



# SHRM<sup>®</sup> Fun Work Environment Survey



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November 2002

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# Fun Work Environment Survey

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### About This Report

Traditionally, mention of the corporate work environment evokes images of stiff, formal office settings and workstations designed to discourage interaction and foster productivity. Cost-effectiveness and efficiency are among the customary protocols for corporations to succeed in highly competitive environments. In fact, most employees expect their workday to be filled with stress, pending deadlines, and too much work. Work, after all, is about working. But there are signs that this trend is changing. More companies are attempting to integrate “fun” into the workplace. Fun at work is starting to be viewed not only as a means to engage workers but as an avenue for developing creativity and innovation. Resistance and beliefs that fun is a triviality that does not belong in the workplace, however, often counter this view. To understand the perceptions of human resources (HR) professionals toward fun work environments, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in conjunction with a team of academic researchers, Dr. John Newstrom, University of Minnesota, Duluth; Dr. Frank McLaughlin,

University of North Florida; and Dr. Robert Ford, University of Central Florida, conducted a survey in June 2001. The researchers developed the idea for this study, designed the survey instrument, and fielded the survey to randomly selected SHRM members.

This survey report contains numerous tables and charts that capture the participants’ responses. The report highlights the overall responses of participants and then categorizes data by industry and by organization size. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included at the end of the report.

SHRM is the world’s largest association devoted to human resource management. Representing more than 170,000 individual members, the Society serves the needs of HR professionals by providing the most essential and comprehensive set of resources available. As an influential voice, SHRM is committed to advancing the human resource profession to ensure that HR is an essential and effective partner in developing and executing organizational strategy. Founded in 1948, SHRM currently has more than 500 affiliated chapters within the United States and members in more than 120 countries. Visit SHRM online at [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org).

### About the Authors

Evren Esen is the Survey Program coordinator for the Society for Human Resource Management. She is primary responsible for this report including its organization, the preparation of the narrative and the presentation of the data. Jessica Collison, SHRM Survey Program Manager, and Dr. Deb Cohen, SHRM Vice President, Knowledge Development, also partici-

pated in the reporting and design stages of the study. Dr. Robert Ford, Dr. John Newstrom and Dr. Frank McLaughlin are professors at the University of Central Florida, University of Minnesota at Duluth and the University of North Florida respectively. They developed the idea for this study, designed and fielded the survey instrument, and collected, organized, and tabulated the data.



# Introduction

The idea that the workplace can include elements of fun has slowly begun to infiltrate corporate America, and the boundaries between work and “play” may be beginning to blur. Mixing work and nonwork activities by creating opportunities for employees to have fun together through public celebrations, entertainment, socials, games, and humor are among the strategies used to introduce “play” to the workplace. Advocates of fun at work believe that fun is essential in getting employees to think outside the box, creating energy among employees who may otherwise be unmotivated. Employees who enjoy coming to work are thought to be productive, satisfied, and loyal—or at least that is what more and more corporations are promoting. While research does not support the claim that happy and satisfied employees are more productive, some firms are evolving their “cultures” to include a fun work environment.

The phenomenon of workplace fun, which largely originated during the lighthearted information technology (IT) and dot.com cultures of the mid- to late 1990s, has given rise to a new expectation for work. Casual dress days, stress-relieving activities such as massages and exercise rooms, and social events with the goal of engaging the workforce are slowly becoming commonplace. Companies are jumping on the fun bandwagon in hopes that offering the benefit of a fun workplace may help them to attract new talent and reduce costly turnover.

Fun at work, however, may take on different meanings depending on organizational climate and the attitude of management. Resistance to having fun in the

work environment may be seen at all levels of management. Therefore, before companies embark on incorporating fun activities into their workplace, several key areas need to be addressed. One purpose of this study is to understand fun work environments as they are practiced. Other goals include investigating the frequency of fun practices and perceptions about the importance and effectiveness of fun work environments. While fun at work may be becoming more widespread, do organizations have fun at work policies in place, and if so, where does the momentum for these policies come from? In addition, this study explores how factors employees usually seek in the workplace fit with fun at work activities.

HR professionals may be in a unique position to initiate, observe, and assess policies and procedures regarding fun at work. Their perceptions about the utility and effectiveness of fun work activities can provide insight to organizations attempting to cultivate fun practices. This report examines organization size and type of industry to evaluate their possible influences on the perceptions and practices of fun work environments. It is widely believed that fun work environments are more prevalent in certain industries, particularly high-technology companies and dot.coms. The industry analysis section of this report addresses the weight of this factor on the integration of fun in work environments. The size of an organization may also play a role. The report establishes data that may be used to determine whether size is a dynamic of fun work practices.

