

You Need to Be Connected with Others at Work

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Early in my career I used to work directly with attorneys who had lost their jobs or were having extreme difficulty finding their first job. If certain people were persistent enough, and I saw they had real potential, I would generally invite them into my office and offer them work for some time to keep them going.

I was not offering them work because they needed the money—most had enough money to survive. Instead, I would offer them work because I knew they needed to be around people in order to get through what they were going through. They needed to feel connected to others around them.

More than money or prestige, the most important component of work is the quality of connection we get with others through it.

Someone who is confused and let down by the work world will undergo a complete change once they are able to be part of a work environment and start feeling connected with others. For most people, nothing is worse than feeling and being alone—and not having a group. Everyone needs a group to belong to.

Losing a job is among the most difficult things that can happen to anyone; however, I do not believe it is the financial impact of losing the job or not being employed that is most painful for people. Instead, the biggest pain comes from the lack of connection the person experiences to those around them. Not being allowed to participate in the activities of the group can be extremely painful.

One of my favorite movies is [About Schmidt](#) with Jack Nicholson. The movie is about a man who retires from his job and struggles for connection with others. He sponsors a young boy, Ndugu, a six-year-old Tanzanian boy. He writes the boy letters and much of the story takes the form of his letters to Ndugu. When his wife dies, Schmidt decides to go on the road in a thirty-five-foot Winnebago. He feels extremely alone and struggles to find a connection with the world and people around him. He struggles with rage, depression, and all sorts of emotions that the viewer is led to believe he was not facing before his retirement and the death of his wife.

Ultimately, the movie shows that Schmidt never was connected to others and never realized he was lonely when he was busy going into the office each day. After a long career, he suddenly realizes he had security in his job as an actuary but was not really valued by others and never really had a connection. Without his job and wife, he realizes how important connection with others is and the fact that he no longer has it.

A few years ago, I was spending a lot of time at work. I had all sorts of people doing various jobs in the office, and frankly, there were people doing [jobs](#) that did not need to be done. It is bad management when you have more people than you need—but as a young manager I did not understand it at the time. I was eager to hire people and put them to work—even people I did not need. I was seeking connection.

One day, my ex-wife said something to me I will never forget:

“You have so many people working there, you like hanging out with all those people. You do not need most of them—you just enjoy the company.”

At the time, a part of me instinctively knew that she was 100% right. I was running a business that could be much more profitable if it had fewer people—but I enjoyed having a lot of people around. It was as if I had made my office into a social arena.

This was during the “dot-com” era, and I made the office a great social place to work. We had fridges filled with soda and beer. We had a Starbucks coffee machine before Starbucks was popular. Dart boards, pool tables, Ping-Pong tables, and foosball tables were scattered throughout the office.

Going to work was a ton of fun and I enjoyed it a great deal. Very often, the whole company went out together after work. As hard as it is to believe, people often worked on Sundays because it was fun just hanging out in the office. Connection, friendships, and so forth were highly valued.

Work had been turned into a place of connection and fun. There was very little that might be considered “impersonal” and “professional” about the office. Instead, people were able to connect with others around them. Thinking back on these times, the sense of connection I and everyone else got at work was very enjoyable and made work a great place. Life is more enjoyable when we are connected to others.

Something very interesting about people who achieve the most success in their [careers](#) is that they are often the most alone. They are focused on being extremely successful and this success serves to separate them from others. Instead of making them more liked, or more connected, they generally lose a sense of connection with those around them because they are so “special.” People treat them differently, isolate them, and only connect to them on a superficial level—where they may be trying to get something from them. This is not connection and people who become extremely successful often know this.

The cast of famous people who lacked a connection with others is legendary. One example is Michael Jackson, who ended up spending most of his time with young children. He felt these were the only people he could connect with. When someone feels isolated and disconnected, all sorts of strange things can happen.

People seek connection in innumerable ways and they really need it. When people do not feel connected to others, they may join radical organizations, gangs, or something similar, to get that feeling of connection. Most people do not get up one day and think that they want to be part of a white supremacist organization, for example. They end up joining the organization and adopting its beliefs because the members of the group accept them and provide them a sense of connection.

People will go to great lengths to be connected with others. Some gangs have used rituals such as the “blood in” that require the killing of another person (sometimes a complete stranger) in order to complete the initiation and be accepted as part of the group.

The need people have to be connected with others is extremely deep, though. We have religions, churches, community groups, schools, sports teams, and more. Friendships and sex are about connection. Most of our jobs are, of course, about connection. If you look around, the odds are very good you will see the many ways you are trying to connect with others in your life and how much you need this connection.

To be successful—and happy in your career—it is important that you work with those you feel you can connect with. Many people believe a key to success is being different and unique. To some extent it is good to be different and unique; however, if you are too different and unique, you will never be connected to others as much as you could be otherwise. Being different separates you from other people.

Because the need to be connected with people is so important, you should understand that one of the main needs most people have from work is to connect with others. Perhaps it is on the phone, in person, or otherwise, but we all require connection. You need to ensure you have this connection with others in your work because everyone needs it and requires it.

Read More About the Importance of Being Connected with People:

- [Why You Should Never Miss a Company Holiday Party or Invitation to Your Boss's Home](#)
- [Relationships, Commodities and Making Connections](#)
- [Take Small Actions and Meet Others](#)
- [The Importance of Fitting In](#)
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