

Contents

Foreword	<i>ix</i>	
	<i>Shawn Achor</i>	
Invitation	<i>1</i>	
	<i>Jane E. Dutton and Gretchen M. Spreitzer</i>	
I FOSTER POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS		9
1 Build High-Quality Connections	<i>11</i>	
	<i>Jane E. Dutton</i>	
2 Outsource Inspiration	<i>22</i>	
	<i>Adam M. Grant</i>	
3 Negotiate Mindfully	<i>32</i>	
	<i>Shirli Kopelman and Ramaswami Mahalingam</i>	
II UNLOCK RESOURCES FROM WITHIN		43
4 Enable Thriving at Work	<i>45</i>	
	<i>Gretchen M. Spreitzer and Christine Porath</i>	
5 Cultivate Positive Identities	<i>55</i>	
	<i>Laura Morgan Roberts</i>	
6 Engage in Job Crafting	<i>65</i>	
	<i>Amy Wrzesniewski</i>	

III TAP INTO THE GOOD	77
7 Activate Virtuousness	79
<i>Kim Cameron</i>	
8 Lead an Ethical Organization	90
<i>David M. Mayer</i>	
9 Imbue the Organization with a Higher Purpose	100
<i>Robert E. Quinn and Anjan V. Thakor</i>	
IV CREATE RESOURCEFUL CHANGE	113
10 Cultivate Hope: Found, Not Lost	115
<i>Oana Branzei</i>	
11 Create Micro-moves for Organizational Change	126
<i>Karen Golden-Biddle</i>	
12 Treat Employees as Resources, Not Resisters	136
<i>Scott Sonenshein</i>	
13 Create Opportunity from Crisis	147
<i>Lynn Perry Wooten and Erika Hayes James</i>	
Epilogue and Looking Forward	158
<i>Gretchen M. Spreitzer and Jane E. Dutton</i>	
Notes	173
Acknowledgments	195
Index	197
About the Authors	205

Foreword

Shawn Achor

author of *The Happiness Advantage*
and *Before Happiness*

In one of my earliest attempts to bring leadership research into companies, I was invited to Zurich by a large Swiss bank during the economic crisis to give a lecture on Positive Leadership in Uncertain Times. Instead of reading my short bio, a disgruntled senior leader, who had been forced by the Human Resources (HR) Department to introduce my session, came to the front of the room and said, "Hello. As you know, we don't have bonuses for everyone, but here is a talk on happiness . . . from a guy from America."

You can imagine the response. There was immediate non-verbal stonewalling from these cool, reserved Swiss bankers. Honestly, I was already nervous for this talk. I was a green, thirty-year-old researcher with massive educational debts about to lecture on leadership to ultra-wealthy, battle-hardened, fifty-year-old managing directors at one of the world's largest banks. But what happened next was a significant learning moment for me.

About ten minutes into the talk, as I transitioned to explaining the scientific research that had been done on how to create rational optimism and to deepen social support in the midst of crisis, the senior leaders imperceptibly began leaning forward.

Build High- Quality Connections

Jane E. Dutton

Think of the last time an interaction at work literally lit you up. Before the interaction, you may have felt depleted, tired, or simply neutral. After the interaction, even if it was brief, you had greater energy and capability for action. This sense of heightened energy is real, and it is an important indicator that you are engaged in a high-quality connection (HQC). Other signs include a sense of mutuality and positive regard. In HQCs, people feel attuned to one another and experience a sense of worth and value. HQCs are critical building blocks for bringing out the best in people and organizations. The seed for this chapter is that leaders can bring out the best in themselves and others by building more high-quality connections at work. They also can design and implement practices, structures, and cultures fostering high-quality connection building throughout the organization and beyond.

