaining Proper Boundaries. The key to this habit is judgments and self-control. When speaking of this habit Kohn and O'Connell go beyond the obvious inappropriate manners and into those "grey" areas that actually leave some boundaries blurred.

Another theory that explains boss-subordinate relationships is Workplace Relationship Quality and Employee Information Experiences,. This study was conducted by Patricia Sias, and points out the theory of Leader-Membership. This theory is believed to be the most widely accepted theory regarding superior-subordinate relationships The main point being that employees with the best access to information are the most likely to succeed. Furthermore, employees with a higher quality relationship with their supervisor have more access to such information and will be more likely to succeed in the workplace.

The Importance of Human Relations in the Workplace

Relationships between employees in the workplace are important to increasing employee turnover, productivity and fostering creativity. Relationships between employees and management are of substantial value in any workplace. Human relations are the process of training employees, addressing their needs, fostering a workplace culture and resolving conflicts between different employees or between employees and management. Understanding some of the ways that human relations can impact the costs, competitiveness and long-term economic sustainability of a business helps to underscore their importance.

Basics

Human relations in the workplace are a major part of what makes a business work. Employees must frequently work together on projects, communicate ideas and provide motivation to get things done. Without a stable and inviting workplace culture, difficult challenges can arise both in the logistics of managing employees and in the bottom line. Businesses with engaging workplaces and a well-trained workforce are more likely to retain and attract qualified employees, foster loyalty with customers and more quickly adapt to meet the needs of a changing work environment.

Improving Retention

The quality of workplace relations is critical to employee retention. Employee retention may seem trivial especially in a workplace that is used to a high turnover -- but managers must remember that turnover is financially very costly. Every new

employee requires a substantial investment of time and energy in their recruitment and training. In addition, severing ties with old employees can sometimes be challenging, especially if the circumstances are not particularly amicable. Making sure quality employees remain interested and engaged in the institution requires patience, compassion and flexibility, but can actually make the institution more financially sound.

Motivation and Productivity

Workplace relationships provide a source of employee motivation, which is important to maintaining productivity. Employees who are interested in their work and in the well-being of other employees tend to be more productive than those who are not. This productivity pays obvious financial dividends to the organisation, as it can get more done in less time with fewer costs. Building relationships by both recognizing an employee's value to the organisation and a concern for their needs often go a long way.

Fostering Creativity

The modern business environment often rewards businesses that are able to quickly develop products that meet changing consumer needs. In some industries such as technology, for example employees' ability to come up with effective new ideas is often the difference between the entire company's success and failure. According to Sallyport Magazine (2010) research shows that creativity is based to large degree in social interaction. Employees' creativity is often dependent on their ability to communicate with other employees and share ideas. Without quality workplace creativity it is likely to affect the desire positive outcome of the institutional goals.

Importance of Relationships in the Workplace

Many full-time employees spend more of their working hours with co-workers than they do with their spouses and families. As such, it is important to allow employees the opportunity to build quality relationships with their co-workers. This can be accomplished through the organization of informal get-togethers away from work, as well as by encouraging employee interaction. There are many benefits that can be reaped by the institution who allow and foster good relationships in the workplace.

Improved Teamwork

When people know one another well, they are much more likely to work well together. Watch teams who have a new member; typically, that new member will remain somewhat isolated until everyone else gets to know her. If you have several

employees who are barely on speaking terms and you throw them together into a project, it will take some time for them to break the ice and begin to work well together. Conversely, team members who already know, like and respect each other may be more willing to collaborate for the betterment of the project.

Improved Employee Morale

Given how much time employees spend in one another's presence, the development of good relationships in the workplace can increase employee morale. Coworkers become friendly and look forward to spending time with one another while they do their jobs. This may also make work more fun for these employees with the end result not only being a more positive workplace but also improved overall morale. Conversely, a stiff and unfriendly work environment will have the opposite effect.

Higher Employee Retention Rates

When employees feel connected to a company, whether it is because they share the same vision as the company leaders or they feel as though their fellow co-workers have become like family, they will be much less likely to want to seek employment at another company. Friendships take time to build, especially quality friendships, and the prospect of having to start all over may help convince some employees to stay right where they are.

Increased Productivity

All of these elements add up to one common result: happy employees who are naturally more productive. Overall, while you may have some issues with employees becoming too friendly and wasting time together, a happy and well-adjusted workforce is a productive one. By feeling more connected to their place of employment, workers naturally want to try harder to help keep the company going and to help it grow.

Co-workers spend a good deal of time together, especially in team environments. It is unavoidable for employees to eventually develop personal relationships among themselves in addition to their formal co-worker relationships. Workplace relationships can be a good thing for institutional success in a number of ways, when they realize the importance of forming workplace relationships are better equipped to develop high-performance teams.

Team Cohesiveness

Team cohesiveness relies on mature and professional relationships. People tend to function more smoothly together when there is a personal component to their relationship. Employees may hold back in group discussions with people they are unfamiliar with; good ideas and positive conflict can be stifled in the interest of politeness and professionalism. Team-building activities, shared after-work

experiences and problem-solving successes can all contribute to team cohesiveness, strengthening workplace relationships in the process.

Psychological Factors

People have a psychological need to be accepted as a part of group or to feel a sense of social belonging. Workplace relationships can enrich employees' experiences at work by satisfying their psychological needs for affiliation. Employees who struggle to form personal relationships with co-workers can find their morale decreasing on the job, and they may be more likely to leave a job than employees who look forward to seeing friends each day.

Social Life

Full-time employees spend a good deal of their lives at work and may see their co-workers more often than personal friends or family members. Without forming personal relationships at work, employees can find it difficult to find friends in their home lives. Because of this, it is important to blend home and work life a bit to develop lasting personal friendships with co-workers. Current co-workers can form personal relationships that last for years after the employees' formal work relationship ends.