## Summary of Findings

Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents agreed that companies that promote fun at work are more effective than companies that do not. Although respondents believe in the effectiveness of fun at work, three-quarters of respondents indicated that the level of fun in their organization is less than what they think it should be. Only 2 percent of respondents rated their organization as “excellent” with regard to its fun work environment. Almost all respondents reported that fun in the workplace should be a relatively common occurrence, stating that it should occur occasionally to very often.

According to respondents, the importance of fun opportunities in the workplace is increasing. The number of respondents who stated that fun at work is very important in today’s workplace is nearly double the number reporting that it was very important five years ago. The data also indicate that respondents expect that fun will increasingly become very important in the workplace over the next five years. Clearly, the notion of integrating fun in the workplace is coupled with the expectation that employees will favor companies that offer such opportunities.

In spite of the agreement that workplace fun is a burgeoning area, there appears to be little consistency in the practice of fun activities within organizations. The amount of fun varies across departments within organizations, demonstrating that the impetus for fun activities is more localized than centralized. This finding is corroborated by data showing that very few of respondents’ organizations have policies in place relevant to fun work environments.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that the

positive outcomes of fun work environments are the ability to attract new employees, increase employee enthusiasm, and increase group cohesiveness. Results also showed that the fun practices used most often and believed to be the most effective are 1) recognition of personal milestones; 2) public celebrations of professional achievements; and 3) fun social events. A majority of organizations, regardless of industry and size, tended to use these activities.

Finally, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that employees believe that being listened to at work is very important. This may not have a direct link to fun at work; however, it may illustrate the need for employers to open the doors of communication with employees, including gaining their insight on ways to make the workplace more enjoyable. Imposing a fun at work policy from the top down may not fulfill employees’ needs. Listening to their ideas and suggestions may be a way to start the process of developing a fun work policy that employees will buy into.

## Methodology

Five thousand participants were randomly selected from SHRM’s membership database, which includes approximately 170,000 members. Each member of the sample was sent an e-mail invitation containing a link to the online survey. To improve the response rate, participants were sent reminders to complete the survey instrument. Out of the 5,000-member sample, approximately 4,000 e-mails were successfully delivered to respondents, and 574 HR professionals responded to the survey, a response rate of 14 percent.

# Survey Results

## Possible Consequences of a Fun Work Environment

Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which organizations promoting fun work environments would experience a change in 29 listed outcomes (such as absenteeism or group cohesiveness). Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents indicating increases or decreases in each outcome as a result of fun work environments. A large majority of respondents stated that organizations endorsing a fun work environment are likely to experience increases in several key areas. The top five outcomes include a moderate to substantial increase in the ability to attract new employees (95%), increased employee enthusiasm (95%), increased group cohesiveness (94%), increased communication among employees and employee satisfaction (93%), and increased employee creativity (92%). Additional outcomes respondents felt were consequences of a fun work environment include more employee friendships at work (91%), a greater level of employee commitment to the organization (88%), and increased customer satisfaction (86%).

According to respondents, organizations that endorse a fun work environment are likely to experience decreases in employee anxiety and stress (84%), complaints of boredom (82%), turnover rates (79%), absenteeism rates (72%), and interpersonal conflicts (72%).

Workplace issues such as equipment damage caused by playfulness, reports of sexual harassment, employee errors, work taken seriously by other departments, and employee professionalism were cited by more than two-fifths of respondents as not affected by fun work environments.

Clearly, HR professionals perceive fun work environments as having a positive impact on employee relationships and attachment to their organizations, without compromising professionalism. It is possible to conclude that a fun work environment improves employee morale while decreasing issues that hurt organizations, such as turnover rates and absenteeism.

## Frequency of Fun Practices at Work

Respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which their organizations used ten different types of fun practices. These data are depicted in Table 2. No one aspect of fun was indicated by more than half the respondents as used with greater than moderate frequency. Respondents reported that the following practices are used more than moderately to extensively in their organizations: recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment) (49%) and public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”) (39%), followed by fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties) (38%). More than a quarter of respondents noted that opportunities to engage in community volunteerism and stress-release activities (casual dress days, exercise facilities, and massages) had greater than moderate use.

The use of entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays) was given the lowest frequency rating, with 73 percent reporting no use at all to less than moderate usage, followed by opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs,