The Value of High-Quality Connections

High-quality connections contribute to individual flourishing and to team and organizational effectiveness. These forms of connecting call forth positive emotions that are literally

life-giving. Barbara Fredrickson, who studies the power of positive emotions in connection, suggests these moments of connection start people on an upward spiral of growth and fulfillment.¹ For leaders, tapping into the power of high-quality connections means taking seriously the evidence that this form of person-to-person interrelating is at the root of critical individual and collective capabilities. The following are just some of the benefits of high-quality connections:

1. People who have HQCs are physically and psychologically healthier.²
2. Higher-quality connections enhance a person's physiological resources.³
3. People in higher-quality connections tend to have greater cognitive functioning.⁴ High-quality connections also broaden people's capacities for thinking.⁵
4. People in higher-quality connections are better at knowing who to trust—and who not to trust.
5. When people are in HQCs at work, they tend to exhibit more learning behaviors.⁶
6. When people are in higher-quality connections at work and when top management teams have greater-quality connections between them, they tend to be more resilient (i.e., bouncing back from setbacks more effectively).⁷
7. When people are in HQCs at work, they tend to be more committed and more involved, and they display more organizational citizenship behaviors.⁸
8. When people are in higher-quality connections at work and teams have higher-quality connections, individuals and team members are more creative.⁹
9. At the organizational level, more HQCs enable greater overall employee commitment and engagement at work.¹⁰

10. At the organizational level, more higher-quality connections enable relational coordination, marked by shared knowledge, shared goals, and mutual respect, which is associated with greater organizational effectiveness in terms of greater efficiency and higher-quality performance.¹¹

The beauty of high-quality connections is that they do not require significant time to build because they can be created in the moment. Meaningful investments of time and attention can further strengthen quality.

Strategies for Building High-Quality Connections

As a leader who wishes to ignite the best in yourself and in others, you have a range of potent options for building more HQCs with others and for designing organizations fostering this form of interconnecting.¹² We begin with your own interpersonal possibilities and invite you to consider four distinct pathways, or types of actions, to make workplace interactions more likely to yield high-quality connections.

Pathway 1: Respectfully Engage Others

Small acts matter in conferring worth to another person. Respect, or honoring another person's existence or value, is a state that is created in interaction with other people. Respect is not something we can grant ourselves; rather, it is a quality of experienced valuing from another person coming from subtle or direct messages of appreciation and worth. Respectfully engaging another person is accomplished through behaviors that signal that one person exists and is important in the eyes of another. There are at least three different moves that leaders

can engage in to respectfully engage others and to foster the building of HQCs.

One of the most potent ways is through presence, or psychologically and/or physically being attentive to another person's existence. Conveying presence takes effort for leaders, as hectic schedules, technological demands, and physical demands are just some of the barriers to communicating to another person they possess significance and value. Conveying presence means showing up bodily for another person, whether in someone's physical or virtual presence. Our bodies provide rich and revealing displays, signaling whether we are present—or absent. We explicitly remind others with our displays to stay attuned to and to be with another person. For example, turning off one's phone or physically moving away from the computer can be potent signals that one is ready, present, and receptive to connection with another person.

Respectful engagement also happens through effective listening and communicating supportively. If leaders can engage these two critical aspects of respectful engagement, high-quality connections result. Effective listening requires both empathy and active engagement. Empathy implies being tuned into what another person is saying so that one can imagine what the other person is feeling and meaning. Being an active listener means being genuinely responsive to the person who is speaking through moves such as paraphrasing or summarizing what another person is saying, asking questions, or soliciting feedback.¹³ Supportive communication is a quality of communication that involves attending both to what is said and to how it is said in ways that provide direct, descriptive, and actionable information that another person can hear and use.¹⁴ Supportive communication involves making requests and not demands,¹⁵ which invites a form of engagement that

is voluntary and receptive, leading to a higher quality connection.

Pathway 2: Task-Enable Others

At the heart of task enabling is the core idea that higher-quality connections form if we facilitate another's success or performance on a task or a goal. When we task-enable others, they sense our interpersonal investment and desire to help, which opens them to an HQC. Of all the options for building high-quality connections, task enabling is often the method most explicitly recognized by work organizations. For example, when organizations assign mentors or coaches to facilitate another person's development, they are formalizing a task-enabling role. They are betting it will make a difference for a person's performance or growth. However, most task enabling happens informally, when one person reaches out to help another because they sense that they have something to offer and can make a difference. Critical and often-used enabling resources include emotional support, encouragement, recognition, guidance, task information, and flexibility. The most effective task enabling involves matching the resources provided to the task at hand and the specific style and needs of the person. Accordingly, task enabling often requires soliciting feedback about whether the help being provided meets the need. Sustained task enabling builds and supports HQCs, and works best when a continuous learning process is in place. Both people are soliciting and providing feedback that matches enabling resources with the particular needs of the person engaged in the task.

