



101 Ways to Boost Morale at Work

From
The Desk
of Bob Nelson

Bob Nelson

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INTRODUCTION

Today's workers are stressed out. Some 40 percent of them report their jobs are very or extremely stressful and 25 percent say their job is the Number One stressor in their lives today (National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health, July 2003). Sixty percent of workers feel pressure to work too much and 56 percent of them are either somewhat or completely dissatisfied with their jobs today (CNNmoney.com, November 2003). In short, morale is at an all time low for most employees today.

Yet, I find there is a fine line of difference between stress and excitement. In the following pages you will find simple and practical ideas for improving morale in your workplace and making work more fun and enjoyable in the process. Use & enjoy!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CONTENTS

- I. One for All and All for One
- II. Appreciating a Job Well Done
- III. Balancing Work and Family
- IV. Relaxing with Dress Codes
- V. Best Friends at Work
- VI. Improving Someone's Workday
- VII. Keeping Spirits Up With Perks

I. One for All and All for One

I think most of us have experienced that incredible feeling in a workplace when your entire department is full of energy and enthusiasm and everyone is focused on accomplishing a set of goals. This magic is achieved by clearly communicating the goals and by building a team that is excited about achieving those goals. All of the ideas in this chapter will help you build morale by getting everyone to work together as a team.

“Continuous, supportive communication from managers, supervisors, and associates is too often underemphasized. It is a major, major motivator.”

—Jim Moulthrop, Consultant

There’s no “I” in team. To keep front liners motivated, WinterSilks, a \$35-million silk apparel cataloger in Middleton, WI, requires all salaried personnel, including senior management, to take a minimum of fifty phone orders annually. Executives fill in where needed.

Stand Up and Holler. “We hosted a sales and service conference in Orlando last year. When the buses filled with employees who were attending arrived at the resort, all the executives lined up on the sidewalk and applauded as they disembarked from the buses and went into the resort. We stood most of the day, and some of us even got blisters. It really made everyone feel very special.” —Victoria Gomez, Vice President, Norwest Banks, Columbia, MD





Sky fare. Herb Kelleher, CEO and co-founder of Dallas-based Southwest Airlines, knows the value of being personally connected with employees. He often helps flight attendants serve beverages when he flies and has been known to help sort luggage.

Publish or perish. To improve morale of its drivers, who felt “out of touch” because they were often offsite, Barr-Nunn Transportation of Granger, IA, publishes a newsletter and hands out a four-hour cassette tape with industry and company news, information on benefits, and personalized messages such as birthday announcements. Since starting this, the company has experienced a 35 percent reduction in turnover.

Keeping in Touch. “We assign a mentor to each new employee who comes on board so the people feel connected right away. The mentor is available for any type of day-to-day questions. At the end of 60 days, there’s a follow-up with the mentor, employee, and manager to see how everything’s going. It’s really made a difference in our retention rate and in how fast people feel ‘on board.’”

—Claudia J. Smith, Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Austin, TX

Graphic diversity. Employees at the Gap’s Canadian Distribution Center in Brampton, Ontario, place push pins on a giant world map in the lobby to create a visual display of their countries of origin.





Real Meal Deal. “Once a month, Integrated Marketing Services in Princeton, NJ, invites employees to a ‘Bagels and B.S.’ meeting at which management discusses performance year-to-date and plans for the future, then fields questions from the

group. Employees are also invited to complain to management about whatever might be on their minds. The meetings have opened up the lines of communication and are very popular.” —*Jim Mullins, Kepner-Tregoe, Inc., Princeton, NJ*

Strength barrage. A great way to perk up an entire office and provide practical feedback is to have everyone make a list of positive attributes of each co-worker.

All Together Now!. “We sent an e-mail to our entire staff asking everyone to applaud the great efforts of our office services department at 4 p.m. at their desks. Members of that department work throughout the building and are rarely in one place at the same time, so this was a terrific way for each staff member to receive the benefit of the praising at exactly the same time and in the same way.” —*Barbara Green, Office Manager, Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP, Canton, OH*



“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

—Sir Winston Churchill

High Note. “I end our management staff meetings on a high note by saving time at the end of each meeting and asking that 11 managers share one thing they have done to thank their employees since we last met. I capture those thanks and place them in our employee newsletter for broader visibility. —Norman Groh, Customer Service Manager, Xerox Corporation, Irving, TX

The Human Touch. “I mark my calendar and then send flowers or cards to employees on the anniversary of important events in their lives. For example, I’ve sent cards on the anniversary of a parent’s death or for a child’s graduation or birthday. There are subtle ways to let employees know I’m interested without prying into their lives. After all, we’re working with human beings, and we can all be more effective and sensitive if we understand one another better.” —Don Eggleston, Director of OD, SSM Healthcare, St. Louis, MO



