



Pepperdine University GSEP Drastically Improves Performance, Communication, and Division Environment by Focusing on Strengthening Internal Relationships



PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology provides advanced degrees and continuing education for students with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, working together to learn, grow, and inspire one another to improve the human condition. As the name suggests, GSEP is constantly working on improving its approaches to solving new challenges and bringing collaborative ideas together.

Industry: Education

her vision was to create an environment where people can grow together, create together, and achieve a sense of meaning and satisfaction at work, serving students and university friends and partners.

In her efforts to create a strong team, Williams brought in Dr. Hairong Gui, an ambitious, highly capable, and competent professional, to lead their finance division as the new Director of Finance. When Gui and Williams began their journey, their goals were to improve performance, processes, and teamwork that can ultimately support the school's growth and provide students and constituents with a solid foundation of service and trust.

"The main challenge for us was that our student accounts were not getting the attention they needed. We realized that our approach to solving this problem created a lot of tension, stress, and divisiveness in our teams," Williams says. "Watching people putting in long hours and not achieving the desired results was troublesome. I felt that

THE CONTEXT

Founded in 1969 and based in Malibu, California, the Graduate School of Education and Psychology has gone through a major transformation under the leadership of Dean Helen Williams. With her dedication and passion, Williams sought to create a culture of connection and safety where colleagues can form strong and secure relationships with each other. The driving factor behind



the whole division had to do it together. I realized that it was more advantageous to ensure that the team needed to be connected for the results to change. Success and failure can never be attributed only to one person. It's a team effort."

THE ENGAGEMENT

Unwittingly at first, the Emotional Connection model from EmC Leaders shaped the way Uribe and her Senior Executive Team guided and cultivated, nurturing the culture at CB&T. While Uribe and Bandeladze had instinctively followed the Process of Emotional Connection in resolving challenges, they decided to integrate the EmC approach into their 15 bank branches across Southern California. Based on their experience, they had already envisioned what they wanted their bank managers to exhibit on a daily basis:

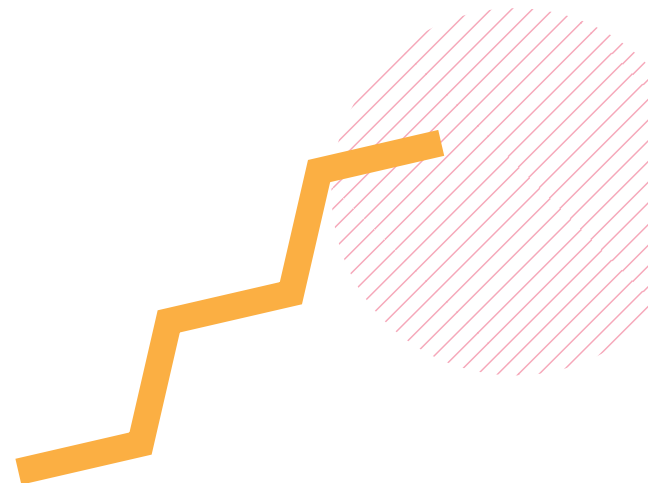
- Avoiding emotion was no longer an option. Recognizing that emotions drive interactions started to de-escalate the negative cycles and restructure conversations into a positive cycle.
- Emotional safety was key to fostering a culture of trust, care, and loyalty. Leading from a place of vulnerability helped navigate through difficult conversations, helping eliminate tension in the workplace. Training in emotional connection increased understanding and skills that continually reinforced the safety and strengthened the bond.
- Learning how to create an emotional connection with each team member and helping them connect together was the main focus. This became the standard expectation for each bank manager.

After identifying key elements for improving performance, the team adopted strategies and practices consistent with the EmC process aimed at restructuring interactions and creating strong relationships. EmC Leaders' experience with dozen of companies has shown that leaders who actively use the EmC process are much more successful in changing and creating a connected team culture throughout their organization.

- **Connected Team.** "By getting emotionally connected the way we did, we knew that we had each other's backs; we didn't have to second guess each other. We understood where everybody was coming from, and

because all of the noise was taken away, we were able to focus on the task at hand and getting the work done," Uribe says. Productivity, efficiency, and accountability significantly improved. Each direct report was motivated to learn the skills of emotional connection from their manager so that they could teach those skills and implement them in their own teams. Uribe noted that once the team felt connected, everyone had laser-like focus and felt united.

