Who's your favorite person at work?

The one that you talk with the most, maybe spend your most lunches with?

You might even text or spend time with each other outside of work.

What about your least favorite person at work? The one that you try to avoid, you just don't really like being around them very much.

What's the difference between these two people?

What's the difference between these relationships?

When it comes to trying to understand relationships- and good luck with that- we tend to externalize.

We say, *I get along with this person because they are a good person. They're funny, nice...* or *I don't get along with this person because they are boring, mean...*

Whatever.

But the truth is all of us have positive and negative qualities and there's just some people we naturally mesh with. It has more to do with that connection than it really does whether that person is objectively a good or bad person.

When it comes to being a leader, you don't have the luxury to pick and choose who you want to build relationships with. It is your responsibility to build relationships with every single person on your team.

You are a human being and some of those relationships will come more easily to you and some will really test you. But as best you can you have to show no signs of favoritism and no signs of disliking people.

If you do, it will really undermine your credibility as a leader.

You really have to do your best not really to fake it but to authentically build relationships with every single person on your team.

It matters because relationships are at the core of everything, and having positive relationships at work increases collaboration, morale, and our staff retention, which is what we're always striving for.

77% of staff say that these work relationships are the main factor in how engaged they are at work and how bought in they are. These work relationships really matter.

There's so many different relationship levels- you and your team, you and your colleagues, you and your boss, you and your clients, you and your board, your team

members...There are so many different relationships.

We'll focus today on the two in blue, which is your relationship with your team members and your team members' relationships among themselves.Most of the principles we'll talk about really you can use in any level of relationship we're talking about.

When it comes to you and your team you are in a unique position as the team leader, so you have to recognize that there is that natural hierarchy there.

When it comes to building relationships with each and every team member, there's a balance as with so many things. One of the balances is between treating your staff the same in terms of fairness, but also treating them differently based on who they are as individuals.

Like with any relationship, it's going to look different based on the two people within it.

How can you strike that balance?

As the leader, it's on you to adjust to them- what are their needs and preferences and communication styles and work styles and how can you adjust to them to best support them?

Also, it's a good idea to get to know your staff as people but also strive to know more than one thing about them.

I'm in this weekly group that I love and the host is great. But he kind of knows one thing about every person in the group, so every time you show up to the group, he'll ask you about that one thing. For me, it's the Patriots which I'm very happy to talk about but it's gotten to a point where I'm like, *can we talk about something else? There's more than the Patriots, right?*

It's good to learn that one tidbit, but don't constantly go back to that one tidbit. As a leader, it's your role to help build relationships among your team members.

Naturally, as adults, people are going to gravitate to who they gravitate toward. There are always cliques at work, and that's just going to happen- who eats lunch together and who sits by each other and all that. You don't have so much control over that. You do have control over how you are intentionally creating team camaraderie and building team morale.

Team building is really important to help build up those relationships among your team members. The research shows that when people know each other better, they work together better.

When I say 'team building' a lot of people immediately go to some team building activity where they're given toothpicks and marshmallows and have to build a bridge.

That is a type of team building activity and there's a time and a place for it, but that's just one small piece of what team building is.

Think about ways you are constantly creating opportunities for your team to work together and get to know each other, activities outside of those traditional team building activities. Things like doing community service or taking a field trip one day or all going to the same training or celebrating some success.

There are lots of different things you can do and do them together as a team. Make sure you're creating ways for team members to collaborate and break up what those teams look like. Don't always put the same people working together. Really shift it, so people have opportunities to work with everybody.

It's great for you as a leader to be supporting and celebrating your team, but how can you empower them to do that for each other?

It's really meaningful when they can start to self-regulate that so instead of everybody coming to you every time they have a question or a problem, can they start to get to know who to go to on the team to help them with that problem or situation?

What kind of system or process can you create where other team members have the chance to shout out other team members and really build up and support each other?

As your team gets to know each others' strengths, can you set up trainings where your staff is constantly training each other on how to do things? You can create all these wonderful planned opportunities and sometimes it's nice just to create space for staff to chat and get to know each other.

At one of the places I worked, we had a lunch get together. People would brown bag it, you know- you just can't buy pizza every week for everybody- but you would just say, 'whoever wants to join for lunch, this is where we're going to be.

People would bring their lunch and it's just really informal that I had nothing to do with it as the leader. They planned it themselves and I gave them that space to be a part of it. I didn't infiltrate that space, but allowed for things like that where they can get to know each other in a more natural way.

As always involve your team. Some of the best ideas are going to come directly from your team. Ask them ways that they would love to get to know each other better. As much as they can self-regulate what's going on among team members, allow for that to happen. Take a step back. See if they can't figure it out for themselves, but always be in earshot in case a situation does arise.

If something needs to be addressed that cannot be self-regulated, make sure you're stepping in to address it.

Keep in mind that work relationships, like personal ones are complicated and they take

work and time and intention to build and grow. Don't rush it and don't force it. Recognize that it's going to take time, and also that healthy relationships involve conflict. It's a sign that people are willing to be honest and open with each other and work through that conflict.

If there's no conflict at all, then you might consider that people aren't comfortable really being fully open and honest with each other.

Now if there's nothing but conflict that's a whole different conversation.

Understand that relationships are mutual so when it comes to you as a team leader, then you need to take on that role as a leader and probably put in more of the work then you would with colleagues where it is more of a mutual arrangement.

Remember that relationships are not perfect. There's always going to be something you wish were different or kind of annoys you or you would change if you could but that's how relationships are. They're never going to be perfect, but they can still be strong and great.

Some will take more work than others. Some people you're going to naturally gravitate to.

As a leader, be conscious of that and make sure you're developing relationships with each and every person on your team.

So, the most important question for you is, how can you make relationships the foundation of your work as a leader?