



TOOLKIT 4 – BEING INTERPERSONALLY SKILLED

- ❖ **Build strong relationships.**
- ❖ **Get buy-in to your plans.**
- ❖ **Inspire people.**

The skill of being able to deal effectively with people at all levels has been shown in many studies to be a key skill for successful business people.

Whether it's motivating a team, selling to key customers, getting buy-in from stakeholders, talking up the share price in the city or simply getting the best out of people; good interpersonal skills separate the real leaders from the pack.

STORY – A TALE OF TWO BOSSES

When I (David Hall) first started my career at Steetley plc my boss was an ex-Air Vice Marshall.

He could not remember my name so he called me John. When it came to the annual appraisal (which I looked forward to) he often cancelled our meeting at the last moment: 'Fill in the form John' he would say 'I'm too busy' (and important). Consequently he got 100% out of me, 10% on Mondays, 20% on Tuesdays ...

Tony Kitson was my next boss. At the annual appraisal Tony would prepare for it very carefully. He would give me two to three hours where we would talk about my career.

He was enthusiastic, encouraging and very supportive. He encouraged me to do an MBA, giving me time off to study. He remembered all my children's birthdays. He would call me up prior to board meetings and ask for my advice and help. He was a real turning point in my career and confidence.

Tony had the interpersonal skills to inspire everybody including shareholders, customers, his board, colleagues and even my children.

I have not seen Tony for 25 years but if he called me tomorrow and asked me to go to London for him, my response would be 'Tony do you want me to run there with a sack of coal on my back ...?' That's the point - one boss was self-orientated and arrogant and the other could get people to walk on water for him.

The difference? Interpersonal skills.

EXERCISE

Highlight the 5 most important relationships that you manage and for each one list the details that show you understand them better than any of your other contacts. Then in the next box list the things that you need to do better that will enhance each relationship.

Name and type of relationship	Things that make this relationship special	Steps to improve the relationship that I have
<i>Example: Brian Hunt – Supplier of core products</i>	<i>Weekly contact Hobbies: motorbikes (Honda fireblade) Wife (Holly) and 1 child (James aged 5)</i>	<i>360% feedback request Invite for a tour around our premises Ask Brian to become part of my problem solving network</i>

SEVEN COMPONENTS OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

<p>1. Listening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With respect, interest and total attention. • Maintain eye contact at all times. • Do not interrupt or end people's sentences for them, let them finish. • Leave space for people to talk by staying quiet. • Don't offer solutions or opinions too early. • Provide encouragement and support.
<p>2. Show support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice a five to one ratio of support to criticism. • Avoid 'Yes but ...' • Avoid telling them your problems, it does not create empathy it only annoys people.
<p>3. Time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give people time to talk. Don't rush or slow down the pace of the discussion.
<p>4. Control your body language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be careful to keep your body language in step with your purpose e.g. don't cross your arms if you want to appear open and inclusive. • Be relaxed and smile in order to encourage people to talk.
<p>5. Provide information at the right time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclose things about yourself that shows you are human, have humanity and you can be self-deprecating. • Sometimes people do need information, don't overload them but provide it at the right time.
<p>6. Ask helpful questions</p>	<p>Helpful questions are ones that make a positive assumption and direct the speaker's attention back to their goal. Here are some examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you were the Manager what issues would you tackle first and how would you do it?</i> • <i>If you knew you were critical to the organisation's success, how would you approach your work?</i> • <i>If you knew that you were as smart as your boss was, how would you present yourself to him?</i>
<p>7. Equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat the person as a peer or a friend. • Give equal opportunities to talk and listen. • Keep to boundaries

Using these skills builds rapport and empathy in most interpersonal situations.

People want to do business with people they trust and like and these skills have proven important in building relationships with people.

You may have noticed that often women possess these skills. Sometimes men (including me) need to work at their interpersonal skills because of their conditioning and the role models they follow:

Good interpersonal skills

Listen

Ask helpful questions

Establish equality

Encourage

Appreciate

Male conditioning

Interrupt, talk over, compete for air space

Give advice

Assume superiority

Compete

Criticise

The good news is that interpersonal skills can be developed.

STEP 1 **ASSESSING YOUR LEVELS OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

Are you interested in how you rate on these key interpersonal skills?

If you are then photocopy the interpersonal skill assessment and ask selected people to fill it in, in order to give you some feedback. This will raise your consciousness level and help you take stock of what you need to do in order to improve your interpersonal skills. Low scores may explain why you are not getting the results from people you desire.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Name: (Person being assessed) _____

Name of Assessor: _____

Please answer these following questions as honestly as you possibly can. Your feedback will help your colleague.

