

Leadership is a People Sport

The best leaders understand that people do business with people they like, people they trust, and with those who make them feel special. This translates into a simple, yet transformational, idea: When you take care of relationships, results will take care of themselves.

In his new book, *The Leader Who Had No Title: A Modern Fable on Real Success in Business and in Life* (Simon and Schuster), Robin Sharma shares a process to build world-class relationships with your team and clients that will cause you to form stronger bonds so that you achieve superior results. Sharma suggests that it all starts with understanding that the deeper your relationships, the stronger your leadership. He offers six suggestions that can help you be a better relationship builder.

1. Give Away What You Most Want. Want more respect from those you work with or from the customers you serve? Give them all more respect. Want more appreciation? Give more appreciation away. Hope to have more loyalty? Be exceptionally loyal (in a world where loyalty is a lost art). The best way to influence other people is through the power of your best example. Give away all that you most wish to receive. People will love you for it.

2. Leverage the Power of Circulation. “The business of business is people,” said Herb Kelleher, founder of Southwest Airlines. Yes, we have more technology than ever before and we can access the world’s information with a single Google search, but it’s also true that we’ve never been less emotionally connected with people. I’m not talking about being wired through e-mail or cell phones. I’m speaking of real human connections, the kind that cause people to believe in you—and go to the wall to help you win. There is extraordinary power in circulating. Just being out there, having lunch with your team and breaking bread with your customers is important. When people get to know you, they’ll be first in line to do some serious business with you.

3. Treat People Like VIPs. In these turbulent times, the single best move an organization can make is to develop the leadership talent of every single person at every possible level. Now, anyone can lead, whether they’re the receptionist or the vice president of sales. And one of the defining behaviors of leadership without a title is leaving everyone you meet better than you found them. Be one of those rare people who inspire others to do their best and raise their game—regardless of your rank.

4. Listen Like a Genius. Listening involves more than waiting until the speaker has stopped speaking. Yet, in our 24/7 world, few people in business have dedicated themselves to being a “wow” of a listener. When you become brilliant at listening, people feel that you care about them. When they feel you care about them, they begin to care about you. And when people care about you, your success becomes a part of how they define their success.

5. Say “Please” and “Thank You.” “Manners are the lubricating oil of an organization,” said management guru Peter Drucker. “Please” means “I respect you,” and “Thank you” means “I appreciate you.” To grow your relationships and lead the field, manage your manners so people see that you strongly value them.

6. Focus on Value Generation (versus Ego Gratification). Former President Harry Truman said, “You can accomplish anything in life, provided that you do not mind who gets the credit.” Leave your ego at the door every morning, and just do some truly great work. Few things will make you feel better than a job brilliantly done. And the more you focus on adding value to as many people as possible, the more all those ego pursuits, like a bigger title, more money and greater acclaim, will show up for you in the best of ways.