Harvard Business Review
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by Timothy Butler and James Waldroop

Reprint R0406E

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Most executives assume they know who their "people" people are: They're the team players, the ones who know what's going on in their colleagues' personal lives, the ones who can smooth over interpersonal conflicts. They're usually found in human resources or sales.

The truth, however, is much more nuanced than that. Interpersonal savvy is critical in almost every area of business, not just sales and HR. In fact, it comprises aptitudes that are more varied than a lot of people might think. Recently, we've conducted extensive research on the people side of doing business—what we call the relational factor. After more than 18 years of studying how the deeply embedded life interests of business professionals develop into career roles, we know that individuals do their best work when it most closely matches their underlying interests. Managers, therefore, can boost productivity by using their employees' relational interests and skills to guide personnel choices, project assignments, and career development.

We've analyzed psychological tests of more than 7,000 business professionals, and our findings challenge the limited traditional notion of who "people" people are. Using factor analysis, a method of statistical analysis, we have identified four distinct dimensions of relational work: influence, interpersonal facilitation, relational creativity, and team leadership. In this article, we'll explain each component and show how knowledge of all four can help managers hire the right employees, make the best work assignments, reward performance, and promote career development (others' and their own). At the end of the article, we'll direct you to an online assessment tool we created to measure both your orientation toward relational work in general and your interest level in each of its four dimensions.

The Four Dimensions

To maximize the interpersonal capacity of your organization, you must understand all four areas of relational work—because when you match employees' interests and skills to their responsibilities, everybody gains.

Influence. Professionals who earn a high score in this dimension enjoy developing and extending their sphere of interpersonal influence. They take pleasure in persuasion, negotiation, and the power of holding valuable information and ideas. This dimension of relational work is all about changing the point of view or the behavior of others. An old expression, "He could talk a dog off a meat truck," aptly describes high scorers here. Whether to a customer or to a colleague—and whether they're talking about a product, a service, or an idea—these people live to sell. Think of the manager in your firm who is always able to get more resources for his projects than anyone else can. Or picture that former boss of yours who could always get people fired up for the next challenge, regardless of how tired they were from the last one.

While people who score high in influence can be found in any function and any industry, we've discovered that individuals with deal-intensive roles in financial services and sales tend to stand out in this dimension. Jeffrey Manning (all names of people cited as examples in this article are pseudonyms), for instance, the managing partner of a very successful venture capital firm, was running his own fund at age 31. Some would argue that his success was a function of good timing—he entered the world of high-technology investing in the mid-1990s—but those who have done business with him have a different explanation: Jeff is a natural at deal-intensive finance. He's a born networker. Whether he's on the golf course or at the annual dinner for a prominent charitable organization, his talent for meeting people and inspiring their confidence is indisputable. Jeff is not a salesperson, nor is he a team-focused manager. He's an alliance builder and negotiator. He can locate and gather key players to participate in deals that optimize value for all parties involved.

Interpersonal Facilitation. This is the dimension many people first think of when they think "people person." Individuals with high scores here are keenly attuned to the interpersonal aspects of a work situation. They intuitively focus on others' experiences and usually work quietly behind the scenes to keep their colleagues committed and engaged so that projects don't get derailed. They naturally ask themselves questions like "What group will work together best to get this job done?" and "Why is Joe being overcritical in meetings and underperforming in general?" and "What sort of assignment does Miriam need to grow and feel more competent?" These types of issues rarely show up in reports, but as every seasoned manager knows, handling them effectively is essential to organizational success.

Consider Alicia DiGiavonni, the internal medicine unit manager at a Boston-area HMO. Alicia has an MBA and is a focused, task-oriented operating manager, but her success comes from her effectiveness as the organization's unofficial psychologist. Alicia has done more in the way of counseling, conflict resolution, coaching, and informal personality assessment than many of the therapists who work in the mental health unit. Staff members frequently confide in her when there is disabling friction within a work team, when they need career advice, or when they're struggling with personal issues. She is an expert at recognizing hidden agendas at meetings and identifying the problems that workers are reluctant to share with senior managers. She knows which combinations of people on a project team would yield great synergy and which would be disastrous. On countless occasions, Alicia has kept projects on track through skillful, behind-the-scenes interventions.

