

Brief Moment, Big Payback

An employee in a New York City business stopped at his manager's office for a scheduled appointment. Without looking up or speaking, the manager waved him in and pointed to a chair – but kept on working.

As the employee waited, he looked around the room. On the wall was a picture of a little girl. It struck him that he knew very little about his manager. Does she have a family? Is that her daughter?

When the manager finally looked up from her papers, the employee asked, "Is that your little girl?"

The manager said, "No," and without skipping a beat launched into the subject of their meeting.

An important moment just passed, and the manager missed it.

In every organization, these fleeting moments make a big difference in workers' perceptions of their leaders. Unless you realize the value of these exchanges, your own priorities and expectations will obstruct such bond-building opportunities with your staff.

In this example, given by John M. Gottman and Joan DeClaire in *The Relationship Cure*, the leader's priority was to get down to business. But her employee was focused on establishing a personal connection first – important to the entire organization because what's personal is based on trust. If this employee can't even talk to his manager about what's on her office wall, then how can he feel confident enough to discuss issues that are crucial to his job and to the company?



What's a leader to do? It's this simple: "Oh, that's Kim. She's my sister's kid. She sometimes hangs out with us when ..."

It takes a few more minutes, but the effects last a long time.

– Beecher Hunter