

Farley and Lucy came to visit us over the Thanksgiving weekend. From the moment they walked in the door with my oldest daughter Emily and her husband Pete, I could tell that they were happy to see us. Farley and Lucy really like our back yard so it is one of the very first stops they make when they come from their home in Lawrence, Kansas to visit.

Now if you think that I have been failing to tell you about grandchildren, don't get too excited. Farley and Lucy are grand-dogs. Farley is a border collie and black lab mix who is almost 8 years old (in human years) and Lucy is a 2 year old golden retriever and yellow lab mix. Their personalities are as different as the color of their coats. Now I do not know very much about dog breeds or their corresponding personality traits, but in general I know that Lucy's breeding has a tendency to be more active while Farley's breeding tends to make him calmer.

When Lucy meets somebody new she is all about getting to know them. Her massive tail could cause bruising on an unsuspecting bystander when she starts actively wagging it. Farley is again more reserved; he might stop by for a casual sniff, but is unlikely to jump up on you to say hello. Both Lucy and Farley are very smart and can perform many entertaining tricks. Farley is better at the tricks than Lucy is, but Lucy doesn't seem to mind.

Emily and Pete have a friend that likes to take the dogs running in the morning. Farley doesn't need a leash, Lucy's is fairly short. When we went to the Christmas tree farm, Lucy was jumping up and down like crazy she was so excited, Farley took it all in stride.

As small business owners and managers we have employees who act like Farley and some who act like Lucy. I personally think it is important to have both types of personalities on your team. If we had nothing but a lot of Lucy types we would be the most friendly, most active people in our industry. Unfortunately there would be chaos in our wake. We would have a lot of fun, make a lot of friends but would need an army of people cleaning up behind us. Eventually, in order for us to stay in business, a short leash with a tight collar would have to be attached.

On the other hand if we have nothing but Farley types as employees, everything would be calm orderly and under control. Fun would be had, but it would be measured carefully and within the appropriate guidelines. Everything we would do would be done by the rules, but the company would not be challenged or pushed beyond what feels comfortable. Eventually, in order for us to stay in business, we would need someone with vision to lead us.

As small business owners and managers, we tend to hire people like ourselves, because we get along best with those types of people. However, we need to be careful to hire and promote all personality types. We just need to be careful to make sure the right personalities are in the right jobs. Lucy would not be good at compliance or quality control. Farley might not be aggressive or thick-skinned enough to be in sales. Plus they need to be managed in different ways to protect and promote our companies.

We love it when Emily, Pete, Lucy and Farley come to visit. This last time they stayed for almost four full days and we got to know them all a little bit better, especially the dogs. We were as happy to see them as they were to see us.

*Small Business Today is a bi-weekly feature written by Tom Friedman, market president of First National Bank, Ames-Ankeny.*