

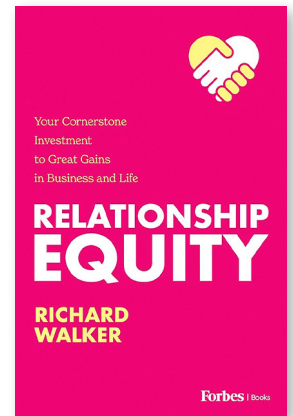


Executive Book Summaries®

Relationship Equity

Your Cornerstone Investment to Great Gains in Business and Life

by **Richard Walker**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

“In our families, our businesses, our communities, our world – we need one another. We are not islands unto ourselves.”

The book *Relationship Equity: Your Cornerstone Investment to Great Gains in Business and Life* takes us on a meaningful journey of realizing why the relationships we build with people are deeply important. It shows us the path toward building meaningful relationships steadily and faithfully.

Through his very own fable of progressing from a small-town bricklayer to the CEO of a successful tech company, author Richard Walker credits the kindness of people as the reason for his success. He says, “If you are a friend who is genuine, you will have genuine friends – and lo and behold – they will want to help you just as you have helped them.”

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- The philosophy of relationship equity.
- How to cultivate a relationship equity mindset.
- How to build enduring relationships in life and business.
- How to make the most out of your opportunities.

Introduction: We're All Just People

"Do you think other people are better than you?" my father asked me. "Of course, they are, Dad!" I said after my team lost the football match. "We lost, didn't we? I mean, you saw the score for yourself, right?" He cut me short, "No, they're not better. And if you start thinking others are better than you, that means you're thinking you're better than others, and you're not. We're all just people, Richard. Sure, there's always going to be some who have better skills, but that doesn't make them better people. Never forget that."

And I never have. Half a century later, I realized those were some of the most profound words that I have ever heard. As I advanced into adulthood, I witnessed the power of Relationship Equity firsthand. At so many turns, I met people who graciously gave me attention, advice, and encouragement. They believed in me and I have done my best to return their investment in our relationship – and with interest.

What fascinates me the most is discovering ways to positively influence the lives of others, as others have done for me. This is not so much of a business book as it is a philosophy book. What I offer here is a game plan not only for good business but also for good living. To be best at both, we must develop reliable and authentic connections with others. That's what engenders growth. That's what promotes prosperity. Only by reaching outward and upward can we move onward. We rise, or we fall, on the quality and strength of our relationships.

Chapter 1: Investing in Humanity

When asked why he scored more goals than everybody each season, Wayne Gretzky, the great ice hockey legend answered, "I don't go to where the puck is. I go to where it's going to be."

I had met a chap who would come to influence me through the years as few others have done. His emphasis consistently was on helping others succeed, and that required more than a set of skills. When we met, I was well on my way, sure, but Bill must have recognized my relative inexperience. Nonetheless, he also recognized something else in me that soon would make him want me as a business partner. He didn't go to where the puck was. He went to where it was going to be. As a result, together we have been successful in building a strong and profitable business.

The bottom line here is the power of relationships. In the business world, as in virtually all human affairs, relationships are of paramount importance. When you show others

that you genuinely care and want to help, they often want to reciprocate. Fostering strong, sacrificial, and respectful relationships mutually benefits everyone; this truth is the foundation of Relationship Equity.

Think of Relationship Equity as an investment. It isn't one that, necessarily, will build your bank account, though it quite often does. Rather, the equity you are building is in people. Whether or not it results in dollars, it always makes good sense to get to know people on an equal footing, not expecting a payback but exploring how you can help one another. And when you're open to that, marvelous things tend to happen.

Chapter 2: The Relationship Equity Mindset

Relationships are not static. They thrive when nurtured, and they shrivel when neglected. Like a master gardener, you must know what needs the most attention, how much, and when.

Relationships require effort. But when Relationship Equity becomes your mindset, when you practice those skills daily until they become reflexes, you can be sure that you will find yourself moving in new circles with opportunities possible at every step.

