



Kate Hull Rodgers

Fun isn't just for April Fools



Fun at work...Nice

There is a new business initiative in America called National Fun at Work Day. The Mayors of Dallas and San Francisco have officially sanctioned it. Many companies have embraced it. A firm in Kansas celebrated the day by turning its car park into a beach party, complete with trucked-in sand, live music and free sun glasses. 3000 employees of Chase Industries in 20 cities were provided with disposable cameras and told to go on photo safari. In Seattle, one company held a lottery to name floors of their office block after workers.

National Fun at Work Day is a wonderful idea, but it isn't enough. It runs the risk of trivializing fun with tokenism. To create an environment that encourages enjoyment in employment is much more complex than having a BBQ in the car park.

The goal is for fun to become a benchmark of success not an added extra. Fun has to become entwined in the way we work. For this to happen, we must be clear on the value added to our lives and to our businesses. The benefits are now well documented. They include increased morale, motivation, attendance and retention.

Fun Days are an excellent way to help an organization team build by creating shared memories. But when the frivolity is forced it can meet with resistance. Not everyone has the same idea of 'fun'. Humour is a sense, and fun is a matter of taste.

I recently had first hand knowledge of this. You see, I don't like practical jokes. This is my personal taste not my professional opinion. Practical jokes, in the right context, can be wonderful workplace fun. Just not my workplace, please. Bill, my husband and partner in HumourUs, loves practical jokes. He recently sent me a notice that my wages would be docked 2 hours for doing laundry during work hours. It didn't matter that they were his jeans I was washing. I didn't think his memo was funny at all, and told him so.



Jester minute

"I think it's very funny," he countered. "You're the Humour Specialist, are you going to censor my idea of fun? Especially when I got my point across so well..."

My professional side knows he has a valid point. My job is to encourage people to exercise their idea of fun, not judge it. But my personal side still thinks my husband's a bit of a chump.



Funny? But is it your kind of fun?

Your kinda fun, my kinda fun, our kinda fun – it's a minefield we must navigate. Respecting and tolerating other peoples' ideas of fun is the challenge many businesses don't want to take on. Instead of allowing fun to become the fiber of a workplace, it is often relegated to specific activities such as Dress Down Friday or a DVD lunch hour. Interweaving fun and allowing it to grow organically will increase productivity and well being. It is a healthy, diverse organization that will allow fun in its many guises. Every day should be a Fun at Work day, and it is not just in April we should be Fools.

Laugh on
Kate