

How to Create a *Motivating* Environment



Use these suggestions to ramp up productivity, reduce stress, and build morale.

By Gini Graham Scott

The higher employees' morale, the more they'll get done. Here are some low-cost ways to make the office more fun and less stressful for employees:

Start meetings with a fun opener, and add some humorous or inspirational touches. For example, share a quick joke, particularly one related to the workplace or your industry, or bring in an inspirational quote or passage to read at the meeting. Or start the meeting by asking people to share something enjoyable or inspirational that they did. For instance, they might fill in a sentence such as: "My favorite way to have fun is..."; "What I especially enjoy is..."; or "One of the most fun things I did this past week (month, on the weekend) was...."

Add humorous or inspirational touches to your meetings.

Invite employees to bring dishes to a potluck for lunch, an office party, or a picnic, and suggest a theme to make things more festive. For example, people could bring their specialties to an ethnic foods night. Those who like to cook could participate in a cooking contest, such as a bake-off or chili cook-off, with employees voting on their favorite dishes, and a novelty prize for the winner.

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Create a space in the office where people can put up comments, short poems, cartoon favorites, and the like. This could be a bulletin board in the lunchroom, wall in a meeting room, or other location. Or arrange long strips of wrapping paper along one wall, as one manager did, where people can write or draw whatever they want and tape up clippings from newspapers and magazines. Suggest a positive, motivational theme to use.

Bring in a CD player or iPod, and encourage people to bring in their favorite songs to play during lunch hour or on breaks. Employees can just listen or dance as they like. Employees who are good at dancing might give others lessons.

Introduce a "fun box," where employees can drop off suggestions on fun things to do. Go through these suggestions and implement those

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you like best. Or read them aloud at a meeting, have employees vote on them, and implement the winners. Even if suggestions are totally off the wall and impractical, read them aloud, too—always good for a laugh. ■

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Taking Fun Out of the Box

For more morale-building strategies, see these *Nonprofit World* articles at www.snpo.org/members:

- **The Overwhelmed Office: Six Fixes for the Stressed-Out, Productivity-Challenged Workplace** (Vol. 28, No. 4)
- **Building Morale** (Vol. 13, No. 3)
- **Counteract Stress to Make the Best Decisions** (Vol. 28, No. 1)
- **Why Your Employees Are Losing Motivation—and What to Do about It** (Vol. 27, No. 3)
- **How to Reduce Employee Stress** (Vol. 24, No. 3)
- **Think, Dream, and Do** (Vol. 28, No. 6).