



Getting Along in the Office: Being Friends with Coworkers and Employees

By Ruth Haag

You probably spend as many hours at work as you do awake at home. Thus, you spend as much time with your coworkers as you do with your family.



As such, it's nice to be able to tell people at work important things that are going on at home. Sometimes, for example, it's nice to gain the insight of a coworker about a personal problem. As a result, though, it's sometimes

hard to determine where to draw the line with business friendships. Should you be sharing all kinds of intimate details about your home life, or should you keep totally quiet about what goes on away from work?

Sharing Too Much Can Make Others Think Less of You

One of my first supervisors had some problems with her husband. She began to come to work late. Then she would sit and tell her assistant about all of her problems. As time went on, she did no work, and neither did her assistant. When she decided to move out on her husband, her assistant took the day off and helped. From that point forward, however, her assistant no longer respected her, and no longer worked very hard.

When you are at work, you would like to be judged by the quality of the work that you do. If you are a wonderful worker but share with everyone that you cannot control your home life, they will include that in their estimation of you.

The Main Goal of Work

At home with your family and friends, your main goal may be to socialize. The main reason that people go to work, though, is to work, and some of us sometimes forget that.

How Much Should You Share?

Some people believe that others are keenly interested in all of their problems. In fact, while others might show concern, they most likely don't really want to be totally involved.

Ultimately, keeping some distance between your work life and your home life is a good thing. Here is a list of things to keep to yourself:

- Details of an illness
- Details of your arguments with your spouse
- Details of your financial problems
- Details of your vacation
- For women, details of their monthly cycles
- Details of romantic conquests
- Involvement with what your child is selling from school

Here is a list of things you can share:

- That you were sick and are now well
- That you are buying a new house
- That you are going on vacation
- That you are having problems at home (but not what those problems are)



Supervisors Should Not Socialize with Their Employees

Imagine a situation in which a supervisor and several employees have a weekly poker game. Imagine that it then becomes apparent that one of the employees in the poker group is not working effectively and should be fired. The supervisor has a very tricky problem. If she fires the employee, the poker group might fall apart. On the other hand, if she keeps the employee in order to salvage the game, she will have to do the employee's work to ensure that it gets done. Bottom line: Supervisors should not socialize with their employees.

About the Author

Ruth Haag helps managers and employees understand the dynamics of the work environment, and how to function



Career Tips

smoothly within it. She is the President/CEO of Haag Environmental Company. She has written a four-book business series: *Taming Your Inner Supervisor*, *Day-to-Day Supervising*, *Hiring and Firing*, and *Why Projects Fail*. Her

enjoyable, easy-to-read books provide a look at life the way it is, rather than the way that you might think it should be. Visit her online at www.RuthHaag.com.

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