



## EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: PEOPLE SPACE

We all keep talking about *me* time. I would like to talk about *we* time—that is, time for relationship-building.

How can *we* work together when *we* can't even find time to talk? It is astonishing how long it takes to get on someone's calendar just for a quick conversation—the type of conversation that could quickly improve effectiveness, efficiency and trust—five minutes to save hours.

Have you noticed how hard it is to find time to be together with your team, talk to your mentor, have just-in-time conversations with direct reports, or build real relationships at work?

Our fallback has become electronic media. Is email really that efficient? I don't think so, but I decided to check. What I learned from my research is:

- 1) We often speak in email in ways we never would in person.
- 2) Email communications can create misunderstanding.
- 3) There is no guarantee the email has been read.
- 4) There is certainly no guarantee it has been understood in the spirit in which it was written.

Try this little exercise:

- Part 1:
  - List all the people on your team.
  - Rate the relationships you have with team members on a scale from 1 to 5, where the best relationship is rated 5, and the worst relationship is rated 1. If every relationship is a 5, you don't need to read further...but you may be looking at the world through rose-colored glasses! So, consider Part 2 of the exercise.
- Part 2:
  - Notice with whom you tend to spend “in person” time and to whom you tend to send emails instead.

What we know is that building trust requires getting to know the other person, and if you don't make the time one-on-one, or on the team, the lack of relationship will inhibit high performance. So...

- 1) Pick up the phone!
- 2) Have “office hours” for at least one hour per week, where people (inside and outside the company) know they will not be disturbing you if they walk into your office or call you.

- 3) Leave some “people space” or “**we** space” on your calendar.
- 4) Don’t cancel out on **we**-time.
- 5) Take people you have the most challenges with to lunch and learn something about them that you enjoy.

And, consider what John Lubbock (English Biologist and Politician, 1834-1913) had to say: “In truth, people can generally make time for what they choose to do; it is not really the time but the will that is lacking.” Does that ring true?

*What additional steps can you take to allow for more time with others? What benefits do you believe you would derive from having more “people space” on your calendar?*