Say It Electronically. “I recently discovered a useful tool for planning recognition in advance for the year. Everyone knows about electronic greeting cards, of course. There are many services. They all have a great selection and are really a pick-me-up for our employees when they are having a bad day or are far away on business. People may not realize that you can plan to send anniver-

sary and/or birthday cards up to a year in advance. It just takes filling out a form electronically, and the services send reminders out via email when the date approaches.” —*Katherine A. Kawamoto, Director, Americas Sales Contracts, Irmo, SC*



Reverse Motivation. SCA Hygiene Products, based in Philadelphia, has a novel way to reward senior managers from company headquarters who demonstrate successful leadership. Honored managers “win” a trip to the company’s manufacturing plant in Bowling Green, KY, to spend a day with the line workers there. Awards are given by a three-member

Country Management Team that keeps the process bureaucracy-free. Selected plant workers are also honored when they are especially productive or offer an innovative, money-saving idea by being able to visit any of the company’s sales offices in the U.S. or Canada.

The program has demonstrated considerable success. Plans are being made to rotate some of the company’s European and North American staff and to reward whole teams from Canada with a visit to the U.S. and vice versa. Those who have taken part in the exchange have come back “totally pumped.” —*George Mapson, Director of North American HR, SCA Hygiene Products*

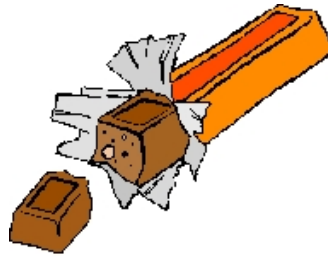
II. Appreciating a Job Well Done

Nothing can kill morale faster than when an employee feels that their accomplishments are not noticed and are not appreciated. This chapter includes creative ideas for recognizing accomplishments.



Floppy Chicken Awards. KFC Corporation Louisville, KY, employees who go the extra mile are presented with a Floppy Chicken Award, numbered in sequence, a handwritten note of thanks, and a \$100 gift certificate. A photo of the presentation is on permanent display in the Walk of Leaders, in a prominent area of corporate headquarters. — *Diane Zile, Manager of Employee Recognition, KFC Corporation, Louisville, KY*

Thanks a Million. “I created an award for all my team members who helped me. I call it my ‘Thanks a Million Award.’ It contains a thank-you note taped to ten \$100,000 candy bars. Recipients break them up and pass them on to others who have helped them.” — *Chris Ortiz, Systems & Applications, NASA, Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX*





Pass-Around Awards. When positive reinforcement is given by colleagues or team members, the results can be significant. For example, the Office of Personnel Management in Washington, DC, has a “Wingspread Award.” This

engraved plaque was first given to the division’s “special performer” by a department head. Later, that person passed the award to someone he believed truly deserved it. The award has come to take on more value because it comes from peers. A recipient can keep it as long as he or she wants or until another “special performer” is discovered, at which time a ceremony and lunch are held to pass the plaque to the new “owner.”

Bonus structure. Amsco Steel pays out 30 to 40 percent of net income in incentives and bonuses to 60 employees, based on three separate financial thresholds. Inventory clerk Ron Bookman says: “It gives you more incentive to make sure everything is perfect to the best of your ability.” The program is refined continually to make it better and make sure everyone feels responsible for success.

The Exalted Order of the Extended Neck. “I wanted to reward people who were willing to buck the system, practice a little entrepreneurship, who were willing to stand the heat for an idea they really believe in, so I give out a special award I call ‘the Exalted Order of the Extended Neck’ for people who really find ways to go ‘outside the box.’” —Richard Zimmerman, Chairman & CEO, Hershey Foods, Hershey, PA



“Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.”

—Art Linkletter

Split the Difference. “At Pfeiffer & Company, a publisher now a part of Jossey-Bass, a division of John Wiley & Sons in San Francisco, employees were rewarded for being willing to stay away from home an extra day by splitting the difference in airline costs with them. For

example, a ticket with a return on Friday night might be \$150 cheaper than one with a Sunday return, so we would give the employee \$75 of that savings. To our surprise, it also turned out to be a great way for employees to bond with clients, vendors, or co-workers in the other city when there simply had been no time during the normal work week for social activities.” —*Marion Mettler, former CEO, Pfeiffer & Company, San Diego, CA*

On board. At Southwest Airlines, the incentive pool last year was equal to 13.7 percent over salary, or an average of \$6,000 per each of the 4,500 employees.

Performance bonus. Wells Fargo Bank employees can add as much as 25 percent of their annual salary in bonuses if they achieve certain performance levels. About 60 percent of employees qualify for at least some bonus each quarter. Says John Gavin, divisional head in Fort Worth, “We found that a typical bonus was seen as just part of salary. Now everyone is paid an incentive based on performance. The difference in employee behavior is significant. The bank first made customer data available to tellers and tracks a new service to the employee who introduces it to a customer.





