

BUILDING HIGH QUALITY CONNECTIONS AT LIGHTENING SPEED

Jane E. Dutton

Ross School of Business and Center for POS

PURPOSE: Demonstrate and reflect on how to build high quality connections (HQCs) and their impact
Show how small moves/actions matter
Illustrate that it does not take much time

PROCESS: 1. Ask everyone to stand up and go stand next to the person they know the least in the room. Explicitly ask them to not try to connect until you give them the signal
2. Tell them that each person will have a chance to lead in connection building and to decide who will lead first.
3. Give each person 60 seconds each to lead in building a high quality connection to the other person (Great to have a bell or dinger to easily signal when 60 seconds is up.
4. Energy will be electric. Be sure to observe how people are standing, body language, listen etc.
5. When stop after 2 minutes ask each person to give feedback to the other person about what they did that worked in building a HQC. (Generates more energy!)
6. Keep people standing while you debrief. I always stand in the middle.

DEBRIEF: 1. Begin with, "What worked?" Explore concrete tactics that people used that others experienced as effective. Help people build on each other. Usual mentions include
-the questions that people asked that conveyed genuine interest
-identifying commonalities (e.g., shared goals, shared histories)
- Revealing something personal that started trust building
-body language- eye contact, open body stance, responsiveness etc
2. "How did you know what the other person was doing was working?" (here trying to probe for how it unlocked energy, created a reciprocity dynamic (a positive spiral) because you could feel yourself open up and want to invest in the other person)
3. "How might you use what you learned from this brief exercise in your work or beyond?"(here I tell them about running conferences and doing this at the beginning to "till the soil" for a meeting. Building good connective tissue at the beginning fundamentally alters the trajectory of possibilities for creativity, risk-taking, engagement, etc..Sometimes we forget the power of inviting people to use their ingenuity and power to build high quality connections with others. This exercise is also powerful because it shows it does not take a lot of time!

READINGS/RESOURCES:

[Energize Your Workplace: How to Build and Sustain High-Quality Connections at Work.](#) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2003.

Dutton, J. and E. Heaphy. The Power of High-Quality Connections at Work. In K. Cameron, J. Dutton and R.E. Quinn (Eds.) Positive Organizational Scholarship (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers), 263-278, 2003.

Exploring Positive Relationships at Work: Building a Theoretical and Research Foundation. J. Dutton and B. Ragins (Eds.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, Inc., 2007.

Stephens, J.P., E. Heaphy and J. Dutton High Quality Connections. In K. Cameron and G. Spreitzer (Eds.), Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship. Cambridge: Oxford University Press. 2011.