



“ Like laughter, fun is contagious. When someone is clearly having fun, almost everyone wants to follow. ”

## MANAGEMENT BASICS #10: FUN

SERIOUSLY, IT'S OKAY TO HAVE FUN!

**Editor's Note:** Following is the final part of our ten part series called "Management Basics," by Fred Ode, CEO, chairman and founder of Foundation Software. See the first nine installments on our website, [www.constructionbusinessowner.com](http://www.constructionbusinessowner.com).

**O**f all the important qualities that leaders can possess, none is more endearing — and enduring — than fun. Like laughter, fun is contagious. When someone is clearly having fun, almost everyone wants to follow.

Concluding my series of "Top Ten Management Basics," the topic of "fun" is what truly drives a business. Without fun, none of the other nine leadership qualities will matter much at all, and long-term "success" will have lost much of its meaning.

Too often in business, the unwritten rule is that fun should be left at the door, and there is a very sharp distinction between work and play. For overworked and overstressed

employees, the only "fun" to be had is at the after-work happy hour bar. But that's certainly not the kind of fun I am talking about. Having fun at work means we take our jobs seriously and take ourselves lightly.

Katherine Graham, the media mogul and owner of the *Washington Post*, once said, "To love what you do and feel that it matters—how could anything else be more fun?" Motivational expert Dale Carnegie was quoted as saying, "People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing." Even basketball star Michael Jordan had some great advice when he said, "Just play. Have fun. Enjoy the game."

Children, by nature, aspire to have fun. They play sports, not to improve

their skills or win athletic scholarships—but because it's fun. Sore muscles, bruised egos and narrow

### Management Basics— A Ten Part Series

1. People
2. Communication
3. Leadership
4. Management
5. Change
6. Number Knowledge
7. Technology
8. Marketing and Sales
9. Integrity
10. Fun

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losses are all worth it because the game is so much fun to play. As business leaders, we can learn a lot from our inner child. We need to regain the enjoyment that once came from our jobs, and inspire others to enjoy what they do as well.

Unfortunately, when the fun factor is missing in company leadership, the void is felt throughout the whole company. And while fun can be contagious, a lack of fun is like the “black plague.” Take away fun from your business and you’ve taken away a lot more than just humor and laughs. You take away creativity, intuitive thinking, team spirit and productivity.

Studies show that humor and lighter attitudes can help everyone cope with job stress. With reduced stress levels, other benefits follow. For example, job satisfaction increases, employees work more efficiently and most importantly, they remain effective during stressful periods. It’s safe to say, therefore, that fun not only contributes to the health of your employees, but also to the overall health of the company.

So how can you bring fun into your business without disrupting workflow, or turning the office into a three-ring circus? While it certainly won’t work to just add it to your mission statement, (Memo from the boss: Henceforth, everyone will have fun at work!), it may be a good idea to publicize fun as a legitimate and worthwhile aspiration of the company.

According to Matt Weinstein, author of the book, *Managing to Have Fun*, there is no right or wrong way to establish a playful corporate culture, there are thousands of ways to approach it and every business is different. However, he gives four basic principles to help incorporate fun into the company:

- 1. Think about the people involved:** Get to know employees even better. Then, try to match their style of fun with rewards, recognition and revitalization.
- 2. Lead by example:** Every manager’s leadership style is different, but every manager should be able to find a comfort level of fun as well.
- 3. It’s not worth doing:** If you’re not getting personal satisfaction from what you’re doing, it’s not worth it. Enough said.

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As I finish my series of the "Top Ten Management Basics" for long-term success, I challenge owners and upper-level managers not to separate work and play, but instead put "fun" to work. When you create an atmo-

sphere and culture that people can enjoy, you are well on your way to building a company that will stand the test of time.

I hope you have enjoyed this series of articles. The views and opinions you've read are completely my own, which makes me the unique "bulldog" business owner that I am. ■

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