Easter Baskets. “Last year at Easter time, I purchased plastic eggs and filled them with candy, a bit of pocket change (mostly pennies), and coupons to take off an hour early or come in an hour late or have lunch with me (my treat). To be able to participate, my folks had to meet their weekly quota and then on Monday they picked an egg out of a beautiful-

ly decorated basket. It made Monday morning a little more exciting and set the tone for the whole week!” —*Linda Fuller, Supervisor of Business Development, Jevic, Inc., Delanco, NJ*

The Spark Plug Award. Some very simple awards can make an impression that lasts a lifetime. Beverly Cronin, book manager for Hastings Books, Music, and Entertainment in Rio Rancho, NM, recalls receiving such an award in the mid-sixties from a department store manager in Akron, OH, who said, “This is for you because you add such a spark to our workplace.” The award was a spark plug painted gold and hung on ribbon as a necklace. She still keeps the award in her jewelry box to commemorate the first time she was recognized on the job and realized that she did make a difference.





Thanks a Bunch. “I recently wanted to thank all the employees in my department for their great work in meeting some financial goals. The group is all women, except for one man, who is very health conscious and eats a banana at break daily. I gave each of the women a bunch of flowers and the guy a bunch of bananas. He really appreciated the fun in

the gesture.” —*Terry Horn, HR Director, Household Automotive Finance, San Diego, CA*

Packing it in. Premier Fulfillment in Keller, TX, president Ken Laye uses piecework compensation to move business at the packing company. Says president Ken Laye, “You give people a nice, clean facility to work in, tell them what is expected of them, and pay them what they’re worth. You set up a scenario where they make money and you make money.”

Popcorn Lunch. “When I used to work for Four Pi Systems, a subsidiary of Hewlett-Packard in San Diego, CA, I would take my work group out after finishing a really demanding project to reward them by going to see a movie over lunch hour. It meant a slightly longer lunch hour, but it was a great break and a lot of fun!” —*Jennifer Wallick, Computer Scientist, San Diego, CA*

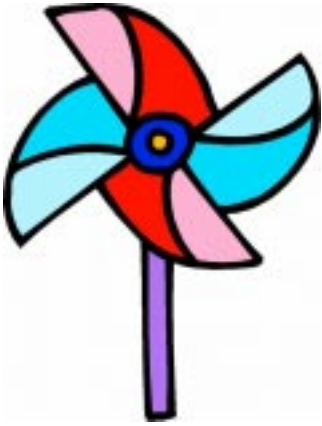




Improved Appearance. “We wanted to improve the appearance of our security guards so we started giving those who were dressed appropriately in full uniform their choice of work schedule as an incentive. We were surprised to find that peer pressure is making the biggest difference. At the beginning of each shift, the shift commander has everyone stand up who is in the correct uniform and the staff call each other on any slipups.” —*Shannon Kearns, RN, Quality Management, Jackson Health System, Miami, FL*

The Gold Star Award. “It’s really true that anything can be a significant form of recognition. Over three years ago I drew a star on a piece of scrap paper, colored it, and gave it to someone for helping me out that day. They in turn gave it to someone who gave it to someone else. It took on special significance with each use. Now we have it on a magnetic backing and people pass it on to recognize those who have helped or those who are having a rough day. People love it!” —*Markeeta Graban, Associate Director, Department of Psychiatry, University of Michigan Health System*





Silly Things Mean a Lot. “I’m the maintenance manager over 64 jet mechanics for a company that contracts out to the U.S. Navy’s flight school. These rough-and-tough men just love it when I tape a pinwheel or a balloon to a plane they’re working on, signifying that the jet engine has passed every test with flying colors. The breeze blowing through the hanger makes them all rotate or bounce around and everyone wants to earn one.” —*J. Charles, Anonymous Government Contractor, Pensacola, FL*

Fishy Stuff. “The New England Aquarium allows employees to recognize co-workers with a ‘thank you cod’ (a card shaped like a cod fish)—a play on New England accents. Half of the card goes to the employee and the other half into a quarterly lottery for gift certificates for paid time off, the company store, and local restaurants.” —*Linda Hower, Learning Technologist, Gilbane University, Providence, RI*



III. Balancing Family and Work

Everyone knows how difficult it can be to balance work with a family life. Employees can feel very stressed when they don't have a balance between work and family. Some 83% of employees want more time with their families according to a recent Gallop Poll. This chapter gives you ideas for how companies are helping employees balance work and family needs and pressures.