Relational Creativity. At its core, this dimension is about forging connections with groups of people through visual and verbal imagery. This is the relational work being done when an advertising account team conceives of a campaign, when a marketing brand manager develops a strategy to reach a particular consumer segment, when a speechwriter crafts the president's next address, and when a senior manager develops a motivational theme that will focus and inspire her employees.

Although relational creativity in business is most commonly used for persuading customers to buy and investors to invest, it is different from the influence dimension. Professionals skilled in influence convince others on a person-to-person basis, whereas people talented at relational creativity use images and words to arouse emotions and create relationships with groups. This dimension is not a measure of creativity in general—only in the interpersonal realm. Someone who's creative in an analytical area of business work (such as designing new investment instruments) can still

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have low interest in relational creativity; similarly, an artist (such as a composer or a painter) can lack skill in this domain.

Most of us don't have much occasion to interact with people who stand out in this dimension, although chances are we have coworkers with this strength that we don't know about because it has no outlet in their daily jobs. For an example of someone with outstanding skills in relational creativity, look at Diane Weiss, a senior editor for a major magazine. Whether the question is which illustration to use, how best to express data graphically, what title to give an article, or what image to put on the cover, Diane is the one to ask: She has an unerring sense of what will pull readers in. But she is not known for her easy management style or her ability to "read" people. In fact, even her most ardent fans will agree that she can be exceedingly difficult to work with. For understanding the masses, though, Diane is as good as you can get. She is a bona fide people person—with the emphasis on the plural.

Individuals skilled in interpersonal facilitation often work behind the scenes to keep their colleagues committed and engaged, so projects don't get derailed.

Team Leadership. Individuals who score high in this dimension need to see and interact with other people very frequently to feel satisfied. Conversely, the more time they spend in front of a computer screen, the worse they feel—and perform. Professionals with a high level of interest in team leadership love managing high-energy teams in busy service environments and enjoy working both with the team and with the customer. Their ideal job might be overseeing a busy resort or a retail store.

The difference between individuals who score high in team leadership and those who do so in the influence dimension is their interest in managing people. High scorers in team leadership always want to work *through* a group. They're the embodiment of the player-coach role. People who score high in influence are interested in the outcome of an interaction—the closed deal—whereas those scoring high in team leadership focus more on the interpersonal and managerial processes. Compare the managing director of mergers and acquisitions at an investment bank (excelling in influence) with the sales manager at a large automobile dealership (strong in team leadership).

Not all team leaders—even effective ones—have high scores in this dimension, however. It is quite possible for team leaders in areas such as production, research and development, and information technology to show little interest in this particular relational skill. But we consistently see high scores here for leaders of teams that have a strong customer focus.

Take, for example, Andy Keller, who manages sales for the West Coast region of a successful sporting goods company. Likable and full of energy, Andy was one of a handful of MBA graduates from an esteemed business school who pursued a career in sales. His classmates saw sales as a low-prestige option, but Andy knew what he wanted. Almost immediately, he became a top-performing rep. He enjoyed driving from pro shop to pro shop, talking both with the store managers and with the players coming off the golf course. But while he liked selling, when he was promoted to manage a sales team in northern California, he *loved* it—which is not always the case when salespeople move into management. Andy would be the first to tell you that he is neither a strategist nor a negotiator. He's more interested in talking to people and leading a team; he also likes seeing tangible feedback on his—and his group's—performance every month.

