
Cultivating Connections to Improve the Workplace

(AND THE BUSINESS BOTTOM LINE)

PRESENTED BY NIKI RAMIREZ
FOR THE AZ SHRM ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024





What We'll Cover Today:



- What do Connection & Connectedness mean at work?
- What are the benefits of cultivating a deeply connected workplace culture?
- What is the role of communication in social connection at work?
- How does connection facilitate Inclusion, Belonging, and Psychological Safety at work?
- What questions should I be asking to gauge connection in my workplace?
- What does HR need to do to lay the groundwork?



Connection: A Workplace Definition

THE BONDS WE FORM WITH OTHERS AT WORK THAT ALLOW US TO BUILD TRUST, FEEL SEEN AND VALUED.

Activity: Look at this!!

- Grab your phone.
- Open your photo album.
- Pick a photo that makes you HAPPY!
- For 1-Minute: Share with a neighbor: who is in the photo, what's happening, why is it meaningful to you?



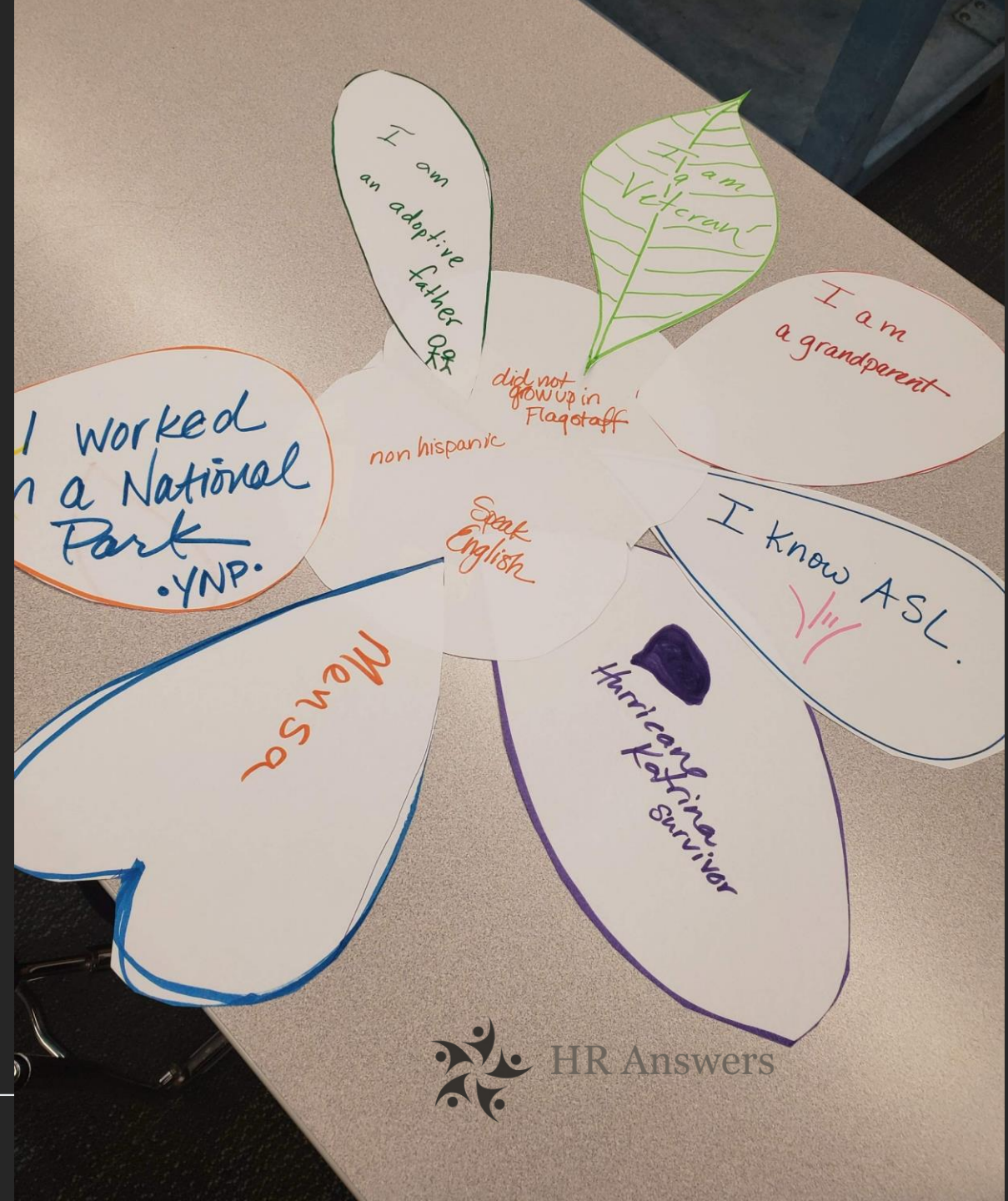
HR Answers

In Psychology: Connectedness

“THE SENSE OF
BELONGING AND
RELATEDNESS THAT
PEOPLE EXPERIENCE
IN THEIR
INTERACTIONS WITH
OTHERS.”

Activity Idea: Unique & Different, All at Once

- **Part 1:** Each participant creates their own unique flower. On each petal they list a unique thing about themselves. Share around the group. (Make flower, 5 mins; share 1-2 mins per person)
- **Part 2:** Then, make a team flower! Fill the petals with things that you all have in common. (10 mins)



POP QUIZ:

What is it called when people work together and create something more valuable and larger than they could create on their own?

Benefits of Connection in the Workplace



HR Answers



Let's cut to the chase!

