



Patch Adams

## Building lasting relationships

Successful people have the ability to develop relationships that last. And, building relationship requires the building of trust. A relationship is two people eliciting responses from each other. Further, the best business relationships, like personal relationships, work when everyone has an investment in making things happen. This article stresses on the fact that the exchange of ideas, information, products and money is central to professional success. An insight...

**Sanjeev Baitmangalkar**

*“Strange is our situation here upon earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine a purpose. From the standpoint of daily life, however, there is one thing we do know: that man is here for the sake of other men.”*

*- Albert Guinon*

**Y**ou may not have heard of Dr T R Sudheendra, professor and surgeon in orthopaedics. At first sight, you may not notice him and he carries no baggage. But, if you get to meet him for five long minutes, you will never forget him. Dr Sudheendra is a highly competent and an outstanding orthopedic surgeon and professor in orthopaedics. As a professor of orthopaedics, he has been preparing many young surgeons of the future, where he holds a unique distinction that each and every student of his, has passed in the first attempt. It means in all his long years of teaching, he has an unblemished record of not having a single failure. His surgical practice too has produced similar results. An enviable achievement, which he plays down with modesty. Yet that is not his greatest contribution to this world. Dr T R Sudheendra has worked on putting the human heart back into the practice of medicine.

Dr Sudheendra stands out for his passion for compassion. Doctors are

now-a-days given to science; they tend to care more for the disease and for its scientific aspects than for the individual patient. Dealing with the suffering of humanity - the doctors see the man unmasked, exposed to all the frailties and weaknesses. It is here that Dr Sudheendra keeps his heart soft and tender to be different from his fellow creatures.

Born as the eldest of six children to an Indian middle class family. His penchant for building good relationships may have come as a part of the family values or from the responsibilities he has had to shoulder in his younger days or because of his association with a Christian missionary institute soon after his graduation. This taught him a few things such as serving people and doing the best you can without expecting anything in return – theory of good karmas. His uncanny ability with people made him the preferred choice as class monitor during his school days, becoming the bridge between the teacher and the taught. When his

grandmother described him as 24 karat gold it summed up his character, attitude and values. A quiet person with tremendous amount of tolerance, patience and a deep sense of understanding, always ready to extend a helping hand and welcoming everyone into the warmth of his heart.

As a linguist, he speaks seven languages including Arabic fluently. He has also taught orthopaedics in the Arabic world for four years. Perhaps, it also helps him to connect with people by speaking in their mother tongue. Dr Sudheendra's ability to show compassion and build relationships can be encapsulated in the way he looked after two terminally ill cancer patients. Oncology was neither his specialisation nor his subject. While he was doing his house-surgeonship, one day he noticed two patients in the wards who were terminally ill with cancer. Perhaps they needed a miracle to come out of this illness. But more than anything they needed someone to hold their hand. "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but when demonstrated; their echoes are truly endless" — Mother Teresa.

From that day on, Dr Sudheendra was their Patch Adams. He was God's angel who held their hand and did everything he could to lighten their burden and reduce their pain and suffering. He donated blood when required, brought them food everyday. In short, he looked after them like family, until they breathed their last. In the argument of competence over compassion, competence is no substitute for compassion.

His compassionate attitude has helped to build lot of good relationships. While talking to his patients, all of them told me they have never been harassed for money. Some have even been fully treated without having to pay. The soft stuff is always harder than the hard stuff. In these days the medical system looks at your money than your needs, but Dr Sudheendra stands out as different and genuine. "When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion" — Dale Carnegie.

I had only met him a couple of times in the past ten years and for someone else's problem. But on that Sunday early morning

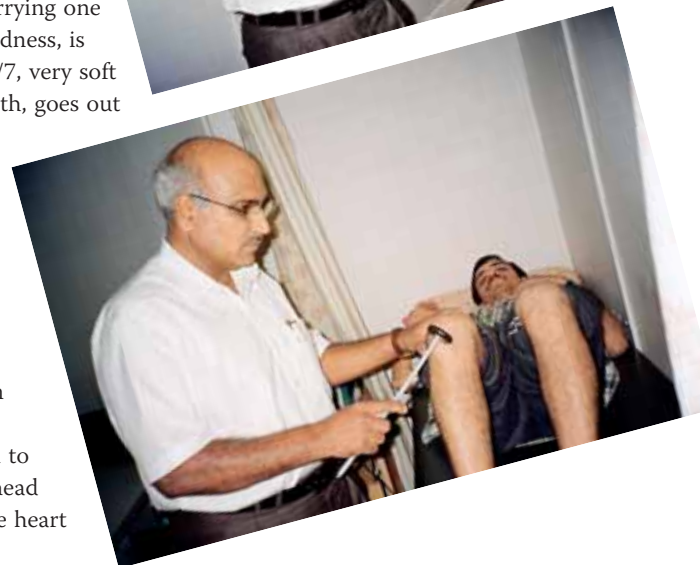
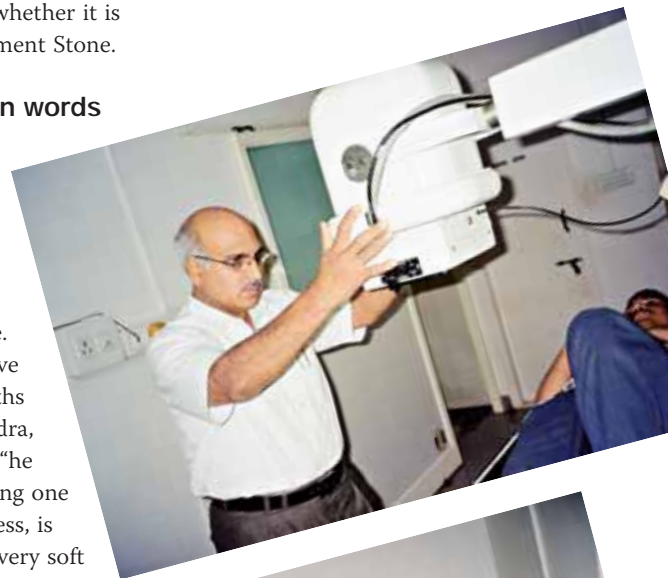
when a motorcyclist crashed into me and as I lay on the road, he was the first person I called for help. On early Sunday morning most doctors have their 'do not disturb' signs hung up. Many do not even answer or return your call. But when I rang, Dr Sudheendra listened and simply said, "I would come there right now and fetch you, but the hospital ambulance has gone for repairs. Is someone there who can bring you to the hospital? I will reach there with you." And it must have taken 10 minutes for my cousins and co-brother to come and pick me up and take me to the hospital. And as we got there, lo and behold, I found Dr Sudheendra waiting at the entrance for me. For the condition I was in, there was no better sight to see. "There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. The little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative", W-E Clement Stone.