It's important to note that the four relational dimensions are not discrete types. A person can have great interest and skill in two or more of these areas or in none of them. And scoring high in more dimensions isn't necessarily better; some are irrelevant or even detrimental to certain types of work. Above, we've offered examples of people who are stars in one dimension, but some of them score high in other areas as well. Andy Keller, for instance, demonstrates team leadership, but he also shows a keen interest in influence, which is why he excelled at sales before moving into management. And Alicia DiGiavonni, who is extremely talented in interpersonal facilitation, also has a strong interest in team leadership. She has no interest in influence, however, so you'd never want her to be in a deal-making role.

Clearly, "people" people are not interchangeable. Put Diane where you should have Alicia, and the results will be disastrous. Jeff would fail at Andy's job, and vice versa. That's why it's so important to align your employees' relational talents with their job responsibilities. Keep the four dimensions in mind when you're hiring new employees, assigning tasks,

rewarding employees for their contributions, and developing the people in your organization, including yourself.

Hiring Wisely

It's relatively easy to assess most technical abilities when you're considering hiring someone. Skills in financial analysis, marketing, operations management, information technology, sales, and other functions can readily be vetted. Evaluating a person's relational abilities is a bit more difficult. Try the following techniques to ferret out a candidate's skills in the four dimensions of interpersonal work.

Influence Skills. If you find yourself wanting to hire the candidate regardless of her talents, she's probably a master in the influence dimension. Some other signs to look for include a history of being elected to leadership positions and a broad and deep professional network—especially outside the person's current place of employment. People who score high on influence frequently serve on the boards of relevant professional and social organizations. During the interview, pose questions with no right answer—ones that call for an opinion—and then assess how confidently and persuasively the candidate expresses herself. Another way to gauge her interest and ability in this dimension is to ask about a peak moment she's had at work. Did it have anything to do with influencing a decision?

At its core, relational creativity is about forging connections with groups of people through visual and verbal imagery—in an advertising campaign, for instance.

Interpersonal Facilitation Skills. When you want to assess a candidate's adeptness at interpersonal facilitation, try asking him to describe a work situation in which two people were in conflict. Someone who's talented in this dimension will offer an insightful explanation of what might have been going on under the surface of the disagreement. Or present the candidate with a case from your own work history (no names or identifying information, of course), and see how helpful he might have been in that situation, paying particular attention to the kinds of questions he asks about the dilemma. Next, look for evidence of broad and deep personal and professional networks, especially inside his current place of employment. And since most people who excel in this dimension participate in some kind of good cause, ask him to talk about his experiences in that realm. Finally, ask him to describe a job that he wouldn't want to do—not for lack of competence but for personal reasons. Would that position require an uncomfortable level of toughness toward other people, such as managing a turnaround in which a number of employees will lose their jobs?

Relational Creativity Skills. To determine whether someone is relationally creative, start by having him describe a favorite advertising campaign, slogan, or image, and then have him explain why he loved it and found it so effective. In addition, ask, "What do you think motivates most people in life, and how can companies tap into that motivation?" (The second part of the question is what counts.) You can follow up with questions like "If our company wanted to get into the X market, how would you position our product?" and "How would you reach the decision makers with our message?" Ask the candidate to describe a time when he was "in the flow"—so immersed in his work that he lost track of time—and see whether he cites a task that required a high level of relational creativity. Finally, ask what other careers he has considered. People who score high in this dimension frequently give creative or offbeat answers.

Team Leadership Skills. People talented in this area usually have a long history of involvement with groups—for instance, sports teams, fraternities or sororities, or social clubs. So be sure to ask the candidate about activities outside work and see if she holds a leadership role in any of them. Ask her, too, to describe her ideal job. Probe for details such as how many people she would be interacting with and in what way. Does she, for example, envision herself as a CEO with four division heads reporting to her, or would she rather be leading a collaborative management team? Next, have her describe the best customer service operation she's ever experienced, either as an employee or as a customer. Notice how excited she gets while discussing it. In fact, pay close attention to how much energy and enthusiasm the person exhibits during your conversation generally. Is she someone who inspires *you* to go out and give it your all? If so, she's got a special talent in the team leadership dimension.

