

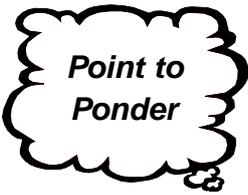


## Develop Productive Working Relationships

### ■ *Scope*

This unit explores the way successful managers ought to behave whilst working with team members, colleagues and their own managers. It is important that managers understand the variables which influence the most appropriate structure and systems of management. This unit analyses the 'fit' between structure, systems of management and the behaviour of people. It has three elements:

- C5.1** Develop the Trust and Support of Colleagues and Team Members
- C5.2** Develop the Trust and Support of Your Manager
- C5.3** Minimise Interpersonal Conflict



### *Point to Ponder*

Respecting the welfare of others, being trustworthy and promoting harmony are key components of a healthy workplace. Although most of the time, the majority of us help each other, there are times when we work at cross purposes or even go out of our way to disagree with and hurt each other. It is dealing with this kind of varying behaviour that forms the basis of interpersonal behaviour at work. Successful managers would understand how they could influence the way individuals and groups behave within organisations. There is generally the tendency for people to help and support others at work even when there is no personal benefit in it for the person helping. This is **pro-social behaviour**. Others **co-operate** with each other at work – that is, people give and receive help from each other. Often competition is in display at work as one person tries to win it and forces others to lose thus encouraging conflict to emerge. This breeds disharmony, ill will and unpleasantness.

As its worst form, conflict produces deviant behaviour such as thieving from and harming others. In order to understand interpersonal behaviour, we must first of all be able to appreciate the building blocks for social relationships in general. What makes people behave the way they do; sometimes in perfect harmony, other times with aggression, apathy and ill will.

The two important factors are **psychological contracts and trust**. Psychological contract is a person's belief about what is expected of another in a work relationship. For example, if you do a piece of good work for your manager, you expect to be paid; if you leave a message for a colleague you expect to be contacted back. Although there is no legally binding contract our expectations of others are much the same. However, unlike legal contracts, where terms and conditions are made explicit, psychological contracts are perceptual in nature. Like all perceptions, this gives way to a person behaving differently from what is expected of him or her, thus creating challenging forms of interpersonal behaviour.

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The nature of psychological contracts in the workplace varies according to the types of relationships. For example, the relationship between an employee and his manager is somewhat long term, complex, constantly changing and without finely defined boundaries. The basis of such a relationship is much more than simply money and benefits; it is vast, and spreads widely into the future. This is called a **relational contract**. Compare this with the relationship a seasonal worker will have with his or her boss. Such a contract will have a clearly defined economic boundary and a definite end as the season gets over. This is a **transactional contract**, highlighting a narrow scope, defined time span and purely economic terms.

The major factor that makes relational contracts so different from transactional contracts is the degree of trust between the employee and the manager. Trust is the level of confidence a person has in the words and actions of another. An employee trusts his boss to make a strong case for him in times of change or difficult situations. In cases where this trust does not exist, the relationship is problematic and conflict is likely to result. **Calculus-based trust** is where a person trusts another based on deterrence where he or she believes that the other will behave as promised because of fear of punishment. In some situations, such a basis for trust is important in the workplace. Employees need to know what is expected of them in terms of performance and behaviour standards. Organisational policies and procedures are the tools to define these. A performance management policy or a training and development procedure tells all employees fairly and clearly what is expected of them or what support they can access to develop themselves.

In contrast, **identification-based trust** is based on the belief that one would act in a manner recognising the needs and desires of another. This is likely to be found in close relationships as it occurs when people know and understand each other to such an extent that one allows the other to act on his or her behalf. Ways of promoting trust in working relationships are to:

- **Always meet deadlines**
- **Follow through as promised**
- **Spend time sharing personal values and goals**

As mentioned earlier, pro-social behaviour (helping others) is conducive not only to making working a pleasant experience but also a productive one for both individuals and their organisation. There are two ways in which pro-social behaviour can manifest itself in the workplace:

1. **Organisational citizenship behaviour** – when people go beyond what is formally expected of them; 'beyond the call of duty' and contribute to the wellbeing of their organisation to promote this behaviour:
  - **Go out of your way to help others**
  - **Be an example of conscientiousness**



As a manager, if you set examples of good behaviour (coming to work on time, not taking advantage of personal perks etc.), your employees are more likely to follow that pattern

- **Make voluntary activities fun such as company outings, dinners and other annual events. These will not be well attended unless they are worthwhile coming to. It is through such informal interactions that commitment and feelings of ownership emerge and flourish**
- **Demonstrate courtesy and good sportsmanship**

