

What It Means to Have a Best Friend at Work

Are Friendships Really Necessary at Work?

You may hear this question when coaching people about workplace relationships or asking them about their best friend at work. They may have heard stories about employees fraternizing too much on the job or think close relationships at work are messy. But Gallup's research shows that having a best friend at work is a strong predictor of whether someone is engaged in their job.

The best predictor of higher wellbeing and engagement at work is not what people are doing — it's whom they are with.

Without a best friend at work, the chances of being engaged in your job are one in 12.

What People Look for in Workplace Friendships

When Gallup asked respondents what it means to have a best friend at work, their answers revealed something simple yet profound: Trust is the common denominator of meaningful workplace relationships. But trust can look, feel and develop differently based on how people are wired. From our analysis, four main themes emerged:

- 1 Trust**
Trust is the single most common factor in how people define what it means to have a best friend at work. But trust doesn't always look the same. Some seek out emotional connection. Others are drawn to intellectual partnership, shared wins or pragmatic support.
- 2 Personal Connection**
For some, the role of a best friend at work transcends the office. These relationships blend personal and professional life and endure beyond the workplace. Friends at work become companions on both personal and professional journeys — celebrating milestones, sharing challenges and socializing outside of work.
- 3 Shared Experience**
Others describe a friend at work as someone who “gets” the unique challenges, stressors and context of their professional environment, often because they live it too. This shared understanding allows for a kind of support and validation that is difficult to find outside the workplace.
- 4 Mutual Investment and Collaboration**
To some, a friend at work is marked by hands-on help, motivation and professional synergy. They describe their best friends at work as reliable collaborators who actively contribute to both daily success and long-term growth.