Making the Right Assignments

Ideally, most working groups should include people with interests in all four dimensions of interpersonal work. As a manager, you are responsible for making that happen. Look first for an overbalance: If all of your people are

strong in influence (and only in influence), for example, you'll have a lean, mean deal-making machine—but one that spits out people just as readily as it spits out deals. When all team members share the same orientation, they tend to recruit other people cut from the same cloth. The newcomers only reinforce and amplify the group's original leaning, and then the team as a whole often starts devaluing other relational skills. ("We influencers don't want any interpersonal facilitators in here slowing us down with their 'feelings'!") Groups that are severely lopsided like this are prone to develop gaping blind spots, and they tend to underappreciate interpersonal differences and contributions.

If your team doesn't have coverage in any of the four dimensions, it's probably ignoring critical areas of relational work. To fill the gaps, conduct an informal audit of the available interpersonal talent pool. Start with your direct reports, and then scan the broader organization for people with the relational skills your team lacks. Be careful not to fall prey to stereotype and overlook talent hidden in unexpected places. We know a vice president of information technology who shines at relational creativity, for instance, even though her job description doesn't require it. The point is, look beyond job titles to see the individuals behind them when you're trying to fill holes in your team.

People who excel in team leadership always want to work through a group. They're the embodiment of the player-coach role.

Since it's impossible for you to know who all the strong interpersonal facilitators, team leaders, and the like are in your organization, you will have to enlist the help of your fellow managers. But managers in areas outside your own, if skilled, will be able to—and should be happy to—share this kind of information with you. Truly effective organizations have relatively permeable boundaries when it comes to internal transfers for the sake of matching people's interests and skills with the needs of different work roles. It is to the significant advantage of any organization to develop a cultural norm of sharing information concerning the motivations and talents of people in various work groups.

Once you've completed your relational talent scouting, it's time to build a team with the requisite relational skills to get the work done most effectively. You can reconfigure teams, combine them, break large teams into smaller work units, or, of course, introduce new members in order to fill relational gaps. An entertainment company we worked with, for example, had a group with two people who were strong in team leadership. The overlap wasn't problematic within the group, but another team in the company desperately needed more of that dimension. So the company reassigned one of the people from the first group, which continued to flourish, though down one member. And the second group, newly infused with team leadership, picked up its pace dramatically.

Of course, your audit of the company's talent pool may reveal that you need to look outside the organization. If that's the case, be sure to ask questions that will help you assess each candidate's relational interests and skills during interviews.

If you do need to bring in someone new, either internally or externally, to balance a lopsided group, you'll want a person with interests and talents not just in a dimension that the group needs (interpersonal facilitation, say) but also in one the group already has (influence, for example). That will help him gain acceptance more easily. And you'll need to support that person in work that is not influence oriented. Otherwise, there's a very high chance that he will be marginalized into failure.

Several years ago, we worked with a division of a management consulting firm that was, for all intents and purposes, engaged in a turnaround. The division's human resources manager was overwhelmingly geared toward interpersonal facilitation, whereas the group needed team leadership and influence. So employees weren't encouraged to get with the program and accept the changes in management and culture; in fact, they only got upset whenever they spoke with the HR rep. After several months of this, a new HR manager with a much tougher personal style was brought in.

Even if you're not dealing with a misaligned team, you still need to make sure people's interpersonal interests and talents are well matched to their work, lest employees decide to move on to another company, possibly a competitor. We're not saying that it will be easy. But remember, your organization's competitive advantage lies in its people. And as a manager, your competitive advantage lies in your ability to get the most out of them.

Matching Functions with Interests

There is no such thing as the perfect personality profile for a specific business function. Our research, however, has found that certain jobs attract people with particular relational strengths, whether in influence, interpersonal facilitation, relational creativity, or team leadership.