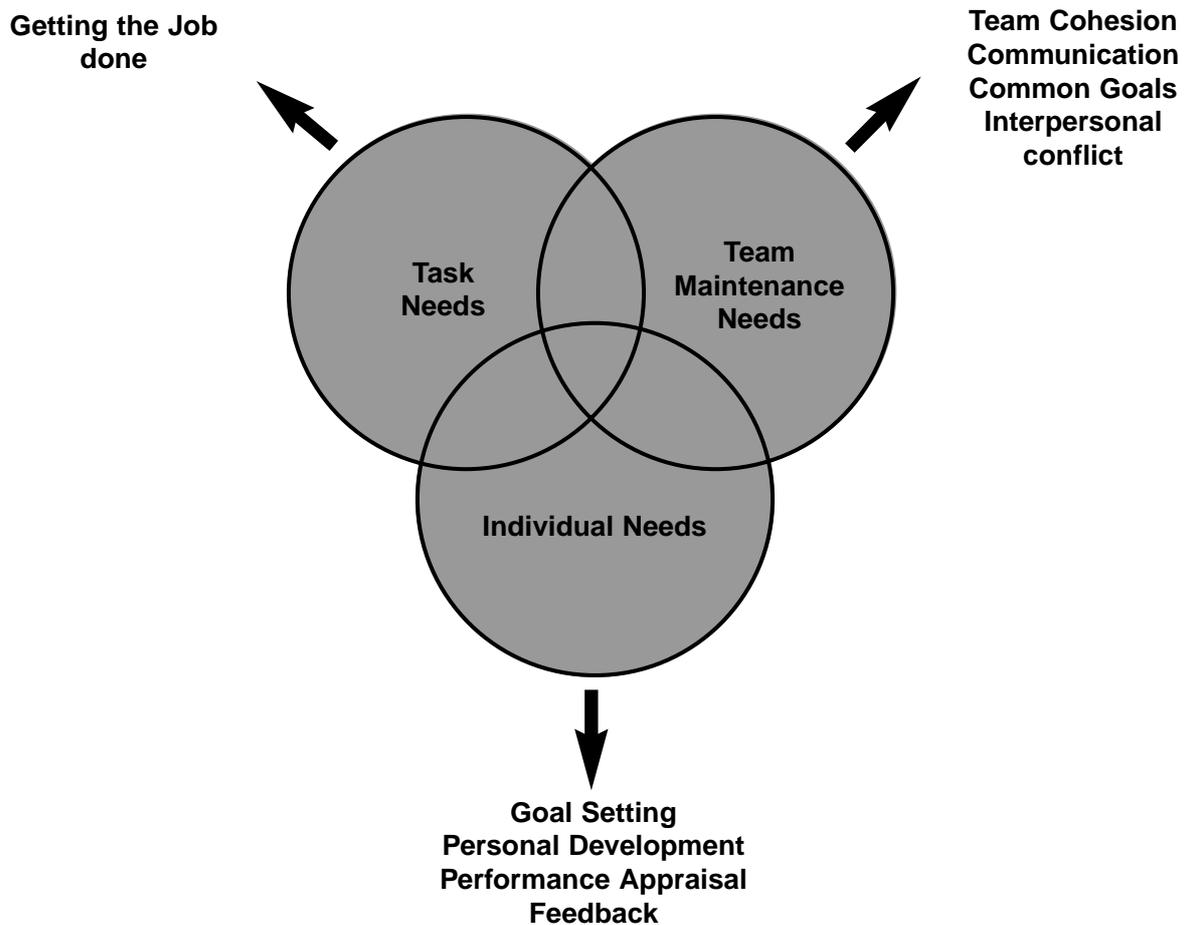
**2. Whistle-blowing** – the disclosure by employees of illegal, immoral or improper practices by employers to people or organisations who can apply pressure and take corrective action. Personal orientation comes into play in an individual's natural predispositions towards working with or against others.

- **Competitors** are people whose primary aim is to prove themselves to be better than others. Open competition with others sets in
- **Individualists** are those who are about nothing but maximisation of personal gain. They are not interested whether others do better or worse than themselves
- **Co-operators** are those who aim to achieve joint outcomes, getting the best for their team
- **Equalisers** are those whose main concern is minimising the differences between themselves and others

Successful managers will take time out to get to know their individual employees' personal orientations and match these to the kinds of tasks to which they are best suited. For example, competitors may be good at negotiations whilst co-operators may excel at team situations.

