

DEVELOPING RELATIONAL CAPACITIES IN THE WORKPLACE



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CareerTech

Relational capacities refer to the interpersonal skills and organizational abilities used to build, maintain, and strengthen professional connections. They transform organizations from purely functional spaces into collaborative environments by fostering communication, problem-solving, and coordination. Organizations must build and activate relationships to be successful.

1. Structure Cross-Functional Collaboration.

Break down departmental silos to ensure information flows naturally across the organization.

- **Matrix Structures and Task Forces:** Form teams composed of members from different departments to tackle specific projects.
- **Communities of Practice:** Create voluntary, interest-based groups that allow employees to share knowledge and best practices outside of traditional reporting lines.

2. Invest in Relationship-Focused Training.

Treat networking and relationship building as core professional competencies to be strengthened, not left to chance.

- **Onboarding and Mentorship:** Embed cross-departmental introduction programs during onboarding. Implement mentoring or buddy programs to connect new staff with more senior team members and peers in different departments.
- **Upskilling:** Provide training in active listening, constructive discussion, and emotional intelligence.

3. Establish Shared Values and Goals.

Relational capabilities thrive when all parties clearly see mutual benefits.

- **Aligned Incentives:** Tie departmental key performance indicators to shared objectives rather than to isolated metrics, encouraging teams to collaborate rather than compete.
- **Co-Creation:** Involve employees, stakeholders, and strategic partners in planning and strategy formulation so everyone has ownership of the outcomes.

4. Foster Psychological Safety. Open dialogue is impossible without trust and a non-punitive environment.

- **Transparency:** Ensure leaders openly communicate organizational changes and provide safe outlets (such as town halls or anonymous feedback platforms) for team members to voice concerns and ask questions.
- **Collaboration Recognition:** Acknowledge and publicly reward team members who share knowledge and bridge gaps across the organization.

5. Leverage Collaborative Tools. Use digital tools that facilitate connection.

- **Open Platforms:** Use tools like Slack, Microsoft Teams, or similar platforms to maintain open lines of communication, share feedback, and express appreciation.
- **Relationship Mapping:** Use internal directories to map communication and collaboration networks and to address gaps by introducing people who should be connected.