### Actions speak louder than words

The ability to work with people and develop relationships is absolutely indispensable to effective leadership. Among the top three traits desired in people is the ability to relate to people. Lending credence to what I have said above are many whose paths have crossed with Dr Sudheendra, who echo my sentiments; that "he listens patiently without hurrying one up, exudes warmth and goodness, is empathetic, is accessible 24/7, very soft spoken and easy to bond with, goes out of the way to help anyone ailing with a problem, helps you adjust with the situation better, not prescription happy, etc and the list goes on."

### Take aways

What can we learn from Dr T R Sudheendra's story? What qualities can we learn to imbibe? I think he has the head that understands people, the heart



that loves people and the hand that helps people. To cultivate and manage a good relationship, a person or a leader needs to develop these three qualities:

### 1) Have a leaders' head – Understand people:

The first quality is the ability to understand how people feel and think. According to Maxwell, all people have these in common:

- They like to feel special, so sincerely compliment them
- They want a better tomorrow, so show them hope
- They desire direction, so navigate for them
- They are selfish, so speak to their needs first
- They get low emotionally, so encourage them
- They want success, so help them win

A leader must be able to treat people as individuals by recognising these truths. A major factor in relational success is the ability to look at each person, understand him and connect with him. "If you deal with every customer in the same way, you will only close on 25 to 30 per cent of your contacts, because you will only close one personality type. But if you learn how to effectively work with all four personality types, you can conceivably close 100 percent of your contacts" — Rod Nichols. The ability to adapt your leadership style or this sensitivity is the soft factor in leadership.

### 2) Have a leaders' heart – Love people:

"The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality; The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor . . . A friend of mine characterised leaders simply like this: 'Leaders do not inflict pain; they bear pain' — Max De Pree. To be a truly effective leader, the kind that people want to follow, you must love people. The Albert Einstein's quote at the beginning of this article says it all.

### 3) Extend a leaders' hand – Help people:

People respect, if you keep their interests in mind. People will love you if you focus on what you can give them rather than what you can take from them. And this will create the foundation for building good relationships. Like Le Roy H Kurtz of General Motors said, "The fields of

industry are strewn with the bones of those organisations whose leadership became infested with dry rot, who believed in taking instead of giving . . . who did not realise that the only assets that could not be replaced easily were the human ones."

### Reflect on it

Ask yourself how are your personal skills? How do you interact with them? Are you rude and abrupt or are you polite? Remember you communicate not with the words you say but with the music you play. Your verbal communication that comes out of your exterior personality is non-consequential, what is, is your tonality and body language and obviously Dr Sudheendra excels there. If you are at work and you get a phone call, how do you react? If you video shoot yourself and watch it along with the caller, will it amaze you or shame you? If your relationship skills are weak, your leadership competence will always be weak.

### Bringing it home

To improve your relationship skills, try these suggestions:

**1) Improve your mind :** If you need to understand people better, perhaps you can find wisdom in books by Dale Carnegie, Les Parrot and some others who have produced great works on this subject. You can spend more time observing people and practice what you have learned by talking to them.

**2) Take the focus off yourself:** Strengthen your heart. If you are not caring enough for people, shift the focus from you to them. Identify and list down how you could add better value to them. Try to practice this on a daily basis. Do not wait for the feeling to help others come to you, go out and meet it.

**3) Repair a hurting relationship:** If you have a hurting relationship with anyone, just call and try connecting. Work by doing what ever you can to rebuild it. You can put that ego in your back pocket for a while and move forward. Own up your responsibility and apologise when necessary. Try to understand that person better, love, help and serve him. **MMT**



Sanjeev Baitmangalkar is the CEO of Stratmann Consulting. He has an expertise in lean manufacturing, BPR & turnarounds, supply chain management, industrial marketing, machine tools and product development. He imparts training in areas of finance and leadership, is working with overseas and Indian clients. He can be contacted at stratmannconsulting@gmail.com