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Most organisations today have recognised the importance of team-performance and utilise teams in most work situations. Managers have to combine the needs of teams and individuals whilst attempting to get the tasks done. John Adair, in his theory of Action-Centred Leadership, asserts the interdependence of all three:



Often the manager's role is similar to that of a juggler; he needs to keep all the balls in the air and he knows the consequences of dropping one! The manager has to recognise what motivates each employee and must create an environment that will provide for the maximisation of each person's potential. Motivation is a set of processes that arouse, direct and maintain human behaviour towards achieving certain goals. People are not always motivated by money alone. Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory specifies that there are five human needs: psychological (the basic need for food, water, air and shelter), safety (the need for a secure environment), social (to have friends and to be loved and accepted), esteem (the need to develop self-respect, achieve approval and gain recognition) and self-actualisation (the need to become all that one is capable of in order to achieve the maximum potential).



Managers can take several actions to help their employees reach their optimum performance level thus keeping them involved in the workplace and taking ownership of workplace activities. This can be achieved by:

- **Providing financial security**
- **Setting effective performance goals**
- **Providing feedback concerning goal attainment**
- **Motivating by being fair and equitable**
- **Giving people a voice in decisions affecting them**
- **Restructuring jobs to make them interesting; and**
- **Job enlargement and job enrichment by ensuring that the core job dimensions are present in each job: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. If present, these components produce psychological states that lead to positive outcomes both for individuals and the organisation, such as high levels of job satisfaction and low labour turnover**

As Steve Widdett puts it, in his article in *People Management* (December 2003):

'There are more than 20 theories focusing on different aspect of motivation... Key among the agreed principles are:

- **Motivation is internal and cannot be imposed**
- **Motivated individuals persevere longer with tasks**
- **Motivated individuals are more likely to achieve their goals**

Motivation needs to be managed at an individual level and efforts to create it are misguided.'

The manager needs to distribute the various operations among his/her team members; it is necessary to plan, organise, direct and control their activities. It is a fundamental principle of management that for organisational effectiveness there must be **delegation**. This means the conferring of a specified authority by a higher authority. At the individual or personal level delegation is the process of entrusting authority and responsibility to others but retaining the accountability or ultimate responsibility. Delegation creates a special manager-subordinate relationship. The subordinate is responsible to the manager for doing the job, while the manager is responsible for seeing that the job gets done. The manager is accountable to a superior for the actions of subordinates. Managers are there to protect and support team members and accept personally any reprimand for unsatisfactory performance. It is then up to the manager to sort out things in their own departments and counsel members of staff or review and adjust the way they delegate.

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**Perception** is a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment. Absenteeism, turnover and job satisfaction are all reactions to the individual's perception. Dissatisfaction with working conditions or the belief that there is a lack of promotion opportunities in the organisation are judgements based on attempts to make some meaning out of one's job. The employee's conclusion that a job is good or bad is an interpretation.

Managers must spend time understanding how each individual interprets reality and when there is a significant difference between what is seen and what exists, try to eliminate distortions. Failure to deal with differences when individuals perceive the job in negative terms will result in increased absenteeism and turnover and lower job satisfaction.

Managerial decision making can be improved thus increasing their chances of establishing good working relationships across the work arena, by following the suggestions below:

- **Analyse the situation and adjust your decision-making style to ensure that it is compatible with the organisation's culture**
- **Be aware of bias; we all bring bias to the decisions we make. If you understand the biases influencing your judgement, you can begin to change the way you make decisions to reduce those biases**
- **Combine rationale analysis with intuition**
- **Do not assume that your specific decision style is appropriate for every job. Your effectiveness as a decision maker will increase if you match your decision style to the requirements of the job. For example, if your style is directive, you will be more effective working with people whose jobs require quick action, say stockbrokers. An analytical style, on the other hand, might work well with accountants, market researchers or financial analysts**
- **Try to enhance your creativity. Openly look for novel solutions to problems, attempt to see problems in new ways and use analogies. In addition, try to remove the organisational barriers that might impede your creativity**

*Investigate*

1. *Write a reflective log on your ways of establishing good working relationships with others, the principles you go by, your communication methods, and how you ensure that your staff remain motivated. In the light of this unit will you amend your current methods? If so why? If not, why not?*

*Investigate*

2. *Describe how you work effectively with your manager paying particular attention to the communication between the two of you and how decisions are made in your arena.*



