

Make Meetings Fun

When the average employee is asked to attend another meeting during their busy day, the natural response is to run like the wind – or at least fake a "scheduling conflict." It's hard to imagine meetings being considered "fun." But injecting a little fun into your meetings might be just the right thing to encourage participation and creativity.

No one will be required to recite knock-knock jokes, wear silly costumes or balance a spoon on their nose, but a little laughter can go a long way towards improving productivity and employee morale. Unless the meeting is scheduled to deliver bad news, why not try a few of these ideas?

- ✓ Most people learn by doing. Whenever possible, include hands-on activities, live demonstrations, field trips, games, role-playing, etc. Don't be afraid to mix it up – variety is what keeps people interested.
- ✓ Bribery works! Organize contests to generate ideas and offer prizes to encourage participation. A little friendly competition can bring great results.
- ✓ If your meetings tend to be dominated by a few people, try passing out five pennies to each meeting attendee. Attendees must "spend" a penny each time they talk. And no borrowing allowed!
- ✓ Consider appointing a Director of Fun for meetings. The Director will be responsible for dreaming up participatory activities, bringing in additional fun materials (videos, comic strips, articles, snacks) that relate to the meeting topic. A different Director could be appointed for each meeting.
- ✓ For a fun change of pace, consider hosting a meeting in talk-show style. Have the speakers act as guests, attendees are audience members and the meeting facilitator can be the talk show host. The host will encourage the audience to ask questions and share their opinions on the speakers' comments.

Having fun at the office leads to a more enjoyable workplace and increased employee loyalty. It's important to always provide employees with the caveat up front that they're free to decide to what extent they wish to participate. Some employees will warm up more slowly to an unconventional meeting style than others. It's not fun to have your meeting facilitator (or worse, your boss) breathing down your neck to hurry up and start enjoying yourself. People will participate when they're comfortable and relaxed.

Remember, laughter stimulates blood flow, strengthens the immune system, reduces levels of hormones that create stress, and reduces pain perception (this is especially important when you're attending the sixth meeting of the day). Happy Meeting!