



301

WAYS TO HAVE

FUN

AT WORK.

**DAVE HEMSATH
& LESLIE YERKES**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DANIEL McQUILLEN

An Excerpt From

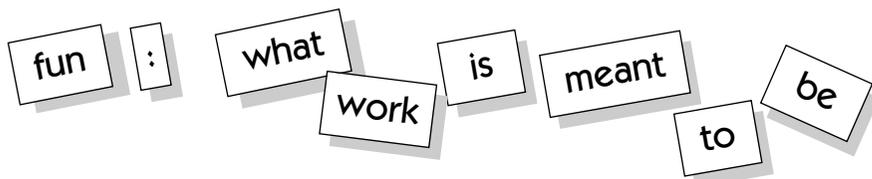
301 Ways to Have Fun at Work

by Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vi
Introduction	viii
How to Use This Book	x
Work Environment: Giggle While You Work	1
Communication: Funny You Should Say That	43
Training: Learning the Fun-damentals	69
Meetings: Having Fun—Wish You Were Here	97
Recognition: Say It with Fun	127
Team Building: How to Create Fun-atics	157
Simple Acts of Fun	183
A Twelve-Step Method to Fun	216
Suggested Readings	230
Index	233
Companies Featured	237
About the Authors	240

INTRODUCTION



Fun at work—is it an oxymoron or the newest business management trend?

We believe that fun at work may be the single most important trait of a highly effective and successful organization; we see a direct link between fun at work and employee creativity, productivity, morale, satisfaction, and retention, as well as customer service and many other factors that determine business success.

We wanted to help people see that link, so we decided to conduct an international survey to collect real and relevant stories of what actual businesspeople are doing to create fun workplaces. The results have been phenomenal. We received responses from individuals at many levels of the corporate hierarchy, who work within companies of all sizes and in a wide variety of industries. The responses revealed that many successful companies have made fun an integral part of their corporate culture. Fun has become an organizational strategy—a strategic weapon to achieve extraordinary results in areas of corporate life ranging from training sessions to meetings to hiring practices.

Humor consultant and bestselling author C. W. Metcalf wrote in *HR Focus* (February 1993) that “humor is a vital, critical element for human survival, and we often forget about it, and set

it aside. We are told that laughter, fun, and play are unadult, unintelligent, and nonprofessional. Nothing could be further from the truth. One of the first indicators of the onset of most mental illness is a loss of the sense of joy in being alive.”

Fun and humor help individuals through crisis and change. Because they facilitate the release of tension, fun and humor increase employees’ ability to cope with stress on the job and to remain flexible, creative, and innovative under pressure—central features of a strong, resilient corporate culture.

Organizations that integrate fun into work have lower levels of absenteeism, greater job satisfaction, increased productivity, and less downtime. As cited in *HR Focus* in February 1993:

- ▼ In the nine months that followed a workshop conducted by C. W. Metcalf at Digital Equipment Corporation in Colorado Springs, twenty middle managers increased their productivity by 15 percent and reduced their sick days by half.
- ▼ Employees from the Colorado Health Sciences Center in Denver who viewed humorous training films and attended fun workshops showed a 25 percent decrease in downtime and a 60 percent increase in job satisfaction.

Fun and the energy it creates are contagious. By far, the most intriguing part of the hundreds of surveys we received are the many stories of the ways that individuals and companies incorporate fun into the workplace.

This book is essentially a compilation of these fun and inspiring stories.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We wrote *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work* for everyone who works: from line employees to managers, from contract workers to senior executives. The book is designed so that you can open it to any page and find valuable ideas to use immediately.

We have organized the book into seven sections to facilitate your finding a fun idea to suit your particular work situation or need. At the end of each section, we present an in-depth case study, which we call a “Fun Focus,” that illustrates the theme of the section. The sections are as follows:

work

Work Environment: Giggle While You Work

communication

Communication: Funny You Should Say That

training

Training: Learning the Fun-damentals

meetings

Meetings: Having Fun—Wish You Were Here

recognition

Recognition: Say It with Fun

teams

Team Building: How to Create Fun-atics

acts

Simple Acts of Fun

Look for the Fun Icons throughout the book, which identify

Fun Facts,



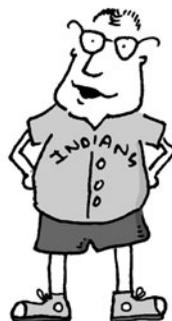
Fun Resources



and Fun Quotes.



There are even Dave and Leslie Icons, which identify stories we are telling or retelling.



In addition, we have included our Twelve-Step Method to Fun, a program we suggest you share with your coworkers, and follow by implementing one step a month for a year.

At the end of the book is our list of suggested readings—books we highly recommend for your reading pleasure and to aid you in your pursuit of fun at work.



WORK ENVIRONMENT

**GIGGLE WHILE YOU
WORK**

WORK ENVIRONMENT

GIGGLE WHILE YOU WORK

the phrase “a fun workplace” doesn’t have to be an oxymoron. Anyone can choose to create a fun workplace. Both qualitative and quantitative data exist to support our belief that a fun work environment can have a positive impact on productivity, quality, customer service, and job satisfaction. But still it is a **choice** that each of us makes.