Pathway 3: Trust Others

Trusting another person is a pathway for building HQCs. Although a well-worn and frequent prescription, trusting others

at work can sometimes be difficult. Trusting means being vulnerable and relying on another person to follow through on their commitments. Trusting involves paying attention both to what you say and what you do, as well as to what you do *not* say and do. For example, good trusting moves include sharing resources, granting access, delegating responsibility, being open, and seeking input. However, trusting to build HQCs also means *not* monitoring and controlling excessively, ignoring input, acting inconsistently, or accusing another of bad intentions. Trust is hard work, especially if one has grown up or worked in contexts where it is a rare or misused condition. In addition, if trust is broken, it can be difficult and time consuming to repair. Despite these challenges, trusting moves are potent contributors to high-quality connections that make interrelating smoother, more efficient, and more enjoyable.

Pathway 4: Play

All species play, and humans at work are no exception. What is sometimes overlooked is the importance of play in building connections. Moments of play are moments of exploration and interaction, often building new knowledge and broadening action possibilities. They frequently evoke positive emotions, which open people up to new and generative ways of interacting. Play at work is often associated with innovation and creativity because it fosters new knowledge and develops cognitive skills.¹⁶ However, the role of play in building connections—especially ones where people are energized and sense mutual regard—is often missed or underestimated. Play at work takes numerous forms. Some units or organizations institutionalize play through team-building activities, volunteer opportunities, or simply by having play supplies, such as ping-pong tables or basketball courts, read-

ily available. Leaders and employees can enact numerous moves to engage play, either in formal forums such as meetings or at informal gatherings such as celebrations. What is most important to remember about this pathway is that it exists as a powerful and low-investment option for building HQCs.

Designing Organizations That Foster Building and Maintaining High-Quality Connections

Leaders have multiple means for creating a work context that encourages both the creation and the sustenance of high-quality connections.¹⁷ Leading for sustainable excellence in an organization means taking actions to create and to institutionalize a context where HQCs are the norm and the expected form of human-to-human interrelating for employees, customers, suppliers, and all relevant organizational stakeholders. Leaders have at least three design choices that are likely to cultivate and support high-quality connections.

Reward High-Quality Connection Building and Relational Skills

Leaders have several options for formally and informally rewarding effective connection building. Some leaders create team-based awards where a portion of an employee's incentives are tied to collective as well as individual performance. The use of team or group incentives focuses attention and motivation around collaboration, which fosters the building of high-quality connections.¹⁸ Some leaders also encourage HQCs through the creation of spot awards or peer-controlled rewards, which allow for the recognition of excellence based on a peer's contribution to collective performance. Southwest Airlines is

one organization that deploys these types of incentives, and their use is one of the reasons analysts see them as highly effective in relational coordination.¹⁹ Finally, leaders can encourage the building of relational skills (e.g., social intelligence or effective helping) as part of talent development, providing further incentives for creating and building a workforce that is sensitive to and invested in bettering their capacity to build and to sustain HQCs.

Build High-Quality Connection Routines and Practices

Routines and practices are repeated activities and ways of doing things that become typical and normative in any organization. Often taken for granted, these ways of acting may come to typify an organization, but they can be potent contributors to high-quality connection building. Multiple routines and practices foster HQC building. For example, some organizations explicitly select employees who have relationship-building attitudes and competencies. Others routinize significant peer involvement in employee selection as another means for building HQCs when a person begins their organizational membership. Still others utilize onboarding practices that are explicitly designed to foster rapid and significant quality connecting for newcomers.²⁰ Use of relational onboarding practice means giving priority to opportunities that enable newcomers to connect with the appropriate people, instead of overwhelming them with information. Finally, practices used during routine meetings can be potent means for fostering connections. For example, making sure people are introduced in ways that equip others to engage and to trust them, and facilitating people to be well prepared for meetings, are simple but potent practices to bring about high-quality connection building.

