

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with the legacy Series of Digging Deeper.

Today, I want to talk about relationships. Many of you have probably heard about this very long-term Harvard study, about what makes people happy, and what allows also for good health and all of that. And really, it was found that relationships are a key to happiness, health, longevity, all of that.

Well, digging deeper into this study, one of the things I read and found was that the happiest group of people and the healthiest group of people also had relationships and connections at work. All right, so, that's what I want to talk about. Today is the opportunity for more relationship and connection at work and how this might relate to more company success, certainly more successful for your people who are going to be happier and more fulfilled. And more connected, by the way, so they might not move on to the next company when they want a 10-cent raise. Actually, maybe it's a \$2 raise in today's world.

But relationships and connection are important. They're important to your culture, and you have an opportunity, if you think about it, to build your culture, utilizing the strength of relationships and connection of your people at work. Now, think about some of the things we may have thought were right to do at work. No fraternization, closed doors, offices that people sit in, isolating people for efficiency. Turns out those things actually aren't good in the big picture. What they've found is that people actually do a better job when they have connections, they have relationships at work.

So how do you achieve that? Well, a more open environment. We have a client up in Philly that took all the doors off of the offices, there are no doors. Now they have a conference room where if somebody has to take a phone call in private or something, they can go do that, but they took the doors off the offices. Pretty interesting.

Certainly, a lot of you have seen now offices with good public spaces, sort of meeting spaces, open spaces for people to come out, relax, collaborate, or just spend some social time with other people. And then those public spaces, the beer keg, those sorts of things, in today's world, maybe a smoothie machine or more health-oriented types of things in your kitchenette, but a place where people can actually interrelate and improve those connections, encourage collaboration as people work together, that certainly deepens their ties. And by getting people to collaborate, again, that just connects people better to the work. More company fun, more get-togethers. The picnic, one of the very successful ones because that allows people to get to know others' families in a lot of cases. And again, that deepens the relationships and connections that people have with work, both connecting, the spouse and the children and that sort of thing to the company, but also others in the company, getting to know those people, that strengthens the connections.

Getting people involved in charities and things like that. Again, another area to deepen the relationships. People going out to work on a Habitat for Humanity project, for example. A lot of connection, relationships, and that type of thing. Onboarding and mentoring is one of your great opportunities for connection. We have several clients where the CEO meets regularly with new hires for maybe half an hour and finds out about them and then meets with them off in the future. That's a huge connection piece. Mentoring or assigning a mentor or if not a mentor, at least just a coach or somebody to watch out for that new employee is very important to help them connect with other people again. And that should be one of the objectives of your onboarding and mentoring, is to start those connections to allow people to understand not just what other people do, but who they are, and that deepens the connections throughout the company.

Make sure your leaders understand that they're responsible for promoting and assuring connection. They should be identifying somebody who's not connecting and possibly inviting them themselves over to dinner at their house, taking them out for drinks, getting a group of people together to socialize for lunch. Speaking of lunch, having team lunches where people get together out of their offices. Again, another chance just to interconnect outside of the work itself. I've seen some companies that use their award programs whenever they're giving an award to staff or receive an award from the outside, getting everybody together to present that award and cheer together, that sort of thing.

But the opportunity for relationships and connections deepens the tie of your people to the company. It deepens the culture. Not only are you going to be better off in terms of fewer people leaving you, but you're also potentially going to become that hot company that people want to work for, because they find their community there. So very much encouraging you to think more about your work hub as a place for those relationships, for connections, and instead of possibly trying to damper them or keep them down, change your policies, change your philosophies to encourage them. And I think you'll have a better workplace, and you'll certainly have a happier team.

Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.