**Table 1** Possible Consequences of a Fun Work Environment

	Number of Respondents	Mean	Substantial Decrease	Moderate Decrease	No Effect	Moderate Increase	Substantial Increase
1. Accident rates (frequency).	491	2.63	9%	37%	40%	13%	1%
2. Ability to attract new employees.	564	4.37	2%	1%	3%	47%	48%
3. Absenteeism rates.	562	2.33	26%	46%	6%	14%	9%
4. Communications among employees.	566	4.25	3%	2%	3%	53%	40%
5. Customer satisfaction.	554	4.13	2%	2%	9%	53%	33%
6. Cost of operations.	535	3.07	3%	25%	36%	34%	2%
7. Employee anxiety and stress.	569	2.00	36%	48%	1%	8%	6%
8. Employee complaints of boredom.	562	2.01	35%	47%	5%	7%	6%
9. Employee creativity.	570	4.22	3%	1%	4%	55%	37%
10. Employee enthusiasm.	569	4.43	3%	1%	1%	39%	56%
11. Employee satisfaction.	566	4.31	3%	2%	3%	48%	45%
12. Employee friendships at work.	563	4.19	2%	1%	6%	57%	34%
13. Employee turnover rates.	559	2.16	23%	56%	9%	10%	3%
14. Equipment damage caused by playfulness.	505	2.99	4%	9%	70%	16%	*
15. Frequency of employee errors made.	530	2.78	5%	27%	54%	14%	*
16. Group cohesiveness.	562	4.17	2%	2%	3%	65%	29%
17. Interpersonal conflicts.	557	2.29	12%	60%	17%	10%	1%
18. Level of employee commitment to the organization.	562	4.07	1%	2%	9%	65%	23%
19. Mutual trust among employees.	560	3.90	1%	2%	19%	63%	15%
20. Organizational citizenship (voluntary acts of helping behaviors) by employees.	548	3.98	2%	1%	12%	67%	18%
21. Professionalism at work.	558	3.14	1%	22%	44%	27%	6%
22. Quality of employee productivity.	557	3.77	1%	7%	19%	62%	12%
23. Reports of sexual harassment.	513	2.96	4%	16%	60%	18%	1%
24. Respect among coworkers.	554	3.66	*	5%	32%	55%	8%
25. Respect from higher-ups.	547	3.39	1%	11%	42%	41%	5%
26. Speed with which new tasks are learned by employees during training programs.	547	3.63	1%	4%	36%	50%	9%
27. Strength of the corporate culture (shared values and norms).	555	4.01	2%	2%	11%	63%	22%
28. Understanding of the organization's mission and priorities.	550	3.63	1%	2%	42%	44%	11%
29. Work taken seriously by other departments.	534	3.28	2%	11%	49%	34%	5%

\*Indicates less than 1 percent.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 2** Frequency of Practices

	Number of Respondents	Mean	1 Not at All	2	3 Moderately	4	5 Extensively
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	570	2.41	21%	34%	32%	10%	3%
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	565	1.97	44%	27%	18%	9%	2%
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	570	3.15	8%	20%	33%	27%	12%
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	567	1.91	46%	27%	19%	7%	1%
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	568	2.26	32%	31%	22%	11%	4%
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	570	3.15	4%	23%	35%	28%	10%
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	569	3.38	4%	21%	26%	29%	20%
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	568	2.77	21%	26%	21%	20%	12%
9. Stress release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	569	2.60	20%	31%	26%	17%	7%
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	563	2.21	35%	28%	22%	11%	4%

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all used, 3 moderately used, and 5 extensively used in the respondent's organization.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

aerobics) (71%). About two-thirds of respondents reported using games (e.g., darts, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events) and friendly competition among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests) with low frequency.

The frequency of fun at work practices may be closely related to costs and the return on those costs. The high frequency of activities such as recognition of personal milestones, public celebrations of professional achievements, and fun social events could be due to the existence of these practices in

the current organizational structure. If management supports these activities, not necessarily as “fun” events but as employee appreciation events, it may be more willing to approve of them, since their costs are likely to already be absorbed into the budget. Many of these types of activities may be self-serving to an organization because they become part of the “corporate ritual,” reflecting positively on the organization for supporting employees in terms of such things as long tenure or certain accomplishments. Also, these events encourage employee interaction, which ultimately may aid the organization by building social capital. On the other hand, activities used with the lowest frequency—entertainment, personal development through opportunities for non-job-related learning, and games—may be considered “extras” that incur additional costs in both funds and time.

### Utility (Contributions) of Fun Practices

Because HR professionals are in a good position to assess the utility of activities designed to create fun in the workplace, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which the same ten practices described in the previous section contribute to a fun work environment (regardless of whether these activities were actually used in their organization). As shown in Table 3, the top three practices were the same practices respondents indicated as having the highest effectiveness. Recognition of personal milestones and fun social events were both rated by 78 percent of respondents as contributing greater than moderately to extensively toward fun in the workplace. Public celebrations of professional achievements followed, with 74 percent of the respondents deeming them effective in promoting fun work environments. It is difficult to know from these results whether any cause-and-effect relationship exists. One conclusion is clear, though: HR professionals appear to be satisfied with the use of these practices. The same consistency appeared on the bottom end of the scale, with entertainment and opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning listed both as the two practices with the least util-

ity and the least frequently used.

Interestingly, several activities that respondents rated as having high utility in contributing to a fun work environment were rated low in their actual frequency of use. While 70 percent of respondents indicated that stress-release activities would be highly contributive (more than moderately to extensively), only 24 percent stated that they were actually used with high frequency in their organizations. Sixty percent of respondents rated friendly competition among employees as contributing more than moderately to extensively to fun environments, yet only 15 percent responded that it is used in their work environment. These findings may indicate that activities that HR professionals perceive as effective are not readily implemented in their organizations.

