

FRATERNIZATION

You hired others to do a job! That means you hired that “someone” for their competence, logical problem-solving abilities, and progressive decisions. However, some employees have difficulty meeting job expectations without leaning on others for support or completion of their job assignment or job description.

Fraternization is when employees establish a personal relationship with other employees that curtail their work expectations. This behavior is contra-indicated with the expectations of their work assignment and job description. The goal of a leader is to guide ineffective working relationships into a productive work outcome. Therefore, if a leader interacts and interrupts fraternizing employees to redirect negative work conversations and behaviors into positive work behaviors, the emphasis becomes clear that meeting work expectations are the reason for employment.

Employees are usually “self-actualized” through their monetary income and validation of their worth by others. It can be difficult for some employees to stay fully focused on their work assignments while seeking approval and promoting their feelings of self-worth. Fraternization often becomes the employee’s persistent attempt to validate their self-worth. Ideally, the employee’s self-worth validation comes from the leader. Therefore, leaders help employees toward their ultimate self-actualization without the need for excessive fraternization with other employees. Assisting employees, as a leader, to be self-actualized and confident increases positive, productive work outcomes and reduces the need for unnecessary and distracting fraternization by employees.

The consequences for employees to share personal information are not all bad. Sharing commonalities may be good if you are trying to establish a close working relationship with another person. However, personal sharing (fraternization) that curtails work expectations is time-consuming and distracting for getting the job done, and such behavior requires some restraint.

The problems of excessive personal sharing by leaders with employees can lead to employee attempts of manipulation, blackmail, or misrepresentation of the leader’s shared comments to others in an untoward manner. As a leader, consider carefully sharing your personal information with employees. The question for you, as a leader, might be: “How could this personal/private information I intend or have shared be misconstrued, misused, or how could it be used against me as a leader?” If this concern appears paranoid, so be it for your good! Believe it or not—all of your cohorts and subordinates DO NOT have your best interest, as a leader, in mind!

Being close to employees at unexpected moments will tell you if they are on task. Your presence as a leader at an unexpected time to watch job performance is called “Beneficial Uncertainty.” In other words, employees never know when you, as the leader, will be present or plan to be present. If you notice a fraternizing behavior that deviates from an employee’s expected work performance, ask the employee a specific open-ended question (that cannot be answered by “yes” or “no”) about the job they are hired to do. Or, state your observation of fraternization without drawing judgment. It will usually bring an end to fraternizing behaviors(s). Your recognition of fraternizing and their response will often refocus their attention on their job assignment.

Open-ended question examples---(requires a lengthy response):

1. Sally, tell me how Mr. Dobbs is helping you to succeed?
2. Joe, why did you decide to move this product to the other side of the store?

Closed-ended questions example—(requires a short “yes” or “no” response)

1. Sally, is Mr. Dobbs helping you to succeed?
2. Joe, do you want to move this product to the other side of the store?

Learn leadership communication techniques to control excessive and disruptive work fraternization. Use unexpected “Beneficial Uncertainty” to curtail excessive fraternization that interrupts productive work expectations.

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