

# Can You Relate?

Positive Working Relationships

Get along  
with  
the boss

Play nice  
with others

Who  
depends  
on you?

**SAMPLE  
PAGE**



## People Who Need People

You already know how important human relationships are to your daily life. Each day is shaped by your interactions with your family, friends, teachers, classmates, and even the strangers with whom you come in contact. And, if you happen to have a job, each day is also influenced by your interactions and relationships with your supervisors and coworkers. However, getting along with supervisors and coworkers does not always come easily or naturally. That's why learning how to cultivate positive working relationships is such an important skill. With determination and work, you can build positive relationships with everyone on your work team.

### Interdependence

Interdependence is a very important concept in human relations. But what does this term mean? Any two (or more) things are said to be **interdependent** if they need or rely upon one another for some reason. This is really a very common phenomenon—one that you can readily see all around you.

For instance, think about the seesaws and teeter-totters that you played on when you were younger. For the person on one end of a seesaw to go up, the person at the other end must go down. Then, for the other to go up, the first must come back down to the ground. Each person is dependent on the other—s/he relies upon the other person—to make the seesaw work. Remember how sad you were when there was no one to play with on the seesaw? It's very difficult to use that type of playground equipment alone.

So What?




Laura is having a typical morning. When she woke up, she ran into her brother in the hallway. He was also heading for the bathroom. “You go first,” he told her. “It takes you longer to get ready, anyway.” After breakfast, Laura’s friend Sadie picked her up and gave her a ride to school. When Laura got to her European history class, she realized she had forgotten her homework. She explained this to her teacher, Mr. Murphy, who agreed to give her an extra day since she had to deal with her homework.

Consider the relationships you have been affected by. Not even 9:00 a.m. today so far—how have your relationships with others had an impact on it already?

As you can see, human relationships are important to each and every one of us. Human relations are the ways that people form and conduct relationships with one another. Having good human relations skills is very important for your life as well as for your career. Read on to learn how you can develop the human relations skills necessary for positive relationships at work.

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## Objectives

-  Describe the importance of positive working relationships.
-  Describe three basic management styles commonly encountered by employees.
-  Demonstrate how to foster positive working relationships.

*Many mechanical devices (cars, computers, cell phones) are made up of a number of interdependent parts that work together for a common purpose.*

## Supervisors: That's How They Roll

Your success at developing positive working relationships depends, in large part, upon your ability to get along with your supervisors and managers. They are expected to guide and direct the efforts of their employees. They are responsible for ensuring that the workers under their supervision are performing their jobs in the most efficient and productive manner.

The following are some general guidelines for building a positive working relationship with your supervisor in any type of work environment:

- Accept criticism professionally, without becoming defensive.
- Take all work-related complaints to your supervisor first, before discussing them with anyone else. This demonstrates loyalty to your company, a very valuable trait in an employee.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something. Most likely, your supervisor would rather be interrupted to answer a question than for you to perform a task the wrong way.
- Be trustworthy and honest. It's impossible to have a good relationship with your supervisor if s/he can't trust you.
- Always accept responsibility for your own mistakes. Don't make excuses for your mistakes or shift the blame to others. Accepting responsibility demonstrates your maturity as a person and as an employee.
- Be dependable. Others on your work team should never have to wonder if you'll follow through on your word.
- Be flexible. In most businesses, plans and goals are constantly evolving and changing. Managers appreciate employees who can "go with the flow."
- Work hard!

Managers' approaches to the task of supervising, also known as their management styles, often vary. How a supervisor performs the job is affected by prior experiences (both as an employee and as a supervisor), personality traits, and attitudes regarding motivation.

Despite the fact that every supervisor's manner differs somewhat, it is possible to talk in general terms about some of the more common management styles you may encounter as an employee. By being aware of the major characteristics associated with each of these styles, you will be better able to analyze the behavior of your own supervisor and better prepared to respond in the most appropriate way. This will help you to adapt to the work situations in which you might find yourself.



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## Laissez-faire managers

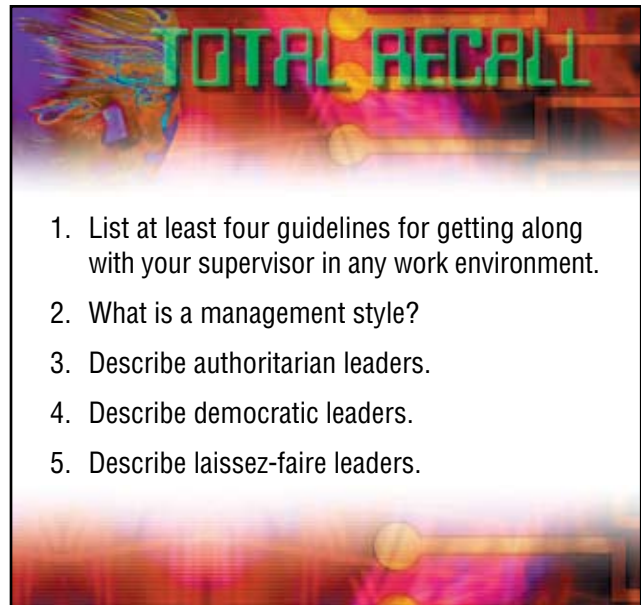
Laissez-faire is a French term that refers to a philosophy of noninterference. A supervisor who uses a laissez-faire management style takes a “hands-off” approach to managing employees. These supervisors exercise very little or no control over their workers. While this could bring chaos in some work environments, it is excellent for others, especially those requiring maximum creativity from employees. The following behaviors are common among laissez-faire managers:

- Provide only general guidance
- Avoid giving specific, detailed directions
- Permit employees to function independently
- Encourage creativity
- Encourage initiative

If you have creativity, initiative, self-confidence, self-discipline, assertiveness, and the ability to set your own goals, you will do well working for a laissez-faire supervisor. You will adapt more easily to this approach if you like to act independently, devise your own solutions, and make your own plans and decisions. Keep in mind that, even if you are working for a laissez-faire supervisor, you will still need to check in occasionally to make sure you are meeting expectations.

### Summary

Your success at developing positive working relationships depends, in large part, upon your ability to get along with your supervisors and managers. There are some general guidelines for getting along with your supervisor in any work environment, including accepting criticism professionally, working hard, and being trustworthy. A supervisor’s approach to the job is his/her management style. Three general management styles are authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. Each style has its defining characteristics, and employees can learn certain ways to work effectively under each.



## The Gray Zone

Pamela and Kim are good friends as well as coworkers. They usually eat lunch together, go to the gym together for a Pilates class once a week, and sometimes catch a movie together. Yesterday during their lunch break, Pamela told Kim that one of their employer’s friends had offered her a job. She explained to Kim that the job offer is very tempting because it offers a significant pay raise and have a shorter commute to work. “What do you think I should do? Should I take the new job, or stay with our current employer?”

If you were Kim, what would you say? Would you advise Pamela to take the new job or keep her present one? Also, would you keep Pamela’s secret, or would you let your supervisor know that Pamela is seriously thinking about leaving the company?

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