Clearly, all this highlights the fact that managers need to 'know' each of their employees to build employee insight. This also forms the basis for developing a trusting relationship between the manager and employees. **Conflict** is the inevitable result of incompatible interests. Conflict occurs quite commonly in organisations. About 20% of managers' time is spent on dealing with conflict and its effects. It happens for a variety of causes often as a result of interaction with others or even because of the organisation itself:

- **Perceptual distortion** – almost a 'myopic' state when it comes to seeing another person's perspective on a matter of disagreement
- **Grudges** – when people have lost an issue with someone else, they try to 'get even' by planning some sort of revenge. This type of conflict is very harmful to another worker and wastes a lot of energy, time and effort, all of which could have been utilised for better productivity
- **Distrust** – the more strongly people suspect that others are out to get them, the more likely they are to generate conflict with others. Organisations are breeding grounds for such conflict. In the absence of clear information about what is happening, people speculate and gossip, giving way to suspicion and conflict
- **Competition** over scarce resources
- **Destructive criticism** – all too often a great deal of conflict is generated. Competent managers try to avoid this by providing timely, meaningful feedback to staff; feedback that focuses on aspects of performance that were poor instead of a sweeping, general condemnation of performance. They are also motivated by a desire to help the employee to improve, rather than a desire to assert dominance over him

Unresolved conflict will make teams and individuals dysfunctional as communication and coordination of efforts are compromised. However, not all conflict is unhealthy. In fact, when managed constructively and sensitively, conflict can also bring to the forefront problems that have been ignored in the past, thus promoting the generation of new ideas and ways of working. Indeed, people start tackling issues rather than live with them in a resigned fashion!

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Conflict has both **benefits and costs**. A sensible manager will work to minimise costs and increase benefits. Such efforts by which two sides in dispute with each other exchange offers, counteroffers and concessions in an attempt to find a mutually acceptable agreement, is the process of bargaining or negotiation. Resolving conflict by negotiating a 'win-win' situation, where both parties get some or most of what they want, is a significant managerial skill. There are many useful ways in which this can be done:

- **Avoid making unreasonable offers as this tends to anger the other party**
- **Seek the common ground – parties in dispute often overlook areas where they have agreement and assume their interests are totally incompatible. By getting them to start from the common ground there is more chance of getting them to come to some agreeable arrangement on areas of dispute**
- **Broaden the scope of issues considered**
- **Use mediation and arbitration**
- **Identify and remedy deviant organisational behaviour – actions from employees which intentionally violate the norms and formal rules of the organisation**
- **Have well-defined policies and procedural guidelines on aggressive behaviour and bullying at work. Provide training to recognise and combat such behaviour**
- **Treat people with dignity and respect – talking calmly but assertively to someone who appears to be troubled can go a long way in defusing a potentially explosive situation**

**Investigate**

*3. Describe to what extent you accept conflict as inevitable in the workplace; suggest how you as the manager attempt to avoid the harmful effects of conflict. Illustrate your report with real examples from the workplace where you have identified and resolved conflict. Will you act differently now and why?*

It is the responsibility of the manager to manage and achieve results through the efforts of other people. The changing nature of the work environment is reflected in changes in the traditional boss-subordinate relationships. Today's work environment calls for a management style where both concern for people and concern for the task is crucial. Management writers suggest that a participative style of management is more likely to harness effectively the people within an organisation. It is important that managers have a well developed sense of 'people perception' and understand the feelings of the staff, their needs and expectations. Managers are likely to be judged not just on their performance but also on results achieved by their staff.

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## ■ *Guidance for Gathering Evidence for this Unit*

All elements call for a personal narrative from you explaining how you have developed the trust and support of your manager, colleagues and team members. You should also clearly indicate where you have provided supplementary work evidence.

### Possible Sources of Supporting Evidence

#### Unit C5 - Develop Productive Working Relationships.

<i>Possible Source of Evidence</i>	<i>Used</i>	<i>Location in Workplace/Portfolio</i>
Consultation documents, memos asking for suggestions		
Work allocation/objective setting records, minutes of meetings		
Memos, e-mails or reports to your manager explaining or informing him/her of decisions you have made and the rationale		
Requests for additional resources or changes in the workplace		
Your own appraisal documents, Feedback reports		
Documents from your manager asking you to stand in or deputise for him/her		
Testimony from your manager		
Evidence of conflict among your team and how you have resolved it		
Any advice you might have given others to resolve conflict		
Records of disciplinary or grievance procedures you have conducted		
Counselling notes, evidence of keeping personal matters confidentially		
Candidate's Signature		
Assessor's Signature		