Function: Sales and Sales Management

Interests: Individuals who excel in this field typically have a strong interest in team leadership. High scorers in this relational dimension are extremely sociable, enjoy working with customers, and prefer environments that call for a great deal of interpersonal activity. Our sample of salespeople showed elevated scores in the influence dimension as well. As the influence score increases, so does interest in direct sales; higher interest in team leadership suggests that a sales management career is more likely.

Relational Dimension: Team Leadership, Influence

Function: Human Resources

Interests: HR generalists typically score very high in interpersonal facilitation—higher than they do in influence. Of course, profiles vary from person to person and at different levels within the organization, as is the case for any functional role. It would be unusual, for instance, for a vice president of human resources in a major company to have a low score in influence.

Relational Dimension: Interpersonal Facilitation

Function: Management of Direct Service Delivery

Interests: Managers who are in their element on the front lines of customer contact, particularly in consumer-oriented service businesses, have notably high team leadership scores. These people enjoy the rapid pace, the variety, and the social element of directing a team charged with meeting the day-to-day demands of customers.

Relational Dimension: Team Leadership

Function: Marketing

Interests: The marketing function calls for both analysis and imagination, and it is a role that focuses on human behavior. As a group, marketers are quite relational, scoring much higher than other business professionals in the relational creativity dimension and showing higher-range scores in team leadership and influence as well. Although they are a step removed from the end user, good marketers are deeply interested in the thoughts and feelings of their customers. Individuals skilled in relational creativity tend to be very empathic—an important psychological asset for effective marketing. The fact that marketing is a team-oriented function may account for the elevated interest in the team leadership dimension among our sample of marketing managers and executives.

Relational Dimension: Relational Creativity, Team Leadership, Influence

Function: Science and Technology Management

Interests: Living up to the stereotype, managers in science and technology in our sample had a lower average score in the influence dimension than did business professionals as a whole. None of the other three relational dimensions is notably elevated for this group, either. Individuals within a sample group, of course, may have profiles that are substantially different from the average for that functional group.

Function: Negotiations and Financial Deal Making

Interests: We found that the majority of financial services professionals who work in mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance, trading, business development, corporate development, and venture capital score high in influence. Their interest in this dimension sets them apart from their financial services colleagues in less relationally oriented roles like accounting, financial analysis, equity analysis, and portfolio management.

Relational Dimension: Influence

Function: Communications and Public Relations

Interests: Communications and PR professionals in our sample scored even higher, on average, in relational creativity than the marketing people did, but notably lower in team leadership. That's because these functions tend to be more focused on individual contributions, whereas marketing is more about working with a team.

Relational Dimension: Relational Creativity

If you find yourself wanting to hire a candidate regardless of her talents, she's probably a master in the influence dimension.

Rewarding Relational Work

We reward what we recognize as valuable. Unfortunately, much relational work, especially interpersonal facilitation, goes completely unnoticed for what it is. The result: out of sight, out of the reward chain.

For example, in 1998, Joyce Fletcher of Northeastern University studied the work that individuals skilled in interpersonal facilitation performed in organizations. When she shadowed a group of engineers in their daily activities, she found that their relational efforts frequently went unappreciated. That type of work is often considered unnecessary at best—and at worst, it's seen as getting in the way of "real" work. Of the four relational dimensions, interpersonal facilitation is the one that is most closely identified with feminine characteristics and, perhaps as a result, the one that is most prone to undervaluation. Think for a moment: Who hasn't heard (if not made) disparaging comments about people in the human resources function who have been a little *too* adept at this dimension?

Yet the fact is, all four dimensions of relational work contribute to the bottom line—in terms of productivity as well as attracting and retaining talented people. Productivity is fueled by passion; people work hardest when their daily activities provide an outlet for their deepest interests. And many of your people can make significant contributions to your organization in this relational realm.

