

RELATIONOMICS

BUSINESS POWERED BY RELATIONSHIPS

DR. RANDY ROSS



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To the love of my life, LuAnne, who continuously inspires me to create value for others, sharpens me relationally, encourages me to be my best, challenges me to apply what I teach, shows me unconditional love, brightens my world, and makes a beautiful “billboard.”

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FOREWORD

Over many years, I've worked with and observed great leaders across a wide variety of organizations and industries. Many of them have discovered that when the people they serve are engaged at work and treated well, they will treat their customers well in turn. This results in happy customers who come back, content shareholders, and a thriving business.

The best leaders know that healthy relationships are the secret to great results and human satisfaction. Leaders who invest time and resources in serving, caring for, and developing their people see a noticeable difference in employee morale and engagement as well as in improved financial performance. The interesting thing to me is how many leaders say they would like this kind of culture but can't seem to spend the time and energy needed to get the *people* part right.

Leadership is about creating a nurturing environment in which your people can connect and collaborate. Life is not a solo sport. Every person must work effectively with both internal and external customers in order to be successful at

what they do. The best leaders serve their people by modeling positive behavior. These serving leaders create both great relationships *and* results.

Randy Ross agrees. In *Relationomics*, he makes a compelling case for healthy relationships by calling out negative elements that can stifle people's growth and offering principles you can apply both at work and at home that will transform the way people relate to one another.

Relationomics contains practical wisdom and proven methods for untangling the biggest challenges facing today's business leaders. If you want to craft a compelling culture in which team members are inspired to bring their best to work every day, read this book!

Ken Blanchard
Chief Spiritual Officer of the Ken Blanchard Companies
Coauthor of *The New One Minute Manager*
and *Servant Leadership in Action*



FOCUS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS: INTENTIONALITY



ONE

THIS IS A RELATIONSHIP!

The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.

—Vince Lombardi

Most leaders believe the purpose of business is to make money. The best leaders are those who know that the real purpose of business is to make a difference in the lives of those they encounter. If the sole reason for a business to exist is simply to make money, people will figure that out and will soon cease to support that endeavor. But when a business truly seeks to create value for those it serves, it will most certainly make money. Because people will gladly pay full price for those things that they deem bring

true value to life. And when an organization strives to make the lives of those they encounter just a little better, it will create a positive wake in the world. Those who are impacted by that wake will not only become faithful followers but also spread the word to increase the tribe.

Likewise, when organizations put people above profits, their priorities produce rich dividends both relationally and economically. For the heart of any business is its people. Thriving organizations are powered by people. And profitable organizations serve people well, both internally and externally. The healthier the relationships between these people, the better the business.

Unfortunately, few organizations promote healthy relationships. Some assume most people know how to build healthy relationships. For others, healthy relationships fall far behind other priorities on the scorecard. Culture is simply not a primary focus. Many organizations invest far more in their products and processes than in their people. As a result, relationships languish, customer service is mediocre, and conflict abounds. Poor relationships will almost always lead to poor performance.

This book is a modest effort to move relationships in the marketplace in a slightly more positive direction. It's my hope that the principles set forth within these pages will give leaders helpful fodder to guide them toward healthier relationships. The best businesses I have experienced are powered by healthy relationships. At the same time, I believe that the context of business is a fertile field in which healthy relationships can be cultivated and grown. Healthy relationships lead to healthier and happier lives. When people are healthy and happy, business flourishes.

Relationship catalyzes growth. No place is this more evident than in business. People want to grow. Companies want to grow. But growth is a by-product of healthy relationships. And the stark reality is that most business environments simply are not conducive to the cultivation of healthy relationships. Because of this, people suffer and, therefore, businesses suffer. Engagement falters and productivity is limited to less-than-optimal levels because few have prioritized and mastered the principles necessary to create vibrant, thriving relationships. Organizations don't get the results they desire because their leaders don't lead well relationally.

› **Relationship catalyzes growth.**

Practicing healthy relational principles to drive business may seem to be common sense, but I can assure you that it's not common practice. The practices necessary to move relationships from superficial to substantive are rarely commonly applied in business settings. Thus, there is a pressing need to focus on the fundamentals.

In July 1961, the Green Bay Packers were gathered for the first day of training camp. The previous season had ended badly as the Packers had squandered a lead late in the fourth quarter, losing the NFL championship to the Philadelphia Eagles. The brutal loss had haunted the team for the entire off-season. Now training camp offered hope for a fresh start. But before camp could get started, the players had to face their fiery coach as he set the framework and laid out the expectations for their workouts. Thirty-eight athletes, many of them half their coach's age and twice his size, were openly anxious and slightly unnerved as Vince Lombardi entered the room.

Lombardi stood in front of them. With football in hand, he looked around the room at the silent assemblage for

what seemed like an eternity. Then, extending the pigskin in front of him in his right hand, he spoke five words that clarified his coaching philosophy. He simply said, “Gentlemen, this is a football.”

With those words, he began a tradition of annually starting from scratch and taking nothing for granted. It wasn’t

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meant to be insulting. It was necessary. It was basic. It was clarifying. It was . . . inspirational.

