



Advice on friendship with co-workers

Making friends with your co-workers can enhance your overall work experience, and it can also improve your life outside of the office.

It is not uncommon to develop friendly relationships with the people that you work with. After all, if you work a full-time office job, you probably see these people as much if not more than you see your own family on most days! However, you have to make sure that you don't jeopardize your job by becoming out-of-the-office friends with your colleagues. On the other hand, you should also look at your workplace as an environment that could be the breeding ground for meaningful new friendships that could make your work experience far more enjoyable.

Even if you do not make lasting connections with your co-workers, you should at least be friendly so that you can be productive if you have to tackle group assignments or presentations together. Group assignments are very common, so you have to sharpen your people skills if you want to thrive. You may be an expert in your field, but if you cannot communicate effectively with your colleagues, then your career could be drastically impeded in comparison to someone with great people skills and comparable expertise.

By the way, you have to communicate effectively with everyone - regardless of your status at work.

If you are the boss, you have to be just as personable to your clerical workers and secretaries as you are with your vice president. You should never try to make yourself out to be superior to your co-workers, because nobody wants to become friends with an egotistical snob. On the same hand, even if you are low on the totem pole, you should not be afraid to be friendly towards the "big wigs." In fact, if you can gain the respect of the higher-ups on a personal level, you will be more likely to get their attention on a business level. If you are shy and nervous around your bosses, then you are likely to go unnoticed and underappreciated. You're all people - there is no reason why you should feel inferior to someone simply because they have a flashier job title than you currently have. Making connections and gaining respect from your co-workers can truly further your career.

Just remember: even if you are pals with your co-workers, your focus at work has to be getting your jobs done, not socializing about your personal lives. If you spend more time around the water cooler than around the board room table, then your friendships could be an impediment to your career growth. You do not want to develop a reputation for being a slacker - all talk, no action. Also, if you have close friends at work, you could alienate your other co-workers who you are not personally affiliated with. You don't want other



co-workers or new employees to feel that they would have to somehow penetrate your fraternity-like club to become a member of the office. Never ever allow a personal dispute to enter the office, either. You should always be welcoming and open to new employees who come into your office, and you should be able to adjust to the range of personality types that you will likely encounter. If you want to make friends with "the new guy" (or gal), introduce yourself and offer your assistance should they need it. If you often go out to lunch with a group of co-workers, invite the new employee to come along.

Gossip is something that goes on in virtually every workplace. Unfortunately, it can be detrimental to work friendships. Do your best to avoid gossiping about your fellow employees. While it may seem like a good way to get "in" with other co-workers, it often leads to getting yourself "on the outs" with others. Would you want to work with someone who insulted you? It is unprofessional, and moreover, it is unkind. If you have a problem with one of your co-workers, you should privately bring it to his or her attention. If you make a point to resolve any conflicts as they arise, your co-workers will respect that about you. Also, people want friends who are not afraid to be honest and direct, and that is exactly how you should handle work conflicts. You should also be approachable and understanding, admirable qualities for employees and friends.

Your workplace is likely to be filled with a variety of different people, and many of them may be people that you never would have envisioned developing friendships with. However, you should try to get to know your co-workers because you might be surprised to find out that you have the potential to develop a lasting friendship. At the least, you should be acquaintances with the people that you work with. The more comfortable you are with your co-workers, the more productive a team you will be.