Just as we reward what we value, people do what they are rewarded for. As a manager and leader, it is your job not only to recognize and reward your direct reports for their relational performance but also to ensure that they do the same for their reports, and so on through the ranks. Evaluate contributions in these four areas as a formal part of every employee's review. Give everyone direct feedback, and explicitly state that a portion of raises and bonuses will be tied to those contributions—keeping in mind that not all positions call for proficiency in all four areas.

You may also be able to tailor the nonfinancial rewards you give your employees. A person who is strongly interested in influence, for example, is likely to place a high value on the reward of being able to express that interest directly. Regardless of her formal work function, try to sculpt her job in a way that allows her to be an influencer. Similarly, find team-oriented tasks for your team leader, even if 95% of his job is done sitting in front of a computer screen. And enlist your interpersonal facilitator's aid in understanding the dynamics of people in your team. Although it may not be easy to find, be on the lookout for creative work to give to the person interested in relational creativity. We're not suggesting that you take other assignments away from employees, though. So while you'll be getting more from them, they will be energized by the new responsibility and genuinely experience it as a reward—a win for you and the organization as well as for them.

Developing Relational Skills

Your job as a manager is to keep challenging your people to stretch toward their full potential, but you've also got to focus on your professional growth. Suggestions for advancing your own or anyone else's relational skills follow, but for the sake of clarity we've geared this section toward you and your skill set.

First things first: You don't have to be interested in, or skilled at, all four dimensions of interpersonal work. Most people aren't. You do, however, need to know where you stand on each, so you can either build up the areas where you're weak or make sure you have people close to you in the organization who can help when you need it.

A sophisticated self-analysis can be done using an assessment tool that we developed in the course of our research (available at www.careerleader.com/people). Your responses will be scored immediately and confidentially online, and you'll be given measures of your overall relational business interests as well as the strength of your interests in influence, interpersonal facilitation, relational creativity, and team leadership.

Once you have a good sense of your relational profile, take some time to analyze each of your positions or assignments over the past two years. What relational profile would have led to optimal performance in each situation? How closely does that profile match your own? Where did you shine? Did a lack of interest or ability in any of the four dimensions interfere with your success? Were you able to compensate in some way? How?

Now consider your current position. What discrepancies are there between your role's demands and your profile? Think about areas in

which you may have more relational interest than your job requires. After all, the lack of an opportunity to express a strong interest can be a significant source of dissatisfaction.

Finally, think carefully about what your next position might be, and even the one after that. What will the relational demands be? Where will you naturally excel, and where will you probably run into trouble? Think about how you can sculpt your future positions so that they are more closely aligned with your relational strengths. If it is clear that you will need to develop a stronger capability in a dimension you have little interest in, try the following suggestions for building the appropriate skills.

Influence:

• Read about recent successful political maneuvers (both in government and in corporate contexts), paying attention to what worked with which types of people.

• Make a "power and influence" chart. List the people in your intimate work setting and draw lines between them to illustrate their relationships. Use arrows for directions of influence, dotted lines for weak relationships, wavy lines for conflicts, and so on.

• Identify people who are notably strong in this dimension, and study the way they operate. What works for them won't necessarily work for you, but it will help stimulate your thinking.

• Practice your influence skills in low-risk situations. You may feel more comfortable trying out new ways of interacting in social settings before changing your behavior in your office.

• Read Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

Interpersonal Facilitation:

• Don't assume that other people are wired the way you are. Work to get inside their heads and hearts. Go to www.careerleader.com/rewards for a list of rewards that many people find motivating.

• Jot down some notes on what individual coworkers seem to care about, their values, what kinds of people they seem to be drawn to, and which ones they seem uncomfortable with. See what inferences you can draw from these details.

• Keep track of people over time, noting trends in how engaged they seem to be, how positive and optimistic they appear, how excited they are, and the like.

