

Relationship Survey 2007 Results

By Caroline Burr



Introduction.....	2
About Respondents.....	2
Perception of Relationships within their Businesses	2
Impact of Poor Working Relationships within their Businesses	3
Intervention, Improvement & Value	3
Conclusions.....	4
Profile on Caroline Burr	4

Introduction

I am pleased to share the results of InSpring's 2007 survey on the importance and impact of poor relationships within businesses, and the solutions being used to address them.

About Respondents

The survey was taken by 44 individuals, with 59% at Director or CEO level, a further 20.5% at Management level and 15.5% of Consultants.

Detailed breakdown of position held:

CEO / MD	36.5%
Director Level in Corporation	22.5%
Manager Level	20.5%
Consultant	6.5%
Founder / Business Owner	9%
Other	5%

There was a high level of participation from those within smaller businesses (56.5%) however many answered from their most recent experience of working within a corporate. 25% worked in businesses of 26-2000 employees, and 18.5% in businesses with 2000 or more employees.

Perception of Relationships within their Businesses

When asked to rate how important it was to them that working relationships ran effectively within their business, 88% chose the strongest option and said they were essential, and all respondents saw them as important to some degree.

There is a strong perception that Directors need to improve relationships between one another. 33% of respondents see the need for improvement in Director relationships between 1-2 of their Directors, with a further 47% seeing the need for improvement between 3 or more of their Directors. From the detailed breakdown below you will see in some businesses the number of Directors with perceived relationship issues is even higher.

Need for improvement

33%	between 1-2 Directors
30%	between 3-6 Directors
7%	between 7-10 Directors
10%	between 10+ Directors

Impact of Poor Working Relationships within their Businesses

Poor relationships between Directors, where respondents were able to choose multiple reasons, are seen to have the greatest impact as follows:

Relationships between Directors

60.5%	Increasing office politics
57%	Blocking key decisions
57%	Creating low morale
53.5%	Lowering productivity
46.5%	Increasing people management issues

When exploring the impact of poor relationships between Directors and their direct reports, the greatest impact remained in many of the same areas, but shifted in ratio. Again respondents were able to choose multiple reasons.

Relationships between Directors and their direct reports

80.5%	Creating low morale
65.5%	Increasing people management issues
57.5%	Lowering productivity
57.5%	Increasing office politics
50%	Delaying projects

Intervention, Improvement & Value

Currently, businesses intervene in poor working relationships for a wide variety of reasons, but mostly when they have a negative impact on

- Performance
- Client relationships
- Internal relationships
- Or affect communication and result in unacceptable conflict.
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Intervention seems to more readily take place when there has been a specific negative impact, or things have reached a crisis point, rather in prevention or anticipation of either occurring.

Again, as you would expect there are a wide range of methods used to improve working relationships, but those that stand out are individual coaching (66.5%), team development (45.5%) and performance management (41.5%). Targeted relationship coaching for both parties involved was one of the least utilised methods (12.5%).

56% placed a high value on effective solutions to address poor working relationships, with a further 28% placing some value on this.

Conclusions

Poor working relationships both between Directors, and with their direct reports, have a high impact on businesses, yet often only seem to be addressed when they reach crisis point, or a specific performance issue.

There seems to be work being done through formal processes, training, individual coaching and informal mentoring to address relationship issues, however surprisingly little targeted work involving both parties in the form of relationship coaching. Perhaps this reflects the limited availability of this service in the marketplace, and more generally the lack of trained individuals with relationship expertise.

The wide range of answers on the approach and context for intervening raises the possibility that in a larger survey you might find that individual leadership and management style plays as much a part as the company culture.

Given the importance and value placed on good working relationships at Director level, the survey suggests that there is room for an increased focus on relationship within businesses, to address wider organisational challenges such as politics and low morale, that reduce the time available for productive and effective work.

Profile on Caroline Burr

Caroline Burr is a specialist relationship coach with her own established coaching practice of over five years, working with individuals, relationships and teams. Her warmth, intelligence, energy and boldness create a safe environment to fully explore a relationship, from building confidence in a relationship to addressing conflict, game playing and hidden agendas. Accustomed to working with two people on their relationship, she brings her ability to manage highly charged sessions between couples in their personal relationships, to the politically charged corporate environment.

Relationships are at the heart of a business, as customer satisfaction and team effectiveness depend upon them. Caroline enables Directors and Managers to produce improved results through increasing their confidence, skill and understanding in relationship with each other and their staff.

How relationship coaching helps.

One of her corporate 1:1 clients, a Senior Director, was given coaching as his didactic management style no longer suited the business and they were unsure how to manage him as he was alienating his team. Two years later he was promoted to a critical role, was highly influential within the business and able to build sustainable relationships with his team and peers. His new understanding of relationship also enabled him to stabilise his private life, which had been affecting his confidence and productivity.

Prior to setting up InSpring in early 2002, Caroline worked as a Change Management Consultant at Unisys and in Business Development at Norman Broadbent, working with clients such as Microsoft, RBS, McKinsey, Ernst & Young, Cisco and Shell, as well as consulting with a range of VCs, incubators and start-ups, and a speciality in the IT and Telecommunications sector.

Married with a son, Caroline integrates her coaching practice with being a mum to have a fulfilling balance in her own life and relationships.

Her training includes:

- Co-active Life Coaching Program – CTI, UK
- Certificate in Contextual Couple Counselling – Re.Vision & The Centre for Gender Psychology
- Relationship Coaching Program – The Centre for Gender Psychology
- Co-active Leadership Program – CTI, US
- Diploma in Vocational Guidance – Reading University