Think About It: With these definitions in mind, what do you think the benefits of workplace connection are?

Now, SHARE!

#1 Benefit of Genuine Connection:



Increased Employee Engagement



- How much? Engaged employees are ~20% more productive (Gallup)



- Why?! Stronger connection unlocks discretionary effort (HBR)

Additional Workplace Benefits of Strong Connections:



HIGHER JOB
SATISFACTION



REDUCED
TURNOVER



POSITIVE
CULTURE ASSISTS
IN ATTRACTING
TOP TALENT



RESILIENCE;
EMPLOYEES HELP
ONE ANOTHER
COPE WITH
DIFFICULT TIMES



EFFORTS TO
COLLABORATE
ARE MORE
EFFECTIVE.
HIGHER
CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION



HR Answers

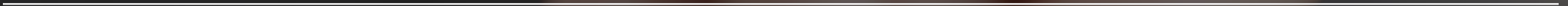


42% of Turnover is Preventable

The signs and symptoms are often ignored by business leaders (Gallup).

[Full-time employee, making minimum wage costs ~ \$14,000+ to replace]

Connection & Engagement Lead to 10% Increase in Customer Satisfaction (Gallup)



An illustration of three women in a bar setting. On the left, a woman with dark skin and blonde hair in a bun, wearing a pink and grey patterned top and dark pants, is gesturing with her hands. In the center, a woman with light skin and short reddish hair, wearing a yellow sweater and a green skirt, holds a white wine glass. On the right, a woman with dark skin and long dark hair, wearing a pink dress, holds a glass of red wine and has her hand to her head. The background features a bar counter with various bottles, potted plants, and hanging lamps. A pink handbag sits on a stool to the right.

Social Connection at Work is Key

Why? A study out of Stanford University highlighted that social connections are critical to lower stress and anxiety.

