

## **Improving the Interpersonal Relationship among Employees in Nestle**

**Soo Pei Lee<sup>1</sup>, Daisy Mui Hung Kee<sup>2</sup>, Pei Sin Lee<sup>3</sup>, Wei San Chin<sup>4</sup>, Hooi Ming Gan<sup>5</sup>, Bareeq Alghanim<sup>6</sup>, Bablu Kumar<sup>7</sup>**

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>

Kuwait University, Kuwait<sup>6</sup>

ABES Engineering College<sup>7</sup>

Correspondence Email: daisy@usm.my

### **ABSTRACT**

An interpersonal relationship is one of the important social factors that would influence the smoothness of operation within the department that leads to the success of an organization. Productivity increases when individuals work in groups as compared to an individual who works alone. The paper proposes that the interaction among co-workers is important to increase productivity in an organization. Nestle, the world's largest food and beverage company, has the most influential and significant brands around the world. Nestle begins in 1866 with the foundation of the Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company by Henri Nestle. The implications of the study as well as suggestions for future studies are discussed.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal relationship, Productivity, Interaction, Decentralization, sense of belonging, Nestle.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 21<sup>st</sup> century and the influx of the fourth Industrial Revolution, the organization have realized that the structure of organization, procedures, and process of work should be transformed to cope with the current changes and business trends. Imagine your routine workday in 1960, you should think about the degree of differences of your work life today compared to what it was about 60 years ago? Today we are relying on the modern technology such as Internet of Thing (IoT), virtual reality, augmented reality, cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), cognitive computing, etc. Work is now more relies on technological competence, more mobile, less possibility to rely on geography, and more rely on team-based and collaborative. As collaboration and collective activity become more prevalent, employees need a well-developed relationship, networking, teamwork, collaboration, learning, and growth. A person can spend around seven until eight hours at his or her workplace and it is not possible for that individual to do the task alone. A linkage between individuals who come and working together in the same organization can assume that have the interpersonal relationship.

There are many successful food companies in the world, for example, Nestle, Mondelez, Mars, Hershey's, Heinz, Kellogg, Ferrero Rocher, and others. These are the global food processing company and have a strong product portfolio. So, what factors will influence employees when applying to a company? There's no significant and powerful formula for great company culture. According to Branson (2015), the key is just to treat your staff how you would like to be treated. The worst thing a firm can do is reduce the creative energy of its young, talented people and person who have potential. Therefore, when employees are choosing their job, the quality working environment of the company will be the first consideration. As a result, Nestle will be the first choice because Nestle

always offers its leaders and employees different programs to learn how communication and social behavior differs across cultures and how to adapt themselves accordingly.

Nestle is the world's largest foodstuff company located in Switzerland and seen in about 189 countries worldwide. The company has more than 2,000 brands where their main products fall into categories of tea, coffee, bottled water, baby food, breakfast cereals, and lots more. One of the famous products of Nestle is Nestle milk chocolate which is a chocolate bar. Nestle's priority is to bring the best and most relevant products to people, wherever they are, whatever their needs, throughout their lives with the tag line, 'Good Food, Good Life'. Conway statista (2018) reported that the Swiss company Nestle was rated as the world's largest fast-moving consumer goods company, in terms of revenue amounting to a staggering 90.8 billion U.S. dollars in 2017. According to McGrath (2018), the annual and comprehensive list of the world's most powerful public companies Nestle are the top three food and drink companies in the world as measured by revenue, assets, profit and market value.

Nestle's vision is to achieve long-term success, create value for shareholders and society while Nestle's mission is to nurture a healthier life for consumers through tastier and healthier products. Nestle's existence and future development are completely dependent on successfully serving consumers' needs. To accomplish this, Nestle establishes its branches in many countries so that they can be close to the customers and develop bonds of trust with customers over many decades. Developing long term relationships of trust with employees, suppliers, business partners, governments and society are always the concerns of Nestle. Nestle's success over the years is a direct result of their hard work and dedication. In this context, we believe that healthier employees can be expected to be happier, more engaged and to demonstrate higher performance and productivity.