Secret Agent Dad. “An engineer on my staff spent an extended amount of time on the road doing environmental evaluations of companies. I sent a letter to his three school-age children explaining why their dad was gone so much lately and that he was doing special ‘secret agent’ work that was very important for our com-

pany. His wife called the next day to say how excited their kids were that dad was a ‘secret agent.’” —*Michael L. Horvath, Director, Environmental Projects, FirstEnergy Corporation*

Priorities. As a result of its commitment to a more balanced work life, employees at clothing outfitter Eddie Bauer can “call in well.” Its Redmond, WA, store has even created “Balance Day,” an additional day off for all employees.

“You never know when a moment and a few sincere words can have an impact on a life.”

—Zig Ziglar, Motivational Speaker



Maydays. “About six years ago, the subject of how great it was to have time off came up, and someone suggested that we offer three-day weekends during the summer. This was the birth of ‘Maydays,’ in which every employee is allowed to take off either a Monday or a Friday each month from May to September, with the approval and coordination of the supervisor. It has become a popular benefit, and we’ve been doing it every year since.” —Peter Workman, President, Workman Publishing, New York, NY

Special services. Coopers & Lybrand provides a resource and referral program for employees who need child care information. One senior consultant used the service to find suitable care when her nanny quit just as she was closing a half-million dollar deal. She was able to interview candidates immediately and did not miss a day of work. The entire setup cost the company under \$150.

Sharing the load. Rippe & Kingston Company in Cincinnati, OH, offers flexible hours and has found that more and more male employees take advantage to leave early to tend to the children or other family members.





Include the Family. We do several things here at Fortress, but one is an especially big hit with the employees' families. Every spouse and child of an employee is in my computer calendar. On the birthdays and anniversaries of all spouses, they are sent flowers or a cookie-gram at their place of business or at home. Every child (up to age 16) is sent a birthday card with \$20 in movie tickets to use at their leisure.

Including the families has meant a lot to everyone. —*Michael L. Finn, Chairman/CRO (Chief Remover of Obstacles), Fortress Safe & Lock, Cincinnati, OH*

Gaining acceptance. 13 percent of employers offer some type of backup child care for well children, up from 5 percent seven years ago, per workplace consultants Hewitt & Associates. The services are increasingly being offered to lower wage workers, not just management.

In it together. When employees at Amway in Ada, MI, work lots of overtime or travel extensively, manager Robin Horder-Koop sends thank-you notes to the employees' families, thanking them for their support.





Bank on us. Chase Manhattan Bank says it has saved \$820,000 in reduced absenteeism in one year alone by offering New York City employees backup child care. The bank plans to open eight new centers in 2001. Employees are offered 20 free days a year.

Stick around. At the Lands' End catalog center in Dodgeville, WI, the new child care center often allows parents who would not be able to come to work at all or who would have to leave early put in a full day when their regular day-care options don't work out.

No rush hour. CMP Media's InformationWeek in Manhasset, NY, the company's onsite child-care center made all the difference in Katherine Lechler being able to continue to work full-time. "It's a great comfort not to have to run out of here at the end of the day and race to some other place to pick up the kids."

Company sponsors. NationsBank, headquartered in Charlotte, NC, provides five different onsite or nearby child-care centers for its 100,000 employees. They also have a chartered public school for 150 students from K-3 in Jacksonville, FL. New parents can also take up to six months of partial home time after maternity leave is over.

“Imagine every person is wearing a sign that says 'Make me feel important.'”
—Mary Kay Ash, Founder
Mary Kay Inc.



Family focus. CDA Management Consulting, Inc., shuts down for a week each summer just to give employees time with their families. Company President Carolyn Pizzuto reports that most customers respond positively to

the company's voice mail message and are willing to call again the following week.

Menu options. Marriott International, based in Bethesda, MD, helps employees balance career and personal life through their Work-Life Program, which has established a child-development center, child-care discounts, family-care spending accounts; referral services for child, elder, and family-care issues; and many other innovative programs.

Less turnover. At Deloitte & Touche's West Palm Beach, FL, office, Ann Blanchard has the freedom to move between part-time and full-time schedules as she raises her young children. "I have a lot of opportunity," Blanchard says. Her boss, Susan Peterson, sees such flexibility as the only way to go: "You can't afford to re-establish your professional staff every few years."

“Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever achieved without it.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson



Seasonal relief. Price Waterhouse has found that offering support for weekend child care is very effective. Nearly 30 of their offices provide subsidized weekend child care during busy tax season.

Charter schools. Ryder System runs a subsidized day care center across the street from its Miami headquarters in an attempt to attract and retain talented employees who might have small children. Now the company is constructing a public charter elementary school next door. “We want to be the employee of choice in south Florida,” says Anthony Burns, chief executive of the truck leasing and logistics firm. Ryder is spending \$5 million to build the school. The proximity of the school could mean productivity gains to Ryder. Teacher conferences and soccer games will be right across the street. Ryder employees’ children will have first claim to the school’s 300 seats. At this time, Florida is the only state that allows companies to give preference to employees’ children.