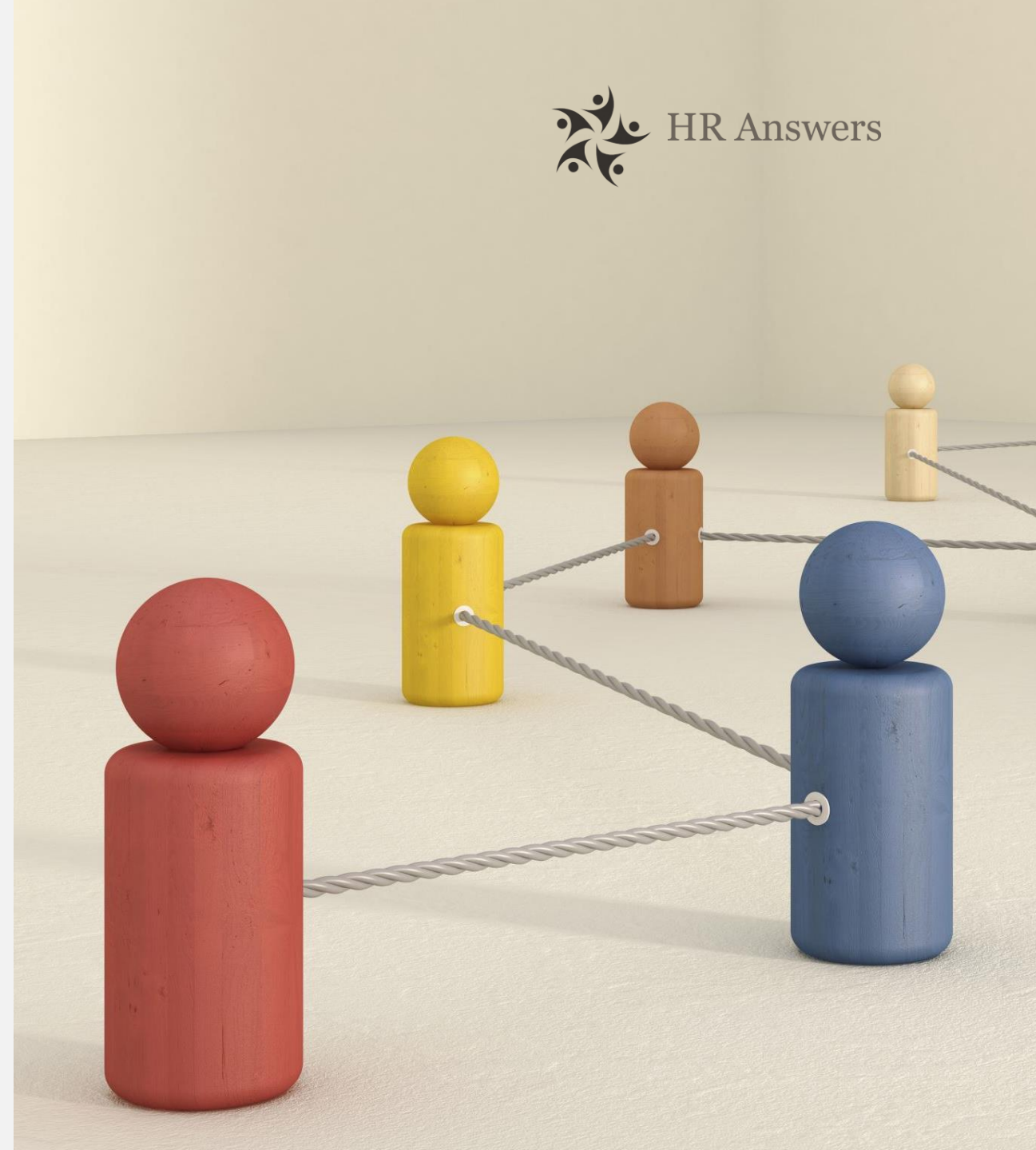


HR Answers

Social Connection Bottom Line\$

Engaged, connected employees have 41% lower absenteeism (Gallup).

- Savings: Less overtime payout + PTO/sick leave.
- Increased earning potential via efficiency and effective workflows



Quality Time Builds Social Connection

- Have fun and play together
(World Rock Paper Scissors Day)
- Listen to music
(shared Spotify list)
- Do/make art together
- Sharing stories (Tea Time)
- Volunteer together



Example: An Invitation to Connect

From: Niki Ramirez

Sent: Monday, May 13, 2024 8:28 PM

To: Sarah Marchese <sarahm@hranswers.org>; Sarah <sarah@hranswers.org>; Jessica Milewski <jessica@hranswers.org>; Sheree Bailey <sheree@hranswers.org>

Cc: HR Assistant <hello@hranswers.org>

Subject: HRAnswers.org 1-Day Team Retreat, Monday, May 20, 2024

ALERT. Tons of info to follow. Lol



Hi team!

