

Q¹²® ELEMENT: Q05

My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

Gallup's research indicates that caring can be translated into the phrase, "Caring means setting each person up for success."

A productive workplace is one in which people feel safe — safe enough to experiment, to challenge, to share information, to support each other, and in which team members are prepared to give the manager and the organization the "benefit of the doubt." None of this can happen if team members do not feel cared about. Relationships are the glue that holds great workplaces together.

One of the crucial questions for a team leader trying to get the most from his people is whether they form a cohesive, cooperative, self-sacrificing, motivated crew — in short, a tribe. Such attitudes are the essence of the Fifth Element of Great Managing. It is measured by an employee's reaction to the statement, "My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person."

The fact that being a great manager requires a special ability to influence emotions makes many supervisors uncomfortable. American industrialist Henry Ford is reputed to have once remarked, "Why is it that I always get the whole person when what I really want is a pair of hands?" It would be easier if teams could restrict their need for bonding to home, church, and neighborhood, but they can't turn off the reflex that easily. Those who see the "cares about me" statement as more worthy of a discussion on *Oprah!* than in the vernacular of a results-driven manager need a deeper understanding of human motivation.

"Social capital makes an organization, or any cooperative group, more than a collection of individuals intent on achieving their own private purposes," wrote authors Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak. "Social capital bridges the space between people. Its characteristic elements and indicators include high levels of trust, robust personal networks and vibrant communities, shared understandings, and a sense of equitable participation in a joint enterprise all things that draw individuals together into a group. This

kind of connection supports collaboration, commitment, ready access to knowledge and talents, and coherent organizational behavior."

These benefits don't flow unless the members of the business units feel someone takes a personal interest in them, a fact that can come as a rude awakening to some managers. "When I first became a manager, I was 22 years old. I was very focused and I was very result-oriented," one manager said in an interview. "I used to give people tasks and I guess I was very rude about them. I'd say, 'See, I need you to do X-Y-Z,' and I would walk off. I had an older lady on my team in so many words tell me that I was a jerk. We had a decent rapport, so I sat down and I said, 'I want to listen. Why do you think I am a jerk?' And she told me, 'Haven't you ever heard of "Good morning," "How's your family?" or "How did your weekend go?"' That left a lasting impression on me and will for the rest of my life."

This summary is a revised excerpt on this Q¹² element from *12: The Elements of Great Managing*.