



Lawpsided Seminars

Ten Ways to Add Fun to the Workplace

By Sean Carter

A law firm's greatest asset is its employees. More particularly, its greatest asset is those employees who like their jobs. These employees are more productive as they often arrive early and stay late. They also take fewer sick and personal days. In short, when work is fun, it doesn't seem like "work" anymore.

The important thing to realize is that there are steps that everyone can take to transform the workplace into the "funplace." And, more importantly, these steps do not detract from the main purpose of the firm, which is to conduct "business" on behalf of its clients. Here are ten ways to add fun to your workplace.

- 1. The Name Game.** The most beautiful word in the English language for all of us is our own name. However, in many companies, too few people are on a first-name (or any name) basis. Instead, we all pretend to be best friends by using terms of endearment like "buddy," "pal," "sweetie," "girlfriend," etc. This is a shallow ruse and a poor excuse for taking the time to know the names of our co-workers. A fun way to fix this problem is to play the Name Game. You simply appoint a Name Czar. Whenever the Name Czar sees two or more people talking (or simply standing near one another), the Name Czar quizzes each person about the other person's name. If a person "fails" the quiz, they are fined \$1. In a very short period of time, everyone will know everyone else's name. Even more, the fine pot is a great source of funds to throw a pizza party, give away prizes, or what have you.
- 2. Workstation Dress Up Days.** Monotony kills joy. After awhile, it can get depressing working in the same workstation day after day. To alleviate this problem, you can have days in which employees decorate their workstations to coincide with the theme of the season (e.g., Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas). Of course, don't feel confined to just holidays. For instance, to celebrate the beginning of summer, you can have a "Beach Day," where employees decorate their workstations with umbrellas, beach towels, etc. To encourage participation, you can award prizes to the most authentic, the most creative, the most festive, etc.
- 3. Trivia Contests.** One way to create loyalty and a sense of belonging is through sharing a common history. You can share the history of your firm with your employees in a fun way by creating trivia contests. To make it easier for everyone to participate, the answers probably should be multiple-choice and may even contain hints for newcomers to the

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- company. The point is to make answering the questions fun. In this regard, prizes for the “winners” will add to the fun.
4. **Scavenger Hunts.** Most people have a need to be more than simply a name or job function in the eyes of others. We also want to be seen as *people* – people with families, hobbies and lives outside of the office. One way to encourage people to learn about each other is to sponsor scavenger hunts where employees hunt for information about their colleagues. For instance, the goal of the scavenger hunt could be to find two people who went to college in New England, three people who are black belts in karate, etc. To prevent from having the scavenger hunt ruin office productivity, conduct it over a two or three-week period so that people can casually go about the task of learning more than the name, rank and serial numbers of their fellow employees.
 5. **Talent Competition.** At holiday parties and other company gatherings, sponsor a talent competition. There are a number of people in your company who have amazing talents that never get an opportunity for expression at work. A talent competition will allow them to show that there is more to them than their ability to write briefs, create web pages or crunch numbers. You may also consider adding some fun categories as well, such as “Most Unusual Talent” or “Most Unlikely Talent”.
 6. **High School Yearbook Awards.** In high school, each class chooses a “Class Clown,” “Best Dressed,” etc. Why can’t your firm do the same thing? In fact, you can make the awards much more meaningful (and fun) by changing them to fit your firm. For instance, you could have awards for “Firm Crackup,” “Best Voicemail Message,” “Worst Penmanship,” “Messiest Office,” “Most Interesting Office,” etc. If you want to go all out, hold your own award ceremony complete with red carpet walks and long-winded acceptance speeches.
 7. **Employee of the Day.** The renowned speaker Cavett Roberts once said, “Three billion people on this planet go to bed hungry each night for food but four billion people go to bed hungry for a word of encouragement and praise.” We all have a deep need for praise so why not meet that need as often as possible by naming an “Employee of the Day” *everyday*. Employees could be nominated for such simple (but extremely valuable) actions as soothing a disgruntled client, working through lunch to meet a deadline or bringing home-made chocolate chip cookies into work. All employees don’t have the opportunity to land million-dollar accounts or represent the firm on television. However, each employee does make a contribution that should be recognized at some point. Employee of the Day awards can serve this purpose.

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8. **Feature Stories.** If you have a firm newsletter, you may want to consider adding an employee feature story. In this story, you can tell the life story of the employee – where they grew up, where they went to school, their family status, their hobbies, etc. It's probably best to choose employees at random rather than by rank or seniority to make it more interesting for the readers.
9. **Weekly Drawings.** Everyone loves to play the lottery. Why not add that same feeling in the office by having a weekly drawing? The prize could be something small given away by the firm (or one of its clients). It could also include items donated by employees – tickets to sporting events or the theater, etc. The point is to add a little excitement to the week.-
10. **Join a League.** Employees who play together, stay together. In most cities, there are law firm leagues for basketball, software, bowling, etc. And if there is no league, form your own company league. There is nothing wrong with a little healthy competition between say, the staff and the attorneys or the associates and partners. The important thing is to provide an opportunity for employees to work together and have fun. Besides, we could all use a little more exercise.

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