I'm so excited to have everyone together next Monday, here in Gilbert, Arizona!!! To set the stage ...

Q1: What is this 1-day retreat all about??

One Thing: Cultivating Deeper Connections

A1: Guided by a shared vision of fostering stronger bonds, our 1-day retreat is an intentional space where trust blossoms, collaboration thrives, and genuine relationships flourish. Through reflective dialogue, immersive activities, and heartfelt interactions, we aspire to forge authentic connections that support our team as we do our best work, together. I encourage each team member to arrive with open hearts and minds, embrace vulnerability, celebrate diversity, and honor each individual's unique contributions.

Our ultimate goal is to emerge not only as colleagues but as a resilient, interconnected community, empowered to achieve greatness together.

What is a song that gets you energized?
Add to Our Collective Spotify List



Creating the Right Conditions for Connection

The Role of Communication in Human Connection



HR Answers

Communication
is the Fuel

Care is the Spark

Connection is the
Result





Connection Requires ACTION.

We rely on interactions with others to fulfill our need for connection and belonging.
(WebMD)

Connection Fosters Belonging




Interacting with others allows us to form personal bonds, test assumptions, and build trust.



Improved trust cultivates honesty and openness at work.



Honesty and openness facilitates accountability.

A photograph of four hands of different skin tones cupping a single, glossy red heart. The hands are positioned in a circle, with fingers pointing outwards, creating a sense of unity and care. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

Social Connection & Psychological Safety

Give me
permission to
be ME!



Q) What is the best way for leaders to give permission for employees to be themselves at work?

Answers Include:

- ✓ Lead by example.
- ✓ Show people it is ok to be yourself.
- ✓ Champion differences.

Inclusion: Let's Get Personal



Meet/Connect with
Elena Joy Thurston,
Amazing Workshop Leader & Coach





Connection & Psychological Safety Facilitate Inclusion



Inclusion through Connection

- ❑ Your ideas are welcome
- ❑ Your questions are valid
- ❑ I trust you
- ❑ Let's do it your way

An illustration on a reddish-brown background showing two people working on laptops. On the left, a person with dark skin and dark hair is typing on a light blue laptop. On the right, a person with light skin and blonde hair is typing on a dark blue laptop. A white paper airplane is shown in flight between the two laptops, with a dashed line indicating its path. In the top left corner, there is a white mug, and in the bottom right corner, there is a grey mug. The text "Organizational Communication Strategies that Foster Connection at Work" is written in white serif font across the center of the image.

Organizational Communication Strategies that Foster Connection at Work

A Culture of Connection Includes:



Regular 1:1's with supervisor/leadership



A realistic cadence for surveys and employee feedback



Team meetings that are productive



Open Office Hours



Easy access to leaders outside my “chain of command”



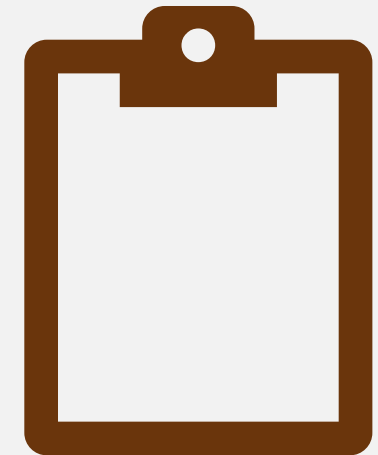
Social Interaction & FUN

Surveys as a Form of Communication



Speaking of Surveys ... Gallup's Q12

- ✓ (Number 5) My supervisor or someone at work seems to care about me as a person.
- ✓ (Number 8) The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel that my job is important.
- ✓ (Number 10) I have a best friend at work.
- ✓ (Number 11) In the last 6 months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.