The players, eager to advance their games, wanted to hear how their coach planned to get the team back to being a championship contender. They were reeling from the realization that they had come within minutes of winning

on the biggest stage their sport could offer. They were preoccupied with the prize. Lombardi knew that what they really needed was a refresher course. If they didn’t get back to the basics of blocking and tackling, then their greatest desire would be nothing more than a pipe dream. So, Lombardi’s methodical coverage of the fundamentals continued for the duration of training camp.

At one point, during yet another rudimentary instructional session, Max McGee, the Packer’s Pro Bowl wide receiver, joked, “Uh, Coach, could you slow down a little? You’re going too fast for us.” The attempt at levity brought a smile to Lombardi’s face, but his obsession with the fundamentals remained undeterred. He was steadfast in his commitment to practice to perfection the most foundational elements of the game. Consequently, his team

became the best in the league at mastering the basics that everyone else took for granted.

Six months later, the Green Bay Packers annihilated the New York Giants, winning 37–0 and clinching the NFL championship. Vince Lombardi would never lose in the playoffs again. He won five NFL championships in a span of seven years. He never coached a team with a losing record and is still considered one of the greatest coaches to ever lead a team onto the football field.¹

This obsession over the basics has been a hallmark of many successful coaches. John Wooden, the great legend of the hard court, was known to start every season by teaching his players how to put on their socks and tie their shoes. That’s as elementary as you can get. Likewise, Nick Saban, the famed coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide, never worries about the scoreboard but instead focuses keenly on the process. If anyone were to have a reason to start with the end in mind, it would be Nick. Walking in the wake of Paul “Bear” Bryant, he is poised to capture more national titles than any other college coach in history. Yet he refuses to speculate about the future. He is doggedly focused on being in the present and doing what is necessary to make each and every moment count. He knows that if you do what is necessary to prepare properly today, tomorrow will take care of itself. If you master the basics and bring your absolute best to every minute of practice, then you will be ready for the game on Saturday. And when you bring your absolute best, your best will be enough.

It’s always about the basics, no matter how far we may advance. Good coaches focus on the fundamentals. Good business leaders do the same. And nothing is more basic

than how we relate to one another. If we get this relational piece right, then growth will naturally follow. Healthy relationships will lead to the growth of individuals, the growth of teams, and the growth of enterprises.

› **It's always about the basics, no matter how far we may advance.**

You may be feeling a bit like Max McGee, ready to respond with a big, “No duh! Can we please move on?” The thought of such a response brings a smile to my face. Hey, I get it. We all think we have mastered the basics of communication and interpersonal relationships. If not, then how did we get to where

we are today? After all, you might say, you can't be a leader without some semblance of social grace and relational acuity.

Fair enough. But I remain undeterred in my pursuit of this point. What got you to where you are may not take you to the next level. Individual achievement and

regular promotions do not necessarily equip you to connect deeply relationally and to effectively lead others.

I led a team of recruiters for a large regional group in the mortgage field earlier in my career. My team and I were tasked with the responsibility of determining who might be successful as mortgage originators. It was a role I enjoyed, and I had the privilege of meeting many wonderful people in the process. But I wish I had a dollar for every time I heard a candidate say, “I'm perfectly suited for this job because I'm a people person.” Occasionally, I was unsuccessful in demonstrating self-restraint and blurted out what I was thinking. “You're a people person, huh? That's interesting. What exactly does being a people person mean?”

I can honestly say I never received a response that increased my level of comfort with any of those candidates;

they weren't actually the people persons they thought they were. They each had this mistaken notion of what being a people person actually meant. Interestingly, each one included the word *love* in their explanations but was unable to clearly and articulately describe what that looked like in real life. So, what's the point?

You may indeed be a leader. But the sad reality is that many leaders do not lead well. We assume that somewhere along the line, everyone learned how to play well in the sandbox with others. We also assume life experiences have refined relational capacities. Those assumptions would often be wrong about others and they would also likely be wrong about us. People suffer and organizations flounder with less-than-stellar cultures and meager results when we neglect to address the essentials that lead to healthy relationships.

Think about the following questions. Then write either "yes" or "no," along with any additional thoughts, in the space provided.

>> GAINING TRACTION: Questions for Consideration & Application

1. Do projects in your organization occasionally get side-tracked, or even derailed, due to interpersonal conflict?

2. Is unresolved conflict leading to lack of unity among team members?

3. Does a low level of trust cause unnecessary friction among team members?

4. Do you lose too many good people to other organizations?

5. When there is a vacuum in communication, do people tend to assume the worst rather than believe the best?

6. Do you struggle with territorialism and silos within the organization?

7. Do work groups compete with one another when it comes to allocation of resources?

8. Would you like to increase collaboration among teams?

9. Would you like to reduce turnover?

10. Would you like to attract better talent?

11. Would you like for your people to experience greater meaning and fulfillment in their work?

12. Would you like to elevate the morale and productivity of your teams?

13. Would you like to create movements of good within your organization that inspire team members to bring their best to work each day?

14. Would you like your folks to be deeply committed to your organization's vision, mission, and purpose?

15. Would you like for everyone to be kind and play nice together?

16. Would you like to elevate performance?

17. Is there a need for honest developmental feedback?

18. Would you like for everyone to look forward to coming to work each day, knowing they are part of a team committed to their personal growth and the growth of the organization?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then maybe it's time we get back to the basics.

What I propose to do in the following pages is extend to you some fundamental and profound ideas and simply say, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a relationship."