

Common Sense Leadership

JOHN KEYSER, BUSINESS LEADERSHIP COACH

Our Internal Clients

Relationships matter, are everything in business. If someone trusts us, respects us, has confidence in us and wants to work with us, that can go a very long way to ensure our success. And we must realize that we must earn and continue to earn that trusting relationship, every day.

My experience as an executive in the corporate world and now as a leadership consultant and coach to CEOs and senior executives in businesses and nonprofit institutions, is that too few in senior management realize that relationships with those who choose to do business with us, our external clients, are vitally important, and so are our relationships with the people within our organization.

Our relationships with our people are every bit as important. External and internal clients both are top priorities!

As the renowned management professor and expert Tom Peters said some time back, "Take good care of your people and they will take good care of your clients."

The business world is so demanding today. When I was growing up, my father got to his office 8:30 and left by 5:30 and did not bring home hours of work each night and each weekend, as most of us do today. We live in a super competitive environment with pressure on fees charged and profit margins. In the past, many service providers told the client what the fee was. Those days are long gone.

And today we have to do more with fewer people.

As managers, hopefully as leaders, we must drive for results. Absolutely! That is certainly true if we are with a publically owned company and have to meet 90-day financial targets. If we're with a privately owned company, the pressure is still there, maybe a little less intense.

Certainly, there are needs to focus on numbers and also on our relationships with our clients, or we risk losing them.

We must also focus on our internal relationships - and not just with our chief executive, operating, financial, technology, marketing, talent management and HR and other chief officers. We must earn the admiration, respect and trust of everyone in our companies. If we don't we'll have high turnover, and those that stay with us will likely lose their passion and put a little less into their work. Bad morale is a disease to organizational spirit.

Our job and responsibility is to make time to do everything. It's a challenge, no question, but it is our duty.

Let's do our very best to spend less time in meetings and more time out of our offices, being with our people, acknowledging and thanking them for their good work, and very definitely

asking them for their ideas and advice. We'll learn so much! And they will feel valued and heard, which is so important for morale!

There is a huge difference between knowing someone and having a solid relationship. It's the nature of our relationships that matters.

To really develop a solid relationship with mutual respect, we must spend time with that person – in conversation, asking about them, listening carefully, and being genuinely interested, supportive and caring. Our people need to know that we, as the CEO, or senior management, or their boss are there for them, to help them learn, grow and succeed.

Earlier this year, I wrote a paper "Conversations are the Work of a Leader," borrowing the phrase from Susan Scott's wonderful book, *Fierce Conversations*. I received appreciative feedback from a great many executives for the reminder of their duty to be out speaking with the people who are actually doing the work of their companies.

This is one of many reasons why businesses would do better with women sharing significant management and leadership responsibilities. They tend, in general, to be more naturally inclined towards conversations, relationships and thinking about the team. There are many exceptions, for some women, this is not their strength, and some men are excellent at this.

We want our people to be aligned, excited about their work, and having the admiration, respect and loyalty toward senior management.

Think of our people as our internal clients, and recognize that they are truly vital to our success.

We absolutely must build and maintain solid internal relationships to sustain a winning organizational spirit and outstanding results.

Know that even short conversations that show our interest and genuine care are better than no conversations, so let's do our very best.

Watch the positive effect this has on morale and productivity!

About The Author



John Keyser is the founder and principal of Common Sense Leadership, www.commonsenseleadership.com. He works with executives helping them develop organizational cultures that will produce outstanding financial results year after year, and a striving for continuous improvement, theirs and their team's. His contact information is john@johnkeysercoach.com and 202-236-2800.