

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

©copyright by Robert (Bob) W. Lucas

Excerpt from Lucas, R.W., Effective Interpersonal Relationships, Irwin/McGraw-Hill, New York, NY 1996.

Relationships with others can be fragile and are crucial in personal and business success, yet many people do not give much thought to building or maintaining them.

The following are a series of actions that you can take to develop or strengthen relationships with others.

Gather your thoughts and information before you initiate communication. Failure to do so could leave the impression that you are disorganized or ill-prepared and not worth listening to.

Never approach someone to discuss a topic when you are angry or upset. Anger can cloud your judgment and cause you to say things you do not mean, or make mistakes which could cost you later. Always take time to cool down; plan your approach logically, then take necessary action.

Be prepared to give immediate, specific and honest feedback in any interaction. Unless you tell people openly how you feel or what you need them to know, they can only guess. The latter can cause much confusion, resentment and failure.

Realize that if a message is important enough for someone to verbalize, it is probably important to them. Even if someone tells you that an issue is "no big deal," if they brought it up in the first place, you need to address it and come to a resolution to prevent it from escalating. Avoiding only causes long-term problems.

Take the time to send messages carefully and accurately to avoid misinterpretation. As you may have heard, "haste makes waste," and if you are like most people, you do not have an abundance of extra time to correct problems created by not handling something correctly in the first place.

Avoid trying to intimidate or pressure someone into action. This will only result in resentment and frustration while damaging your relationship.

Strive for consistency in dealing with others. This can go a long way in reducing stress and apprehension. Treating others fairly and equitably sends a message that you are trustworthy and concerned for others.

Follow through on all commitments. If you find yourself unable to perform or deliver, as promised, inform those people affected immediately.

Admit your mistakes or take blame when you create problems. Failure to do so could damage your credibility and lose the respect of others.

Be ready to assist others. Helping others will gain you supporters, while increasing your popularity and effectiveness.

Provide credit and praise when others are responsible for successes. Most people want and need recognition. Giving it goes a long way to proving that you are supportive of others.

Never criticize others in front of someone. Use, as a rule of thumb, the adage "*praise in public, criticize in private.*" Failure to remember this could cause a loss of loyalty, trust and respect.

Respect confidences when others share information with you. Never pass on information entrusted to you. It may be the last information you ever get from the person and your reputation as a trustworthy individual will suffer severely.

Judge people based on factors they have control over, not ones which they do not (race, sex, age, ethnicity, or physical or mental characteristics). Focusing on uncontrollable characteristics is both unfair and not very smart. It could also violate discrimination laws.

Bob Lucas B.S., M.A., M.A, CPLP is an internationally-known author and learning and performance professional. He has written and contributed to thirty-one books and compilations. He regularly conducts creative training, train-the-trainer, customer service, interpersonal communication and management and supervisory skills workshops. Bob can be reached at blucas@robertwlucas.com or through his website www.robertwlucas.com. Follow his blog at www.robertwlucas.com/wordpress and like him at www.facebook.com/robertwlucasenterprises