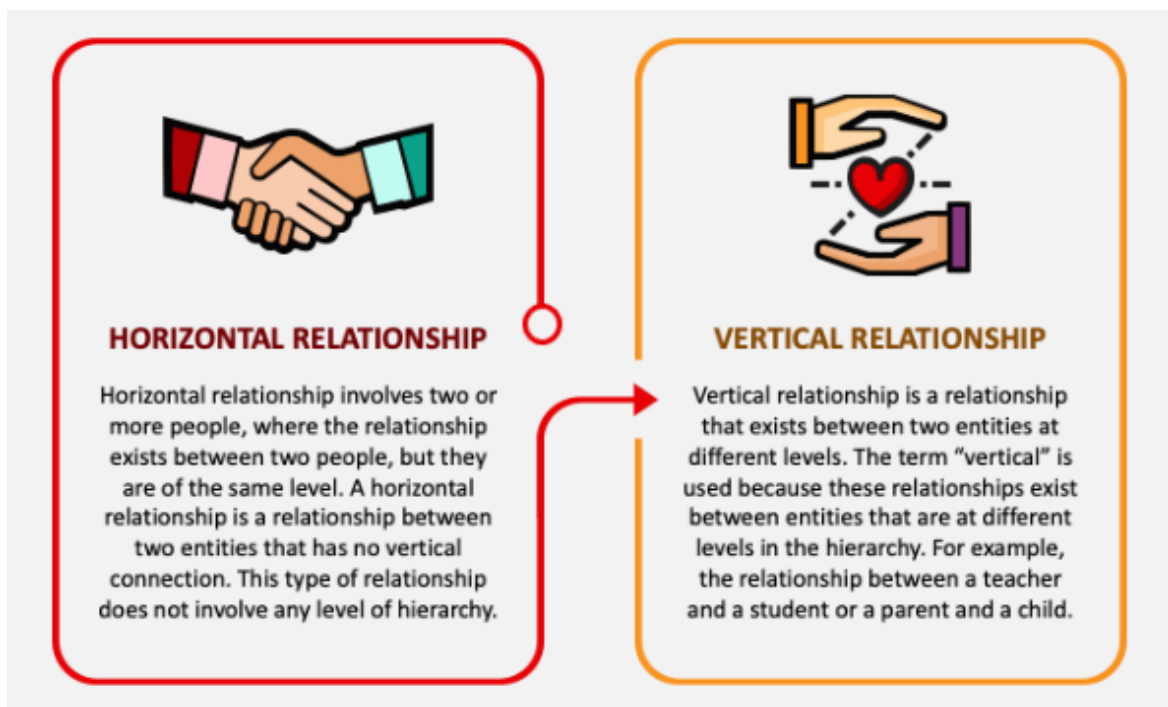


## Relational working within organisations

A relationship-centred practice framework needs to be promoted at the organisational level through a supportive culture and delivery model, recognising that practitioners will often replicate the relationships and experiences they have with their managers and colleagues in those that they have with the people they are working with. Once again, there is no single blueprint; and time, patience and perseverance are all required for building positive relationships across an organisation and sustaining a healthy connected workforce.

Attention should be given to the development of professional relationships both horizontally and vertically across the organisation and to those between individuals and within/between teams, supporting a universal building of trust and promoting a safer environment for staff to address any challenges. In a fully relational environment, there is a focus upon networks rather than hierarchies, upon empowering rather than controlling, and upon collaborating rather than competing. Making new connections should then become effortless, conflicts should resolve in generative ways, and new thinking and innovation should be encouraged.

### Horizontal and vertical relationships



### Relational leadership and culture

*"Leadership is not a person or a position. It is a complex moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good" (Joanne Ciulla)*

*"Your most important job as a leader is to drive the culture and not just any culture. You must create a positive culture that energizes and encourages people, fosters connected relationships and great teamwork, empowers and enables people to learn and grow, and provides an opportunity for people to do their best work." (Jon Gordon)*

Leadership can be seen as a social process and primarily about people, with good leaders caring for colleagues and working in a respectful, empathetic, values-driven, and collaborative style. The building of positive relationships and a foundation of trust and respect is at the core of this work, with leaders spending time to listen, understand and connect, helping to build a positive culture and a shared vision, while also inspiring and building confidence in colleagues. Good leaders understand that creating an environment where people thrive – through consistent micro-interactions and relationships of commitment, care, trust, high standards and accountability – is crucial to the vitality and success of any organisation, unlocking potential across the workforce and at the same time developing its future leaders. To build and broaden connections, the need to think about moving from an 'open door' to an 'out the door' policy has been highlighted.

