Making Work Suck Less: Healing Workplaces Through Play

Jeff Harry
Positive Psychology Play Speaker

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Attunement

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Building The Work Playground

Why Does Work Suck Now?

What Initial Steps Need To Be Taken To Build Back Trust?

How Can We Measure Progress in Healing A Workplace?

What Are You Willing To Do First?

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Built The Largest LEGO-Inspired STEM Organization In The U.S.

- Play (No Business Plan)
- Intuition (Picked Fun People)
- Prioritized people over profit
- Followed Our Curiosity
- Focused On Inspiring Staff

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What Is Play?

Play Is Any Joyful Act That Has No Specific Purpose or Result…

Where You Are Fully Immersed In The Moment

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What Is Play?

Play Is The Opposite of Perfection

Play is rooted in curiosity, experimentation, a sense of wonder

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You'll find the future where people are having fun.

STEVEN JOHNSON

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Play Is Where Innovation Thrives

Vs.

Wright Brothers

Samuel Pierpoint Langley

- Competed Against The Wright Brothers To Create The First Flying Apparatus
- Received $2.5 Million By The War Department
- Had Access To The Top Scientists & Engineers At The Smithsonian
- Quit After 2 Failed Flight Attempts

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Work Sucks...

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Employees Feel Used

Some Google employees didn't realize they were laid off until their badges wouldn't let them into the office

Aaron Mok, Kate Duffy, and Sawdeh Bshitiya
Jan 25, 2023, 2:49 AM MST
Sephora Hit $10 Billion in Revenue and Workers Aren't Happy That All They Got Was a 'Stale Cookie'

Reddit users called it the "infamous cookie."

BY JORDAN HART • FEB 7, 2024

Key Takeaways

- Sephora North America shattered records with $10 billion in sales in 2023.
- But workers at the beauty chain were disappointed to just get cookies to celebrate the milestone.
- An employee who got the cookies told Business Insider they were "stale."
Employees Feel Exploited
The Productivity–Pay Gap

Most Americans believe that a rising tide should lift all boats—that as the economy expands, everybody should reap the rewards. This outcome can be guaranteed by smart and compassionate policy choices or subverted by policymakers choosing a different path. EPI’s Productivity–Pay Tracker shows the shift toward the latter: Since the late 1970s, our policy choices have led directly to a pronounced divergence between productivity and typical workers’ pay. It doesn’t have to be this way.

The gap between productivity and a typical worker’s compensation has increased dramatically since 1979

**Productivity–Pay Tracker**

Change 1979–2022:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>+64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hourly pay</td>
<td>+14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Productivity has grown 4.4x as much as pay

Notes: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/non-supervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. “Net productivity” is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.


Economic Policy Institute
Work Sucks, But It Doesn’t Have To
What Do Employees Want?

Staff Want To Feel Seen, Appreciated & Heard

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Question Worth Asking #1

What Do You Need To Feel Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?

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Question Worth Asking #1

What Do You Do To Ensure Your Staff Feel Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?

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Making The Work Playground Safe

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Making The Work Playground Safe

Ready For The Hard Questions?
Question Worth Asking #2
What Values Are Communicated Through Your Team’s Actions?

OR

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Work Culture Is Defined By The Worst Behavior Tolerated - John Amaechi
Nobody wants to work anymore…
Nobody wants to work anymore…

with them.
Question Worth Asking #3

Which Managers Should Not Be Leading People?

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Nearly all bosses are ‘accidental’ with no formal training—and research shows it’s leading 1 in 3 workers to quit

BY ORIANA ROSA ROYLE
October 10, 2023 at 4:47 AM PDT

The Chartered Management Institute’s research found that although one in four people in the workforce have management responsibilities, very few have been trained to do their jobs.

LUIS ALVAREZ—GETTY IMAGES

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From Manager to an Individual Contributor - A step ‘Backward’ ‘Forward’!

As per Conventional wisdom, it is a natural progression to *always* move from an Individual contributor to a Manager /Team Leader role. But as per the ‘New’ wisdom, it is ok to move from a Manager to an Individual Contributor (‘By-Choice’ cases) as long as you can justify your move and showcase how you utilized this move to the maximum.
We Are All Feeling Burnout

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We Are All Feeling Burnout

- Doing The Job of 2 - 3 People
- Impossible Deadlines
- Consistently Working Late
- Overly Demanding Supervisors

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What Issues Are You Facing?

- Unfunded Mandates
- Not Enough Staff
- Aging Infrastructure
- Not Enough Money

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YOGA
Happy Hour
Pizza Party
Therapy

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Question Worth Asking #4

Are You Addressing Systemic Issues With Individual Solutions?

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The Work Playground Is Safe

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To Feel Seen

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Play Experiment: Explore Your Impact

Write Down What You Do Best At Work

Celebrate!

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Play Experiment: Explore Your Why

How many people's lives have you impacted this year in positive way?

Directly & Indirectly

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Play Experiment: Explore Your Why

Think of your most memorable & meaningful moment this year where you impacted someone in a positive way

(Felt the most connected to your work)

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DOPAMINE
THE REWARD CHEMICAL
• Completing a task
• Doing self-care activities
• Eating food
• Celebrating little wins

OXYTOCIN
THE LOVE HORMONE
• Playing with a dog
• Playing with a baby
• Holding hand
• Hugging your family
• Give compliment

SEROTONIN
THE MOOD STABILIZER
• Meditating
• Running
• Sun exposure
• Walk in nature
• Swimming
• Cycling

ENDORPHIN
THE PAIN KILLER
• Laughter exercise
• Essential oils
• Watch a comedy
• Dark chocolate
• Exercising

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To Feel Heard

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Address The Water Pressure Issues
Question Worth Asking #5:
What Are Your Water Pressure Issues?
To Feel Appreciated

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What Is Your Language of Appreciation?

- Tangible Gifts
- Quality Time
- Words of Affirmation
- Acts of Service

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What Is Your Language of Appreciation?

How Would You Like To Receive Recognition?

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Humans Wanted To Be Treated Like Humans

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FORCED FUN SUCKS

Why do a number of organizations keep at it?

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Zone of Genius/Flow State

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THE BIG LEAP

ZONE OF EXCELLENCE
You do these things extremely well and can make a good living. (This is where others want you to stay.)

ZONE OF GENIUS
The set of activities you're uniquely suited to do...
...they draw upon your special gifts and strengths.

ZONE OF INCOMPETENCE
Others can do these things better than you can.

ZONE OF COMPETENCE
Others can do these things just as well as you can.

TIME

BEST USE OF

TALENT

Source: The Big Leap by Gay Hendricks (published 2009), p. 29, 31, 33, 34

Infographic by Anaik
What Is Flow?

“
The best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen. – Flow

Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

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What Is Your Staff’s Zone of Genius/Flow?

What is the work you do where you forget about time?

What is the work you’d do even if you weren’t get paid for it?

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Making Work Suck Less Through Play: Questions Worth Asking

• What Do You Do To Ensure Your Staff Feel Seen, Heard, & Appreciated?

• What Values Are Communicated Through Your Team’s Actions?

• Which Managers Should Not Be Leading People?

• Are You Addressing Systemic Issues With Individual Solutions?

• What Are Your Water Pressure Issues?

• What Is Your Language of Appreciation?

• What Is Your Zone of Genius?

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Who Will Decide The Future of Work?
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Old School Leadership
- Individualism
- Competition
- Control
- Ego

Human-Centered Leadership
- Shared Humanity
- Collaboration
- Inspiration
- Intuition
Thanks So Much For Playing! Access To Studies & Bonus Gift

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