

29. Is it Considered “Professional” to Have Friends in the Workplace?

JUST THE FACTS: Working with friends can make work lots of fun. Sometimes, though, it may not always be the best situation. The purpose of this activity is to get participants to discuss the benefits and potential drawbacks to working on a job alongside friends.



Time

15 minutes



Materials

- Activity 29 - one for each person or each group.
- Optional: White board/flip chart and markers.



Directions

Ask the group to discuss (or list) some of the pros and cons for working (on a job) with friends. Divide the larger group into groups of three. Hand each group the “Avoid the Clique” scenarios. Discuss/define “clique” if necessary (a small group of people, with shared interests or other features in common, who spend time together and do not readily allow others to join them).

Each group should read together and discuss Scenario #1. With the larger group, discuss what the lifeguards’ supervisor meant by “paying close attention to their jobs?” If you were the supervisor, what specific instructions would you give?

Next, the small groups should read together and discuss Scenario #2. Each group should come up with possible solutions for each of the four questions for consideration - and be prepared to discuss with the larger group.



Conclusion

Come back together as a group to discuss the possible solutions. These may include, but need not be limited to:

1. Too much socializing at work may result in poor production.
2. Co-workers may feel alienated by the clique. They may be suspicious or jealous that they’re not included in the group.
3. The three can maintain their friendship outside of work hours.
4. It’s important to like people at work. It makes the job more enjoyable.

Use this opportunity to discuss “cliques” in general - and the problems that might arise (in different situations) because of them. Think about how cliques may be perceived by others. Ask if anyone has ever had the experience of being part of a clique or an outsider to a clique. If comfortable, ask each to share a story explaining what it felt like to be in either position.



Journaling Activity

What would be the benefits of working at a job with your best friend? What would be the drawbacks? Would you want to work at a job with your best friend? Why or why not?



Extension Activity

Participants can create a list of tips for:

1. How to manage friends in the workplace.
2. How to develop friendships on the job.
3. What to do when your workplace friend turns into a “frenemy.”

Activity 29. Avoiding the Clique

SCENARIO #1:

LaToya, Rosa, and Day were great friends. All three received their lifeguard certification together and were very excited to be working at the same community pool during the summer. The pool's supervisor knew the three girls were all close friends - and that this would be their first paid job. He wanted to be sure they recognized how fortunate they were to be able to work alongside their friends, but also needed to stress the importance of not letting their close friendship get in the way of doing their jobs.

If you were the supervisor, what specific instructions would you give to the girls?

SCENARIO #2:

Trent, Ben, and Antonio all started working at a local home improvement store at the same time. They were in the same orientation group and liked each other immediately. Trent and Ben work in the customer service department and Antonio works in accounting. The three usually go out after work on Friday night, text each other during the day, and try to eat lunch together several times a week (when they can). Sometimes they even hang out on the weekends. While Trent, Ben, and Antonio are lucky to have found such good friends at work, some of their co-workers are not as pleased about their close friendship.

Questions for Consideration

1. What is the danger of becoming too friendly with co-workers or socializing with them too much?
2. What objections might other co-workers have to this three-person clique? Why might some of these co-workers not be pleased?
3. How can the three maintain their friendship without damaging their relationships with their co-workers?
4. Why is it important to have friends at work?