• As with influence skills, practice and build your interpersonal-facilitation skills in low-risk arenas like social settings.

• Talk with coworkers about topics that aren't work related: Ask about a child's big soccer game or violin concert. Don't be afraid to engage in personal conversations. Commenting to someone that he has seemed a bit down lately will probably be taken by the other person as a sign of caring, not prying.

• Read Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*. See also the chapter "Taking Others' Perspectives" in our book *The 12 Bad Habits That Hold Good People Back*.

Relational Creativity:

• Look at ads, consider the markets they're selling to, and try to get inside the minds of the creators. Then think about what you might do differently.

• Practice the tried-and-true technique of brainstorming to loosen up your creative thinking—just as you might stretch your hamstrings before going for a run.

• Pay attention to the ways that vendors try to hook you into buying their services or products, whether you're interested in using them or not. Notice which tactics are successful and which ones are not. For the ploys that don't work well on you, consider why they might be effective on others.

• Read about people who have effected major changes through their relational creativity skills, such as business leaders, political figures, or religious leaders.

• Read *Adweek* and *Advertising Age*.

Team Leadership:

• Decide who in your organization is a master team leader and watch her in action—even though her style may not be a perfect fit for you. (She may, for instance, get great results by cheerleading for the team, but that activity might be so foreign to your personality as to be unworkable. Still, by observing, you can pick up an array of strategies from which to choose.)

• Ask the person you're observing for direct advice.

• When forming a team, select people with different viewpoints and abilities, and make sure team members feel comfortable challenging you. Then your job becomes that of a traffic controller for good ideas, not that of a delegator or even a dictator.

• Don't be afraid to choose people for your team who know more than you do. One of the best team leaders we have ever worked with ad-

mitted cheerfully that every member of his team knew more about the business at hand than he did. He said: "What I know about is getting these people together, keeping them together, and getting the best work from them."

• Take a class or two. National Training Laboratories has been training corporate managers and leaders since the late 1940s, and it offers a variety of courses to bolster skills in team leadership.

• Read Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith's *The Wisdom of Teams*.

Be warned, though, that building these skills will feel like swimming upstream because your efforts will not be driven by a fundamental interest in the dimensions themselves. Let's face it—if you weren't interested in something yesterday, reading this article probably hasn't awakened a long-dormant passion.

You also need to be honest with yourself. If the relational demands of a position or long-term career path exceed your ability to develop the requisite skills, you need to do one of two things: Engage the help of peers or assistants to compensate for your relational shortcomings, or—if this approach fails or is impractical—rethink the wisdom of taking that position or going down that path. A large gap between the relational demand of a position or career and your ability to meet that demand can lead to a career breakdown, something you certainly want to avoid.

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Many senior managers, focused on more measurable and immediate outcomes, aren't sufficiently attentive to relational work—especially the behind-the-scenes activity that strengthens team bonds and keeps workers motivated and productive. We have looked at this kind of work in finer detail so that you and your employees can understand the roles where they will shine and make your business prosper. As a leader, you will need to take the four relational dimensions into account as you make hiring decisions, assign people to teams and projects, recognize and reward performance, and develop your own and others' relational abilities. Such awareness is an important element in keeping projects and initiatives on track. So when you find yourself inclined to relegate relational work to the back burner (and you will), remember that a business strategy is only as good as the people who carry it out—and if no one is around to carry it out, your future does not look good.

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Further Reading

This article is also available in an enhanced *Harvard Business Review* OnPoint edition, (Product no. 7022), which includes a summary of its key points and company examples to help you put the ideas to work. The OnPoint edition also includes the following suggestions for further reading:

Job Sculpting: The Art of Retaining Your Best People
Timothy Butler and James Waldroop
Harvard Business Review
September–October 1999
Product no. 4282

What Makes a Leader?
Daniel Goleman
Harvard Business Review
November–December 1998
Product no. 3790

Leading by Feel
Harvard Business Review
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