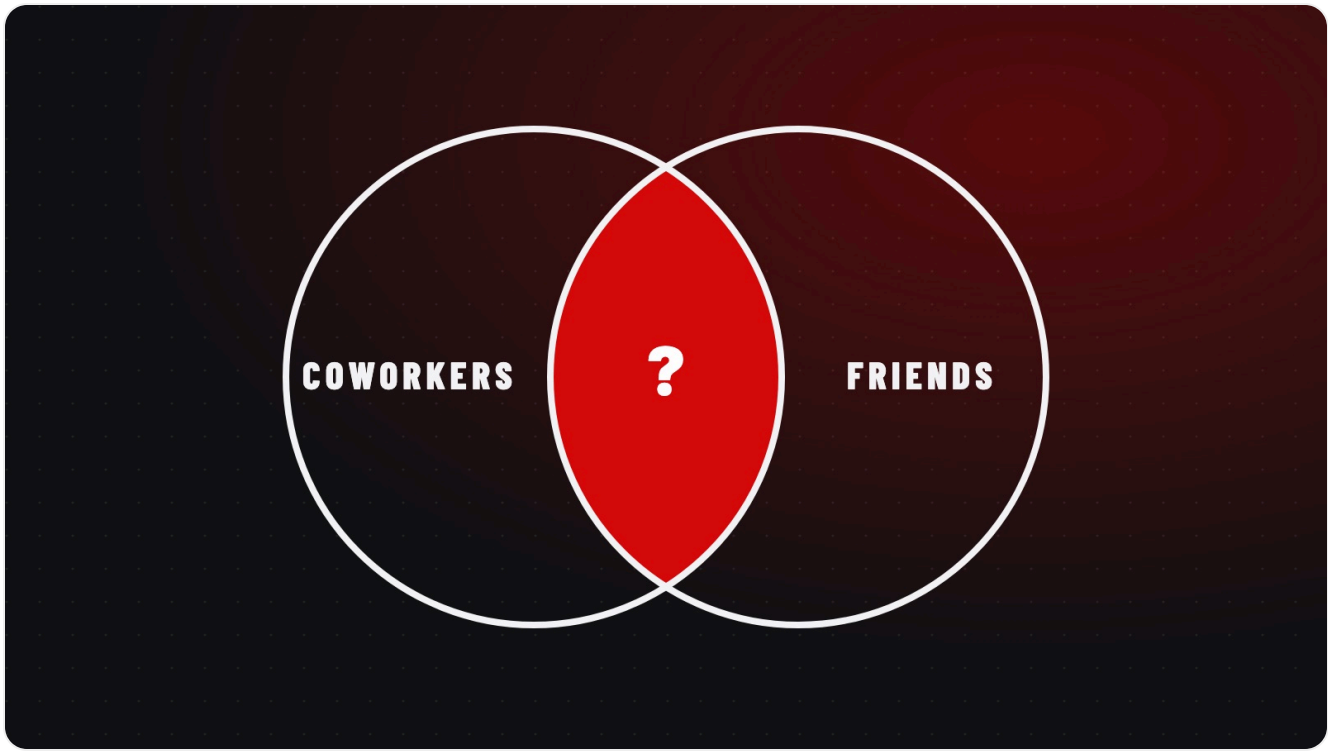
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Can your coworkers be your friends?



By Tommy Lee



This is something I've always wrestled with.

Everyone says they want to work with their friends. But nobody warns you about this. Needing your coworkers to be your friends can quietly make you a less effective leader.

If you asked me this ten years ago I would've said yes, that would be one of my goals. It would have been great to see it happen.

Ten years later, after leading and growing Resource Global, my answer is now a little different.

