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Centennial Student Union 173
(507) 389-6076

Networking & Relationship Building

One of the key leadership traits is to be able to inspire followership. A leader may be able to provide shared vision and supervision; however leaders must develop a relationship with the people they inspire to follow them. Successful leadership relationship inspires people to become more than they imagined they could be and achieve more than they ever thought they could.

Make people feel important:

1. Pay attention to people using common courtesy: Greet people. Say “Good morning” and ask how they are doing.

2. Listen to what your coworkers, peers and staff members have to say: Do not use or phone, text, or look around when you are communicating with any individual in front of you. Make sure you are physically as well as mentally present.

3. Use powerful, positive language in your interaction with others: Saying “thank you” and “sorry” will take you a long way. Mean what you say when you want to positively recognize someone.

4. Put praise in writing: Leave a “Thank you” note for individuals who have helped you. Let individuals know that without their help the project would not have been successful.

5. Keep your commitments to staff: Only promise things you know you can deliver to others. Not being able to deliver after promising something simple decreases your credibility.

6. Give staff public credit for contributions: Do not take credit for something others have done even if you were leading a project. Open up ways for others to shine and share it with others if something was your friend’s idea. Do not over exaggerate.

What to keep in mind

Building relationship with individuals is not a one-time process. It takes time to build good relationship with individuals and to maintain it. Networking is a way to start building a healthy relationship with individuals.

Following are few things you could keep in mind while networking during meetings and events:

- Prepare for every meeting and event
- Adopt and practice positive attitude
- Approach the person standing alone
- Smile or say hello to “break the ice”
- Prepare a brief self-introduction
- Ask questions and identify common interests
- Make small talk
- Commit to listen first and talk second
- Have fun!

Strong leadership does not negate the need for relationships or collaboration; it embraces them. Leaders by themselves achieve very little; the measure of effective leadership lies in the results a leader achieves by inspiring others. In organizations those results come by working with people, either as individuals or as teams. Networking and relationship building is important as a leader, but maintaining a relationship is equally important as well.

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