

Be the FunStar in the Workplace

Everyone in your workplace has a different idea as to what fun means, and what it means to make work more fun. For some, making work more fun may mean getting rid of onerous bureaucratic procedures and paperwork, whereas others might view it as an opportunity to celebrate a theme day - wear a 'Funny Hat Day'.

Some people might think it's fun to work on a challenging special assignment that stretches their skills, while others want to hold a kazoo parade. Some employees' idea of fun is holding a barbecue, while others want to create a social event celebrating "Stupid Human Tricks."

As you pursue the goal of making your workplace a more fun, creative, humane place to be, keep in mind there truly are different strokes for different folks. So ask everyone on your team what it means to make the workplace more fun and their specific job more fun. It's a question that should become part of every job interview, performance review and mentoring or coaching conversation.

- ☺ Do you send a **daily/regular broadcast email** to your team? Does it include something funny? A Pun? A Joke? A Quote? A funny picture?
- ☺ Do you have a **humour attitude**? Do you know what your humour attitude is? Does anyone in your team have a humour attitude?
- ☺ Are there any funnies on your **noticeboard**? Do you change them regularly?
- ☺ What is in your **desk drawer**? Any funny props, bells, whistles, masks? Do you have funny stickers to stick on cards, or monitors?
- ☺ Every team has a few laughs - is the team **humour positive**? If there is any negative humour, is that addressed? Immediately?
- ☺ Do you use **positive emoticons** in your correspondence, where appropriate?
- ☺ Do you **smile** at people? Even the ones that don't make you smile? Even the ones that you don't want to smile at?
- ☺ Are there **special days** on the calendar that could create laughter? Funny hat day, blue day, baby photo competition.
- ☺ Do you give **funny names** to normal things? Is there an opportunity to relabel mundane places, events, topics, processes that could maybe tickle a laugh?
- ☺ Have you thought of getting a personal **avatar** created? To use in a variety of situations? It could be your signature symbol on emails, presentations, documents, your

intranet profile.

- ☺ Are you **smiling** in your online photo profile?
- ☺ Is there a **cartoon** on your desk? Somewhere?
- ☺ Do you have a **library** of funny sayings, quotes, comments, phrases? Something that everyone knows is yours?
- ☺ Do you laugh at **other people's humour**? Do you make sure that people's attempts at being funny are endorsed? So long as their humour is positive humour.
- ☺ Do you buy **funny cards** as farewell cards, birthday cards, thank you cards?
- ☺ Being funny is being random - do you do **unexpected things**? Enter the building via a different route? Have meetings in different locations? Introduce random topics, when appropriate? Surprise people with a small gift to share?
- ☺ Do you have a collection of **funny badges**? Why not?
- ☺ Do you know a collection of **funny stories** from the past? Is there anyone in your team who can tell a funny story from years ago? Something that a funny that happened many years ago?
- ☺ Do you know the different **types of humour**? Sarcasm, slapstick, irony, surreal, clever, observational, malapropism,..... Can you talk about them as different types and able to identify them when you hear them?
- ☺ Do you have **informal team gatherings**? - morn-

ing tea? afternoon tea? pop quiz sessions? shared lunch? People always laugh in relaxed situations such as this.

☺ Did **something funny happen** to you outside of work? On the weekend? After hours? Tell the story. Practice telling the story to a family member first.

☺ Do you post a **quote for the week**? On the noticeboard? On a whiteboard? In the bathroom?

☺ Today's **special day** is: 'Take Your Webmaster to Lunch Day'; 'World UFO Day'; 'Tell the Truth Day'; 'Forgiveness Day'..... Try them all. Or make them apply to the whole week. Every day has something special about it - some of them are quite whacky.

☺ Play **matching photos** - ask each team member to take a photo of their foot and have a competition to match the photo of an employee to their foot (or back of head, or childhood photo...)

☺ Rather than **sing Happy Birthday** to the lucky team member, belt out their colleague's favorite song (usually badly so it's that much more fun) to make it more meaningful for the birthday celebrant.

☺ Change the **language** in your team - don't call them 'staff', call them 'thrillseekers'; don't refer to 'tasks', 'jobs', 'workflow' refer to them as 'hoopla', 'funny', 'sitcom' or whatever suits.

☺ Have a **fun word of the day** that is rewarded when team members use it - eg 'brou ha ha', 'hoopla', 'lolly-

gag', 'flibbertigibbet', 'malarkey'.

☺ Hold a contest for a day to see who on your team can generate the **most number of smiles** by the end of the day.

☺ Give someone the job of being the **ace reporter** for the day - reporting on events around the office.

☺ Hold a contest for a day to see who on your team can generate the **most number of smiles** by the end of the day.