Family plan. Motorola is constructing an on-site day care center near its facility in Boynton Beach, FL, to help lure workers with young families.

Double duty. J.P. Morgan, an old-line New York investment bank, recently opened a lactation room for nursing mothers on its Wall Street trading floor so they would be able to return to work sooner after maternity leave.

Include the family. Gary Quick, president and CEO of Quick Solutions, Inc., Columbus OH, says: “When you affect the family, you get more mileage out of your perks. A television set from the company, for example, will sit in front of the family for years.” Every four weeks he sends house cleaners to the homes of employees who’ve been with him more than 36 months; he pays \$1,200 toward their vacations. He also sends baskets of food to new employees. Managers get a week a year with their families at the company condo in Florida. Employees who refer six other potential recruits have the use of a new Toyota for two years.



IV. Relaxing With Dress Codes

Many companies today allow casual dress at the office. The shift from suits to blue denim in the workplace can be attributed to high technology, according to clothing manufacturer Lee Jeans. Specifically, computers, fax machines and conference calls reduce the need for traditional corporate attire. There are studies that show that casual dress can increase productivity because comfortable, relaxed employees will work harder and longer at their job. Casual dress codes are a great, no-cost way to boost morale and productivity in your workplace



The New Albany-Floyd County Public Library went through a dress code change and now allows employees to wear jeans as long as they are neat, not faded or fringed. They made this change to allow employees to feel more comfortable and to remove the burden of buying expensive work clothing.

Policy change. American Airlines now allows employees at company headquarters to dress in “business casual” attire every day. The policy applies to about 20,000 management employees. Jayne Allison, vice president for human relations, says, “We have heard from our employees that they believe they are more productive in casual dress.”

“We are continually faced by great opportunities brilliantly disguised as unsolvable problems.”

—Lee Iacocca

Change of pace. Japanese appliance manufacturer Hitachi is doing away with formal titles, somber suits, and morning calisthenics in their Tokyo headquarters. Their goal is “to promote individuality.” Company spokeswoman Emi Takase said employees are being urged to wear polo shirts and slacks,

hoping that more casual clothing will bring out people’s personalities and stimulate their creativity, which will in turn lead to new ideas on how to improve the company. Workers are also no longer required to address their supervisors by formal titles, but may use personal names. Takase says, “We want to give employees freedom to make their own judgments.”

Casual Dress is Here. According to a 1995 poll conducted by Evans Research Associates for the Society for Human Resource Management and Levi Strauss Co., nine out of ten human resource managers said their companies allow employees to wear casual clothing at the office either regularly or on special occasions. Twenty-eight percent allow casual dress daily. Forty-two percent said casual dress is permitted once a week. Eleven percent allows casual dress only on special occasions while one percent permits it on a seasonal basis.





Up and away. Southwest Airlines, which once went as far as the Supreme Court in an effort to keep its flight attendants in hot pants and go-go boots, has recently been encouraging attendants to wear sneakers for comfort and safety. Other airlines and companies have followed suit (so to speak), to the advancement of employee morale.

It is important for organizations to develop a casual dress policy in order to communicate expectations of what is meant by “casual dress.” It is essential that employees know what is acceptable as well as what is unacceptable. Also, managers must set the tone for their employees to help maintain the appropriate level of professionalism for the organization.

Casual Speech. Companies like General Electric, Hewlett-Packard and United Parcel Service have instituted a “universal first naming” program, in which all employees are on a first name basis, even throughout the hierarchy of positions.



Guidelines for Creating a Casual Dress Policy

Casual dress standards can vary from company to company. Standards can also vary from day to day. Casual business wear means neat, clean, professional clothing. Even though standards of dress may be more relaxed at times – remember that good taste and good grooming are always important. Here are some guidelines to help you create your casual dress code:

- ▣ Decide what you want the dress code to say about your business.
- ▣ Ask some of your customers how they expect to see your employees dressed.
- ▣ Ask your employees what they want and what they consider appropriate.
- ▣ Consider all of the jobs and remember that appropriate dress on the loading dock may not be appropriate for a sales person.
- ▣ Have your employees give you feedback on a draft of the dress code.
- ▣ Always state the consequences for non-compliance, including written reprimands, suspensions, or whatever's appropriate for your business.

Whatever you do, put it in writing so everyone knows what to expect. Otherwise, your employees may be undermining your corporate image by dressing how THEY deem appropriate...which may have nothing to do with the business casual image that you want to portray.

V. Best Friends at Work

A growing number of companies are allowing employees to bring their pets into the workplace. Some are even providing veterinary health care coverage to pet-owning employees as an incentive to attract and retain top talent. Studies show that the policy pays off not only in lower worker turnover rates but also with happier, more productive employees. Having pets at work has also been found to reduce stress and can improve an employee's health by getting them out of the office to exercise their pet during the day. Pets are also great at facilitating employee interaction and breaking down awkward social barriers.