Personal Support

Work life does not always deliver positive experiences, and employees may find themselves needing others to support them during stressful or discouraging times on the job. Employees who form personal relationships at work are more likely to rebound quickly from things such as negative performance reviews or gossip around the office.

By the same token, it is also nice to have people on your side to celebrate work-related victories, such as promotions and pay raises. Workplace accomplishments can turn into memorable experiences with a group of friends at your side. Even birthdays spent at work can become memorable occasions with good friends by your side.

The Value of Good Relationships in the Workplace

Good workplace relationships play a significant role in achieving job satisfaction, career success and career advancement. Good workplace relationships can help you establish your professional reputation within a company and also within the industry. Good workplace relationships allow you to broaden your network of both personal and professional friends and contacts. Good workplace relationships are essential to successful career management.

Job Enhancement

Maintaining good workplace relationships does much to increase a person's job

performance, job satisfaction, chances for promotion, education opportunities and career success. Many workplace relationships evolve into positive and supportive friendships that make the workday enjoyable, creating a pleasant working environment. Many workplace relationships extend beyond the workplace and become a part of a person's private life as well.

Potential links

Consider every good workplace relationship you maintain as a potentially beneficial link to managing your career. Every person you work with or cross paths with in the workplace, past, present and future, from supervisors and co-workers to friends of supervisors and co-workers, has the potential to play a role in your career, serving as a potential link both to your career success and to your career advancement.

Network connections

Networking is one of the most effective career management tools you will ever have at your disposal, invaluable when job searching, seeking promotions, making career advances or considering a career change. Networking is a great way to meet and socialize with people both at work and outside, people with similar career interests and others with different career interests, all who may be of value to you in the future and throughout your professional life.

In addition to networking with people at the workplace, also make an effort to socialize with them outside the workplace. Attend mutual professional organizations, alumni associations, job hunting support groups and other events, where you can continue to maintain your workplace relationships while also making new contacts through mutual friends and co-workers.

Hidden Job Market

Establishing good workplace relationships also gives you access to the hidden job market, those job opportunities that are not advertised or made public but are filled through word of mouth and personal referrals. Many jobs today, an estimated 75-85 percent, are filled through the hidden job market. If you are considering a change of company or career or are seeking advancement in your present company, good workplace relationships can serve you well. Your relationships may have inside information and connections regarding job opportunities you would never have access to without their help.

Workplace Mentors

Workplace relationships often include mentors, traditionally superiors in the company who take employees under their wing. A relationship with a mentor can be formal or informal. The role of the mentor is to teach, guide and support the men- tee with the goal of enhancing his or her job skills and job performance, always encouraging the men-tee to achieve his or her professional potential. Mentor relationships make invaluable workplace relationships. Many mentor relationships continue long after

the men-tee has left the company.

Reference Sources

Workplace relationships are an excellent source for getting references. A strong workplace relationship, whether it is with a supervisor, a mentor or a co-worker, can be a potential reference, someone you can count on to write a glowing letter of recommendation when you need one. A person who can vouch for your integrity and superior job skills can often make the difference in whether or not you get a promotion or job offer.

Never burn any bridges. Maintain good workplace relationships with everyone you work for or with, no matter how high or how low on the career ladder, if you transfer to a new department within your company or if you take a position at another company, always make an effort to maintain your established workplace relationships. You never know when those relationships may be of value to you.

Conclusion

To develop effective working relationships with diverse people at work? Start with similarities, not differences, among people when you build relationships. Diversity in the workplace adds a special richness, but also special challenges. As a human resources professional, manager, supervisor, coworker, staff member or business owner, effective diverse work relationships are critical for your success. I have emphasized honoring and appreciating the diverse needs, skills, talents, and contributions of people in recent years. While this is critical, don't let the pendulum swing too far in this direction. We are in danger of forgetting to honor and appreciate our similarities. By acknowledging the similarities and likenesses, we create a starting point for understanding and appreciating diversity in the work place.

In addition if an organization's strategic plan is the body of the organization, and if it's guiding principles are its soul, then the relations between and among its employees, members, leadership - and indeed all stakeholders - is the heart of the organization. If an organization's employees do not join in working collaboratively to realize the vision of an organization, they cannot be expected to contribute their maximum effort and work efficiently to reach its goals and objectives. If the relations between directors, managers and non-managerial employees is poor, teamwork and cohesive leadership will suffer and once again, an organization's ability to reach its goals and objectives within the time frame specified will be compromised. If an organization does not keep a check on the evolving needs of its clients or members, it will soon become redundant and vulnerable to other organizations that will step in to fill the need.

You can get a whole lot more work done -- and do it far more efficiently -- when you

work with a group. However, for this concept to have any practical application, you have to get along with your coworkers. You don't have to be Boss always, but you need to be amicable on both at professional and personal level. Workplace relations directly affect productivity, making it a matter of critical importance.

Recommendations

Here are a few additional tips to encourage positive workplace relationships:

- Be friendly and encouraging to co-workers.
- Be responsible – if you say you're going to do something, do it. If you're unable to complete a task for some reason, make sure information is communicated to all team members who would be impacted.
- If you share an office, be considerate. Find out how your office mate works and be respectful. For example, some people need to work in complete silence, while others enjoy background music. Make sure you're not inadvertently making your office mate crazy with your personal habits.
- Understand that people are unique and dwell on their positive qualities, not their negative qualities. It's acceptable to not be friends with everyone, but try to at least be professional and cordial in your interactions.
- Rise above office gossip. No one wants to earn the reputation of being the office busybody.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate! Your co-workers are not mind readers, so make sure you're communicating with them and your manager on a regular basis.

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