☺ Give everyone a **standing ovation** as they arrive at work.

☺ Announce your arrival into the office with a **giant gong**.

☺ Leave a fun or **inspiring voice mail message** on everyone's voice mail; impersonate a cartoon character, film star, or any voice that you can mimic. Don't make it spooky, of course.

☺ Start a contest with another employee to see who is the **first one to say "good morning"** to the other one every day for a month

☺ Have everyone announce how they are doing on a **scale of 1-10**

☺ Hold an "**8 minutes at 8:00**" team huddle or "9 at 9" meeting where everyone checks in and talks about their 3 big goals for the day. The key is to keep these short (no chairs, and yes, use a stopwatch) and fun in tone. Use it as a chance for people to connect, get ener-

gised and communicate any pressing items to the team.

☺ Hold a **“Goofiest Face” competition** will help people laugh, relax, and encourage everyone to take themselves a little less seriously. And by creating a photo wall of all the goofy mugs you can ensure the laughs keep on coming.

☺ At your next brainstorming meeting, try a fun, frenetic, passionate round of **“extreme-storming,”** where you take ideas to their maximum. Push the boundaries in outrageous ways to bust out of your mental cage. Not only does this add some fun energy into your meetings, it forces a change in perspective that might just lead to fantastic new ideas when you put on your “what-could-we-do-if-there-were-no-limits glasses”. It can also remind you that, although consensus is at times an admirable goal, sometimes the best ideas are found on the extreme edges.

☺ Hold a **“Post Something Fun”** theme day at work, where everyone is encouraged to leave random and anonymous funny, inspiring, thought-provoking ideas, comments or expressions of gratitude on Post-it Notes in unusual places throughout the workplace, so that people stumble upon them by accident as they go about their business, perhaps even a few weeks later. Some of the notes might pop up in highly visible places, whereas others could show up in very creative, surprising locations.

☺ **Name your workspace** something grand and fun

and wacky. Something that defines your character or role in your organisation.

☺ Hold a “**Where Am I?**” contest: Have everyone post a photo of themselves in some interesting location. The photo could be from a vacation or simply an outing in your own city. The key to creating a fun contest is to find photos with an obscure landmark or two, but nothing too obvious (so no Mickey Mouse, Eiffel Tower or Statue of Liberty allowed!). OR, just create a photo gallery in your meeting/lunch room, without the contest part.

☺ Encourage people to display their own ancestral national/provincial/state **flags**.

☺ Hold a contest for the **WORST joke ever**. ie the joke deemed most groan-inducing by your esteemed panel of judges.

☺ Set up a **DIY** ice cream sundae bar at work and turn it into a team event. Have each team be responsible for bringing in a certain sundae-appropriate topping that they feel best represents the spirit of their team. Award a prize for the most creative sundae and/or most creative name for the sundae they have built, again that best represents the spirit of your workplace.

☺ Don't let your organisational history fade to dust. Take the time to interview them and capture their stories on audio or video. Not only is this a great way to keep the culture and history alive, it's a fabulous way to honor the long time employees.

☺ Hold a contest at for the best **work-related neologism**: a funny alternative meaning to some of your most commonly used work terms or acronyms. eg Gargoyle: olive-flavored mouthwash; Flabbergasted: appalled over how much weight you have gained; Abdicate: to give up all hope of ever having a flat stomach; Coffee: the person upon whom one coughs.

☺ Wowing a customer makes it fun for the customer and for the person doing the wowing. So share customer service stories at work on a regular basis that will inspire you and your colleagues, such as...

“An employee of a tech company was having a marathon troubleshooting phone session with a customer when he overheard the customer tell someone they were getting hungry. The employee puts the customer on hold, orders up a pizza and when the door eventually rings, the IT tech tells the customer to answer the door because he’s arranged for dinner!”

☺ Hold a **“Laugh-In” luncheon** where the entire staff gathers with their bag lunches and watches a rerun of an old sitcom classic like Get Smart or Gilligan’s Island.

☺ Give out some **random and whacky** awards to your team members, eg ‘The Best Comeback Award’, ‘The Don’t Quit Your Day Job Award’, ‘Biggest Guffaw Award’, ‘The Closest-to-Crossing-the-Line-Without-Stepping-Over-It Award’.

☺ Conduct a **‘Pay Day’ raffle** where raffle tickets are sold and total money is returned to first and second winners when their ticket is randomly picked.