Watch dogs. Replacements Ltd. of Greensboro, NC, a supplier of old and new china, crystal, silver, jewelry, and collectibles, has allowed its 565 employees to bring their dogs to work every day since 1996. The company reports a 10 percent drop in absenteeism. On any given day, about 25 to 30 dogs come to work. There have been no problems with dog fights or broken inventory.

“Having a good time is the best motivator there is. When people feel good about a company, they produce more.”

—Dave Lonaberger, CEO
The Longaberger Company



Travel companions. At Parrett Trucking Inc., Scottsboro, AL, Mike Parrett allows drivers to take their pets on the road. But he did have to limit the policy to cats and dogs only in the break room after one of his drivers came inside with a boa constrictor around his neck, causing some alarm for office workers.

Dog days. Iams Company in Dayton, OH, allows employees to bring dogs to work on Fridays. The company manufactures pet food and has not had a problem with animals being onsite.

Stress reduction. Shawn Freeman, CEO of Dallas-based Focus2, advocates bringing pets to work to reduce stress. Some people work as long as 90 hours a week at the Web-development company, so Freeman allows them to bring dogs into the office any time they want. Says Freeman, “They think of their pets as children, and if they go for long periods without seeing them they get sort of grumpy.”



Guidelines for Allowing Pets at Work

Following are some useful suggestions for allowing pets at work:

- Make sure you have a written "Pets at Work" policy.
- Get employee feedback on a draft of the pet policy before publishing the final one
- Make sure to list in the policy which animals that are not welcome at the office.
- Have someone to keep a daily attendance sheet of the animals that are visiting the office.
- Have guidelines for unacceptable behaviors and consequences.
- Designate an area outside for exercising pets.
- Provide pet-free work areas for employees who do not want to be around pets.



VI. Improving Someone's Workday

This chapter is filled with ideas for improving morale by improving an employee's workday. When people see their managers making it easier and more fun for them to work, morale goes up.



Enjoy a laugh. A front-desk worker at Wallpapers R Us in La Mesa, CA, printed off dozens of the jokes she received via e-mail and put them into a binder for customers to enjoy while waiting for their orders to be filled. Customer complaints about delays have dropped, and morale has increased among the sales clerks.

Familiar surroundings. What some consider clutter actually can encourage employee creativity. Allow employees to bring in photos and mementos to brighten up their cubicles. The more pleasant the surroundings, the more likely the employee will be productive and happy.

Bureaucracy bashing. M&M Mars reduced its employee manual from three hundred to five pages; and Continental Airlines symbolically burned its legalistic employee manual.





Warming Up a Cold Day. “One really cold winter day last year when wet snow was coming down and freezing on the streets, we hired local high school students to scrape the ice off the windshields of the employees’ cars and then handed each employee a bottle of Heet as they left for the day. Everyone felt

special and that we were looking out for them.” —*Kathleen Capristo, Chief Motivational Strategist, Awards.com, Lyndhurst, NJ*

Work as fun. Lyondell Petrochemical in Houston, TX, removed several layers of supervision to give employees more authority and responsibility. Says lab technician Leticia Ligsay, “We have the freedom to think; and it’s a lot more fun.”

Cut the Deck. “Our client contact is Cover the phone, so we need our people to WOW those clients to overcome the distance factor (Perth being the most remote city on the globe). I read the compliments I receive in a team meeting and ask the person to pick from a deck of playing cards. For cards 2 through 9, they receive the dollar value. For a 10 or picture card, they receive \$10, and \$20 for an ace. It’s fun and helps to spur all the reps to WOW the clients.” —*Kym Illman, Managing Director, Messages on Hold Australia, Perth, Australia*





Wrap Up the Holidays. “Last year our staff of seven in Employment Services offered to wrap Christmas presents for other employees of the university, even providing gift wrap. We picked up the gifts at people’s desks and brought back their wrapped packages. People loved it! They enjoyed the hassle-free service and the results, especially one person who has 8 children.” —Corey Wedel, *Employment Svc. Mgr., Central Missouri State University*

Web-based learning. Workplace flexibility has become the watchword at accounting firm Ernst & Young, which has developed a database that encourages employees to test alternative work arrangements. Through e-mail program Lotus Notes®, 27,000 members of the far-flung firm share information about existing flexible arrangements at their sites, with the ability to implement whatever has worked for others. The reception has been overwhelmingly positive.