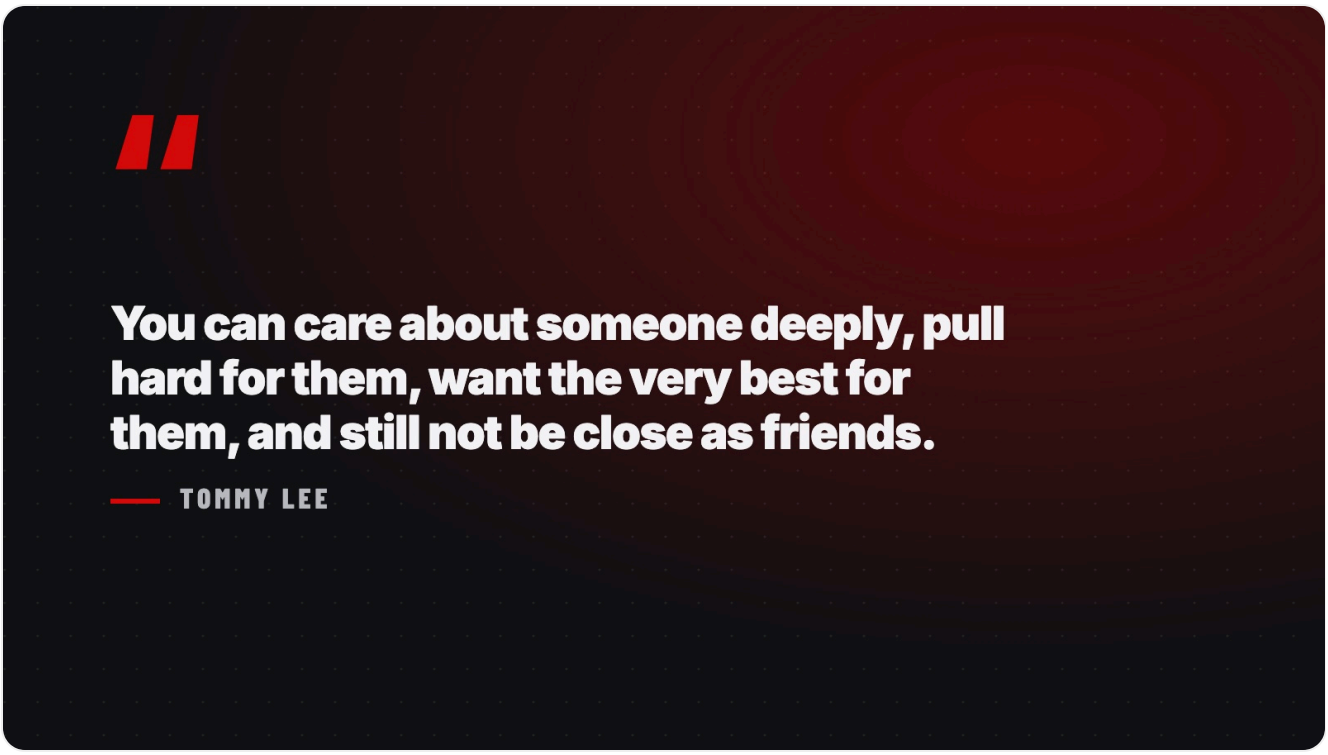
In an ideal world, yeah, it's great when your coworkers are also your friends. When there's a real friendship there that is ideal. But it doesn't always happen, and I've had to be ok with it and not expect it or seek it actively. You might not hang out after work or spend time with each other's family. You might not go on vacations together. You might not do all the things friends do. And that's okay.

Because here's what I had to learn. If you can work together as teammates, as colleagues who actually get the job done and trust each other, that might be even better. That is the preferred win.

It makes me wonder, when the Twelve were traveling with Jesus, were they all friends? I am sure they probably got annoyed with each other. Imagine what they were all thinking when James and John's mother advocated for her sons to sit at the right or left hand of Jesus.

As an organization, you're there to grow, to develop people, to get the work done. That's the assignment. And if you're the one leading it, you already know you can't be everybody's friend. You just can't. You're the one who has to have the hard conversations. You're the one holding people to deliverables. You're the one addressing areas of weakness or improvement. Some of those talks are not fun. And every now and then you're going to get frustrated with each other. That comes with the territory.

So some of the people you work with, you'll build a real friendship. And some you won't. Both are fine.



The real question is, are you okay with that?

And here is a harder question underneath it. Why do we want it so badly? Some of that is good and God given. We were made for friendship. But if I am honest, part of my old need for everyone to like me was not love at all. I was looking to my team to tell me I mattered. I wanted them to make me feel secure. And that is a weight no coworker was ever meant to carry. When you need people's approval to feel okay, you cannot really lead them, because you will spend all your energy managing what they think of you instead of telling them the truth.

> *A people pleaser cannot be an effective leader.*

Because if you're leading and you need every single person to like you, that need will get in the way. It'll make you go soft right where you need to be clear.

It took me a while to accept it. You can care about someone deeply, pull hard for them, want the very best for them, and still not be close as friends. That doesn't mean you failed at anything. It just means you're actually leading.

> ***You will never love the people you lead well until you stop needing them to love you back.***

Tommy

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