Out of Context

Getting to know our coworkers as holistic people, by understanding their passions and what they care about, we kind of get a better idea of what drives them and their work approach, too.

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The first time you see your colleagues outside of work is always weird, I think. It's like when you were in elementary school and solidly believed that your teacher literally lived in the school until you ran into her at the grocery store with your mom. In both scenarios, it's a case of personal and professional worlds colliding – worlds that, for the most part, we tend to keep separate. The problem with that setup is that we tend to develop a slightly more one-dimensional view of our coworkers by only knowing their work personas. Just like the elementary school kid can only comprehend his teacher's existence in the context of a classroom, we are lacking a more complete understanding of our colleagues as *people* by only knowing them in the office. But by getting to know our coworkers as holistic people, by understanding their passions and what they care about, we kind of get a better idea of what drives them and their work approach, too. It might have been the beer, but these were the thoughts that crossed my mind as I stood one July Saturday night in the Wonder Bar in Asbury

Park, NJ, surrounded by my team as we watched my coworker and fellow blog writer Jeff perform with his band, Cold Weather Company. The show itself was great, and I won't lie, it was pretty cool to watch Jeff's band play. (Note: he manages to bring up his band in conversation multiple times a day, so actually seeing a performance was well overdue.) The wide grin of the iconic Wonder Bar mascot presided in the background of the stage as Cold Weather Company rolled through their set for an enthusiastic crowd. My team cheered when Jeff gave Viventium a shoutout from the stage, and my boss even bought herself a Cold Weather Company T-shirt to support the band. And I promised myself I wouldn't get cheesy with this post, but there was this sense of solidarity among those of us who went to the show. It's a feeling I usually associate with our office kitchen at lunchtime when everyone from our team piles in to eat together even if that means some of us are standing when we run out of chairs. I mentioned this in one of my previous posts, about how important it is to choose a company with the right culture fit, and a crucial part of that culture is the people it encompasses.

Our passions influence our work

The "separate worlds" concept in reality just doesn't work, because who we are as individuals in each space naturally influences the other. The creativity and drive that it takes to perform in a band, especially one that writes its own music really isn't all that different from what it takes to be in marketing. Around our office, you can see the teamwork mentality of our two former professional soccer player colleagues stand out, just as another example. And to bring it back to me (because I'm a millennial and that's what we do, right?) I have always been a writer. You're looking at the girl who has wanted to publish a novel since she started writing short stories at the age of twelve. And here I am, blogging and creating written content for a living. Our personal and professional sides are inextricably linked, and when we're in the right jobs our passions only make us better.

Get you a team that can do both

Speaking as a newly working millennial, I think something a lot of us look for in a work situation is a network of colleagues who actually engage, care about their coworkers, and understand us from a multifaceted perspective. When camaraderie among coworkers extends beyond the office kitchen, it only strengthens the working relationship. Or, to put it another way, you know it's real when your coworkers drive over an hour in the pouring rain on a Saturday night to get to your band's gig (I'm looking at you, Jeff).

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