

Fun at work essay



Abstract Over the past five decades, research has been done on how a playful approach at work helps both the employees and the organizations. While more and more corporations are becoming proactive on this approach, the conservative organizations express concern about playing at work. This literature review explains the method of how playing at work will create an open mind. The paper will demonstrate the five steps of how play at work benefits organizations. It points out the advantages while suggesting the need for a business culture to provide an infrastructure that will start the potential and capabilities in people.

Fun at Work 3 Play at Work For almost five decades, studies have been done on the cerebral cortex, the area of the brain which relates to the thought process, and how play can reduce stress, and increase creativity and productivity. Although people think playing at work could possibly cost them their place of employment, more and more companies are realizing they have to reorganize the model of their work environment. More business leaders are beginning to understand that a playful approach can help relieve stress, stimulate creativity, and increase problem solving and adaptive abilities.

Business leaders see how play at work helps create answers to complex problems. Research also shows that playfulness creates an open and healthy state of mind. However, some business leaders are conservative and believe business involves critical decisions and is much too serious to involve any kind of playful approach. They believe that when high stakes are involved, a controlled, researched and thoughtful approach is more appropriate. This examination of the theory of play at work will illustrate the effectiveness of

play, how it affects the roles at work and how business leaders can invite play at work.

Childlike State of Mind Playing at work is good for both the corporation and the employees who work for them. In Dan Pink's, "A Whole New Mind" (Brown, T. 2008), there are six aptitudes that are needed to be successful in the business world today. Playing at work is at the top of the list. Playing puts the mind back in the beginning stages, back to a childlike state of mind, where anything is achievable and possibilities are limitless. A childlike sense of curiosity will allow the employee to see everything with insight.

It will initiate potential and invite curiosity, inner wisdom and inspiration. The playing skills people learned as children are not unneeded, they are a necessity. Hands-on learning are one of the building modes that are learned by young children. However, old habits start to form as children start to grow, and is nearly non-existent as they move through the education system in later years and enter the work force. Hands on learning or "role playing" are empathizing tools. Like children, employers should take role-playing more seriously.

Fun at Work 4 Role play is important for putting themselves in the shoes of other people. This helps the employee and/or the corporations to look at the world and experiences from the consumer's point of view. Some business leaders say play is simply entertainment – passive, and unchallenging. Society condemns the adults who dare play. However, when children feel secure in their environment, they sense they have freedom to play and open

their minds. Should not corporations create the most secure environments for their employees, and encourage freedom, limitless creativity and play?

An Opened State of Mind A person's state of mind is what limits or extends their creativity and the full expression of their talents and potential. Their own thoughts determine the current state of mind, which can change at any moment. "When the past is let go, and they place their attention on the present, they will increase their potential, be happier at work and relieve all of the stress of everyday life" (Gorman, P. 2009). Playing is the simplest way to achieve an open state of mind. Marianne St.

Clair, a life coach and author dedicated to the importance of play, states, "Adults often consider play as something they should squeeze into their days, rather than something hardwired into their brains that must be part of their lives for them to optimize physical and emotional conditions" (Gorman, P. 2009). The magnetism of an open state of mind draws in others and invites them to play along. An increasing number of proactive businesses are demonstrating and supporting a playful state of mind among employees.

Keeping an open and playful state of mind supports customer service excellence, and ignites employees for creativity, innovation, productivity and profitability. When the focus is on the current moment rather than on the past or future, individuals can connect with their own potential and recognize the capabilities in others. Just as important, a healthy state of mind creates respect and equality which will support relationships Fun at Work 5 and communication. Keeping lines of communication open is imperative for the success of a business and an individual.

An open state of mind brings success to the workforce, and success keeps people in a clear and present state of mind, in the positive thinking mode and attentive to the here and now. Play in Humans Stuart Brown, M. D. , has made a career of studying the importance of play in humans. He is a former clinical director and chief of psychiatry at Mercy Hospital in San Diego, and now runs the National Institute for Play. He states, “ When you talk about the work environment, you’re talking about something that tends to become repetitious.

You begin to feel like you’re in a cul de sac and it becomes hard to bring your imagination with you when you go to work. So you try to get your imagination going through your work setting, through the people you work with” (Gorman, P. 2009). Many industries, from hospitals to automobile industries have implemented play as a part of their work culture to support customer service, productivity and profitability. A playful approach to customer service creates a personal connection with buyers and sellers, adds to the enjoyment of work and helps with employee retention.

With the corporate world in this economic downturn, employees are looking over their shoulders to see if they are going to keep their jobs. So it is imperative for organizations to have play in the work environment. People cannot function when worrying about their jobs. Playfulness prepares them for change and helps them to move with the flow. A business culture that supports play at work can provide an infrastructure to release the potential in people. They will create a positive business outcome, retain employees and enhance the experience of work.

For organizations to achieve this positive business outcome, leadership and management have to play together and unite. Fun at Work 6 Unity In conservative organizations, leadership and management are like the odd couple. As St. Clair explains, “ The problem is that leadership is right brain and management is left brain” (Gorman, P. 2009). Leadership is giving guidance and direction, and about creating imagination. Management has its blinders on. It Looks straight forward to get the job done while draining every ounce of energy from the work force for one purpose only, the bottom line.

Managers, who only use the left side of the brain, are limiting the work force and their capabilities to a great degree. Corporations that are proactive and have leadership that has the innovation and inspiration to unite the left and right side of the brain and make it whole, create a sense of playfulness and receive better results. “ We take the business seriously, but we discovered we could be serious about business and still have fun...” (Lundin, C. , Paul, H. Christensen, J. 2000 p. 63).

Not only do they unify the white and blue collar worker, they also unite their vendors and consumers. When managers develop into leaders, the workforce becomes enthusiastic, and they find their jobs challenging and fun. However, when managers keep their blinders on, the workforce becomes afraid. They are stressed out and the organization fails due to a lack of leadership ability. Stress When stress enters the workplace, employees stop being team players. They start shutting down, and that’s where the workplace gets unclear.

Management will have to change the culture of the work environment.

Marian C. Diamond, Ph. D. , a professor of anatomy at the University of California at Berkeley explains that play as an important element to relieve stress in the workplace, to help people bond, reinforce communication and that there is hard science behind the theory (Gorman, P. 2009). When an organization adds play to the work environment, Fun at Work 7 the results are almost immediate. Golden says, “ The bottom line is that play reduces stress, which boosts creativity and productivity.

And companies with happier workforces do better business” (Golden, S. 2005). People are physiologically designed to play throughout their lives, including at work. Play keeps them in concert with their inner self and helps them remain in tune on current issues. Combining a playful approach to work will alleviate the stress at work and stimulate creativity, increase problem solving and adaptive abilities. In conclusion, the results of the studies that were done explain to corporations that play at work will help the bottom line.