As a globally operating company, Nestle is well-positioned in its operating market. Nestle has employed approximately 308,000 people worldwide in 2018. Being such a big company makes Nestle responsible for a huge impact on creating long term relationships with employees, it needs to work towards a better interpersonal relationship and working environment. With the global presence and a broad variety of products and businesses, Nestle always finding the employees who are committed to delivering their best, can go far while collaborating among colleagues and partners who are both culturally diverse and with different perspectives.

In this case study, the focus is mainly going to be on Nestle's interpersonal relationship among co-workers. Relationships among people will never stop being a work in progress. When the organization needs to innovate, as a work force in the organization the element of collaboration is essential. Even if Nestle already has taken on a lot of initiatives towards a better interpersonal relationship, there are always improvements to be made. The number of employees is gradually falling from 2014 with 339,000 to 2018 with 308,000 (Conway, Statista, 2019). Therefore, the main purpose of conducting the research is to find out the ways to improve the interpersonal relationship among co-workers in Nestle. In the following chapters, we will explain and justify the ways to improve the interpersonal relationship in Nestle by providing sensible ideas.

## 1. BACKGROUND OF IDEA

### 1.1 Concept of Interpersonal Relationship

According to Kelly and colleagues (1983), interpersonal relationship defines a close relationship as one that is strong, frequent and with diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period.

The relationship is born, fed, nurtured and it grows. It is born at the level of acquaintance relationship; it is fed at an associate relationship and is nurtured at friendship. One who must be involved in the interpersonal relationship must have a goal to attain at each level to achieve its purpose. The relationship is the ladder to your gain or pain and, therefore, it must be consciously handled. It does not come by chance. It is social work to be done.

Maxwell (2004) observed that a thing which brings towards two persons together to make them remain in the context of relationship. Such things may be common interests like desire, aspiration or a goal. When an interpersonal relationship is born from any of these, if it is fed and nurtured, it grows but if neglected, it deteriorates and dies. Developing interpersonal relationships is a serious business that yields dividends to those committed to it. An interpersonal relationship can be defined as a social association among person, connection and affiliation between two or more people.

### 1.2 Theory of Interpersonal Relationship

According to Social Exchange Theory, the theory which was proposed by George Casper Homans (1958), "give and take" forms the basis of almost all relationships through their proportions might vary as per the intensity of the relationship. In a relationship, every individual has expectations from his or her partner. A relationship without expectations is meaningless.

Furthermore, according to Social Exchange theory feelings and emotions ought to be reciprocated for a successful and long-lasting relationship. Relationships can never be one-sided. An individual should invest his or her time and energy in relationships only when he or she gets something out of it. There are relationships where an individual receives less than he or she gives. This leads to situations where an individual start comparing his or her relationship with others. Social Exchange Theory is important among co-workers in Nestle because this would involve two or more individuals to form a group and "give and take" is important in relationships between co-workers in Nestle.

### 1.3 Interpersonal Relationship Model

The interpersonal relationship model explains an individual's outlook toward relationships and how one's perception changes in due course. When two individuals come together, like each other and enter a relationship. According to the interpersonal relationship model, two-dimensional components go a long way in creating an individual's perception of relationships. The two-dimensional components include others to self and self to others.

Other to self which is one of the components that represent an individual's awareness of his or her partner's attitude, thoughts and beliefs towards himself or herself. The other to self -component is more to do with the awareness of an individual as to how his or

her partner treats him or her. Moreover, self to others which signifies an individual's awareness of his behavior, attitude towards his or her partner.

#### 1.4 Initiatives to improve the interpersonal relationship among co-workers at the workplace

Effective organizational encourages the development of a positive relationship between managers and employees as well as among co-workers.

(a) Management interventions may be instrumental in promoting friendships at work, by initiating social activities both inside and outside of the workplace.

(b) An individual need to get along well with their fellow workers for a positive ambience in workplaces and for healthy interpersonal relationship. Ignoring small issues helps in avoiding conflicts in interpersonal relationships.

(c) Stay away from nasty politics at the workplace. Do not try to harm anyone and avoid being jealous.

(d) Master good communication skills when interacting with co-workers

(e) Learn easy ways to problem-solving.

