



Manager relationships – Strengthen your network

You need good, strong relationships at work

Research shows that the quality of relationships and experiencing loneliness affect managers' well-being and health as well as the organisation's performance. That is why it is important to understand how you and your fellow managers can create a strong sense of community where well-being, learning and mutual support become a natural part of daily life.

Do you sometimes feel lonely in your role as manager?

If you do, you are not alone. It is a common experience among managers. Studies show that four out of ten Danish managers* have felt lonely in their role.

As a manager, you may find that you are left out of conversations and that information is kept from you because you carry responsibility and authority. This can lead to a sense of loneliness, as it is difficult to share dilemmas involving confidentiality and loyalty to the organisation and your team. And there are fewer safe spaces where you can ask for advice and share challenges.

That is why strong manager relationships are important

* VIVE (2022)

Danica



Here is some inspiration on how to strengthen your well-being and the quality of your leadership through relationships and collaboration in managers' teams.

How to strengthen your relationships

1) Map your relationships

Here is an exercise to help you visualise your relationships – where they are strong and where there is room for strengthening connections.

Start the exercise by asking yourself:

"Who do I collaborate with the most?",

"Who do I go to for advice and support?",

"Who gives me energy – and who drains me?"

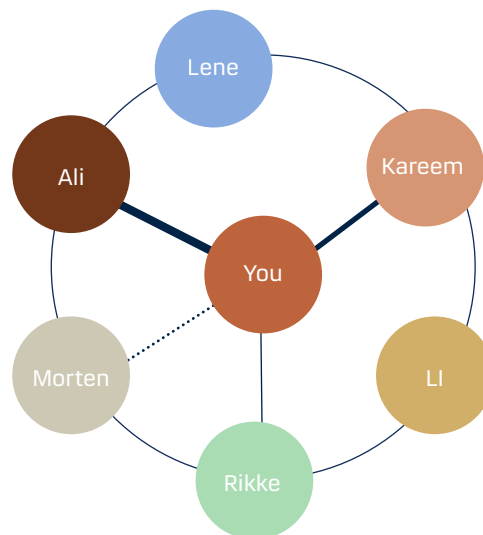
Then, draw your network, adding names and lines to show connections. You can use different colours or line thicknesses to show how strong each relationship is.

Take time to reflect on your network

Where are your key relationships?

Who is on the outside?

Where might you need to build more trust, dialogue or mutual support?



Bear in mind that we often tend to seek advice and support from people who are most like ourselves. Try instead to seek it from those who are least like you.

2) Make the most of small moments

Relationships are not just built in formal meetings – they are maintained in the gaps in between.

As a manager, you are in a unique position to set the tone for an informal culture where people can be themselves. The same applies to your managers' network. Small, everyday actions can make a real difference.

Here are three concrete things you can do:



Walk-and-talk

Walk to a meeting, lunch or an event together – and use the walk as an opportunity to check in without an agenda.



Greetings

Say a genuine good morning – with name, eye contact and a smile. Show people that you see them.



Coffee meetings

Invite a fellow manager to an informal 15-minute chat with no set agenda – aim for once a month, for example. Focus on the relationship, not on results.

See it as part of your job

Strengthening relationships is crucial, not only for your own well-being, but for your network within the organisation. So make time for it and treat it as a valuable and integral part of your job.

Remember: Building relationships does not just happen when you have spare time – it happens when you choose to make time.

3. Make mental security part of your behaviour

A sense of security is not created just by talking about it – you have to show it. When you are willing to show your uncertainty, ask for help and listen without judging, you create a space where others feel they can do the same. And that is the core of strong relationships. Mental security is not just a feeling – it is something you practise so that your actions make it safe for others to be themselves. It strengthens collaboration, prevents conflicts and makes it easier to share ideas, uncertainties and mistakes.

Test your ability to create mental security in your managers' network

Reflection exercise:

On a scale from 1-5, how natural it is for you as a manager to...

Acknowledge a mistake:

"I see now that it was my mistake, and I take responsibility for it."