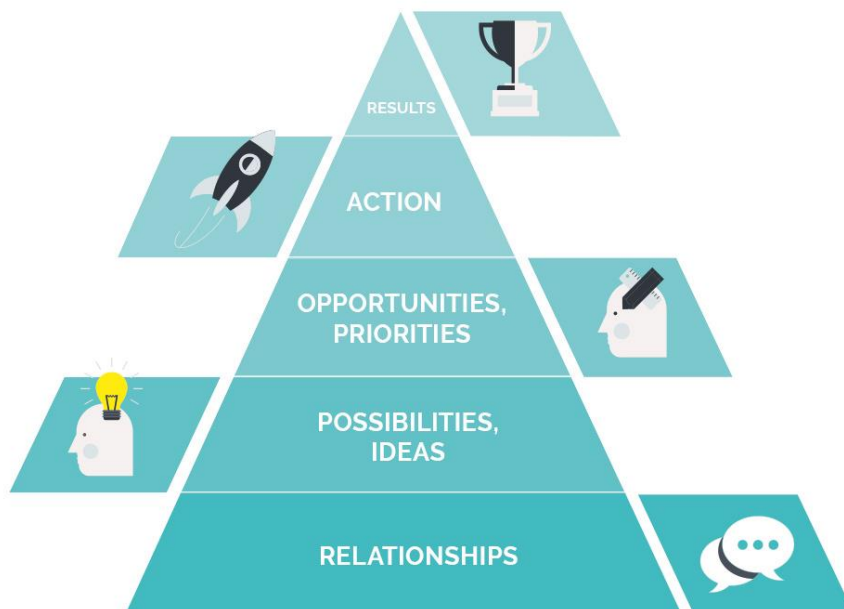
There are a range of leadership models and frameworks which emphasise the importance of relationships, three of which are set out below.

**Future-Engage-Deliver:** in this model of leadership, the 'engage' element recognises the importance of 'big' relationships where people are not only engaged in the work undertaken together, but are also engaged at a personal level:

*"this happens when people see that you are real and authentic. They feel they can trust you and be safe around you and this has them believe in you and what it is that you want" (Radcliffe, 2012)*

Within the framework, the Relationships to Results pyramid helps to illustrate the importance of big relationships – relationships form the broad base of the pyramid, with all influence and impact coming via relationships where people feel valued and actively involved.

### **The Relationships to Results Pyramid (Radcliffe, 2012)**



**Compassionate and inclusive leadership:** there is evidence that compassionate leadership results in more engaged and motivated staff with high levels of wellbeing, which in turn results in high-quality delivery. For leadership to be compassionate, it must also be

inclusive with a focus on relationships. Inclusive leadership is about creating a culture that respects all staff at all levels of the organisation, so that trust thrives and everyone feels valued and respected. People are encouraged to bring their authentic experiences, values and history to work, and there is a focus on equitable treatment and psychological safety, helping everyone to achieve their full potential. Value is placed upon different perspectives and constructive challenge, looking for areas of consensus while also recognising that respectful disagreement is far better than disrespectful agreement. The organisational culture in place is one of involvement, transparency, ownership, empowerment and improvement, with staff fully engaged.

**Transformational leadership:** in recent years, greater attention has been given to transformational leadership and the benefits at the organisational, team and individual levels from leaders encouraging, inspiring and motivating colleagues to create meaningful change. Ways of promoting and incentivising such leadership behaviours should thus be considered, encouraging a focus upon people rather than tasks and the building of trust and strong two-way interpersonal relationships, facilitated through an open, supportive and safe environment.

## **Relational supervision and consultation**

Employee job satisfaction has been found to be overwhelmingly driven by the quality of the relationships with managers, with beneficial staff outcomes positively related to the supervisory dimensions of task assistance, social and emotional support, and supervisory interpersonal interaction. In order for managers to build effective relationships with individual practitioners, the following two key skillsets are required:

- (i) the process-oriented skills of role clarification and 'contracting' a working alliance with staff
- (ii) the interpersonal skills of conveying positive regard, active listening, and generating a feeling of warmth, trust and safety. The attributes of openness, honesty, being fully present and using humour are vital to creating an environment to share practice experiences and receive feedback.

It has been found that managers using a mix of these skills can promote feelings of safety and belonging, encourage creativity, and aid staff retention. The importance of allowing time for quality conversations, particularly at the outset of a new line management relationship, is highlighted within probation's reflective practice supervision standards. Reflective practice supervision can also involve other senior practitioners, professional trainers or mentors, and there can be considerable benefits from peer consultation, strengthening relationships more broadly and allowing for a wider sharing of knowledge.

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