To infuse your work environment with a spirit of fun, you must value fun as important, you must believe fun to be *essential*.

If you want fun to seep into the fabric of your company culture, start with yourself:

- ▼ make a conscious effort to lighten up,
- ▼ plan for fun,
- ▼ respond spontaneously to fun moments, and

- ▼ embrace fun as the chosen tone **for** your work environment.

An organization's work environment is both tangible and intangible. It consists of the physical structure of your operation as well as the tone that is set within its walls. It might seem difficult to get a handle on the tone of your environment. It is, however, a real thing and can have tremendous impact on your work .

an environment that fosters fun is characterized by positive energy, high self-esteem, and team spirit. People feel alive and want to give their best effort to the task. Fun contributes to the creation of an environment that nurtures and sustains what we call employee "want to." You cannot put a price on "want to." Individuals can be trained to do just about anything, but first they must have the motivation. Fun can enhance motivation. If work and the work environment are fun, the results will be better.

To support your pursuit of a **fun** **workplace** and your quest for an enlivened workforce, we will share with you stories, facts, ideas, and resources to stimulate your fun juices for creating your own "Fun Company."

work

environment

:

giggle

while

you

work

Ask yourself the question each day, “Are we having fun yet?”



Weather can influence attitude in both a positive and a negative way. I know that I prefer clear skies and sunshine. I am happiest and most productive during the long days of summer, when the sun comes up early and stays up late. Recently, as the seasons began to change, our city experienced a week of dark and rainy days that sent my spirits sagging. One morning during this week, determined not to let the weather affect my attitude, I burst into song.

I serenaded the office with a complete rendition of “The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow” from the musical *Annie*.



It made me feel better and it was received with laughter. So encouraged was I by the

fun

response that I proceeded through the lobby of our office building in full tune, stopping to sing my merry melody to the security guard and the post person. I was chased back to my office with friendly jeers and robust cheers. There is something to be said for carrying a happy tune.



A California company promotes a fun and healthy work environment by distributing page-a-day calendars on different subjects to each of their staff members. The calendars range in subject matter from Wheel of Fortune puzzles to Dilbert cartoons to gardening tips. Since everyone's calendar is different, curiosity runs high. Staff members have been known to take breaks during the day to solve Wheel of Fortune puzzles on someone else's calendar.

work

Many businesses are promoting a fun and flexible work environment by implementing a shortened work week during slow times of the year. One San Francisco-based company has summer work hours, closing the office at 1:00 p.m. on Fridays from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The free afternoon may be a time when staff members go to a movie together or just have the freedom to get a head start on their weekend.



“The brain is a wonderful organ. It starts working the moment you get up in the morning and does not stop until you get to the office.”

—Robert Frost



Find a way to symbolize your fun. Trowby Brockman, an insurance industry professional, and her team adopted a mascot—one of those icky, soft rubber toy gorillas. He was affectionately called Gordy. Gordy would show up

fun

in unusual places, particularly when individuals were having a rough day.

During one hurried flight to the home office, Trowby reached into her raincoat pocket to find Gordy. It put a smile on Trowby's face and reminded her that she was traveling with the support and good feelings of the team.

When she was transferred to another office, Trowby continued to benefit from the loyalty of Gordy and her team, who remembered to send occasional cards and good wishes. You never know where Gordy will turn up.



Taking one's self too seriously can be deadly. Tom Ziska realized that his workplace, an architecture firm, had become far too serious and stressful, which can be detrimental to the creative nature of the work. Tom went searching for



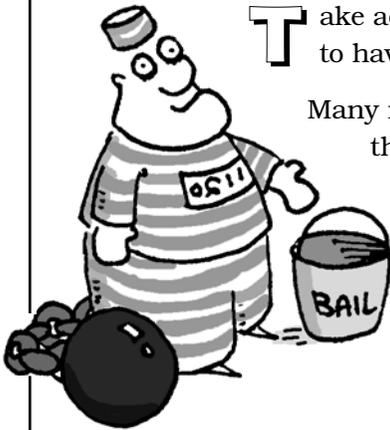
work

something that would allow people to vent their frustrations in a healthy and humorous way. He surprised the office with a pair of parakeets. They are named after two famous architects—Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright. Tom says about his feathered friends: “Their daily chatter and presence has done the trick. We give them the run of the office. To date, no one has complained about their little ‘presents.’ When things get heavy or trying, we ask them what they would do. It’s surprising how often they have good answers.”



Take advantage of every opportunity to have fun.

Many nonprofit organizations use the fundraising strategy affectionately known as “jail and bail.” Individuals are sent to “jail” for a couple of hours. During their



fun

incarceration, the “convicts” are required to raise donations by soliciting “bail” from friends and coworkers. When a community nonprofit organization created a “lock-up,” Jerry Kaminski seized the chance to have some fun with his bosses: he sent them to jail for an afternoon. Not only did it become fun for the entire workplace but it also raised money for an important community cause.



A survey of business school deans and business executives revealed that humor plays a significant part in the operation of a healthy, successful business.