(f) Create conflict management. While you are unable to avoid the conflicts occur at workplace, but you can immediately settle the conflicts with the right plan solution.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this chapter, we will discuss the solutions that are practical enough to be implemented to solve the interpersonal relationship among co-worker issues in Nestle. The following ideas are suggesting for Nestle to improve the positive relationship between managers and employees as well as among co-workers in their organization:

Firstly, to resolve an interpersonal relationship issue, we think the management interventions may be instrumental in promoting friendships at work, by initiating social activities both inside and outside of the workplace. Management interventions are instrumenting to promote friendship at work and these roles of management interventions can be done by the human resource department. By enabling organizational socialization tactics, appropriately socializing newcomers, promoting a climate of openness and fun at work, initiating social activities both inside and outside of the workplace and providing ongoing team-building efforts which are carry out the strategies that inspire valued relationships at work.

Besides, the employee needs to get along well with their fellow workers for a positive ambience in workplaces and for healthy interpersonal relationships. Ignoring small issues helps in avoiding conflicts in interpersonal relationships. Conflict is inevitable and necessary in management teams because of the high complexity and uncertainty involved in the strategic decision-making process. To manage conflict, third-party interventions are needed. Nestle can form a committee to solve the conflict between two or more employees. Emotional management training and sensitivity training can also help the employee insight into their feeling and person around them, so conflict in an organization can be avoided. The conflict between managers and employees can be avoided by having a clear line of authority.

On the other hand, workers should stay away from nasty politics at the workplace. In some fields, you either completed your job responsibilities or you did not. For instance, sales, finance positions, and other positions with well-defined job responsibilities and quantitatively measured goals are good if you are not good at politics, because if you meet the goal, you will probably be considered successful. However, if you don't meet



your goals, you may wish you did play politics, it's in these situations that having the political clout or someone that will vouch for you is valuable.

Meanwhile, good communication skills are part of the fundamental work ethics that should be observed by all employees. It is important because the work environment is guided by a common vision and mission. Thus, there should be a rapport of good communication that would help to achieve the desired and set objectives of the work environment. As such, for a person to master good communication, one must understand self-versus others. Self refers to the personal understanding of one's abilities, temperament, personality, and nature. This is to say that the person would have the awareness that would control their personality and thus help to understand their personality. This would mean that the person would understand the strengths and limits of one's nature. Another critical consideration that must be underscored is the mode of delivery. Communication primarily refers to the transfer of information from one person to another through a medium. So, the medium of relaying the information is also critical. For instance, in the work environment, common decency and courtesy demand that if a person is approached to communicate through a medium, they should be courteous to respond in kind. If a colleague or co-worker sends a person an email to a message through web-enabled platforms, it would be reasonable to respond through the same medium.

Furthermore, easy ways to solve problems in the work environment include the need to understand the form and variety of conflict. Some conflicts occur due to differences in ideology, goal, emotions, personality, or procedural difference. This means that the people would differ in their perspectives and as such, the first step towards resolving the problem would be to understand their nature or form and the variety of the conflict. Before a person deploys measures of conflict resolution, they would need to consider the personalities that are involved in the conflict. This means that it would be reasonable to understand if the people are aggressive, passive, or assertive and how they would react to the outcome of the conflict (Weaver 378). The idea of problem-solving is not to necessarily win or emerge victorious from the acrimony. Rather, it is to help tackle the contentious issue to allow both parties to proceed on well towards the intended common goal. Subsequently, it is reasonable to understand the nature of the situation on whether it would be favorable or not to solve the problem. Sometimes, some problems are not worthy of pursuing a solution for them because their outcomes would be unfavorable to one. So, it would be proper to consider whether the intended outcome of problem-solving would help to realize a favorable outcome or whether the outcome would be undesired. Lastly, create conflict management while you may not be able to prevent conflict at work, you can quickly resolve it with the right plan. We think Nestle can use a competing style in the workplace, which refers to assertive and uncooperative behaviors and represents a WIN LOSE approach to interpersonal conflict. Those individuals who apply this style try to reach their own objectives without concern about others. It includes coercion and dominance. These individuals who assume that conflict resolution means one party wins and the other party loses in the conflict situation. This style by a manager may lead to demotivation of subordinates. Thrusting decisions will also show that the low commitment by others in its execution. However, sometimes Competing Style becomes necessary.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, we will discuss how the solutions can be implemented and the potential risk that might happen if the solutions are not planned properly or do not work well. To improve the interpersonal relationship among co-workers, we will fit some social activities inside the workplace as well as outside the workplace that can make

