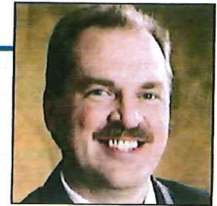


By Wes Friesen



Are You Connecting?

Building deeper connections with people will enhance your influence as a leader and help you have a greater impact.

Henry Kissinger once said, “The task of the leader is to get his/her people from where they are to where they have not been.” How can we help our coworkers be successful here in the present—and move with us towards a better future? A big key for us as leaders is to build strong connections with people.

How can we build strong connections and earn trust so that we can effectively influence our people to be successful? Let me share 10 principles that can help you connect well with people:

1. Commit to connecting. The starting place for developing stronger connections with people is to make a conscious choice to do so. Do you really want to connect better? If yes, then commit to taking intentional steps to build deeper connections. The other principles will give you ideas to consider.

2. Develop a genuine care for people. We can only connect well with people when we value and care for them. We need to not take people for granted and let them know we care and appreciate them. Valerie Elster reminds us that “expressing gratitude is a natural state of being and reminds us that we are all connected.”

Every person is important, as Bill McCartney emphasizes when he says, “Anytime you devalue people, you question God’s creation of

them.” Part of caring for people is to be honest, genuine and transparent. Let people see your heart of caring and compassion—and they will respond and feel closer to you. One of my often used quotes is, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

3. Be proactive. Initiate movement towards them. It’s tempting to sit back and let others try to connect with us. But as leaders we need to be proactive and take the initiative. Management experts Tom Peters and Nancy Austin concluded that “the number one managerial problem in America is, quite simply, managers are out of touch with their people and out of touch with customers.”

4. Look for common ground. Probably my favorite leadership expert is John Maxwell. I agree with John when he says, “Anytime you want to connect with

another person, start where both of you agree. And that means finding common ground.” There are lots of potential areas of common ground, ranging from personal interests to life experiences to values and beliefs. The key to finding common ground: Listening.

5. Be a good listener. Rachel Naomi Remen advises, “The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention . . . A loving silence often has far more power to heal and to connect than the most well-intentioned words.” I like the practical advice from Dale Carnegie (author of the classic book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*) who said, “You can make more friends in two weeks by becoming a good listener than you can in two years trying to get other people interested in you.”

Wes Friesen is the manager of Billing, Credit and Special Attention Operations for Portland General Electric. He manages CIS billing, specialized billing, electronic bills and payments, credit and collections and OPUC and special attention operations. Wes and the PGE print and mail team have earned many national awards, such as the IPMA Management Award, four NAPL Gold Awards and numerous PCC awards. Wes received the Franklin Award in 2010 for his contributions to the mail industry. For the past 27 years Wes has been a university instructor and a speaker at conferences. He has written numerous articles for trade journals. Wes earned a B.S. in Business Administration from George Fox University and an MBA from the University of Portland. He can be contacted at:

Wes.Friesen@PGN.com

6. Recognize and respect differences. While we should be looking to find common ground with others, we also need to acknowledge that we're all different. Our differences and diversity make our lives more interesting and can strengthen our team performance as we blend our diverse backgrounds and abilities together to make us stronger.

7. Share common experiences. To really connect well with others, we need to find a way to cement the relationship. Joseph Newton said, "People are lonely (disconnected) because they build walls instead of bridges." To build bridges that connect you to people in a lasting way, share common experiences with them. Share meals. Go to a ball game or other events together. Take people to meetings with you. Participate in work projects together. Anything you experience together helps create a common history and build connection.

8. Get out of your office. There are increasing expectations on managers to produce more results with the same or fewer resources—and that can drive us into our offices to get our personal work done. But we need to intentionally carve out times to practice MBWA (Management by Walking Around). I have to admit that I'm not as consistent in getting out of my office and touching base with people as I would like. How are you doing?

9. Be a giver. Provide help and share knowledge and resources. Commit to being a servant leader who gives of oneself to help meet the needs of others. We can give of our time, knowledge and resources to help people around us. Giving of ourselves is the ultimate win-win that benefits both the receiver and the giver. Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Anne Frank reminded us that "no one has ever become poor by giving."

10. Once connected, move forward. There is value in building deeper connections with people just for the relationship's sake. But there is even more value when we use our connections with people to add value to our team's key stakeholders (investors, customers and employees) and drive towards a better future. Someone once said, "Leadership is cultivating in people today a future willingness on their part to follow you into something new for the sake of something great." Connection helps create that willingness.

Building deeper connections with people will enhance your influence and help you have a greater impact. How will you use your greater impact? Jackie Robinson's quote resonates with me: "A life isn't significant except for its impact on other lives."

I wish you the best as you pursue deeper connections with people and add even more value to the lives of those around you. *IPG*

In-Plant Graphics Product Showcase

These advertisers are giving you a closer look at what they have to offer in the way of literature, supplies, equipment or services.



CHALLENGE

www.challengemachinery.com

AMERICA'S FAVORITE PERFECT BINDER JUST GOT BETTER



Bind up to 360 books per hour.
Bind up to 2.25 inches thick.
Bind offset or coated stock.
Bind sheets with oil infused ink.
Bind book blocks for case binding.
Bind pads. **PLUS...**
Heavier duty Notching and Roughing.
Vacuum Waste Removal.
Stand and Safety Cover.

Bring your perfect binding in-house with...
THE STERLING® DIGIBINDER® PLUS



**Pressure Seal
Self-Mailers
from InfoSeal
conform with
New USPS Rules
for Self-Mailers**

InfoSeal
THE FORM THE FUTURE WILL TAKE

1-888-952-4636

team1@pressuresealforms.com