



Management and Performance Associates – October 2006

Peer Relationships

This month's topic: how to improve peer relationships. It is a fact that as we go up the corporate ladder relationships become more and more complex, while at same time they become a variable which is more and more fundamental for our success.

Peers are not adversaries. Quite the contrary, peers can become important allies and we can transform this relationship into a rich source of productive conversations where each one challenges the other to perform at their best.

The million dollar question is: Why are some relationships so complicated and what can we do to make them productive and effective?

Many times the difficulty in the relationship can be explained by different interacting styles. It is common to judge a behavior that is not part of our style as a weakness. This is the base for labels and prejudices, which are difficult to be reversed.

Other times this difficulty is the result of the weakening of the communication process. In such situations, the collective thinking is exercised in a restrictive and defensive manner, limiting perspectives and opportunities for mutual growth.

Another responsible element in the deterioration of relationships is our lack of disposition or inability to deal with conflicts as they emerge.

Here are some suggestions to strengthen or to re-establish peer relationships:

Self assessment

Critical people have no time for self assessments. Hard, isn't it? To what extent am I responsible for deteriorating relationships due to my inability to look in the mirror and ask: How would I feel if someone said or did to me what I have just said or done to someone else? By doing that we would realize that in some situations we are the ones who trigger the crisis or raise the difficulties.

Exercise Influence

Remember that by influencing we mean to obtain the results we are looking for while at the same time building and improving relationships. This is a critical skill to strengthen our relationships. Perhaps even more important than influencing is our willingness to be influenced. Without this willingness we are always going to be in a scenario of losers and winners.

Deal with conflicts in a constructive way

The first step to constructively deal with conflicts is to recognize their existence. Dedicating time to search for a solution which is acceptable to all parties involved means a significant investment in the quality of relationships. Finally, remember that we should focus on discussing the needs of all parties involved instead of concentrating on the stated positions. Without this final recommendation, our efforts would act as fuel to the existing conflict instead of its solutions.

Encourage collaboration

In a global environment it is impossible to obtain and sustain results if we choose to work isolated from others. Encouraging collaboration means to offer help, ask for it, and demonstrate appreciation when you receive it.

See you next time. We welcome your feedback.

To know more of our training programs, please send us an e-mail to:

sergio.pereira@mapa-way.com or
sonia.dondice@mapa-way.com

Visit our website:

[**www.mapa-way.com**](http://www.mapa-way.com)