Organize One-Line, Good-Job Tours. Here’s a great suggestion for launching the new year. “Get the highest ranking person you can to tour and visit your department. Before the tour, write out a single 3” by 5” index card for every person. Write a one- or two- line report of some achievement or contribution that the person made. Use the cards as ‘cue cards’ for the top guy, so that he [or she] can personally and specifically thank and compliment each person.” —Jeffrey J. Fox, *Author, How to Become CEO (Hyperion)*





Warm Up. “For eight minutes every afternoon, I have department heads lead their employees in stretching exercises at their desks. It’s a little silly, but it’s fun, and it gives everyone a break. I think we’re more productive because of it and feel better too.”
—Pam Wiseman, *Training Coordinator, Designer Checks, Anniston, AL*

AJarring Experience. “When faced with again disciplining an employee whose productivity, attendance, adherence to the dress code, and attitude were all out of line, I was so frustrated I pulled him outside the store and blurted: ‘I’m really disappointed in you! I know you can do this job, but you’re just throwing all your potential away.’ To my amazement, he decided to live up to my positive opinion of him; he became the top salesperson in the next accounting period.” —Shaheen Mufti, *Women’s Manager, Emporio Armani, Costa Mesa, CA*

Cool Notion.. “When it becomes extremely hot during the summer months, I carry an ice chest full of freezer pops around and give them out to employees who are working in areas that were not air conditioned. You should see their faces light up!” —Cynthia M. Wood, *Team Manager, International Paper, Eastover, SC*



“The secret of success is making your vocation your vacation.”

—Mark Twain

Reach Out. “Store managers at the St. Ann branch of Famous-Barr department stores, based in St. Louis, MO, go to each employee at the end of the day to see what went well for them that day, rather than wait for a weekly or monthly report. Those positive items are worked into the next morning’s store

rally. It’s been a very effective way to reinforce good news on a timely basis and charge employees up to do their best every single day.” —*Dan Eppler, Merchandise Sales Manager, Famous-Barr, St. Ann, MO*

All-Occasion Cards. “I recently decided to take the time to give a welcome card to a new employee and wrote a personal note, saying: ‘At the end of some days you’ll feel elated; after some you’ll feel completely drained; but may you always leave your office knowing you contributed to our organization.’ The employee was thrilled and said she would keep the card always. Her emotional response convinced me of the value of giving cards to thank, congratulate, welcome, and celebrate employees.” —*Joan Padgett, Learning Resources Center, Veteran’s Medical Center, Dayton, OH*

The Praising Board. “I post notes from other departments that have had something positive to say about any of us; this way, people who work with me are more inclined to write one to someone else, so there’s a mutual sharing of thanks. It’s become a point of pride to have a note that one wrote posted.” —*Connie Maxwell, West Des Moines Community Schools*





Join in the fun. A large sofa factory outlet store in San Diego keeps a very large, stuffed polar bear seated on one of the display room sofas. Employees get a kick out of moving the bear into different positions, and customers have been

caught conversing with the bear. Just about everyone who passes likes to pat the bear's soft fur.

Chess anyone? A study by pogo.com, an online game service provider, shows that many employers have begun to encourage staff to play online games to relieve stress or to learn to use a computer mouse more efficiently. The survey found that about 25 percent of employees they contacted were allowed to play Internet games on their breaks.

Balanced life. Claims adjusters with Farmer's Insurance in San Diego, CA, work from home, connected online with the home office in Orange County. Details of cases come via phone or e-mail and they investigate property damage and return to their home offices to file the reports. According to Laura Patefield, "It's the perfect mix of client contact and time alone to complete paperwork. No one's interrupting or standing over my shoulder. I wouldn't leave Farmer's for more money!"





Clean Sweep. “I came up with the idea of offering our employees a management-sponsored car wash (they are in their cars about 20 percent of the time). Employees sat in the shade and drank iced tea while the managers washed their cars. It’s a small thing, but seemed to be appreciated and everyone had a great time!” — *Kelley Gutman, Parrott Creek Child and Family Services, Marylhurst, OR*

Good advice. Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes offer some advice in *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work*: Save humorous clippings, pictures of company events, and fun items such as balloons or toy tops in a “fun first-aid kit” to present to someone who’s feeling low or stressed out on the job. That person can pass it on to the next person who needs it.

Telecommuting. At PriceWaterhouse, more than 600 employees, including three partners in the business, are now using some form of flexible work arrangement. The firm also recently introduced a firm-wide telecommuting pilot program to assess the viability of working from home full-time though an online link.





Some Nordstrom stores recognize employees before the stores open by sharing great letters they have received from customers about their exemplary service over the store intercom system. Letters are then posted on an employee bulletin board for all to read. Each store manager has his or her own routine, but there is never a dearth of material to read,

and hearing the examples motivates other employees to do similar things. —*Edward Nickel, Regional Training & Development Manager, Nordstrom, Inc., Oak Brook, IL*

Remove Obstacles. Go to every employee and find out what obstacles are getting in the way of getting their work done. Be honest and let them know what you cannot fix, and what you are trying to fix.

