

The

TRUTH

About Workplace Fun and Productivity

As the saying goes, “All work and no play makes

Jack a dull boy.” But, before companies like Google began the new trend of promoting fun in the workplace, the words “fun” and “work” didn’t fit in the same sentence together. Today, the younger generations present a new set of challenges for employers, and organizations have been forced to find new, innovative ways to attract and retain them as employees. Promoting a fun work environment is quickly becoming one of the most widely-implemented recruiting and retention strategies in many of the world’s most successful organizations, and there’s a good reason.

How important is a fun work environment?

Results from a PGI survey show that 88 percent of Millennials want a fun and social workplace environment. The Millennial Generation is striving to be happier and more passionate about every aspect of their lives than any generation that has come before them. It seems that Millennials place high value on their time with respect to quality of life—in other words, not wanting to spend time doing something they hate, in a place they don’t want to

be, surrounded by people they don’t want to be around, regardless of the compensation. Granted, no one wants to be in this situation, but past generations have been much more tolerant of these predicaments than Millennials.

When thinking about happiness in general, one might picture being passionate about whatever they are doing, having freedom, and being surrounded by people that truly care about them and want to see them succeed. Most Millennials agree, as 71 percent say they want their coworkers to be a second family to them. Socializing and having fun with coworkers creates a bond and fosters camaraderie, so these two factors directly correlate with one another. Considering this, it should come as no surprise that a study from Kansas State University found socializing to be rated the highest out of all fun-related activities throughout employees of all ages and generations. Organizations that cater to these desires will attract and retain the most talented candidates out there, and will experience a big boost in employee happiness, retention, and even productivity.



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Does more fun equal less work?

All work and no play might make Jack a dull boy, but the second and less popular part of the saying suggests that “all play and no work makes Jack a mere toy.” Put both phrases together, and we have a saying that accurately represents the two most prevalent opinions on combining work and play. There are many companies that remain closed off to the idea. One likely reason for this may be that the leaders of these organizations are Baby Boomers, and remain loyal to the traditional practice of keeping work and play separate, simply because it’s what they’ve always done. Others may think they have too much on their plate to allow for play time and socializing. However, the most common objection to creating a fun work environment revolves around the issue of productivity.


So, does more fun mean less work? The answer isn’t simple—as several studies have reported conflicting results—but by comparing and analyzing results we can draw conclusions. Gallup research has shown that happy employees perform at a much higher level than those who are not happy; Millennials have indicated that a fun, social

work environment is a crucial factor in job satisfaction. By considering the results of both studies as a whole, we can naturally infer that more fun equals higher productivity and performance. By contrast, Penn State University has found that fun in the workplace reduces productivity in young employees within the hospitality industry. Other findings from the University of Pennsylvania—specifically focused on managed and imposed fun—suggest that it increases productivity, happiness, and retention, but only when employees have consented to the terms.

What does it mean?

From these studies, we can form a general idea of what fun means for productivity. Here are some key takeaways:

Fun in the workplace can significantly improve retention, happiness, talent quality, and even productivity. Under the right circumstances, a fun work environment can benefit both your organization and employees in a number of ways. The rewards are great enough that each and every organization should be compelled to at least consider it as an option.



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Employees should be well-trained and mature enough to handle autonomy, and must possess great time-management skills. Make sure to train younger employees on the purpose of fun in the workplace and teach them how to use it to their benefit, rather than letting it negatively affect their work.

The matter of fun in the workplace is no different—both opinions have valid points, but in the end, your results will all depend on how you implement fun. To their credit, Millennials happen to be very career-minded, so other than the occasional employee who loses track of time, productivity shouldn't be a huge issue with this group. Remember that Gen Y is looking to do something they are passionate about, so the trick is to make their work fun and collaborative, not to just throw them a party every day.

You'll read more about Google later on in this eBook. Most of their perks are aimed at getting employees out of their office and socializing with each other, like rock walls,

a fitness center, frequent breaks, and personal creative sessions, along with many other fun-related perks, all of which play a part in its overarching cultural theme of fun and collaboration. We can see how well a fun culture has worked for Google, not only by looking at their widely-known success, but by looking at what their employees say about them. On a well-known company review website, we see that out of more than 1,900 reviews, Google has an employee rating of 4.1 out of 5 stars, and 95 percent approve of their CEO, Larry Paige. If that's not clear enough, a statement just underneath the company rating says, "Employees are 'Very Satisfied.'"

Implementing "fun" into the workplace may sound like an excuse to slack off, but for Gen Y, it means much more than that: it's a small but significant factor in overall quality of life, which this generation finds particularly valuable. Considering that a huge chunk of our lives is dedicated to our careers, placing value on "fun" in the workplace is something to consider, and will ultimately benefit organizations and the workforce as a whole.