

Energize Your Team through the Power of Connection

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With ever-increasing demands on your time, making time for connection in the workplace might seem like a luxury you can't afford. Yet research shows that individuals thrive in workplaces where people *like* and *connect with* one another. According to a recent Harvard Business School study of more than 10,000 individuals in four organizations, an environment where connection is the norm can make employees happier and more productive and “encourage formation of strong, smoothly functioning social networks.”¹ When nurtured, strong social networks can lead to better problem-solving and higher levels of innovation and creativity.

Consider a team sharply divided between “us” (the new members of the team) and “them” (members of the team who had worked together for many years). In order to reach their ambitious goals, it was critical that this team quickly develop a shared vision. To accomplish this, the group took time to connect with one another outside the work environment. They laughed together, played together and took a big picture look at who they want to be as a team. By doing so, they created and strengthened bonds that will serve the team well in the years to come.

Another organization created an opportunity for employees at every level to connect with each other and with the leadership – beginning with almost 300 employee-to-employee interviews and culminating in a day-long convention where more than 80 staff from all different levels came together to look at some of the business' biggest opportunities. being faced by the organization. Employees were given an opportunity to connect, share ideas, and yes, laugh. As a result of the connections made and the information shared, the organization now has nine active “innovation teams” focused on making it a better place for both employees and clients.

Creating a culture of connection doesn't have to be complicated. Here are five easy ideas for strengthening connections in your workplace:

1. **Be fully present.** It's easy to miss opportunities to connect when we are constantly mentally moving on to the next thing on the to-do list. If you model this behavior for your staff, they'll learn to be fully present as well, with each other and with your patients.
2. **Share knowledge and resources and encourage others to do the same.** Be on the lookout for resources that would be beneficial to the people you work with – whether it's an article related to a topic of interest to them or an announcement that their favorite musical group is coming to town. People appreciate the fact that you've listened well enough to know them.
3. **Find ways to connect outside the normal work environment.** Whether this is a formal staff retreat or a simple workday lunch, time away can strengthen relationships.
4. Go out of your way to **make a new member of the team feel at home.** Assign a “buddy” to ease their transition to a new environment.
5. **Be a people detective** - look for opportunities to connect by paying attention to the people you work with. When someone seems to be having a bad day, acknowledge them and lend them an ear. When someone completes a project successfully or reaches a goal,

find a way to celebrate, based on what's important to ***them*** (personal note, e-mail, phone call, card, public recognition, etc.).

Creating a culture of connection takes an investment of your time – an investment that will shower you and your team with dividends for years to come.

¹ Casciaro, Tiziana and Lobo, Michael Sousa. “*Competent Jerks, Lovable Fools, and the Formation of Social Networks.*” Harvard Business Review June 2005.

Marcy Moore, ACC and Pam Williams, ACC. co-founders of Innergized!, Inc., help individuals, teams and organizations successfully navigate transitions, build on their strengths, develop stronger relationships, and create the energy necessary for lasting results. They offer a unique and fun team approach to their speaking, coaching, and consulting. Visit www.innergized.com to learn more and to subscribe to their free *Innergizing Tips* e-newsletter.