		RATING									
		Low/Poor					High/Excellent				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Really listens carefully with respect and interest.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2.	Asks good questions rather than gives opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3.	Treats everybody equally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
4.	Practices a 5:1 ratio of appreciation to criticism.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5.	Encourages and collaborates rather than competes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6.	Gives space and time for open discussions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
7.	Appears to be honest and straightforward.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
8.	Communicates very clearly with people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9.	Shows empathy, interest and understanding.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10.	Is assertive rather than aggressive or passive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total		_____ %									

Reviewing your scores

- 80% + Well done. You will be producing outstanding results through people. You have an excellent range of interpersonal skills.
- 60% + Average for Managers and Leaders. Where do you need to improve? How can you develop your skills above 60%.
- 40% + Below average. A lot of work to do, maybe you should think of undertaking some formal training in interpersonal skills?
- 20% + Are you in the right job? Maybe you should be a lighthouse keeper or a shepherd?

STEP 2

DEVELOPING YOUR INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Here are some actions you can take to develop your low scores on the assessment:

- Book yourself on a good quality interpersonal skill development programme.
- Hire a personal coach to help you to develop your skills.
- Copy good role models, who are highly competent at the skills you want to develop.
- Practice, practice, practice.
Practice the skill you want to develop in real life situations.
- Ask for feedback.
Ask selected people to give you honest feedback on whether your skills are improving. Do they notice a difference?
E.g., ask people to give you feedback on how well you manage meetings.
- Act as if ... Just do it.
Act as if you are interpersonally skilled and you will develop.
- Write out a plan on a piece of card and keep it with you.
E.g., top sports people use this technique all the time to keep them focused.
- Read a good book on the subject e.g., Gavin Kennedy's book 'Everything is Negotiable'.
- Ask people to share their way of using the skill i.e., showing interest. Integrate the best ideas into your skill set.
- Show humility not arrogance.

TIP: If you want to build real rapport and trust with people, then be authentic at all times. This means putting into words what you are seeing or feeling.

I.e.,

'You look a bit puzzled, what are you thinking about?'

Or

'This doesn't feel right to me, how are you feeling right now?'

This is a very powerful way of building rapport and trust.

STEP 3 ROLE MODELLING

We created this approach to help people to develop their interpersonal skills because we found that traditional training courses were not effective. This approach works by getting a team of four to six people together who want to develop their interpersonal skills (including you).

The approach also is a good team building exercise.

Role modelling has been used by many people to develop:

- Sales skills
- Interviewing skills
- Presentation skills
- Appraisal skills
- Running a meeting
- Sales management skills
- Coaching skills

It works because people like to learn from their peers. They learn by watching what others do and copying. The lack of criticism ensures a positive learning environment is created where people are happy to experiment and learn.

Try it, it works because it's simple, fun and is in line with how people prefer to develop interpersonal skills.

	PROCESS	NOTES
1.	Invite people to work on improving their interpersonal skills.	
2.	The ground rules are no analysis of rights or wrongs.	
3.	A volunteer in the group starts the process by naming an interpersonal episode they would like to develop.	<p>An episode is a short interaction i.e., asking questions in selling or giving difficult feedback in appraisals.</p> <p>People do not have problems with total interpersonal situations i.e., selling. They usually are good at some parts (episodes) e.g. dealing with objections in the sales process and have problems with others e.g. asking for the order.</p>
4.	The volunteer demonstrates how they currently perform the episode with another person i.e., volunteer tries asking questions in a sales situation. Another member of the team acts as a typical buyer. The episode usually lasts for two/three minutes.	<p>Authenticity check. Check after one minute whether the role play is the same as the real situation.</p> <p>Nobody is allowed to comment i.e., that was poor or I wouldn't do it like that. No discussion, just role play</p>
5.	Another group member offers to demonstrate how they deal with the same episode.	There are always people in the group who are skilled and can demonstrate the episode really well.
6.	The original group member is asked to notice how their colleague does it.	
7.	Step 5 is repeated with another group member demonstrating how they do it.	No discussion or evaluation is allowed.
8.	The original problem owner is then asked to pick bits of what they have seen which they want to incorporate into their approach (steps 5-6) and repeat the episode.	
9.	Congratulate the individual on their development. The difference between steps 4-7 will be obvious to everyone.	
10.	Repeat steps 3-9 with other members of the group dealing with their interpersonal skill problems.	An added bonus is to video steps 4 and 9, the before and after, to capture the skill development.