

It's ok to have fun in business

Laughter and happiness has a huge effect on our emotional wellbeing and our performance at work. Sometimes we forget how good it feels to share a big, roaring belly laugh. There's a film starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman called 'The Bucket List' which shows how enriching it can be to let our guard down and laugh at the absurdities of life and how sad it is when we become so vacant in our day to day existence, that we forget to do this.

Edward (played by Nicholson) works his whole life to build his hospital corporation into a Fortune 500 company. He is diagnosed with cancer and put into a room with another cancer patient, Carter Chambers (Morgan Freeman). The doctors give both the news that they have six-months to a year to live. Carter decides to write a 'Bucket List' of the things to do in life before you kick the bucket. One of the final items on the list Carter crosses off before he passes away is to "laugh until he cries". Against doctor's orders and all good sense, these two virtual strangers check themselves out of the hospital and hit the road together for the adventure of a lifetime.

Compared to all the items they see and do – from the Taj Mahal to the Serengeti, the finest restaurants to the seediest tattoo parlours, the cockpit of vintage race cars to the open door of a prop plane – sharing a heartfelt laugh and a connection with another person seems so simple. When the moment comes at the end of the film it's the climactic point in the movie and you're left laughing and crying along with both characters.

A little fun and laughter in the workplace is just as powerful when it comes to our emotional health and wellbeing, productivity and your company's bottom line. Let's not pretend all it takes is a few belly laughs to lift discretionary effort at work, but quite simply, the more we enjoy what we do, the more productive we are.

We're talking about employee engagement. It's a person's emotional and intellectual commitment to an organisation. The key: capturing the hearts and minds of employees. The catch: finding out what inspires employees to make that extra discretionary effort. The pay offs: work becomes pleasurable, more

productive and more profitable.

Gallup estimate the overall cost of disengagement for Australian businesses to be as high as \$42billion, more than three times the federal budget surplus – enough to comfortably build new hospitals, better rail networks, or reduce pay roll tax.

International Human Capital experts Hewitt Associates found more than half of Australian businesses find engaging and motivating their employees a challenge, with the average employee engagement score in Australian businesses at 54%.

RedBalloon, Australia's reward and recognition experts received an engagement score of 97% by Hewitt. CEO of Redballoon and engagement thought leader Naomi Simson shares her tips on creating a culture of alignment, fostered by bonding and good times.

1) No Fun at work makes it a boot camp - all fun makes it a kindergarten...

Fun must be tied to commercial returns. Games are really useful tools to keep people focused. RedBalloons are rewarded with RedBalloon points for the following: A Simmering Sales Suggestion (new lead), Rocket Launcher (We are a growing business and we need to keep asking what we should stop doing, what we should start doing and what should we continue doing) and the Firecracker Award (for continually demonstrating RedBalloon values).

2) Tie fun to your company values.

Oscar Winners are awarded at monthly company meetings for living RedBalloon values: Generosity, Leadership, A Sense of Humour and Fun and Being Nimble and Courageous. We love to make their dreams by true by rewarding the winner

with an experience from their 'Dream catcher Wishlist' – a list of 100 things they have ever wanted to do.

3) Give employees something positive to talk about. There are many ways you can inject fun into your business such as through sales incentives, reward programs, celebrations, team building experiences and events. It's all about creating memories that last a lifetime and that's what experiences give.

4) Lighten Up. As a leader, you don't have to be the comedian but it's important that you advocate a sense of humour and fun-loving culture in your work place. As the leadership team goes, so goes the rest of the team.

Edward and Carter may have had cash to splash, but the reality was they reaped more benefits from the simple pleasures they ticked off the list that they shared together. Having fun in business and creating an emotional attachment to your employer brand doesn't have to cost your business a mint. Sometimes it is the simplest things that make a difference.

RedBalloon was established in 2001 and has transformed workplace cultures through employee engagement and recognition programs. Having worked with over 1,400 companies including half of the Top 100, it is their true passion to inspire people by providing amazing experiential reward programs.

If you're ready to put some fun into your workplace and get people talking contact RedBalloon's engagement consultants on **1300 850 940** or visit corporate.redballoon.com.au.

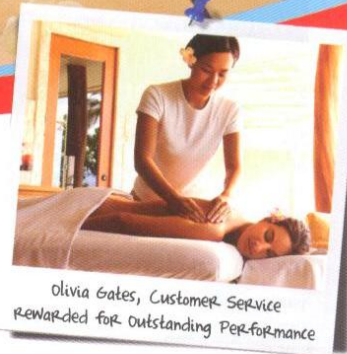
To receive a **FREE** copy of their new 2009 edition – **"The Little Book of Answers: Happy People = Happy Profits"** email your address to freebook@redballoon.com.au



Pamper Performance

It's a fact, people perform better if they are acknowledged and rewarded. If you're looking to increase productivity, engagement or sales - nothing compares to an experience-based program from RedBalloon. From shark diving to luxury massages, we have more than 2,000 unique and amazing experiences to excite and delight. Discover the difference of a motivational program that delivers truly memorable experiences and gets people talking.

Go on, let us pamper you today. Call 1300 850 940 or visit corporate.redballoon.com.au



FREE BOOK!

For your 2009 Edition of 'The Little Red Book of Answers' email your mailing address to freebook@redballoon.com.au

Mix business with pleasure.