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Rules for Having Fun at Work

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A number of books written within the last few years have been telling employers and employees to have fun at work. Whether it is throwing a fish, squirting each other with water guns, or throwing a pie in the CEO's face; fun at work is a hot topic and one that many companies, small and large, are attempting to implement.

A problem with a number of these "fun" books is that they do not define what fun is and what rules the company should institute before letting the dogs loose.

Rule number one is to clearly explain to the employees what fun is and what it is not. Yes, this is a simple concept, but if not clearly expressed to your employees some will miss the point when you give them permission to have fun at work. So, make sure you spell out thoroughly what behaviors are not included in having fun. For example, fun is not telling jokes, engaging in pranks, and teasing coworkers. In other words, fun at work is nothing you would do at a party, i.e., leave the lampshade at the party.

Having Fun at Work Rules

Fun is not making fun of coworkers or management (No mimicking, no teasing, no mocking)

Fun is not telling jokes (No ethnic jokes, no off-colored jokes, no dark humor)

Fun is not practical jokes or pranks

Fun is not sexual

Fun is not deceptive

Fun is not gambling


Fun is not sarcastic

Fun is not making fun of the company

Having true fun at work is very similar to the type of fun you have when playing a sport or performing. For example, think of the last time you were playing a sport or performing in front of an audience. Do you remember how you channeled your attention and energy to the point that you lost track of time and everything else in your life, so you could focus on your performance? Do you remember how much fun it was getting congratulations from your teammates or from the audience? And even though you were completely exhausted following your performance, do you remember how great you felt inside afterwards? This is the type of fun that best fits the workplace. In other words, the best type of fun for the workplace is playful fun, competitive or noncompetitive, that generates congratulations and cheers from coworkers. Additionally, sporting or performance types of fun fit well within the workplace where employers generally want employees to have energy, drive, talent, determination, competitive spirit, and be goal orientated.

What does playful sporting or performing fun at work look like? Imagine two cooks who decide to compete on how many pancakes they can make on a busy Sunday morning. The cooks encourage the waitresses to sell pancakes, and encourage the prep cooks to make as much pancake batter as possible. At the end of the work shift, the cook who makes the most pancakes gets his name engraved on a spatula. In this example, the cooks were involved both in completing and performing.

(Note: the workers and not management should generate fun at work. Management should simply not get in the way of a truly fun time.)



Fun at work generally translates into increased productivity, increased employee morale, and decreased turnover. It also reduces the need for workers to take mental health days. Just remember to follow rule number one, simply explain to your employees what fun is in the workplace.