

## IDENTIFYING AND MEETING YOUR TEAM'S NEEDS By Rick Boxx

Stephen Phelan, a top executive with a major mortgage corporation, was speaking at a conference about his company's approach to caring for their team members. After exploring the needs of their teammates, the company concluded everyone had three common needs within the workplace. He said everyone needs: 1) friends at work, 2) friends during a crisis, and 3) purpose in their work.

Starting with the first need, various studies have shown that very few people have multiple genuine friends. (Social media "friends" do not count.) The best opportunity for developing friendships is often found in our workplaces. Recognizing this, Phelan's company established a unique mentoring program to encourage employees to establish and cultivate friendships at work.

What does this kind of friendship look like – beyond casual acquaintances or the necessary associations that develop as members of a workplace team? The Bible's Old Testament gives this helpful insight: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). Clearly, this requires more than simply being neighbors in the next office or cubicle.

Speaking about the second need – having friends during a crisis – Phelan observed that employers have an ideal opportunity to demonstrate they are friends who care when employees are going through family, financial, or medical crises. This is when their words can move into action.

A friend of mine had an employee in Mexico who was kidnapped by a drug cartel. This obviously was a crisis in many ways. My friend's team found ways to support the employee's family and also worked closely with government and law enforcement authorities to bring their employee home safely.

Another Bible verse that applies in these kinds of circumstances teaches, "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). Employers should look for proactive approaches to being a close friend to employees during crises of many kinds.

The third need Phelan cited – exploring ways for helping each employee to find purpose in their work – brings a different perspective. Years ago, I was teaching at a conference on how to find purpose in work when a nursing home employee approached me. She had previously been homeless, so being able to provide for her most basic physical needs – housing, food, and clothing – was her priority.

Understandably, she had viewed her work simply as a means for earning a paycheck. However, learning that work could have purpose beyond earning a wage was a revolutionary

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idea for her. When this woman discovered God's greater purpose for her work, she began praying and caring for her patients in a deeper way, finding even greater meaning for her daily responsibilities.

To me, this was an excellent example of what Romans 8:28 in the New Testament teaches, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose." This woman's experiences as a homeless person equipped her with unique understanding and compassion, inspiring her to become someone who could see value in her work in a different way. When we can help employees live out their purpose, we are not only meeting a deeply felt need, but also developing them into more loyal team members.

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### Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. How would you define what is a genuine friend? How many of these friends do you have personally?
2. What about friendships you have at your workplace? Are they superficial work relationships, or would you consider them to be genuine friendships that transcend work responsibilities? Explain your answer.
3. Does your company demonstrate sincere caring and concern for its employees beyond their daily work schedules? If not, what do you think would be the impact of focusing on staff needs, especially during times of crisis?
4. Have you found a sense of purpose in your work? Why and how do you think this can make a difference in someone's attitude and approach to their work?

### Challenge For This Week

During this next week, be aware of the people around you. Is there anyone who might need a friend, someone who has genuine concern for them? If you find such an individual, consider and pray about how you might extend friendship and expose them to the love of Jesus Christ. What about yourself: Who can you name that are genuine friends, people you know beyond working associations? Someone you can count on when needed – and they know they can count on you. Sometimes it requires being a friend to make a friend.

#### NOTE:

For more about what the Bible says, consider the following passages:  
Proverbs 27:10; Matthew 7:12; John 15:13-17; Colossians 3:17, 23-24; Ephesians 6:7-8