



FIVE VOWELS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

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Each one of these understood and applied correctly is powerful in and of itself. Applying all of these in our relationships inside and outside of your work environment makes us a very effective relationship builder.

Building relationships is the foundation to any successful workplace. Let us look at whom the key stakeholders are in your business community's success: administrators, contractors, clients, community members, and the list goes on and on! Understanding the importance of these relationships and applying all of these 5 vowels to building and sustaining these relationships will lead to nothing but ongoing success!

In this article we will take each of these 5 vowels, one at a time, understand its importance and focus on the "How" in its application. First let me give credit to a colleague and partner of mine who developed and introduced me to this new acronym, Dr. Ed Feyereisen, the author of a fantastic book entitled, *Living Life with No Regrets*. Dr. Ed identified what happens when these 5 vowels are applied and not applied.



A - Appreciation



FACTS: This is the #1:

- Motivator for most people.
- Reason for turnover (lack of).
- Reason for low self-esteem (which is the root to most mal-adaptive behaviors; low performance, drugs, difficulty in relationships, low expectations, sabotaging one's success and happiness, etc.
- Least expensive and the most lasting gift you can give anyone at any time. And, your supply is unlimited.
- Easiest and most effective motivational tool to use with others; family, friends, team members/managers and customers.

Just a few words on expressing appreciation before we move on to the second vowel, E- Expectations. Expressing appreciation is so easy with a simply Thank You! This acknowledgement goes such a long way to express that you care that what the other person did was valued and recognized. It also creates a positive, supportive climate, fostering mutual respect. It is so easy, so simple, yet at times so neglected in the work environment and other social situations like the family.

Expressing appreciation in front of others is a great teaching opportunity, as well as, reinforcing positive behaviors and skills. Be very specific on what was done, how it was done, and why it is important.

E - Expectations

The next powerful vowel in building relationships, E for expectations

It is so important in building relationships to set expectations, communicate them, and to clarify them early in the relationship. This is so important when hiring new employees, bringing on a new staff, working with clients, and developing partnerships in the community. We have all seen relationships going sour because this is not done early in the formation stage. People many times 'assume' they understand each other, only to find out that there was not 'mutual meaning' in the communication. Giving examples of what you mean, establishing standards and measurements all help in the setting of expectations. It is better to find out early in the formation of the relationship that there may be significant differences in expectations. Establishing a Code of Conduct with staff and clients whether they are adults or children, can be a worthwhile exercise, as an example of setting a specific kind of expectations.

Relationships are all about 'making choices' and to find out early that this can be a growing and compatible relationship where both parties can be fulfilled and satisfied. You are making an investment so invest wisely!

Some facts about Expectations:

- We achieve what we expect.
- We attract what we expect.
- We accomplish less if we do not know what to expect.
- #2 reason for poor/lack of performance and turnover.

Now let us look at how these two vowels, Appreciation and Expectations, work together. When building a relationship, one can reinforce positive expectations and clarify expectations by expressing appreciation. You can also extinguish undesirable behaviors and attitudes by acknowledging they are not appreciated and request that they are not part of the relationship. Many times, this takes place quit normally, naturally, and unconsciously. However, the purpose here is to highlight and demonstrate the importance and power of such actions on building and forming positive, meaningful, and effective relationships.

I - Involvement

Next, we focus on the “I”- Involvement and the importance it plays in relationship building.

This makes perfect sense! How can you build a relationship without INVOLVEMENT? From all perspective’s involvement is critical and often its importance is underestimated. Early in relationship building involvement is necessary to explore the nature of the relationship, what each person brings to the relationship: strengths, skills, attitude, interest, experiences, desires, wants, and expectations, just to name a few factors.

Often, we may initially form a relationship more on impressions and our own interpretation of what the other person brings, or even worse, more on what we expect from that other person in the relationship. In the hiring/selection process, we have a few tools that can be helpful to us and the prospective employee make the right choice. The right choice means a good fit for the position in that specific work environment. Some of these tools are:

- Corporate Strategic Framework
- Job description, including behavioral profiles and competencies
- Key Accountabilities Worksheet
- Behavioral Assessments

“SEEK TO UNDERSTAND RATHER THAN BE UNDERSTOOD”, is an excellent principle to build a relationship upon.