Stretches Release Stress. “We have what we call ‘Veggie Tales,’ which is a video with cute songs and silly stretches we use to release stress. I lead the 15 members of the team of underwriters in six two-minute aerobics exercises in the common area. We do a lot of close computer work so it’s great to relieve the tension.” —*Suzy Armstrong, OK-KS Office, State Farm Insurance, Tulsa, OK*

Pleasant reading. Make a list of all the people and things that bring you joy and pleasure. Read it when you are upset or need a break.



VII. Keeping Spirits Up with Perks

When employees feel that their managers care about them and that they understand what they are going through, then morale will improve. This chapter includes ideas for helping managers show they care by giving employees perks that make their day better.

Third shift pickup. When Dwayne Greer, manager of an Essilor of America plant, discovered that many third shift workers had no way home and had to spend the night outside the plant, he took initiative to arrange for a local taxi company to pick them up and take them to their homes. Within a year, this program transformed a big turnover problem into a backlog of job applicants eager to work third shift.



Payback. Employees of Longs drugstore chain who work late into the night to stock store shelves for special sales on holidays are given certificates for free pizza and soft drinks and time off later the same week so they can spend some time with their families.





Take a break. Instill, in Palo Alto, CA, offers employees a combination of exercise and caffeine for a “perk.” Employees can walk to the local Peet’s Coffee & Tea down the block, sign a sheet, and Instill pays the cost. Nearly 75 percent of employees take advantage of this at least once a day. The weekly bill averages \$350, including a 15 percent tip. It’s the most popular of Instill’s stress-relieving benefits.

Cure for the munchies. At Playboy Entertainment, Beverly Hills, CA, a service comes every day with food items such as lasagna, burritos, or salads for employee purchase. The company has installed mini-refrigerators for some offices. Each month employees can order bottled water, juices, and soda for themselves. Employees also have the opportunity to attend fancy-dress charitable events at nightclubs.

President Tom McConnell of Boston’s New England Securities urges employees to try to solve problems themselves and to take pride in and “ownership” of the solution. McConnell distributed customized T-shirts with the slogan “See it. Do it. Own it.” to all employees.





To keep the stress level down from working long hours, many companies, such as S.C. Johnson & Son in Racine, WI, hire a masseuse for employees. In fact, many massage services specialize in corporate clients, serving a different company each day of the week.

John's Day. "I decided that my employees should have a voice in deciding how to be recognized for a job well done. So, when salesperson John Gruden made his monthly target of \$125,000 in automated voice processing system sales, I asked him what he would like as a reward. His response: designate a John Day in his honor. Soon, John Day banners were plastered throughout the corporate offices, and the company's receptionists answered the phone, 'It is a good morning at the Automatic Answer, where today we are celebrating John Day.' I also let him use my office for the entire day. Finally, at a catered lunch in his honor, Gruden was presented with a special John Day photo album so that he could remember his special day forever." —David Woo, CEO, Automatic Answer, San Juan Capistrano, CA Just do it.

You decide. Management at AT&T Universal Card Services in Jacksonville, FL, allow employees to use their own judgment about whether to waive late fees or raise credit limits when talking to customers on the phone. This has not only made customers happier, but improved efficiency and given employees a greater sense of control over their jobs and a sense of autonomy. Relaxation technique.





Feel-good perks. Schwartz Communication in Waltham, MA, a PR firm, feels like a big family, with employee kids and a company dog on site most days. The company has a game room, creativity training, sports teams, and four well-stocked kitchens. The company also doles out cash on the spot for special accomplishments and shares profits with employees. When

clients renew contracts, the team that services the contract receives a percentage of the annual retainer fee. Says Paula Mae Schwartz, co-founder, “People are motivated to perform every day because they know we’ll reward them emotionally, educationally, or monetarily. I don’t think people give their all unless you give to them.”

Satellite schools. Thirty companies, including American Bankers Insurance Group and Hewlett-Packard, have built so-called satellite schools on their own grounds. The state of Florida predicts that as many as 50 more companies will open work-site schools within the next five years in that state alone.





Other states follow suit. In Houston, the Medical Center Charter School is adjacent to the hospital, clinics, and medical schools. Children of the medical center’s employees account for nearly the entire enrollment, although it is open to the public.

Tuition reimbursement. Nucor Corporation, in Charlotte, NC, has offered \$2,200 a year toward college tuition for all children of full-time workers for up to four years. In addition, spouses of employees can receive \$1,100 per year for up to two years. According to Nucor President John Correnti, the benefit keeps employee turnover “practically at zero.”

Stop to celebrate. Celebrations are an important way to improve employee morale. Some companies have committees dedicated to planning monthly or quarterly gatherings; at others, managers prepare pancake breakfasts or hamburgers after work for all employees on special occasions.