### Factors Employees May Seek at Work

Employees expect a variety of factors to be fulfilled in their organizational environments. In developing fun work environments, the ideal scenario would be to incorporate these factors with activities that create fun work atmospheres. With that in mind, respondents were asked to rate fifteen statements describing things that employees may typically look for in their workplace in terms of importance to employees in their organizations. As shown in Table 4, while most respondents rated each factor as at least moderately important, the factors that stood out and that respondents stated were more than moderately to extremely important were feeling listened to at work (98%) and receiving personal recognition at work (93%). The desire for personal recognition at work corresponds with two of the most frequently used fun activities—recognition of personal milestones and public celebrations of professional achievements. It is encouraging to see that organizations are using activities in tune with what employees are seeking from their work environments.

HR professionals identified three additional factors that stood out as greater than moderately to extremely important to employees: feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work (91%), satisfying job

**Table 3** Utility (Contributions) of Fun Practices

	Number of Respondents	Mean	1 Not at All	2	3 Moderately	4	5 Extensively
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	563	3.49	4%	10%	37%	33%	17%
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	558	3.43	4%	15%	31%	33%	17%
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	564	4.04	*	5%	21%	38%	36%
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	548	3.11	6%	20%	38%	28%	8%
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	560	3.43	2%	13%	38%	34%	13%
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	566	4.06	1%	4%	18%	44%	34%
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	565	4.15	1%	3%	18%	36%	42%
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	558	3.58	1%	10%	36%	34%	19%
9. Stress-release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	563	3.89	1%	6%	22%	43%	27%
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	557	3.62	3%	11%	26%	40%	20%

\*Indicates less than 1 percent.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all, 3 moderately, and 5 extensively contributing to a fun work environment.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

security needs (economic survival) at work (86%), and having control over one’s own decisions at work (81%). In accordance with the fun at work theme, 40 percent of respondents rated having the opportunity to play at work as moderately important. It is inter-

esting to note that respondents are aware of employee wishes to engage in laughter at work and that play at work may be one way to achieve this need. Clearly, HR professionals are in tune with the significant factors that employees seek in their work envi-

**Table 4** Factors Employees May Seek at Work

	Number of Respondents	Mean	1 Not at All Important	2	3 Moderately Important	4	5 Extremely Important
1. Being able to relax, have fun, and enjoy oneself at work.	572	4.06	0%	4%	24%	34%	38%
2. Being free to express oneself openly at work.	572	4.18	*	2%	19%	36%	42%
3. Having control over one's own decisions at work.	569	4.19	*	1%	17%	43%	39%
4. Having control over resources (physical and human) at work.	567	3.86	0%	3%	31%	45%	22%
5. Feeling listened to at work.	571	4.80	0%	*	2%	16%	82%
6. Feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work.	567	4.47	0%	1%	8%	34%	57%
7. Having autonomy and independence at work.	571	4.11	0%	2%	18%	47%	34%
8. Having the opportunity to play at work.	566	3.27	3%	18%	40%	30%	10%
9. Building interpersonal friendships with others at work.	570	3.87	*	5%	28%	43%	25%
10. Satisfying job security needs (economic survival) at work.	570	4.35	0%	1%	13%	35%	51%
11. Having the opportunity to belong to a group of people at work.	568	3.88	*	6%	25%	42%	26%
12. Having the opportunity to express and receive caring at work.	569	3.81	1%	7%	27%	41%	24%
13. Satisfying physiological needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, warmth at work).	566	3.82	3%	6%	28%	33%	31%
14. Satisfying psychological well-being needs (emotional security) at work.	570	3.94	1%	4%	24%	43%	28%
15. Receiving personal recognition at work.	568	4.54	0%	1%	6%	31%	62%

*\*Indicates less than 1 percent.*  
*Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all, 3 moderately, and 5 extremely important to employees.*  
*Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.*  
*Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey*