The Relationship Equity mindset isn't some fancy formula that requires calculations and ruminations. It's about as simple as it gets. It comes down to thinking first about helping others get what they hope to achieve and then letting them help you with what you hope to achieve.

A successful relationship always requires a little give and take. A business relationship can develop into a personal one, and vice versa, and that is all well and good. There should be no barriers between the two, despite the conventional wisdom that suggests otherwise. I have had business relationships develop into lifelong friendships, and I have fostered friendships that led to mutually rewarding business deals.

You must be intentional about creating Relationship Equity and adopting this mindset will be the foundation of your success.

Chapter 3: Foundations of A Philosophy

Opportunities have a way of multiplying once you get in the habit of accepting them. From working as a bricklayer

Caring about people is central to both good business and good living.

to graduating at 27 to landing my first job in the IT field – I could journey from opportunity to opportunity with an incredible set of people guiding me along the path. In fact, the people part is why I still am in the IT field today.

I never tire of the dynamics and complexities of human interactions. After all, our business doesn't have a physical product to sell. What we "sell" is a cadre of smart people with an abundance of tech talent who we have taught to excel and to serve.

A business needs to make money to survive. That is about as fundamental as it gets. Business is foremost about service, whether you are offering a better widget or a wiser way. In one way or another, it is about improving lives. Caring about people is central to both good business and good living. That is the foundation of all success – and Relationship Equity is the cornerstone.

Chapter 4: Links on the Links

Networking is an essential part of building Relationship Equity. A cynic might consider networking to be a calculative use of people for personal gain, but relationships like that would be shallow and devoid of equity with no history of sharing and mutual growth. I'm talking about deeper, lasting relationships that are more than transient and transactional, ones that can enrich your life in ways that are more profound than a big bank account. When you open yourself up to relationships that expand your world, wealth tends to grow organically.

We all have heard the trope that it's who you know, not what you know. Sure, both the who and the what matter immensely, but what makes it all work is how you know. How do you relate to others? How well do you get to know people? Do you regard those you meet as potential friends? And as for what you know, how are you putting it to good use? What you know won't matter if nobody knows you know it. Whose radar are you on? What have you done to put yourself there? Think about that for a moment, and it will make perfect sense.

Chapter 5: Awakening to Oneself

One thing leads to the next might seem like a silly old saying that states the obvious, but it sums up the connectedness of different points in our lives. There is a catch, though. Nothing leads anywhere unless you act on it. If you shrug, your world shrinks. I chose not to shrug.

As young people mature, they presumably become better able to reconcile their values with their behaviors. They go on to pursue productive and authentic lives. Quite often, though, something disrupts that natural growth. It might be cultural or economic demands, family pressures, or simply the voices in their head saying, I can't do that or I'm not smart enough or it's just too late for me. Limiting themselves before they start, they end up toiling for years in jobs and careers that others might believe are appropriate for them and that bring them little satisfaction. They get stuck and can't see a way out.

Aside from your own self-doubt, there are now societal pressures influenced by social media that can have a profound negative impact on the psyche of today's youth. But, like anything else, it is how you respond that is what matters most. We are all in control of how we respond to any source of information. And I have seen firsthand what you can achieve once you recognize your own value and gain the confidence to move forward.

Chapter 6: Breaking Down the Barriers

I have a confession to make: I'm about as technical as a pint of Guinness. I do not fit the stereotype of an "IT guy." It can be a struggle for me to even turn on the computer in the morning. Developing relationships, though, is what comes naturally to me.

The IT world as a whole is weighted more toward the introverted end of the continuum. Our industry needs both types – we need those smart analytical minds, and we also need people who are adept at making connections and zeroing in on the needs and wants of individuals and the marketplace. One part is not possible without the other, and

together they can come up with the best IT solutions.

