

2. The Power of Relationships on Engagement at Work

The desire of belonging to a tribe, a family, a circle of friends, a culture, a community or country is something anthropologically inherent to mankind and has to do with our survival instinct. Research in the field of neuroscience shows us that the reticular system, which is the oldest part of the brain, activates the need to join together (flock) because the group has a greater chance of defending us, evolving and surviving. Conversely, isolation activates fear and mistrust, having a harmful emotional impact considering that relationships have an influence on the biochemistry of our brain. Today, exclusion is a constantly growing topic, especially in the workplace. The digital transformation has undoubtedly led to building faster and leaner relationships with indisputable benefits in terms of efficiency and agility to connect in increasingly complex networks. However, the closeness of a healthy conversational relationship that stimulates empathy and that engages also through body language has diminished. Authentic exchange activates oxytocin which is the neurotransmitter responsible for building trust and bonding. Trust, in turn, is the essential element at the basis of any relationship that could allow an opening towards the other without which not only is an enriching exchange not generated, but it also triggers distrust that raises defences. In a similar environment, where one detaches oneself from the context and empties oneself of motivations, it is the sense of belonging that suffers, even where common sense should make reason prevail, if only for economic interests. In short, the only gratitude for having a safe and well-paid job is not enough to motivate and stimulate the full potential of workers where there is a poor sense of belonging. The Harvard Business Review reveals that a simple "how are you?" per day increases the relational connections between work colleagues, as long as we are also willing to be really present in listening to the answer. This reveals that people need more of an environment that facilitate direct, transparent and engaging personal and professional communication in order to engage more. Feeling the interest, attention and support of the people around strengthens the sense of belonging and motivates people to build relationships, bringing a positive effect on productivity in the workplace.