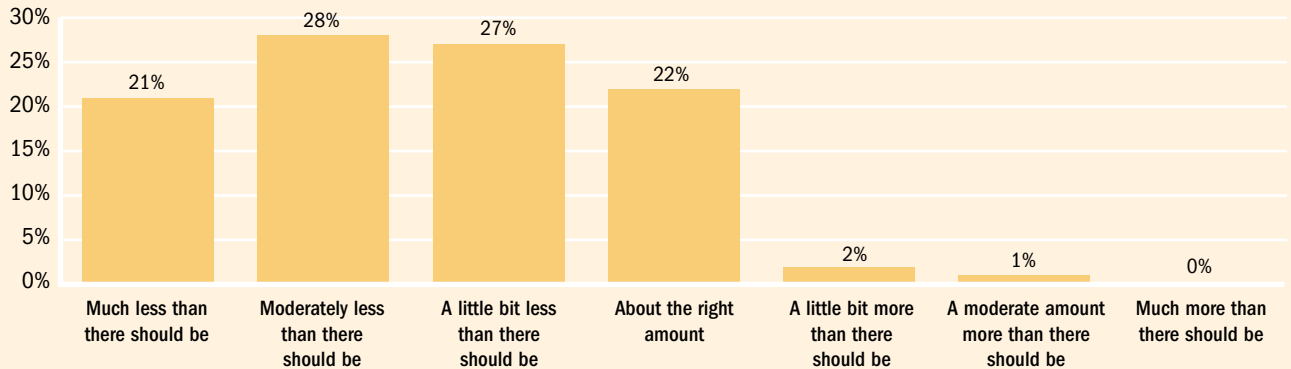
ronments. Recognizing a desire to feel comfortable laughing at work may represent awareness of the human side of the work relationship.

The factors covered in Table 4 reflect many of the facets of job satisfaction that are typically associated with work. Respondents have indicated factors with which most who are moderately familiar with organizational

behavior would agree. In addition, however, employees want to be able to relax, have fun, and enjoy themselves at work (moderately important to 24% of respondents) and have the opportunity to play at work (moderately important to 40% of respondents). This finding suggests that play may be a way to cut across both fun and work.

**Chart 1** Perception of Actual Fun Compared to Optimum Level of Fun

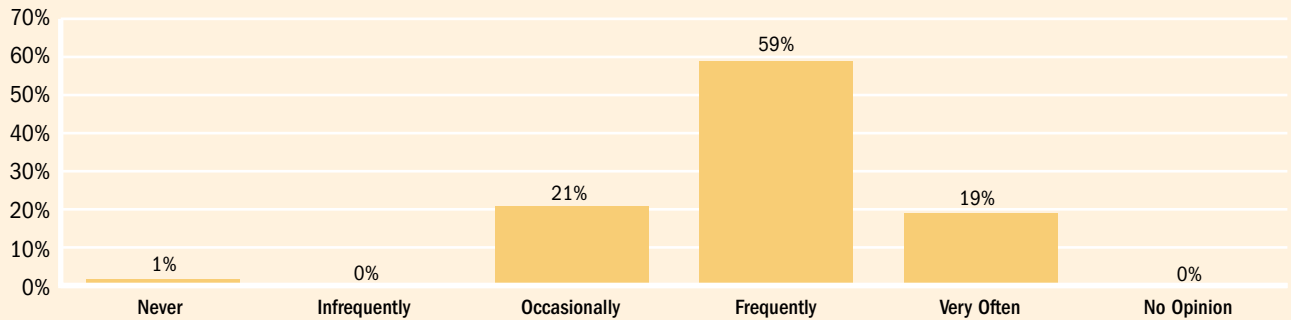
(Number of Respondents=567)



Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Chart 2** Employees Should Have the Opportunity to Experience Fun in Organization

(Number of Respondents=560)



Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

### Perceptions of Fun at Work

Respondents were asked to compare the actual level of fun in their organizations with the level of fun that they thought should exist at work. As shown in Chart 1, 76 percent of respondents indicated that the actual level of fun in their organizations was a bit less to much less than what they thought it should be.

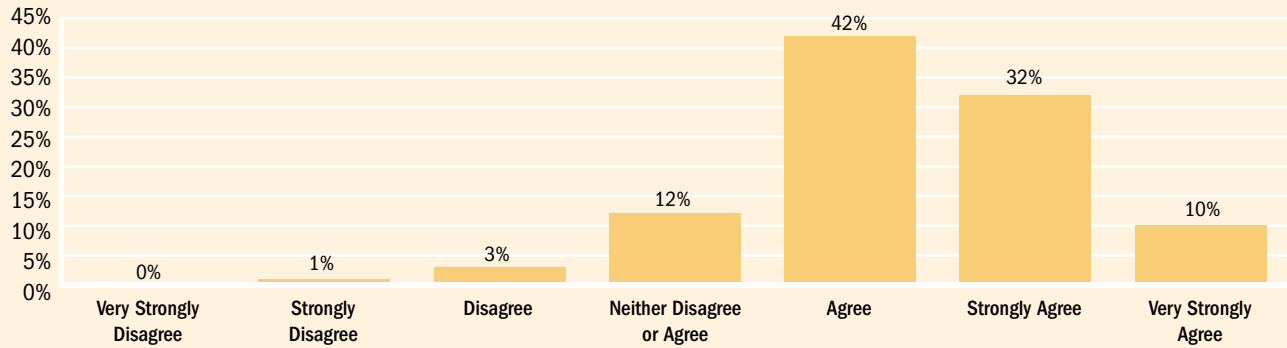
When asked about how frequently employees should have the opportunity to experience fun in their organizations, almost all respondents (99%) stated that fun should be incorporated occasionally to very

often. This finding is illustrated in Chart 2. Respondents are clearly in favor of both increasing the actual level of fun and the frequency with which opportunities for fun in the workplace occur.