employees and managers have more chances to interact with each other. For example, ask employees to have lunch together. We can also join them and take them out for picnics and small get together. Such informal meetings not only bring co-workers closer to each other but also their superior. In the case, the potential risk of doing so is that the organization needs to spend extra time and some management team might feel a heavy burden to maintain these activities and the organization's performance.

Besides, to ensure employees can cooperate well and bring the organization to run smoothly and meets its goals. There are several activities, initiatives and steps that the leadership along with the employees can apply to enhance the collaborative relationships. For example, make teamwork as part of the organization's culture. For co-workers to successfully collaborate, the leadership within the firm must work to make collaboration one of the key values of the enterprise. Employees should observe that the leadership within the organization works together as a team to accomplish goals and tasks. Teamwork and collaboration must be a central theme of the mission statement to improve collaboration among co-workers at Nestle.

Next, to master good communication skills, we will identify and reach out to shy employees and who are lack of communication skills. No matter how an organization reduce it, some people are shy and introvert, but they are just as precious and valuable at what they do as aggressive employees. Reach out to introverted employees and have comfortable conversations where they can share their ideas. Then, they will be sent to a training course to help them strengthen their interpersonal skills to best meet Nestle's specific standards. Some training courses even provide online education programs for employees and supervisors. However, the potential risk is there might be a huge amount of cash outflow because those programs can be a lengthy process and those programs are usually expensive. Furthermore, some training courses can be stressful and time-consuming.

To effectively manage and run a successful organization, problem-solving techniques are required to develop among co-workers. When there is a problem, the first thing we do is try to identify the issues. Employees and supervisors should be clear about what the problem is. The next step is to understand everyone's interest. This is the time for active listening to each other to understand and put down the differences. Then, do some brainstorming by list down the possible solutions. Following this, everyone should evaluate the options honestly and think through all the details and implications then select the best option together. After that, agree on contingencies, monitor compliance and create opportunities to evaluate the agreements and the implementation. In this case, the potential risk is that it does take some time because different people might have different views of what the issues are and make it complicated.

After that, to create a conflict management plan, the top management team of Nestle should prepare a guideline that identifies the five basic styles of managing conflicts. Try to plan in-person or online meetings every few weeks or months to discuss projects, issues and the organization. Care about employees' recommendations, understanding their complaints and general thoughts. Unhealthy and negative conflict is when it becomes personal and emotional, then your judgment gets clouded and you may fail to think logically. So, the potential risk is that if the wrong styles have been chosen to fit among co-workers, it would lead to negative results. This is because employees have differing levels of comfort with addressing conflict. Therefore, every style must evaluate to fit between different co-workers and departments.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Through the findings of this study, the following listed recommendations were preferred to apply in Nestle to improve the interpersonal relationship among co-workers:

One of the recommendations that preferred is individuals need to get along well with their co-workers for a positive ambience in Nestle and for healthy interpersonal relationships. Through this co-worker in Nestle will feel comfortable and free of stress during working and it can increase their efficiency when discussion or meeting. After that, create a conflict management plan is one of the most preferred recommendations to apply in Nestle that aim to improve the interpersonal relationship among co-workers. Sometimes you cannot avoid conflict that could happen among co-workers, but you can generate a plan such as self-assessment tools and teaching team members how to avoid the confrontation. Application of Thomas- Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to help co-workers in Nestle to identify conflict resolution style and their personality type, so they can know themselves well and deep. Finally, stay away from nasty politics in Nestle also one of the recommendations to improve the interpersonal relationship among co-workers. Co-workers should not try to harm anyone through physical or mental. Co-workers should prevent the feelings of jealous on the performance of co-workers. The feelings of jealous could hurt and destroy your performance on work or task because it is a negative feeling which would lead you to become depressed in the long-term. The working environment should keep healthy competition among co-workers in Nestle.

