

# TOP NINE TIPS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH CLIENTS

## 1. Coaching

Supervisors and managers now have a great deal of people management responsibility in addition to their traditional workload. They often need to offer coaching and guidance and carry out performance reviews whilst dealing with grievances and discipline. Supervisors and managers need training to improve their coaching and development skills in order to execute HR responsibilities; and HR needs to take accountability for the relevant training and support being made easily available. Having the correct tools will give them confidence related to executing their people management responsibilities.

## 2. Honesty

Building a relationship that is both cooperative and collaborative is beneficial to both HR and the client. Be honest with managers and appropriately involve them with decisions, this will automatically make them feel more engaged and cooperative. Introducing a new strategy or policy will involve a lot of the client's time and resources; be honest with them about why it is important, what involvement is needed and ask them how they feel about it. This collaborative approach will generate better buy-in from employees and help new HR initiatives come alive.

## 3. COMMUNICATION

When you are trying to communicate with any audience, timing is vital. Do not try to communicate with your clients during the busiest time for the business because it is unlikely you will be heard. Pick your moments to communicate carefully.

## 4. LISTENING

It is likely that supervisors and managers will have different views and attitudes to taking on the more transactional elements of HR tasks or new strategic initiatives, mainly as they do not see the tangible benefits from HR becoming a more strategic role. But their lack of understanding does not mean their views are any less important. Taking the time to properly listen and provide a platform for discussion will help build an effective working relationship. If clients feel their views are taken into consideration, they will have greater buy-in to new challenges.

## 5. TOOLS

If you are relying on supervisors and managers to manage many of the day-to-day duties of people management ensure that you give them the tools and equipment to make this as easy as possible. Easy access to policies and documents, and clearly defined procedures help to make tasks more manageable.

## 6. SUPPORT

As a member of the HR Client Services Team, make sure you provide support to supervisors and managers when needed and more importantly make sure they know HR is there to support them! It may seem obvious but regular training is essential to make sure managers are confident and up to date with their responsibilities. Even after training it is essential that HR are available to answer questions, setting up a dedicated email address and/or phone number will provide a clear support system for clients.

## 7. CLEAR HR ROLE

It is often hard to see a visible benefit in HR transforming itself into a strategic function and repeatedly many managers feel they are just being given more work to do without understanding the benefits to the business. Explain the role of HR as a strategic partner and showcase the benefits that it can bring to the University. Provide examples of how HR can add value to the business on a strategic level now that it has moved away from tactical activities.

## 8. PARTNERS

Once Line managers understand the business advantages of HR in a strategic role, the next step is to recognize them as strategic partners of HR and the business. Giving regular recognition and reward for their responsibilities will not only encourage buy-in from the line but also enable managers to take better accountability and develop closer relationships with their teams.

## 9. PRAISE

This may sound obvious but it is important for supervisors and managers to feel valued in the role. If your clients have implemented a new policy successfully, engaged employees effectively, or are just doing a good job, make sure you tell them and be sincere in your communication.