The IT landscape has changed drastically in recent years. Today, the imbalance between supply and demand is the worst I've ever seen, and it appears that it will not be getting better any time soon unless something major changes. Industry leaders must grow a talent pool large enough to meet that demand. The winners will be the companies that use innovative ways to attract and retain top talent.

Strong relationship skills enhance the chance of success in the world of business. A prime example of this in my own career was during the Great Recession. During this time, I organized golf outings, intending to help laid-off executives connect with new opportunities.

A relationship deficit, however, is far from the only reason that some people with the skillset to succeed do not get into the field and build a strong career. Often, the reason is simply education. Let me explain this to you using what I call the socioeconomic pyramid. The peak of this pyramid represents wealthy families whose children have a high probability of attending a four-year college. At the base of the pyramid are families for whom that expense is out of reach or nearly so. The distribution of ability, however, is arguably the same from the top to the bottom of that pyramid. Wealth produces opportunities, but it does not increase brain power or problem-solving skills.

The implication is clear: our society has a broad base of untapped talent. At York Solutions, we are mining for the diamonds in the rough at the base of the pyramid. The Barriers to Entry (or B2E) program that York has developed provides the training needed to begin lifelong careers in IT. The greatest impact we achieved via this program was found in the discussions we had on imposter syndrome.

In any case, the act of reaching out, of seeking a deeper connection, put them a step ahead of their peers. This is how Relationship Equity works. An act of service, an expression of gratitude, a desire to reciprocate – it often starts that way, small and slow, and then it grows. It works on every level.

Chapter 7: “We’re Doing Good Today, Thanks.”

When I ask people how they’re doing today, most of them tell me they’re “doing good, thanks.” To which I feel like saying, “Well, that’s great! What did you do for somebody today?”

At York Solutions, I preach the philosophy of “doing good

while doing well,” by which I mean that companies that are doing well should use some of their resources to do good for people so that they, too, have a better chance of doing well. And I also believe in “doing well by doing good,” meaning that doing good for others will help us to prosper, too. When we reach out to be helpful to others, they likely will want to return the favor in some way, some time, somehow.

Chapter 8: For Better and For Worse

When I told my wife, Lisa that one of the chapters in this book on Relationship Equity would include some thoughts on how it works in marriage, she smirked: “Oh yeah? Let me write that chapter!” Today, after three decades of marriage, I have learned two indisputable facts: My wife is always right, and I am always wrong. Those are the two rules, so far as I can see, for how to build a strong and enduring marriage.

All kidding aside, though, the principles of Relationship Equity are of supreme importance in a healthy marriage and family life. As in business, I have learned not to jump right in with my solution to every problem. I have found that the best way to help people get to the truth is to just ask questions. That’s how it is in a marriage relationship, too.

As I wake up each day, the first thing I think is, “What can I do to make this day better for my wife?” Even if it’s just making the bed or emptying the dishwasher. And when I do those things, I find that she is all the more eager to find ways to make my day better, too. That’s the spirit that makes any relationship grow.

Conclusion: A Wealth of Possibility

In this book, we have examined the elements of Relationship Equity. In my time, I have observed common denominators among people who turn the corner to success:

They approach life not fretfully but expectantly and when possibilities present themselves, they look for how they can say yes to them, not for excuses to say no. They are willing to work hard to make the most of what comes their way. They think in terms of us, not me, and are eager to build enduring relationships, expecting nothing in return.

Those skilled in Relationship Equity know how to launch a relationship and nurture it properly. They have the confidence to fit in wherever they wish, without feeling like an imposter. Finally, they choose kindness and helpfulness as their modus operandi.



Richard Walker's transformative career path led him to embrace an opportunity as an IT recruiter in St. Louis, MO, which he initially considered temporary. However, he turned it into a thriving career, making impactful contributions to the IT industry for four years. In collaboration with his business partner, Bill Carr, Richard co-founded York Solutions, a leading IT consulting firm that has been revolutionizing businesses since its inception. The company's headquarters in Westchester, IL, serves as an epicenter for innovative IT solutions.

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