I - Involvement



Some facts about I-INVOLVEMENT:

- #3 reason for leaving an organization
- The lack of prevents empowerment, team building, providing maximum performance, ultimate customer (internal/external) service and longevity.

As a leader many times we focus on telling others what is important, and why. That is important but stopping there is not good enough. Involving others in shaping that purpose and vision to their own needs and desires is equally important to clarify expectations, to foster commitment, ownership and mutual understanding. These happen to be our last two vowels that we will cover below.

What do you do to foster involvement in a relationship? What are some of the 'lessons' you have learned that you can pass on to others? Many times, we can help others by sharing both our successes and our failures.

The difference is at this time you are viewing the 5 vowels as a leader/manager and the 'basics' for building a high-performance organization by building meaningful, results-oriented relationships.

O - Ownership

What does Ownership mean to you?

Being accountable for your own behavior, keeping commitments, being responsible are all part of taking ownerships. All of these characteristics and more are explained and illustrated in the Chapter entitled, 'A Way to Influence Others to Help You Succeed', in my book INSPIRATION AT WORK.

Continually building and reinforcing a sense of Ownership!

Practicing, teaching, and supporting the three previous vowels, APPRECIATION, EXPECTATIONS, and INVOLVEMENT creates an OWNERSHIP culture in an organization leading to high performance at every level and in every position. You, as a leader in your role, is where it all starts. Ask yourself some basic questions:

1. Do I feel comfortable in expressing appreciation to others no matter what their position or relationship is to our organization?
2. Do I know how and take the time to see that expectations are frequently clarified in all positions in my team?
3. Do I know how to seek and reinforce involvement of all people involved in achieving the desired results in our organization?

If you can say 'yes' to all these questions, you are on your way to being a high-performance organization. You may be already there! If you cannot answer yes to all these questions, make it a priority in your own development plan. Consider a coach to guide your own development. Not doing so can be very costly to you. So often you focus on what you can more easily see and count, rather than the human side of the enterprise.

O - Ownership

Facts about OWNERSHIP:

- Only way people will perform at 100%.
- Puts the organization first and individual second.
- Will set exciting goals AND will achieve them.
- Don't always know the "how" but always know the "why."

What do you do to foster OWNERSHIP in your relationships in and outside your organization? What are some of the 'lessons' you have learned that you can pass on to others? Many times, we can help others by sharing both our successes and our failures.



U - Understanding

The 5th of the Five Vowels for Building Relationships

You have read about four of the five Vowels, APPRECIATION, EXPECTATIONS, INVOLVEMENT, OWNERSHIP, and have seen how they contribute to relationship building both individually and collectively. We have stressed the importance of practicing their application, so they become automatically the way you respond in situations appropriate for their use (They become positive habits!).

In this section of the article we are focusing on the 5th Vowel, UNDERSTANDING. It is very appropriate to have Understanding as the fifth and final vowel because it is imperative to understand both the value of each vowel and its appropriate application in building and sustaining positive relationships that are aligned to common purpose, goal alignment, and the agreement on what is necessary for goal achievement. Does this look familiar?

It is the essence of high-performance relationships, teams and organizations. This is not 'pie-in-the-sky'. It requires hard work and the kind of commitment most people are not willing to make.



U - Understanding

Going back to some earlier research on the impact of each of these 5 Vowels or the lack of them, let us look at some of these facts about UNDERSTANDING:

Lack of Understanding produces

- The #1 reason for all bad communication.
- Produces poor performance, relationships, levels of trust/respect and responsibility/accountability.
- Divorces, wars, revenge, envy, confusion, and chaos.



Given we are at the end of this article on Relationship Building through Mastering the application of the 5 Vowels, what will you do with this information? One challenge is to move it beyond information that we already have to true knowledge that you are committed to applying in all your relationships. Form partnerships by sharing this model and knowledge with significant others who you live and work with to support each other in the positive habit formation applying the 5 Vowels.

Please come up with your own ideas and please share them with your colleagues.

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Exploratory Session With Dr. Bob

You're invited to a free exploratory session with Dr. Bob about our Coaching Certifications and Programs. If you'd like to discuss your goals and how our Coaching Certifications and Programs could help you grow your business or accelerate your career, please don't hesitate to reach out to us!



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