

Making time to build staff rapport when you barely have time to read this article

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Becoming a manager can have its perks. It gives you more authority, more influence and more responsibility. But it also gives you more to do without giving you any more time to do it. You've got to get the job done, make sure the trains run on time, respond to emails, put out fires, get to meetings and more. Chances are, you don't make it through your to-do list on any given day.

So when people talk about connecting with your staff or learning about leadership skills, you might think, "That sounds nice. But when am I supposed to do that?" Maybe you're only making time to read this article because you just need a break from other tasks

We're going to give you some quick and easy tips to help you build relationships with staff, even when you're strapped for time.

Go for quality over quantity

If you're in a hurry, you want to make the most of the few minutes you've got with someone. When you meet with an employee, it may be tempting to multi-task. It's best to let your phone and email wait for a few minutes while you talk.

If it's not a good time, ask to schedule a future meeting or be honest about your limits. You can say, "I have a meeting in 10 minutes but I can give you my attention until then. Do you still want to meet or should we schedule something for later?"

Are you always in meetings? Invite the person to walk with you to your next appointment. Your employees know you're busy. But spending just a few minutes one-on-one can help an employee feel valued.

See people, not jobs

When you're focused on getting the job done, it can be easy to forget your employees are people with personal lives. And you might not have time to sit down and talk to your staff on a regular basis. But small gestures can make a difference. For example:

- **Remember names.** We've seen the boss character in movies who always gets people's names wrong. Try not to be "that manager." Our names shape our identities. So make a point of learning (and remembering) employees' names.
- **Know your staff.** In addition to learning staff names, find out a couple details about them. Are they in school? Do they have kids? Are they buying a house? Getting to know your staff shows you value who they are, not just what they do.
- **Say hello.** Greet your employees each day. It doesn't take a lot of time or energy to acknowledge your staff in passing. Ask how they're doing and then listen closely to their answers.
- **Show gratitude.** Did Sheila work late last night? Did Steve do a great job on a project? Has the team been putting in extra hours? Let your employees know that you notice their efforts. From reward systems to a simple "thank you," appreciation can go a long way.

Building relationships can sound time consuming. But it doesn't have to be. Spend a few minutes listening to someone. Take a couple seconds to say "Hi" or "How's your family?" Share a quick but heartfelt "Thank you." These small, positive acts pay dividends in staff morale. And they might require less time than it took you to read this article.