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The Role of Social Software in the Workplace

We are all familiar with the idea that a place of work is one that focuses on maximizing productivity, and requires those at work to maintain a certain professional attitude. It is interesting, then, to consider the growing importance of chat programs like Slack or Discord, as more successful companies integrate them into their employees' available tools. By allowing and encouraging the use of chat programs at work, companies are able to strengthen their culture, increase retention, and support productivity in new and significant ways.

Still, why use chat software, when we can set up a workplace with break rooms and other places that still allow conversation and socialization for employees? In my opinion, while those spaces are still useful, the chat interface can offer some unique benefits, such as the ability to chat with employees in different buildings and departments. This helps break down the social barriers that easily form if employees are only able to connect based on their physical proximity. Coworkers that get promoted or move to other teams can retain their bonds, and this helps foster interdepartmental collaboration and innovation.

Most other work communication is in the form of email, or memos, which are usually from someone in a more managerial position to those at the base of the company. Those communications are also often one-sided, and don't allow a lot of room for feedback and discussion. Chat software brings the levels closer to each other, and gives a space for conversation. This gives both sides access to perspectives and ideas they may not come across in their normal workflow, that they can build upon to remain competitive.

In conclusion, the addition of chat software to a modern workplace, which is available to all employees at all levels, is a net positive and useful tool. It provides opportunities for

productivity that are hard to replicate in other ways, allows employees to retain bonds as roles in the company change, and fosters a place to build a more collaborative company culture.