

Economic Impacts of Professional Interpersonal Skill Development



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According to the experts of the Acclivus Corporation, performance consultants to the world's leading organizations, an organization's revenue (life's blood) "is the product of customer *relationships and results.*" Numerous Acclivus *Studies in Performance* tell the story of how improved relationships preceded gains in volume, closing rate and margin."

In the Acclivus Research Report, *Creating Value Business-with-Business® A Decade of Insight*, they suggest the following 3 points:

- Relationships go beyond rapport. Strong relationships must also include mutual trust, respect and value extending beyond the current business transaction.
- Results are more than deliverables. Optimal results must directly contribute to the success and growth of a customer's business
- Revenue is the outcome. Profitable revenue is sustained by strong relationships and optimal results.

Social skills in the workplace help build strong relationships and they contribute to optimal results, including the production of revenue. People in the workplace must be able to align their assignments and actions to achieve optimal results. The assignments are the combination of tasks assigned to them, while the actions necessary to fulfill the tasks will likely involve others.

That is why workgroups, teams, taskforces and departments exist; namely to share not only a common vision, but also the work, experiences, resources and intellectual property of its designated members. This is done in an effort to increase value as experienced by increased revenues, customer satisfaction, production, efficiency and overall quality.

The Human Asset Imaging® Institute exists to research, develop and bring to market products that increase interpersonal effectiveness.

To whatever extent working well together toward a common goal reduces the workload of the individual and contributes to an overall sense of achievement and group harmony, collegiality is a necessary by-product to the creation of more of the same, that is to say, true productivity.

The ability to influence through knowledge, skill and likeability cannot be understated. It is no mystery that people do business with people they like. But what we sometimes fail to realize is the impact of that statement in the workplace, not with regard to selling, but in the way work is distributed, accountability is measured and promotions are granted. Likeability is a stronger factor than most are willing to admit. Celebrities, customer service representatives and effective sales people know this to be absolutely true. But quiet as it is kept, so do managers and savvy employees with an eye toward upward mobility. The ability to negotiate for what you want, whether it be new assignments, borrowed resources, a raise, new and exciting projects, the cubical near the window or the parking spot closest to the front door, all negotiations are dependent on the level of your professional social skills. Information, influence and implementation rule the day in the workplace where the sole objective is to profitably solve customer problems.

Retention:

In an extensive retention study done by the Industrial Relations Center/Carlson School of Management, at the University of Minnesota involving 1,532 exempt, white-collar employees, study results indicated that an organization could improve employee retention and reduce costs by successfully socializing new employees and increasing organizational commitment and job satisfaction. If this is the result among white-collar employees, what might the implications be for non-exempt employees?

Professional social skills are often seen in collaborative relationships with peers and customers based upon trust and the meeting of interdependent needs. Hence, collaboration and teambuilding, and other such trainings are at the core of many a business training curriculum.

According to the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), *2006 State of the Industry in Leading Enterprises Annual Review of Trends in Workplace Learning and*

Performance, it is estimated that “U.S. organizations spend \$109.25 billion on employee learning and development annually, with nearly three quarters (\$79.75 billion) spent on the internal learning function, and the remainder (\$29.50 billion) spent on external services.” Buried in these gargantuan numbers is the massive amount spent on “soft skills” development, that is, those professional interpersonal skills that empower employees to work cooperatively toward client and organizational goals.

All daily workplace interactions with others include, to some extent, one or more of these social actions: advising, coaching, leading, consulting, guiding, directing, instructing, training, discussing, steering, answering, expressing, teaching or preparing. The more tactful and pleasant the communication experience, the more likely progress will ensue.

Regardless of the role one plays in the organization, one must establish personal credibility or legitimacy. An individual’s authenticity and genuine or real feelings about oneself, the work, the customer, coworkers and the company will be tested. And the realization of goals and objectives will be largely dependent on how well the individual conveys the intent and meaning of his or her decisions and actions.

Access, one of the true measures of acceptance, will be granted or denied based on the perceptions others hold. On the other hand, results, the measure of effectiveness, are predicated in large part by others’ willingness to open up and share.

Every day we are being interviewed. Every evaluation and observation that others make of us, whether in the cafeteria, parking lot or corner office is, in effect, a performance review. To whatever extent the employee reveals his or her connection with others through effective professional interpersonal skills will dictate what comes next. In the end, optimal results are not solely the effect of skill or knowledge or “connections” acquired, but of these things in conjunction with strong, lasting relationships based upon the foundations of social skill development.

*For more information
on how to assess the
professional
interpersonal skills of
those in your
organization, please
call the HAI-Institute
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