

Leading Relationally

Yes, that's the right word. It's spelled right. The word is relational. We want to learn to lead relationally. Relational is a word we use in Transformational Leadership to describe the kind of transformational leader we aspire to be. As a transformational leader, learning to lead relationally can impact your organization in powerful and positive ways. Let's look at what leading relationally means and why we think leading relationally is a good thing.

Relational and Transactional People

People relate to each other in different ways. Some people are more relational and others are more transactional. Think for a minute about what happens in your team or family or church group when highly *relational* people collide with highly *transactional* people. Have you ever thought that you wish someone would just get on with the job, quit talking so much to everyone and stop wasting time? Or have you ever thought how rude someone was who only focused on the task, who didn't really talk to anyone and just ignored the people involved in the project? What happens when people-oriented workers intersect with the task-oriented workers? Stress? Anxiety? Anger? Gossip? Underperformance? Do you think this kind of interaction and its accompanying responses could cause high levels of frustration and lower effective interactions with each other?

The Tension Between the Two

Here's how this push-and-pull tension works. At one end of the relationship continuum are people who are highly relational. For these people, the relationship is the most important part of everything they do. They desire to interact with and relate to the people they come in contact with. Task completion is important to them but they are very people-oriented. For them,

in order to get the job done, they first need to build relationship with others and that takes some time. People are a high priority. Simply put, it is difficult for relational people to focus on the transaction if the relationships are not good.

On the other end of the continuum are people who are highly transactional. For these people, it's not usually that the relationship is not important to them. It's just that the task at hand looms large and getting the job done is far more important. They are very task-oriented. For them, they need to address the completion of the task before anything else. When the job is completed, then they'll have time to interact with others around them. Completing the task or getting the job done is a high priority. Simply put, it is difficult for transactional people to focus on the relationships if the transactions are not complete.

Leading people with such diverse personality styles is challenging but that's not the only leadership challenge in this dynamic. The other challenge is that *you* also have a default style and in order for you and your organization to perform at a high level, it's not enough to rely exclusively on your default style of leadership. There is a way, however, to resolve the divide between relational people and transactional people while, at the same time, looking at your own default leadership style.

The Solution

What would happen if highly relational people had the tools to become more transactional without giving up their natural inclination to be relational and highly transactional people had the tools to be more relational without giving up their natural inclination for transaction? That's what we call **relational leadership**. As a transformational leader, one of your primary jobs is, first, to model this kind of relational leadership and then to provide this "tool" to your people so

they can both get along well together and also get the job done well.

It is important to lead both relationally *and* transactionally, and that's why we call it relational leadership. As you model this relational approach, the people in your organization—and we think an organization can be as few as only two people or it can be many people—will become happier and more productive as a result. Relational leaders produce relational teams. They cultivate organizations in which the people get along well *and* get the job done well.

Relational people are honored for who they are and transactional people are honored for who they are. But each group also honors the other group because they know that each group can contribute to both the people in the organization as well as to the completion of the task at hand. And here's the secret of relational leadership: Relational leaders are people whose relationships are so strong that no transaction can cause them to be broken.

In order for this transformation to start happening in your organization, it must begin with you, the leader. {eoa}

Ford Taylor is a leadership strategist, keynote speaker and the author of Relational Leadership. As the founder of Transformational Leadership, he is known as a man who can solve complex business issues with straightforward practical solutions, while maintaining his focus on people. For more from Ford Taylor, check out his Ford Taylor Talks podcast, and visit his website at .

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