

Ten Steps to Creating Higher Performing Workplaces

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The Antidote to Reducing Job Stress and Increasing Productivity in These Tough Economic Times:

By Bob Pike, CSP, CPAE-Speakers Hall of Fame

Do you believe that job stress is higher than it's ever been? That people have greater fear about their jobs and financial security than ever before? And that stress and fear reduces productivity? What if you were told you that there is an antidote for these conditions and that this antidote could be taken almost any time and any place? It's true, there is.

And what is the antidote? The antidote is fun. Are you thinking that the idea of fun reducing stress and increasing productivity in these tough economic times is ridiculous? That your organization is looking to simply survive, let alone thrive in these turbulent times? If that's true, then your competitors are silently cheering that you'll continue to believe that. And they will continue to implement fun in the workplace and reap the productivity benefits.

First, let's get rid of either/or thinking. It is not fun OR productivity - you don't have to make a choice. It can be fun AND productivity. A fun work environment is one in which a variety of formal and informal activities regularly occur. These activities are designed to uplift people's spirits and positively and publicly remind people of their value to their managers, their organization, and to each other through the use of humor, playful games, joyful celebrations, opportunities for self-development, or recognition of achievements and milestones. It's less about taking up time - and more about some thoughtful planning. Here are just a few of the things people are doing right now (in order of frequency) to create a more positive, fun, work environment:

- **Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., birthdays and hiring anniversaries).**
- **Fun social events (e.g., picnics, parties, and social gatherings).**
- **Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets).**
- **Opportunities for community volunteerism (e.g., civic and volunteer groups).**
- **Stress release activities (e.g., exercise facilities, and massages).**
- **Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in newsletters and e-mails).**
- **Games (e.g., darts, bingo, and company-sponsored athletic team**

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- **Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., attendance and sales contests).**
- **Opportunities for personal development (e.g., quilting class and book club).**
- **Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, and plays).**

CEOs and leadership experts are taking this seriously. Kemmons Wilson, Jr. of the founding family of the Holiday Inns said, "The responsibility of incorporating 'fun' into an organization is as important a trait for a CEO to possess as is strategic planning."

Howard Putnam, former CEO of Southwest Airlines states: "We hired attitudes that contained a humor and fun component and developed their skills."

And Ken Blanchard, Chief Spiritual Officer of the Ken Blanchard Companies and co-author of The One Minute Manager said this: "There are two things that can drive out fear. The first is faith and the belief in a better way of doing things. The second thing that will drive out fear is fun."

Here are some of the guidelines to insure that fun leads to productivity.

Fun activities should:

1. Make people smile (at a minimum) and laugh (if at all possible).
2. Positively and publicly remind people of their value to the organization and to each other.
3. Be inexpensive to develop, easily prepared, and able to be implemented within time and space limitations.
4. Uplift people's spirits in ways that make them feel good about being part of this organization (e.g., not embarrass, belittle, or offend anyone in or outside of the organization).
5. Be as inclusive as possible, while respecting the right of anyone to opt out without censure, ridicule, pressure, or criticism.
6. Not detract from anyone's ability to safely, professionally, or efficiently perform his or her job responsibilities.
7. Contribute to, and support, the organization's culture and core values.
8. Be done on a frequent basis, encompassing both planned and spontaneous events.



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9. Be planned and implemented largely by employees (not be a top-down program).

10. Produce organizational results that are desirable, identifiable, and measurable.

And those with health challenges are found lightening things up - because it is a way to move on through that particular challenge. And as those responsible for producing results in the workplace - and on whose shoulders rests the real job of moving the world through this current global economic crisis - we can do it faster, better, easier - if we'll have the courage to allow and encourage our colleagues and co-workers to have fun while they are doing it.

Bob Pike CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame has been a training and performance improvement consultant since 1969. He is the Chairman/CEO of the Bob Pike Group and the founder/Editor of the Creative training Techniques newsletter. Author of 28 books, his 29th, The Fun Minute Manager - Creating FUNomenal Results in the Workplace will be released in June 2009. Contact him at Bob@TheFunMinuteManager.com.