- **Relationship Management.** By empowering people with Emotional Connection, team members learned the roadmap to strengthen work and personal relationships. They gained greater job satisfaction, happiness, and further development. Recognizing and harnessing the power of emotions in the workplace allows for a holistic approach to building and nurturing relationships. When everyone speaks the same language, knows how to reconnect, and feels safe to share vulnerabilities, team members start to grow with each other. They created an environment where individuals felt freer to connect with each other directly, resolving issues faster and with better solutions together.
- **Professional Growth.** The breakthroughs with individuals who went through the EmC process and training contributed to creating a safe learning environment to coach and teach others about the negative cycles and emotions, leading to bonding conversations. In addition, the Process promoted and instilled professional dedication, focus, and genuine care in putting relationships first. The roadmap to emotional connection allows individuals to bring their whole selves to work, with their hearts and minds exploring, creating, and achieving unlimited possibilities.





THE RESULTS

As a result of the Emotional Connection training, Uribe and Bandeladze saw immediate results. "The first thing I noticed is that I didn't have to remind my direct reports anymore to follow the work procedures," Bandeladze says. "Previously, I was allocating 20 percent of my time being on calls or meetings with my direct reports figuring out why they did not complete this or that procedure. That doesn't exist anymore."

When people feel connected, they are more focused on catching errors early in the Process and asking for help when in doubt, cutting the time on making errors. The collaborative effort ignited the collective human energy of everyone on the team.

"Everybody got the message of how important the emotional connection is to our work. The reaction from the men and women was equally astounding," Uribe says, "I know that this particular group is far better off and are far better communicators. This is going to spill over to their personal lives, which is wonderful for us because we want balance, we want everyone to have a better life, better communication with people that matter most to them."

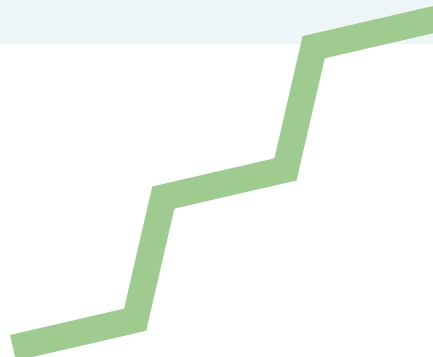
When people can embody the Emotional Connection way of building relationships, they come with a better appreciation, they get to be one hundred percent at work, and their productivity goes way up. "Not only this has caused our trust to go up, but it has caused our bottom line performance to go up as a result of this program," Uribe says, "I am definitely a champion for this program."

"From the beginning, we knew that in order to experience different results and overcome industry challenges, we needed to work differently," Bandeladze says, "So, now I am approaching every meeting from the standpoint that my direct reports really want to be connected with me. This model provided a framework for us to have deeper conversations. So, instead of avoiding them, we are now addressing the underlying issues directly without fear and hesitation. And we can see the results. With a higher degree of accountability, it feels fantastic. We trained our entire staff in Emotional Connection, and I feel like there is no battle that we can't win."



RESULTS AT A GLANCE

- Division efficiency in responding to student accounts with over 200% improvement.
- The team has significantly improved communication, accountability, and motivation.
- The work environment has systematically progressed to become friendlier, safer, and more enjoyable.
- Internal relationships evolved and became stronger, enhancing results and hard deliverables.





– ABOUT –

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

Emotional Connection is centered around the systematic and systemic exploration of emotions present during moments of great stress, uncertainty, and volatility through a proven process that is at once experiential and holistic. The EmC courses give people the skills to transform negative interactions into dialogue for bonding relationships and improved results. With EmC, people can share emotions in an open, honest, and respectful way; individuals start to collaborate better, create safer work environments, and foster cultures of trust and respect. The EmC courses are available in virtual and in-person learning formats.



Transforming organizations through emotional connection

– ABOUT EMC LEADERS –

We offer training programs and professional services in the areas of Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Development, and Conflict Resolution, focusing on creating a culture where people can bring their whole selves to work. With over hundreds of cases under our belt, we create a pathway for people to thrive. Our impactful courses include The Fundamentals of Emotional Connection®, Negative Interactions and Preserving Connections®, Bonding Conversations to Strengthen Connections®, The EmC Master Class for Mastering Emotional Connection®, and Trainer Certification.

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