Having fun is being prepared to break out of the box—in small ways as well as large. It is doing the unexpected, being willing to look foolish or silly: like singing out loud, or

work

cultivating funny voices, or bowling in the hallway with beach balls and empty boxes. When you take a chance, you break the tension and facilitate an atmosphere of acceptance, freedom, and trust.



Make a list of all the people and things that bring you joy, satisfaction, pleasure, fulfillment, and fun. Refer to it when you are bored, upset, or just need a break. Joy lists are great to exchange with others, too!



Many offices liven up their surroundings with Koosh Balls, the rubbery, stringy balls that are fun to play with and toss around. One of the more popular Koosh toys is the Koosh Basketball—perfect for the back of any office door. For

fun

information regarding Koosh toys, call 800-75-KOOSH. To view a few of the Koosh toys as well as a fun array of other toys and gifts, visit the Kitty Hawk Kites web site at www.kittyhawk.com.



When our office (like many offices) is stuck with doing a mundane, repetitive job, we often lighten up the atmosphere by listening to music. Occasionally, the local radio station will play an hour or an afternoon of “one-hit wonders,” rock groups or singers who only made one memorable song. When a new song comes on, everyone in the office will try to be the first to identify the obscure artist. It doesn’t sound like much, but in our small, competitive office an afternoon can soar by as we all attempt to be first to yell out “Video Killed the Radio Star! by the Buggles.”



work

Harmless practical jokes can be a memorable way to create fun in an office. Here is a story of what happened at Printing Industries of America, according to *Association Management* magazine (October 1993).

On July 8, the building manager distributed a routine memo: "This weekend the vendor who installed the cabling in our building will thoroughly clean all of our telephone lines by injecting compressed air into the cables. To control dust and debris that may emanate from your telephone receivers, all staff members are urged to store their telephones in their wastebaskets or to procure special bags from the production department before leaving work on Friday, July 10." More than half the staff asked for the special bags, and the building manager had to get some clear trash can liners to distribute. One woman forgot to procure a bag, worried all weekend, and tried to reach the building manager at home. Over the weekend, the "Mirth Committee" tossed glitter and electrical wire odds and ends into everyone's telephone bag. On Monday morning the staff finally got the message: It was a joke!

fun



According to Polly LaBarre in the February 5, 1996, issue of *Industry Week*, Hal Rosenbluth, CEO of Rosenbluth International says, “The only way for us to continuously provide solutions to the needs of an ever-changing business world is to have the kind of environment where spontaneity thrives.” One way Hal measures his organization’s “happy quotient” is by sending out crayons and a blank piece of paper to employees, who draw their current view of the company. He actually compares these drawings every six months to measure any changes in the way people feel about the company.



“A fun work environment allows you to express yourself freely in an appropriate way that generates a feeling of comfort and association among fellow employees.”

**—Fabian De Rozario, Donaghey Student Center,
University of Arkansas, Little Rock**



work

Timothy Schrllhardt writes in the October 2, 1996, *Wall Street Journal* that many companies are implementing programs to reduce stress on the job. One of our favorites is that of S. C. Johnson & Son in Racine, Wisconsin. The company subsidizes in-house back and shoulder massages in order to help reduce stress among its forty-three customer service department staffers. Corporate massages have become very popular. For example, Barbara Neims, of Manchester, Connecticut, started a massage service aimed at corporate customers six years ago and has since added six massage therapists to serve her growing client list.

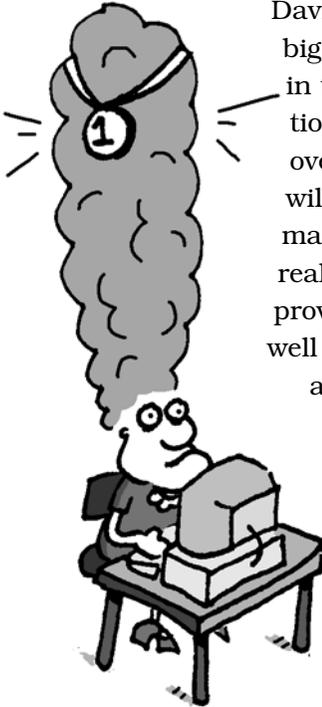


J. David Lewis's office in San Francisco believes that it pays to spend a little money on fun and has come up with the following ideas:

- ▼ Put up funny art in the office and change it when it gets stale.
- ▼ Take everyone out to lunch once a month.
- ▼ Provide candy at meetings.



- ▼ Make sure there is plenty of light in the office. (The “jail look” doesn’t facilitate a productive workplace.)
- ▼ Wear casual dress on Friday.
- ▼ Work more hours during the week so there is time for a party on Friday afternoon.
- ▼ Give out mock award certificates for funny things like “Best Hair Day.”
- ▼ Pay for everyone to go to a conference once a year.



David writes, “Perhaps the biggest factor in creating fun in the workplace is organization. If everybody is always overworked or behind, they will be stressed out. I think management needs to set realistic production goals and provide competent direction, as well as the resources to support achievement of the goals.

Given this structure, even the most challenging work can be fun and not stressful.”

this material has been excerpted from

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