

Global Well-Being

## Managers Guide: Building Strong Connections within Teams

Managers who build strong social connections with and among their team members have more productive, healthy and happy employees, which leads to better teamwork and greater team success. When managers build stronger team relationships over time and encourage collaboration and inclusion, their team members will have higher levels of trust, altruistic behaviors, professional growth and job satisfaction — all of which lead to higher team performance. ([Sources](#))



# 1

## Assess and support emotional intelligence

**Emotional intelligence** is the ability to understand and manage your emotions in positive ways. Having strong emotional intelligence can help with stress and anxiety, work/life balance, prioritizing and professional and personal growth.

### Assess

Start by assessing your own emotional intelligence with this **quiz**.



### Act

**Create a plan** for building stronger connections among your team members. Build emotional intelligence within your team by promoting self-awareness techniques, active listening and positive communication tactics.

# 2

## Build cultural competence

**Cultural competence** is the ability to effectively communicate, understand and interact across cultures. Cultural competence is critical to business success within a global organization like AECOM and enables employees to work effectively and positively within cross-cultural teams.

### Assess

Start by assessing your own cultural competence with this **quiz**.



### Act

The first step in becoming a **culturally competent** leader is to make and build connections with people who come from different backgrounds than your own. Learn about different cultures to gain insight and to help understand the various needs of your team. Encourage and create opportunities for your team to do the same.

# 3

## Foster professional and personal growth

Encouraging a culture of growth means that you help your team identify and use their strengths, while also providing opportunities for them to gain new skills to help them reach their personal and professional goals. If you understand the **personal interests and professional strengths** of your team members, you'll be able to help them bring their best selves to work.

While you don't need to establish close friendships with your team members, taking the time to make a personal connection with them lets them know they are valued and you care about their well-being. Many employees are managing personal responsibilities, in addition to their work responsibilities, which can become overwhelming at times. Recognizing your team members by taking them to lunch or providing opportunities for them to build connections in a social setting will help strengthen their working relationship.

### Explore

Visit **AECOM's Learning and Development Ecosystem** page to understand what leadership and career development tools and programs are available to help support you as a manager.



### Act

You can show your support for your team's professional goals by having regular career development discussions with them, sharing information about **Degreed**, AECOM's new career development program, and sharing well-being resources on **WellBeingAtAECOM.com**. You can take interest and encourage your team members to share their personal goals/interests (e.g., running a 5k in 30 minutes) through **well-being moments** at the beginning/end of meetings.

Schedule a team building activity every three to six months — volunteer for a beach/park cleanup, enjoy happy hour together or partake in a **fun team building game**. By changing your physical environment (getting out of the office), you open yourself up for a deeper connection with your team.

## 4

## Effectively manage conflict

A diverse and inclusive work environment can serve as a strong foundation for personal growth and team performance. Constructive conflict, which is driven by cognitive, cultural and demographic diversity, leads to better decision-making and higher team performance, job satisfaction and employee engagement (see this [Forbes](#) article and this [fact sheet](#)).

### Assess

Start with this [quiz](#) to learn your conflict resolution style or this [quiz](#) to learn your conflict management style.

### Act

If an employee comes to you to discuss an issue they're facing with another team member, **it is important to listen**, be empathetic and help the team members reach an agreement. If managed successfully, your team will grow stronger.

## 5

## Welcome open and honest feedback

Open and honest communication with your team should be bi-directional and is necessary for building trust and morale. Leaders who create opportunities and safe forums for their employees to provide open and honest feedback experience positive **work outcomes** such as higher employee engagement, higher organizational commitment and better collaboration.

### Assess

Start with this [quiz](#) on communications skills.

### Act

Create a culture that promotes open communication, encourages new ideas and respects differences in thought. Meet one-on-one with your employees regularly, ask for and provide feedback, actively listen and reward them for sharing their thoughts — even if it's just a thank you.

Good communication begins with you, and it's even more important if you're working in a virtual work environment. Schedule recurring team meetings where you can provide business updates to your team, share business results and team performance, and celebrate team success.

#### Sources

1. Martin, R., Guillaume, Y., Thomas, G., Lee, A., & Epitropaki, O. (2016). Leader-member exchange (LMX) and performance: A meta-analytic review. *Personnel Psychology*, 69 (1), 67–121. [Read more](#).
2. Ilies, R., Nahrgang, J. D., & Morgeson, F. P. (2007). Leader-member exchange and citizenship behaviors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(1), 269–277. [Read more](#).
3. Kraimer, M. L., Seibert, S. E., & Astrove, S. L. (2016). Consequences of high LMX: Career mobility and success. In T. N. Bauer & B. Erdogan (Eds.), *Oxford library of psychology. The Oxford handbook of leader-member exchange* (p. 241–259). Oxford University Press. [Read more](#).
4. Gerstner, C. R., & Day, D. V. (1997). Meta-analytic review of leader-member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(6), 827–844. [Read more](#).
5. Tummers, L., & Bronkhorst, B. The impact of leader-member exchange (LMX) on work-family interference and work-family facilitation (2014). *Personnel Review*, Vol. 43(4), 573–591. [Available at SSRN](#)