## REFERENCES

- 10 Excellent ways to develop interpersonal skills at work. Retrieved 7 October 2019, from <https://www.educba.com/how-to-develop-interpersonal-skills-at-work/>
- Anna Wollny, Ingo Jacobs, Luis Pabel. (2019). Trait Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Satisfaction: The Mediating Role of Dyadic Coping. *The Journal of Psychology* 0:0, pages 1-19.
- Branson, R. (2015). Virgin. Retrieved from Cultivating culture: <https://www.virgin.com/richard-branson/cultivating-culture>
- Conway, J. (2018). statista. Retrieved from Statistics & Facts on Nestle: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1439/nestle/>
- Conway, J. (2018). statista. Retrieved from Total workforce of the Nestle Group worldwide 2008 - 2018: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/255203/total-number-of-nestle-employees-worldwide/>
- Definition of interpersonal relationship. (2019, October 6). Retrieved from <https://www.definitions.net/definition/INTERPERSONAL%20RELATIONSHIP>
- Hardjati S., Febrianita R. (2019). The Power of Interpersonal Communication Skill in Enhancing Service Provision. *Journal of Social Science Research Vol 14* ISSN: 2321-1091.
- How to improve interpersonal relationships in organizations. Retrieved 8 October 2019, from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/improve-interpersonal-relationships-organizations-15297.html>
- Interpersonal relationship. Retrieved 6 October 2019, from <https://psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/interpersonal-relationships/>
- Jehn, K.A., and Shah, P.O. (1997). Interpersonal relationships and task performance; An examination of mediating processes in friendship and acquaintance groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72(4), 775-790
- Katherine Aumer, Anne Cathrine Krebs Bahn, Cortney Janicki, Nicolas Guzman. (2016). Can't Let It Go: Hate in Interpersonal Relationship. *Cambridge University Press*.
- Kleptsova E.Y. & Balabanov A.A. (2016). Development of Humane Interpersonal Relationships. *International Journal of Environment & Science Education Vol. 11, No.4, 2147-2157*.

- Matthew H. (2016). The Relationship Between Digital Technology and The Interpersonal Communication Skills of Generation Y. *Thomas Edison State University*, 1-166.
- McGrath, M. Forbes (2018). Retrieved from World's Largest Food And Beverage Companies 2018: Anheuser- Busch, Nestle And Pepsi Top Three List.
- Mukherjee I (2017). Enhancing Positive Emotions via Positive Interpersonal Communication: An Unexplored Avenue towards Well-Being of Mankind. *J Psychol Clin Psuchiatry* 7(4).
- Nana Herdiana Abdurrahman. (2018). The Effect of Interpersonal Communication Skills and Work Motivation on Performance of Marketing Employee. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, 7 190-195.
- Obakpolo, P. (2015). Improving interpersonal relationship in workplaces. *Journal of Research & Method in Education* 5.6: 115-125.
- Odden, C.M., and Sias, P.M. (1997). Peer Communication Relationships, Psychological Climate, and Gender. *Communication Quarterly*, 45, 153-166.
- Teaching and learning of Social Skills In Schools: Implications to Social Health. (2019, October 6). Retrieved from <http://hrmars.com/admin/pics/369.pdf>
- The Nestle company history (2019).Retrieved from <https://www.nestle.com/aboutus/history/nestle-company-history>
- Tips to improve interpersonal relations at the workplace. Retrieved 7 October 2019, from <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/tips-to-improve-interpersonal-relationship.htm>
- Weaver, R. (1986). Kent. The politics of blame avoidance. *Journal of public policy* 6.4: 371-398.
- Wong D. H-T., Phang C. S., Nurazeen M., Ganthan N.S., Roslina I., Rasimah C.M.Y, Pritheega M. & Nurulhuda F.M.A. (2017). Effect of Social Media on Human Interpersonal Communication: A Review. *Open International Journal of Informatics Vol 5 Iss.2*.