



The International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association is a not-for-profit trade association open to investor-owned and member-owned fitness, racquet, and athletic facilities. Associate memberships are available to manufacturers or suppliers of products and services of use to IHRSA members.

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# Understanding Our Humanity

Have you ever wondered about the characteristics that make a person uniquely human? The kindness, empathy, intelligence, and contradictions that make them tick? And how we can all be so similar, yet so different? Does it mystify you sometimes?



**Bill McBride**  
 IHRSA Chairperson

I know those are deep thoughts, but our ability to sell our products and serve our members' needs depends largely on how well we understand and can build relationships with others. Their successes and failures are so related to their "humanity"—the set of attributes that make people individual.

I'm not talking about the inability to "get" why someone, for example, collects insects instead of being a movie buff. What I am talking about are those instances when you sense such fundamental differences in someone that you simply *can't* relate to their paradigm of life.

Different as we all may be, we need each other to survive, thrive, and add meaning to our lives—and much of this depends on our ability to understand one another.

Fortunately, throughout my life and what's now an extensive career, I've been fortunate to have had many opportunities to observe family, friends, colleagues, advisors, employees, and members, and to study how they perceive their own worlds and realities.

So I have an idea of what's required to build relationships with others. For instance:

- Common goals and values;
- Trust that both people operate with integrity in the relationship;
- Open, honest, nonjudgmental communication;
- A periodic reality-check to make sure your world isn't "The World."

That said, what can you do if you have an employee or a member whom you just don't "get"?

The late Stephen Covey offered a great solution. In one of my favorite books of all time, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, he suggested a great principle to live by: "Seek first to understand, *then* be understood."

If all of us followed this simple advice, the world would be a much happier place. And we'd all do a much better job of satisfying our loved ones—and our customers.

So, let's all go hug someone either literally or figuratively ... and make a point of listening to *them* before we tell them *our* story.

That will create a connection, and then paradoxically, *we'll* feel better understood. —

— Bill McBride, [Bill.McBride@ClubOne.com](mailto:Bill.McBride@ClubOne.com)