As shown in Chart 3, the majority of respondents (84%) agreed that companies that promote fun at work are more effective than companies that do not. Charts 4, 5, and 6 show that this agreement is stronger now than it was five years ago and that respondents believe it will continue to maintain the same level of importance over the next five years. Two-thirds of respondents (67%) indicated that five

**Chart 3** Companies Promoting Fun At Work are More Effective

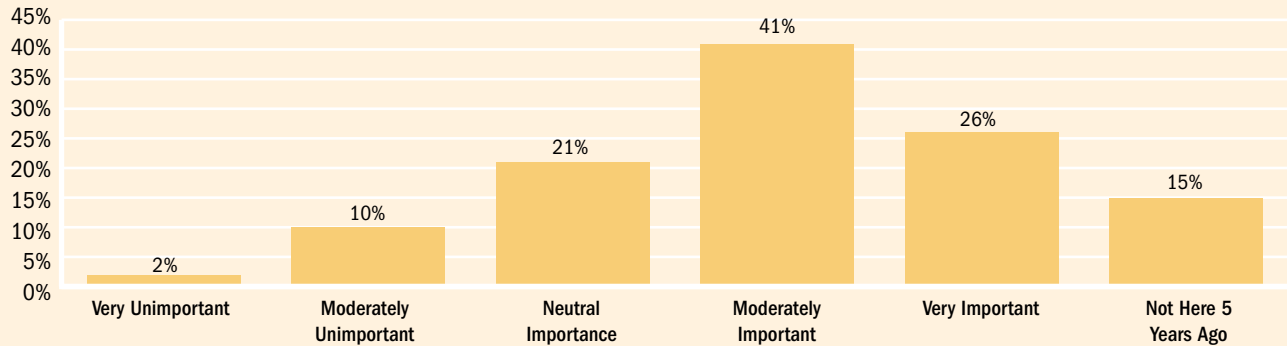
(Number of Respondents=571)



Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Chart 4** Importance of Fun At Work Five Years Ago

(Number of Respondents=486)



Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

years ago it was moderately to very important to have a fun work environment for employees, while 95 percent indicated that at present and looking ahead five years a fun work environment for employees is moderately to very important. This large increase in the perception of HR professionals that fun at work is important today and in the future indicates the changing expectations of employees about their work environment and how it might fulfill their personal desires. It may also be a reflection of the fact that work environments have become more complex because of technology and a host of workplace poli-

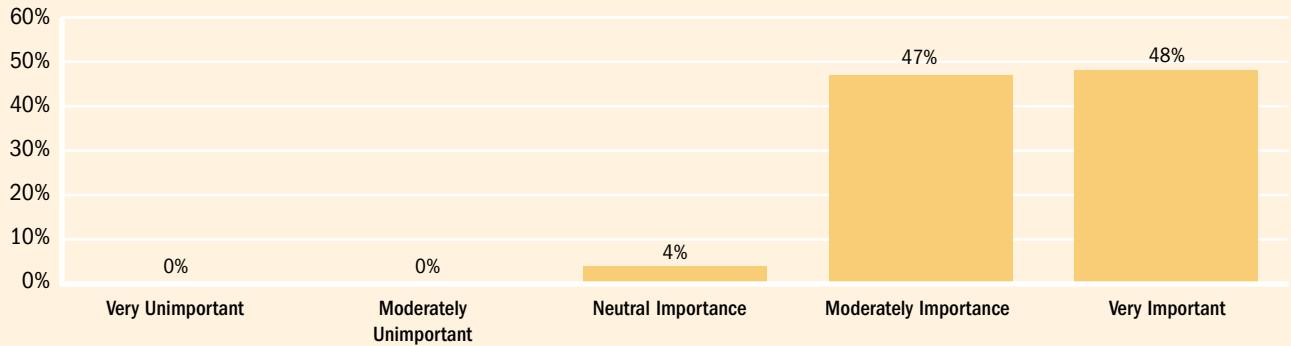
cies and practices, and that fun at work may help to deal with these changes.

