

LEADERSHIP BEYOND THE VACUUM: CREATING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

by Glenn Williams



We aren't meant to do life alone. No matter how successful we are, everyone needs connection and close relationships to do life well.

Business is no different because we don't lead in a vacuum. Fostering successful relationships is the key to building relationships that help to effectively manage up and down, build organizational trust, increase staff engagement, and empower collaboration. We are also seeing a stronger link between the quality of a leader's relationships outside of work and how this impacts key relationships at work.

As leaders, we must recognize, develop, and prioritize relationships, inside and outside the work context, to withstand the reality of high-level leadership. Failure to attend to this most basic human need inevitably leads to disaster.

Leaders need to be anchored and accountable

The research and lived experience around the world clearly show that leaders who lead healthy organizations are those who are anchored in strong relationships both inside and outside work.

Leaders who refuse or struggle to let others in usually find themselves in [transactional rather than transformational relationships](#). When our connection is reduced to what I can get from you to further my plans or career—we become a law unto ourselves—and that's a dangerous place to be.

Transactional relationships may bring short to medium-term results, but they tend to yield a shallow legacy, where results are almost wholly dependent on the person at the top rather than a team.

We've seen it all too often in large corporations. Leaders who believe they lead in a vacuum make decisions based on their skewed perception rather than developing healthy, robust relationships with the people in the organization hired for their expertise.

If leaders make themselves accountable to trusted people, they will gain the trust of those they lead. We need to model leadership beyond the vacuum. If we want a culture of innovation where people feel safe to innovate and to take ownership and responsibility for their part of the whole, leaders must embrace it for themselves.

For more on developing healthy relationships, read our latest in-depth article, "[Leadership Unmasked: Navigating the Gap Between Expectation and Experience](#)."

You can also grab a copy of "[When Leaders are Lost: Moving Beyond Disappointment, Failure, and Hurt to Redefine Success](#)" for more insights on how to succeed as a leader without sacrificing what's important to you.