

DO FRIENDSHIPS WORK AT WORK?

Many people around the world spend a lot of time at work. In fact, they spend more time with co-workers than with friends and family. With all the time we spend at our jobs, does it make a difference to us or to our employers if we become friends with our co-workers?

Research shows that employees are 50 percent happier with their jobs when they have friends at work. And for that reason, they're more likely to work harder and be loyal to their companies. A recent article in the *Harvard Business Review* highlights the importance of friendships in the workplace. According to the article, "Friendships at Work," these friendships help to create "a common sense of purpose and the mentality that we are in it together."

Many companies are starting to see the value of friendships in the workplace and have thought of some interesting ways to help build these friendships. For example, Zappos, the online shoe company, has a very special way to make sure its employees think about friendship. Every time employees log on to their computers, they see a picture of another employee. Then they are asked some questions. *How well do you know this person? Do you just say hello? Do you spend time together after work? Are you really good friends?* In

this way, Zappos asks employees to think about the other people in the office. "My hope," says Zappos owner Tony Hsieh, "is that we can have more employees who plan to be close friends." The company also encourages everything from cookouts to bowling parties. They believe that people who know each other better will work together better.

Other companies also work hard to help their employees make friends. Google is famous for encouraging friendships at work. The company has game rooms, a rock climbing wall, a gym, and a swimming pool. They even have restaurants with free food so that employees can spend time together. Employee Camille James moved from Tokyo to California to work for Google. She belongs to a bowling team and a salsa dance group at the company. She says that they help "break down the walls" that can happen in a large organization.

Research shows that people stay longer at companies and are better employees when they have friends at work. So, when you're looking for your next job, look for a company that encourages people to have friends at work. You will probably like your job more, and you'll be a better employee!