- ☺ Hold a “Twins Day.” Randomly match people up in pairs, then ask each set of pairs to dress as closely to one another as possible in matching outfits and award a prize for the closest matching pair.
- ☺ A very simple alter ego name generator for your next meeting - create everyone’s **alter ego superhero name** using this formula: The color of your underwear + the last food item you ate.
- ☺ Hold a **Formal Friday** theme day one Friday to give everyone an excuse to wear their finest duds. Give a prize to the best dressed and a prize for the most creatively dressed for those people who`d rather not dress up completely formally but can still add something to their ensemble (a clip-on tie, tiara, bow tie, cape...) to add a tinge of formality.
- ☺ Take time to do a team huddle and have everyone say what they **appreciate about each other**, deliver hand-written thank you notes, leave a message of appreciation on their voicemail, bring in a cake, or hold an appreciation lunch.
- ☺ Create a **photo wall online** where you encourage employees to upload fun, offbeat, impromptu cell phone photos of either employees enjoying their work. A photo site like this can help brand your image as a great place to work.
- ☺ Ask team members to vote for who they thought was the happiest person at the end of every workday,

and then announce the winner who received the most votes for that week.

☺ Get your team together for a group **yoga-posing** photo, or create a “yoga-pose-off” challenge and encourage individuals to submit their best “yoga pose-off” photo and award prizes for the best yoga photos (are they called, “yogotos”?).

☺ There are many fun **name generators** that can be used to rename rooms, events, people. [Find one here](#)

☺ Create a team challenge to see who can create the funniest, most creative, and most persuasive **promo video** for your workplace culture.

☺ **Christmas time:** Challenge people to either wrap or unwrap gifts while wearing oven mitts.

☺ **Celebrate Underdog Day.** Take the time to thank, acknowledge, appreciate, send flowers, bring coffee, send a gift, or serenade someone in your workplace or life who too often goes unrecognized and under appreciated.

☺ Have team members create an alternative, second job title for themselves that is imaginative, offbeat, and fun - a title that truly captures the essence of everyone’s job. eg Director of First Impressions, Chief Problem Solver, Manager of Vibe, and Guy in Charge Of Stuff No One Else Wants to Do. Can also be done as a one-off event by having everyone wear a sticker for one day revealing their choice for their fun alternative job title.

Theme Month IDEAS

- ☺ **Value of the Month.** Assign each of your organisation values to a specific month and challenge everyone to live that value in outrageously loud ways.
- ☺ **Go the Extra Mile Month.** Offer a prize at the end of the month to whoever does something that goes the extra mile with their internal or external customers.
- ☺ **Go the Extra Inch Month.** Encourage everyone to generate “extra inch” ideas that will make a consistent difference to your workplace culture or customer service.
- ☺ **Eat Your Greens Healthy Eating Month.**
- ☺ **Something to Snore About Month!** A month dedicated to encouraging healthy sleeping habits.
- ☺ **Name Tag Month.** Have everyone where a “Hello My Name is ____” name tag for an entire month to encourage people to remember and use everyone’s name and engage with each other in a different way
- ☺ **“Yes and...” Month** where everyone must always use the phrase, “Yes, and...” instead of “but” or no” when debating and sharing ideas.
- ☺ **What a GREAT Idea Month** where everyone is encouraged to submit as many useful ideas as they possibly can.
- ☺ **Face-to-Face Month** where everyone is encouraged to put down their smart phones and communicate in person.
- ☺ **Anticipation Month** where everyone is encouraged to look for ways they can better anticipate their customers’ needs and questions.
- ☺ **Walk or Bike to Work Month.**
- ☺ **Get Moving Month!** Hold walk-n-talk meetings and encourage everyone to use

the stairs, walk during breaks and lunches, and stretch regularly at their desks.

- ☺ **Colleague Appreciation Month.** Encourage everyone to make a more intentional effort to thank one another in sincere, meaningful ways.
- ☺ **Family Matters Month.** A month dedicated to celebrating and appreciating employees' family members.
- ☺ **Community Spirit Month.** Look for ideas and opportunities to engage with your local community.
- ☺ **I've Got Your Back Month.** Encouraging safe workplace habits with a focus on employees looking out for each other.
- ☺ **High Five Month.** Yup, an entire month of high-fiving whenever something good happens to remind people to celebrate the small successes.
- ☺ **Gratitude Month.** Encourage everyone to keep a gratitude journal for one month where they list the small things at work and in life they are grateful for.
- ☺ **Clear the Clutter Month!**
- ☺ **Eco-Habits Month.** A concerted all-hands-on-deck approach to reducing waste and saving energy in your office.
- ☺ **Working on Purpose Month** A month dedicated to celebrating the ultimate reason(s) your organisation exists.
- ☺ **Laugh For No Reason Month.** Encourage people to remember the power of laughing for no reason as a simple but effective way to lower their stress.