

Keeping Business Light & Goal Oriented

Having fun and sharing laughter keeps morale up and stress levels down

By Dan Goldberg

The desire for success in business drives us to work long and hard to attain our goals. We spend enormous numbers of hours working on projects, staying in our stores and offices, keeping in touch with clients, co-workers, and vendors. The abundance of communication tools allows us, for better or worse, to converse in our cars, on the street, practically anywhere.

We have the ability to communicate with people around the world and around the clock. And keep our eyes on what our competitors are doing from sunrise to sunrise, and that's not a typo. This new lifestyle enables us to take advantage of so many positive things in our global society. However it has a huge negative side as well. We are constantly standing on the precipice of being poster children for the "No Rest For The Weary Society" and that's extremely dangerous.

When it all comes down to it, what do we want out of our business lives?

Certainly everyone wants his or her business or career to be a success monetarily. However there is more to it than that. We all or almost all, have additional needs; things that fulfill deep and overriding factors in our lives, the desire for contentment and enjoyment in our business as well as private lives are basic to each of us.

Study after study reinforces the fact that the most important factors in our business lives are a feeling of enjoyment in our careers, an understanding that we're listened to with respect and appreciation, and a need for lightness and camaraderie in the workplace.

I would venture to say that the large majority of us, when faced with the choice of taking a \$100,000 a year position filled with anxiety, stress and long hours or a \$75,000 a year position with a minimal degree of those factors, would almost certainly opt for the second option.

Money is usually not the first item on our list. Granted it's very important but normally given the wrong status by the uninformed hiring community.

The ability to keep business light whenever possible is as important to our emotional selves as is the financial bottom line.

Recently while conducting a seminar I posed the \$100,000, \$75,000 choice question to a group of corporate managers. Every one of them chose the latter.

Lightness in business is not just telling an occasional joke, it's a pervasive feeling of "wow, I really like working here, it's fun."

That feeling should come straight out of the corporate culture. The philosophy and values of the organization should reflect a respect for the people who work in it that is more than a periodic raise or an added health care benefit. It should also include the knowledge that you can speak with your “boss” and receive non-judgmental feedback, and give non-judgmental feedback as well, with complete confidence that there will be no retribution.

That factor alone opens up the organization to creative ideas, and new insights. It won't be long until word gets out on the street that your organization is a great place to work. And in this competitive hiring market that's a big plus!

It should also be noted that the feeling of lightness in your organization will also be picked up by your clients and customers as well. Now don't get confused between lightness and not caring or sloppiness or even negligence, they aren't even on the same planet. You can be light and extremely proficient and effective.

Lightness also includes being able to laugh.
Think about how much laughter adds to our well being.
Who hasn't had a hardy laugh and realized how much they “needed that.”

Even your mistakes can sometimes be turned around, laughed about and used to your advantage.

The older we get, hopefully, the more our inner security grows so that we can organize ourselves to bring about some efficiency into managing the complexities of business without beating ourselves and those around us up while keeping the organization light and fun.

That was and continues to be the number one tenet, followed very closely by making money and managing my self, my employees, my businesses and their growth throughout the years.

We can put all kinds of parameters and structures in place. Write manuals spelling out everything from when we should go to lunch to when we're “allowed” to get sick, from procedures on how to purchase to how to sell and what programs to use to report both activities.

Yet if the ingredients of lightness, fun and/or stimulation aren't present it's as if all our well-meaning dictates were written on a hologram. Sort of there, but not really.

The stimulation, fun, lightness factors are so important that they are some of the main reasons people leave one career or company to go on to the next.

That includes recognizing your co-workers for jobs well done to being able to forgive them for mistakes, something we must remember we all do.

Of course there is a process for dealing with mistakes:

- Forgive, then, explain what should have been done in those situations.
- Put yourself in their position.
- Ask them why they did what they did.
- Give and receive feedback.
- Enable people to process the information and the mentoring you give them.
- Let them feel free to ask you anything in regards to their job.

A caring approach usually gets a caring response.

However we always run the risk of folks who will take advantage of the good-natured, caring manager or owner.

As the old saying goes, “once shame on you, twice shame on me” and may I add three times or maybe once or twice more than that, with documentation, and there’s the door! Of course you should have a policy for dealing with those types of people.

I’ve always felt that those who take advantage of caring people, will eventually realize that it’s his or her lose.

Be kind, caring, considerate, and never, ever loose sight of your goals.

And make sure that your team members, employees and/or co-workers know what the goals are. It’s also a good idea that you know what their goals are, in business and in life. This way you can help them achieve their goals while they help you achieve yours.

Keeping the team, employees, co-workers and yourself focused while enjoying what they do may include:

- Taking those people relevant to projects or department members out to lunch or dinner.
- Encouraging creativity and brainstorming. These can be organized meetings.
- Forming intra or inter corporate sports teams and scheduling games.
- Having family outings or barbecues.
- Making annual corporate meetings fun first and last with the meat in the middle.
- Recognizing those who excelled in their positions (make sure the playing field is even first).
- Recognizing those who came up with good and/or creative ideas.
- Allowing some time, of course not an excessive amount, for socializing in the office.
- Reminding everyone of the goal and sticking to a schedule.
- Encouraging laughter.
- Never making anyone feel that you are above reproach or unapproachable
- Allowing people leeway in how they dress and decorate their surrounds

The environment we create in our business lives is often a major factor in how we feel in our private lives. They are both so intertwined that they almost become indistinguishable. Likewise the problems in our private lives often effect how we function in business. It is important that we enable those who work with us to receive the help and encouragement they need in dealing with traumatic experiences in both their business and private lives. That includes time to recover, both physically and mentally, from tragedies as well as joyous events. Personal support and interaction, without being too intrusive, will always be fondly remembered.

A light and caring work environment should be evident during good and bad times as well. When that type of environment is in place the organization is more apt to have employees tell their managers what is going on in their lives instead of having a situation where a personal problem festers and creates business problems for the individual, the manager and the team.

Business is a competitive game in which we've chosen to participate. Like all games we've got to get to the goal line, whatever shape that takes, before the opposition. There's nothing more fun than winning at a challenging game, with teammates you like and in an environment you enjoy. It builds loyalty and excitement.

Why create a stiff, oppressive, negative work environment. Who needs or wants that? And in today's workplace that's a formula for employee turnover or corporate death. It's easier to reach your objectives and goals when everyone feels that they're genuinely cared for and appreciated

We're only on this planet for a finite period of time. Please, manage by not losing focus and play to win but I behoove you to be kind, make money, be light and have fun!

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