Model and Value High-Quality Connection Building

It is well known that leaders' behaviors model and influence what is appropriate conduct for organizational members and thus are critical shapers of an organization's culture. Consequently, if leaders wish to foster HQC building, they need to conduct themselves with this mindset and behavioral repertoire in much of what they do. Leaders can convey values and priorities that elevate the importance of connection building, setting the tone for others to see these behaviors as important and valued activities. Researchers writing about the impact of leadership on interpersonal caring and on the creation of caring cultures in organizations identify various leadership behaviors that can shape organizational-level caring (and provide support for the building of HQCs).²¹ As an everyday example, leaders can act to be present, use face-to-face contact, and engage in active listening, demonstrating knowledge, understanding, and caring for the needs of various organizational constituencies. But leaders can also model values and behaviors in crisis, affecting members' motivation to connect in high-quality ways with others. Leaders' actions in the wake of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States were important shapers of members' connection-building activities.²² As an example of crisis leadership, Phil Lynch, president of Reuters America, headquartered in New York City, took immediate actions to continuously and personally communicate and to be present with all his employees as they wrestled with both human losses and technical challenges associated with that day's horrific events. Leaders' actions toward others during times of duress and challenge leave an indelible impression of appropriate and desired ways of interrelating that last far beyond the immediate circumstances.

Putting It All Together

Bringing out the best in oneself, and in others, means paying attention to and investing in the quality of the social fabric where we are growing and performing. The quality of the social fabric is built one interaction at a time. When we make these interactions high quality, we build personal strength, and we also strengthen and enrich the fabric that sustains, grows, and facilitates others.

BUILDING HIGH-QUALITY CONNECTIONS WITH CLIENTS: THE CASE OF WESTON SOLUTIONS

Weston Solutions (hereafter Weston) is a global employee-owned firm delivering “integrated environmental, sustainability, property redevelopment, energy, and construction solutions for clients” (<http://www.westonsolutions.com/about/index.htm>). High-quality connections with clients are critical for Weston’s strategic success because of the large financial stakes involved with each client engagement and the importance of client engagements for the company’s reputation.

Weston’s management intentionally cultivates awareness and commitment to the importance of building and helping others build HQCs with clients. The company provides training on HQC building for all project managers (PMs). An interview study with the PMs revealed three benefits of HQCs with clients. At the firm level, HQCs with clients yield financial benefits by reducing the need for price renegotiations during contract renewals, increasing contract renewal rates, and maintaining sole source supplier status. A PM explained that with HQCs, “we get challenging projects which are more profitable.” At the project level, HQCs with clients keep engagements flexible and bring in more diverse work, while making client work more enjoyable. In addition, project managers report extensive personal and professional learning when client connections are high quality.

As leaders, PMs foster HQCs with clients using five strategies: (1) having frequent, open communication with clients with some regular face-to-

face contact; (2) personalizing the client relationship by connecting outside of work; (3) committing to always exceeding client expectations; (4) making early admission of mistakes or missed deadlines; and (5) being open, honest, dependable, transparent, and acting with integrity. Project managers looked for what would be home runs for clients and then tried to hit the ball “out of the park” to achieve quality. As one PM said, “You ask the client, ‘Okay, for this particular assignment, what would a home run be for you?’” Another PM reflected the same core belief about hitting home runs: “It demonstrates to our customers and our clients that we’re willing to do whatever it takes to make them successful. And at the end of the day, we’re going to give them more than they paid for.”

TWEETS

Did you know that short, momentary interactions with people at work are like vitamins that strengthen and fortify you throughout your day?

Expand your repertoires of ways to build high-quality connections by doing more task enabling, respectfully engaging, trusting, and playing more with others.

Have you considered how to design your team, unit, or organization to foster quality connections? Your life and performance depend upon it.