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Ask for input and different points of view:

"It seems I might have missed something. I would really appreciate your input to make sure we get it right."

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Learn from the process:

"I realise now that we need to rethink this process to achieve our goals. This has been a valuable learning experience for me."

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Appreciate feedback:

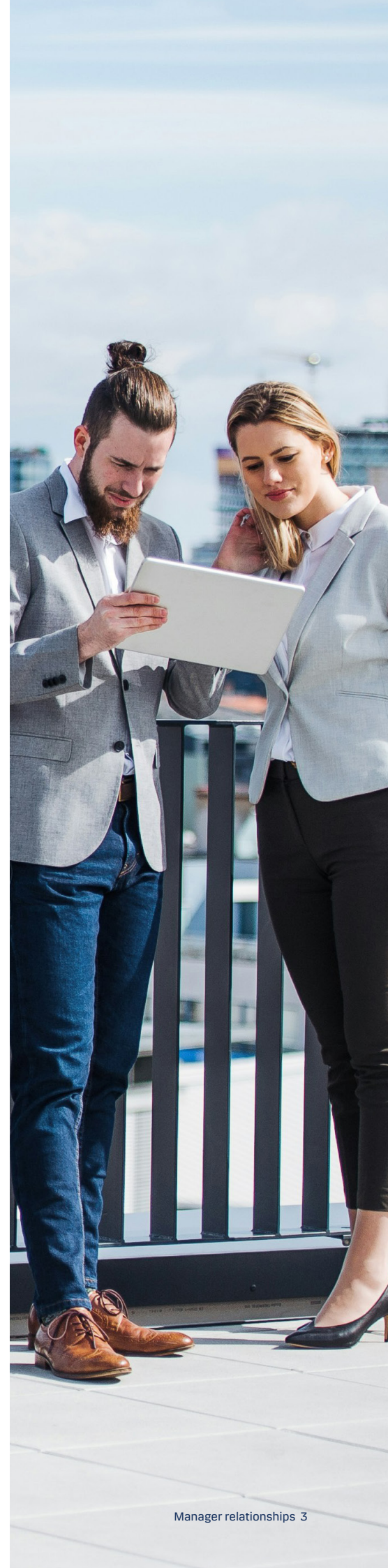
"Thanks for your feedback. I clearly had a blind spot here, and I am grateful that you pointed it out to me and helped me develop."

1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Further reflection you can practise:

Where did you score the lowest – and what could be one small step you could take to improve that behaviour? (For example, invite a fellow manager into a decision-making process earlier than you normally would).

Are there any obvious opportunities already in your calendar where you could practise appreciating feedback or inviting advice from others?





4. Prevent conflicts – and use disagreements constructively

Disagreement is a natural part of being a manager – and necessary to drive progress and development. But under pressure, differences can also lead to friction, misunderstandings or conflicts.

It is important to deal with conflicts effectively when they arise. Take responsibility for keeping discussions constructive – but also for repairing the relationship if it is damaged along the way.

How to keep discussions constructive:

- Be curious before you become critical –
"What are you seeing that I may have missed?"
- Focus on the issue, not the person –
"I found that my input was quickly rejected at the meeting. Could we talk about how we make more space for different perspectives?"
- Share your thoughts in draft form – "This is my perspective – what do you think?"
- Make it safe for people to disagree – "I appreciate your honesty and courage"
- Explain your intention – *"I bring this up because I want to understand and find a good solution together."*

Repairing starts with an honest, responsible conversation where you...

- Listen to understand – not just to defend
"I sensed that something in the meeting was affecting you – would you share how you experienced it?"
- Make it clear that you want to restore the relationship
"This matters to me – I would like to make it right."
- Take responsibility for your own part – even if it seems small
"I can see how the way I reacted affected the situation."

Get support and advice in your role as manager

If your workplace has a health package with us, you can get online leadership coaching and psychological counselling weekdays from 9am to 9pm.

Read more and book an appointment via our Mobilpension App

Because you as a manager also deserve a life in balance.