How Leaders Can Build Relationships With New Peers

As a leader, you are a part of at least two teams — the team you lead and your team of peers. Often leaders don't focus enough of their energy and time on one or the other of those teams, to everyone's detriment. Today, I want to talk about how to build relationships with your peer team — especially if you are new, and they aren't.

Dale Carnegie wrote in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (a book worth reading for a far more complete answer to this question), "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you." At work, we may not be trying to "make friends," but we could replace this with "build relationships," and the point would be the same.

If you want to build relationships, focus on the other person, not yourself. Make them and their needs the focus of your attention. While this may seem paradoxical, for far more reasons that I have time to describe here, it is profoundly true.

Specifically, though, if you are new, you might not know how you can help them, or you don't know how to get started. Here is your answer:

Get started.

Talk to people and start asking them questions. Look for ways to better understand their groups and their challenges. Find connections between you and them, their team and yours. Make the conversation and questions about them. Doing this will very likely lead to people interested in sharing, and in building relationships.

Beyond this basic premise, apply what you already know about building relationships. People want to spend time with people they trust, so be trustworthy. People want to be listened to and valued.

Talk less, listen more.

Ask more, assert less.

And let them know that building a strong working relationship is important to you — and they will likely reciprocate.

Hopefully these ideas are helpful, but my biggest piece of advice is don't worry about organizational rank, politics or being cautious. Go do what you already know works.