HR Department Homework



HR Department Homework

Review opportunities to connect through:

- Individual Feedback (surveys, interviews, informal sharing, etc.)
- Mentorship
- Social Interaction and Fun



HR Department Homework

Job Description Revision:

- Required ability: Establish and maintain effective working relationships with team members and other stakeholders.



HR Department Homework

Review Policies & Procedures:

- Performance Evaluations.
- Employee Growth & Development.
- Code of Conduct.
- Non-Discrimination/Non-Harassment



HR Department Homework

Provide Training to Normalize Concepts :

- Non-Discrimination/Non-Harassment
 - Instincts Based Leadership
 - Emotional Intelligence at Work
 - Workplace Essentials: Critical Communication, Collaboration & Conflict Resolution Skills
 - 4 Keys to Being a Great Team Member
 - Navigating Stress & Negativity at Work
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HR Department Homework

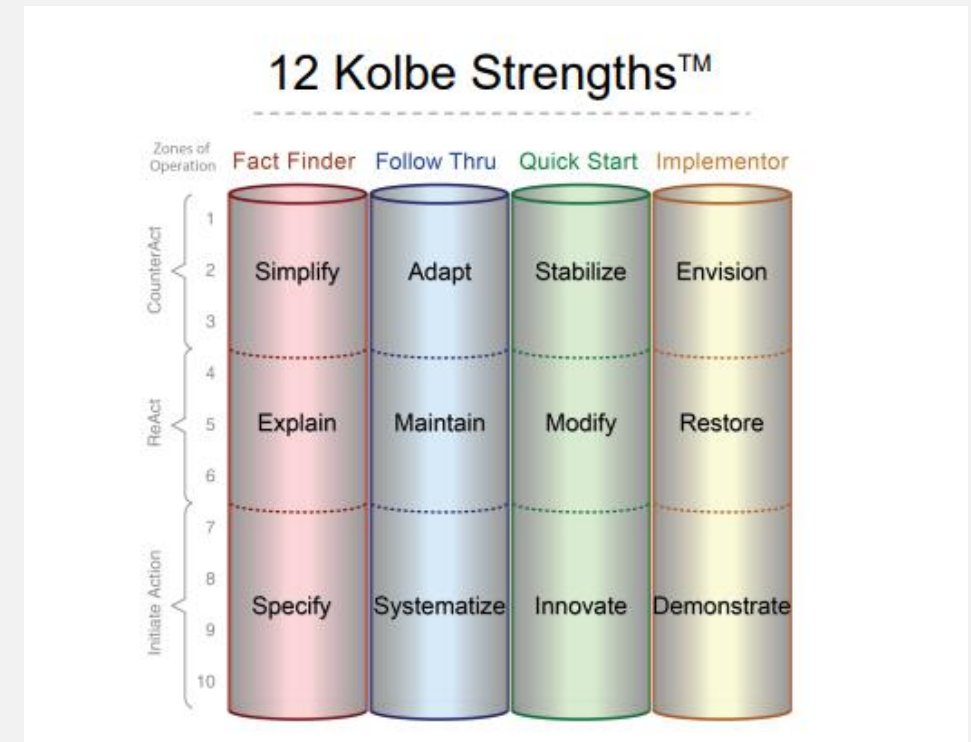
The workplace is about doing.

Connect via How People Get things Done:

- Incorporate the use of assessments at the time of hire (Kolbe A)

Help People Open Up and Share:

- Integrate assessments on-going, especially as teams change (Kolbe, Strengths Finder, DISC, etc.





UBUNTU



I AM BECAUSE WE ARE

Ubuntu at Work:

- I am because my team is.
- We are because our clients are.
- We are because our community is.
- We are cocreators.
- We are interdependent.



There is more to cover. Let's Keep The Conversation Going.

- Reach out to your facilitator:

Niki Ramirez, MBA/PHR

Founder & Principal Consultant

call: (602) 715-1300

email: nramirez@hranswers.org