### Reasons for Resistance

While the concept of fun in the workplace might sound favorable to employees, it does not produce the same degree of favorability for some managers and supervisors. Respondents were asked to rate how likely it would be for thirteen rationales to underlie managerial resistance to fun in the work environment. Table 5 depicts these data. Most of the ratio-

**Chart 5** Importance of Fun At Work At Present Time

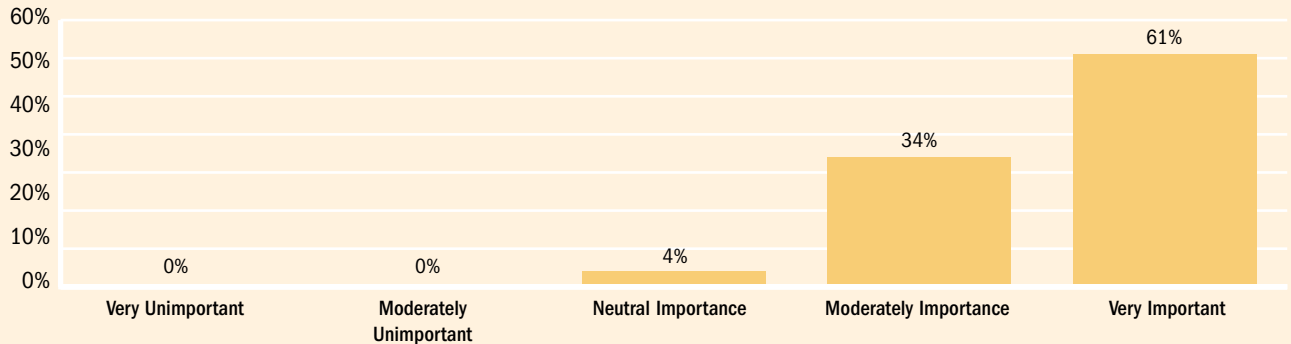
(Number of Respondents=571)



Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Chart 6** Importance of Fun At Work Five Years From Now

(Number of Respondents=572)



Note: Total may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

nales were rated slightly above neutral with respect to triggering resistance. However, two rationales stood out. Eighty-three percent of respondents stated that time constraints (e.g., I can't afford the time) would be a likely barrier to managers favoring fun at work opportunities. Financial costs (e.g., It will cost too much) were another major concern, selected by 72 percent of respondents. Other top reasons reported by more than three-fifths of respondents included fear of support from above (e.g., My superiors wouldn't condone it), fear that the department's work won't be taken seriously (e.g., They'll become

too playful), and the unproven impact (e.g., There's no evidence that it will pay off) of fun at work.

**Differences within Organizations**

More than half the respondents (61%) indicated there are substantial differences across departments in the amount of workplace fun within their organizations. These data are depicted in Chart 7. In an open-ended question, the most frequently cited explanations for these differences included leadership and attitude of department managers and the

**Table 5** Reasons for Managerial Resistance to Employee Desires to Create Fun Work Environments

	Number of Respondents	Mean	1 Very Unlikely	2	3	4 Neutral	5	6	7 Very Likely
a. Time constraints (e.g., I can't afford the time).	571	5.46	3%	4%	3%	8%	26%	30%	27%
b. Financial costs (e.g., It will cost too much).	570	5.21	3%	5%	6%	15%	21%	27%	24%
c. Fears of feeling silly (e.g., I don't want to look stupid).	569	4.59	5%	7%	7%	24%	27%	20%	9%
d. Lack of personal creativity (e.g., I don't know how to have fun).	568	4.33	7%	10%	10%	20%	28%	18%	7%
e. Unproven impact (e.g., There's no evidence that it will pay off).	568	4.74	4%	7%	9%	19%	25%	20%	15%
f. Perceived employee apathy (e.g., I don't think that they would care).	563	4.36	5%	10%	11%	22%	30%	17%	6%
g. Fear of non-support from above (e.g., My superior[s] wouldn't condone it).	568	4.74	5%	9%	13%	11%	23%	22%	18%
h. Belief of non-responsibility (e.g., It's not part of my job).	566	4.61	5%	8%	11%	19%	25%	21%	11%
i. Fear of losing control (e.g., I'm afraid they'll get carried away if I create a little bit of fun).	559	4.58	5%	9%	13%	18%	20%	21%	14%
j. Inconsistency with the organization's productivity culture (e.g., We're here to work, not play).	568	4.68	6%	10%	12%	14%	19%	20%	20%
k. Fear of offensive responses (e.g., Someone will take offense or legal action at whatever I do).	563	4.19	7%	14%	12%	19%	23%	18%	7%
l. Some employees will be distracted (They won't pay attention).	565	4.52	4%	9%	12%	20%	27%	18%	10%
m. Fear that department work won't be taken seriously (They'll become too playful).	564	4.66	6%	8%	12%	15%	24%	22%	15%

Note: A scale of 1 to 7 was employed, with 1 representing very unlikely, 4 neutral, and 7 representing very likely to underlie managerial resistance.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

