

HOW TO

BY DOUG PACKARD

Have fun at work and develop employee loyalty

In today's business environment, employees strive to have their work life serve and enrich their personal life. While most are willing to work hard, they also want to have fun and are cognizant of the impact work has on their physical and mental health.

Before business leaders can plan how to make the work environment more fun, it's important to consider two factors in determining employee job satisfaction. The relationship with the boss is the No. 1 factor in whether people enjoy working for the company. Even if they don't like their job or the company, they might stay if they like their boss.

Job satisfaction is No. 2. Employees need to feel that their work is rewarding and gives them a sense of accomplishment. Ideally, you want them to move beyond viewing their job as just a job. If it's a good fit, they should see their job as a career and ideally as a calling — where the work inspires them.

If either the boss or the job does not work well for an employee, it won't matter much how fun the company environment is. But if both are in good order, the level of fun the company culture achieves can significantly increase the odds of improving employee loyalty.

Creating a workplace that's conducive to fun

Leaders need to create a work environment that sets the stage so that when fun events take place, employees truly enjoy the moments. Creating an environment conducive to fun includes building a culture where employees understand the big picture and believe in what the company is doing. They must get the chance to experience examples of the value the company provides to customers.

It's also important to give employee the appropriate tools for doing their job. This not only includes tools such as up-to-date hardware and software, but also refers to the working environment — such as lighting, temperature, air flow, ergonomics and natural light.

The business should also consider schedule flexibility for personal needs and interests such as charities, hobbies and family. If there's something employees want to do for themselves or a family member, and they can still complete their required workload, consider giving them the flexibility to follow an adapted schedule.

Employees also want to work for a company where they can learn, grow and increase their marketability. Opportunities for education and developmental assignments show an employee that they are valued and that they can make as large a contribution as they aspire to.

Ways to create company fun

One strategy that can have multiple payoffs is getting involved in events that focus on charities, customers or vendors. You can also create fun through short-term contests for small amounts of money or prizes, perhaps based on sales or service departments hitting their key numbers. Even something as simple as ring-the-bell announcements in the middle of the day help inject energy into the staff.

There's also a host of other ideas, all of which can contribute to company fun:

- Clothing-themed days such as favorite sports team jerseys;
- Providing clothing with your company logo at events;
- Posting candid photos;
- Participating in sports leagues;
- Hosting seasonal parties;
- Planning retreats to relax and discuss business plans;
- Celebrating birthdays, job anniversaries, retirements and other milestones;
- Conducting lunch-and-learn sessions for both business and personal development.

As you develop your strategies for fun, keep in mind that you ultimately want your people to feel like they were meant to do their role and be on your company's team. If they appreciate their boss, enjoy their job and have fun, you won't have difficulty hiring and retaining loyal teammates. You will also have a lot more fun yourself.



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