



## Why Loyalty Matters

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Lerzan Aksoy, a marketing professor at Fordham University, co-wrote **Why Loyalty Matters** (Benbella Books) with Timothy Keiningham. The authors argue that when it comes to business success, satisfaction in our relationships and even overall happiness, loyalty is essential. Women For Hire asked Aksoy Five Questions.

### 1) In a nutshell, why does loyalty matter?

The reality is that our relationships equal our happiness and our success. As managers, our success depends upon getting the most out of the people in our organizations, and building relationships with our customers. And for us as individuals, everything we want to achieve in life is going to be accomplished with and through our relationships with others.

The glue that binds our relationships together is loyalty. And that is why loyalty matters.

### 2) In this recession I've seen companies fire even the most loyal employees – people who truly sacrificed for their companies. Given that, how can you say loyalty matters?

Without question, the recession has seriously damaged company-employee loyalty. We read the headlines. Layoffs make the front pages of our newspapers regularly. In essence, employers are telling their employees en masse that their loyalties are no longer economically viable. It hurts! And employees that survive the cuts are responding by mentally quitting their jobs and seeing them as merely a way to make money.

Although companies propose to be doing this for survival, no company can “cut” its way to prosperity. That only happens through growth. If companies are going to grow their way out of difficult times (and excel in good times), they need two things: 1) for their customers to stick with them, and 2) to improve their productivity. This only happens through an organization of committed, loyal employees.

And for us as workers, a lack of employee loyalty means we spend the bulk of our waking hours trading our time and labor for one thing only—money. Sure, we need to pay the mortgage, keep food on the table, etc. But if the only reward for our work is monetary, then the exchange is likely to leave us unfulfilled. The reality is that our research shows that “feeling a deep sense of belonging to the company where I work” is far more important to most employees in driving their happiness than is pay.

### 3) You write that, generally, the more loyal you are the happier you are. Explain.

The most important factor that separates happy people from unhappy people is meaningful relationships with others. Strong relationships (be they friends, family, lovers, etc.) create an implied promise: I will be there for you!

Loyalty is about accepting the bonds that our relationships with others entail, and acting in a way that defends and reinforces the attachment inherent in these relationships. It is this loyalty that differentiates friend from acquaintance, companion from escort.

Furthermore, we are also more likely to surround ourselves with others who share our values. If we are loyal then we are much more likely to have more people around us that truly care about us. It's more than just “networking” that we frequently hear in business.

We are in a time of recession. Imagine how much easier finding a new job would be if we had a group of people who felt a sense of loyalty to us? That we could just call for help. Vice versa, how would you feel if you were able to help a friend find a job? It makes us happy to see that we have enabled another to accomplish their goals or dreams. It gives us a sense of meaning. We inherently have a need to be loyal.

Most of us can see how friend and family relationships link to happiness. But the reality is that this extends to all of the major domains of our relationships: work, faith, community, etc. And a lack of loyalty in any important domain in our lives actually diminishes our happiness.

One of the most important domains of our lives is our work. In fact, nothing will take up more of our time as adults than work—not family time, recreation, eating, or even sleeping. And while we often hear “it’s just a job,” work has the potential to enrich our lives. Our research conclusively shows that the more we can feel loyalty to the work we do, the more likely we are to be happy.

<http://blog.womenforhire.com/2009/07/why-loyalty-matters.html>