



## Building bonds, an ingredient for success

**Your ability to persuade and influence others, and thereby build relationships stems from the power within you**

By K Jayshankar



Getting things done. That is what managers are supposed to do — or so they teach you in business school. Ask any fresh MBA and he will eagerly offer you his mantra for managerial success — must accomplish tasks and achieve results — as these are what count in performance appraisal reports.

What is often not realised is that the secret ingredient of success is the ability to build relationships. Any hardboiled veteran manager from the world of business will tell you that what endures at the end of the day are relationships. By this, I refer not only to the fond memories of old companions when you finally lay down your office, but also those who helped you achieve your goals when on the job, not because you pulled rank on them, but because of your persuasive abilities.

In fact, what is not understood sufficiently is that there are two broad kinds of organisational powers: position power and personal power. Position power is what the company gives you and emanates from the rank that you hold within the organisation. Invariably, the higher you are in the hierarchy, the greater your authority and influence; hence, the more powerful you appear to be in the organisation. What is forgotten is that once you shed your role and rank, your powers vanish and you go back into anonymity. Many business executives who basked in organisational glory have lived with regret once the trappings of office have been lost.

Personal power, on the other hand, is the power that is within you. The genesis or the fountainhead for this is your own knowledge, skills and most importantly, attitude. Even with vast knowledge and enviable skills, you could fail if you don't realise that it is your attitude that defines you ultimately. Cases abound where a person's winning attitude has been the force-multiplier. And your ability to persuade and influence others, and thereby build relationships, stems from your personal power.

In his book *Never Eat Alone*, master-connector Keith Ferrazzi speaks about his awakening to the power of relationships. Quoting Margaret Wheatley that "Relationships are all there is", Ferrazzi — a renowned networker — shares his realisation that success is feasible by building a web of relationships. Too often dismissed as networking, the need to build connections (being a softer element of business) with others — be it peers, subordinates, as well as seniors — has not received enough attention. In the words of the Dalai Lama, ... most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others. In a world filled with the wonders of technology, it is easy to forget that communities (at the workplace and otherwise) are the result of connectedness with people.

The legendary management guru, Ken Blanchard also stressed on the power of positive relationships. In his book, *Whale Done*, he says that relationships are built by accentuating the positive. Insisting that the philosophy he learned by watching animal trainers at Sea World applies to organisational settings too, Blanchard offers his relationship building recipe with trust being the fundamental foundation. Mistakes are but natural when passionate people take initiatives in a company, to which Blanchard offers the remedy that we should redirect the energy, rather than upbraid and highlight faults.

Another valuable relationship builder is the use of positive feedback. Those of us who have grown up in the traditional organisation mould are stingy with praise. The sad refrain from people is that more often than not nobody notices us when we do something right, but the tragedy is that the moment we make a mistake the whole world comes to know because the boss notices it, and, worse, advertises it. Consequently, the big effort in organisations is the cover up instead of acknowledgement of mistakes. Hardly the manner to build bridges of relationships, you would agree.

If only more organisations paid attention to JRD Tata's guiding principle that Good human relations not only bring great personal rewards, but are essential to the success of any enterprise.