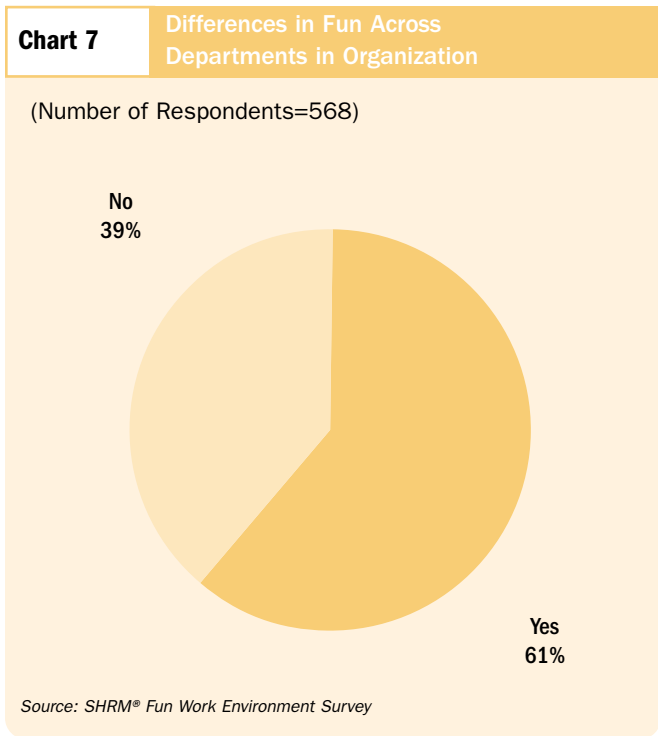
overall departmental culture. Essentially, the leadership style of managers establishes the departmental culture of what is and is not acceptable behavior. Culture is a major determinant in the amount of workplace fun that is demonstrated across departments.

### Origination of Fun Work Environment

Chart 8 shows where in the organization the primary impetus for a fun work environment originates. As one might easily predict, the establishment of fun work environments comes from the upper echelons of the organization. The greatest number of respon-

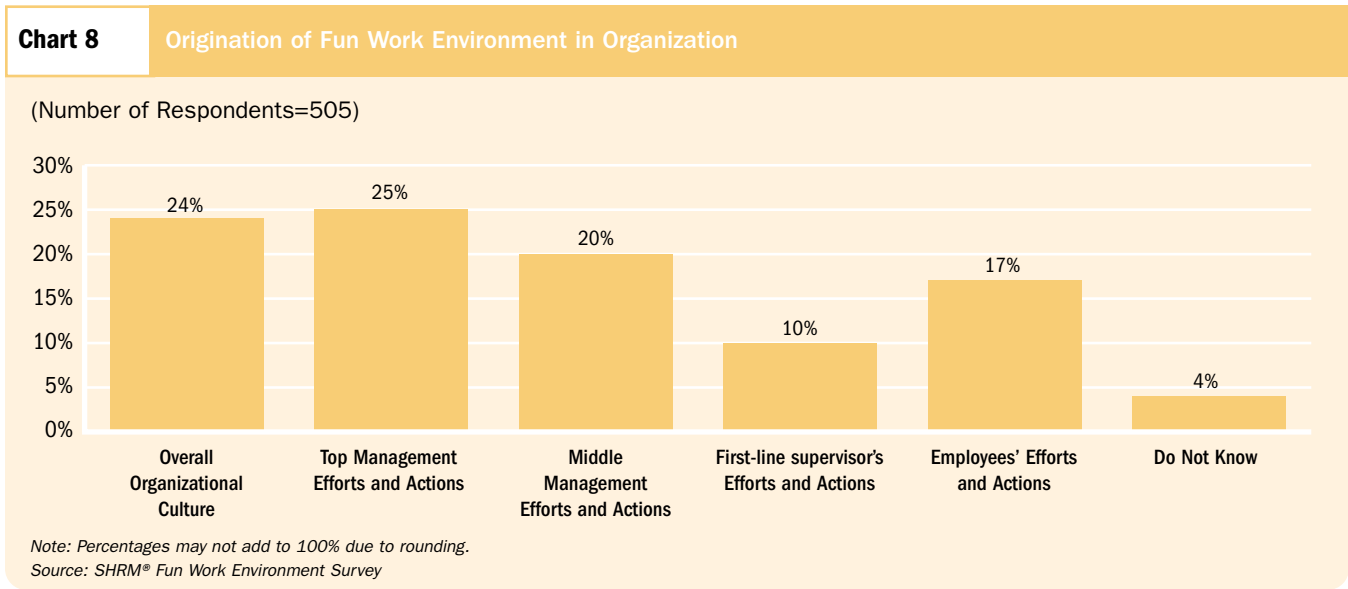
dents indicated fun work environments originate through the efforts and actions of top management (25%) and from overall organizational culture (24%), while another 20 percent stated that middle management's efforts and actions provide the impetus for fun-friendly workplaces. These results make sense, in that organizational cultures are most likely to

reflect the values of top management. According to this study, first-line supervisors (10%) are least likely to initiate fun at work, even less so than employees (17%). These results demonstrate that in some organizations, fun at work efforts come from the top down. Employees may hesitate to establish fun at work activities, believing that the primary impetus should come from top or middle management. It is worth mentioning, however, that employees appear proactive in their ability to launch fun in the workplace, suggesting that they are a good resource for the successful integration of fun at work.



**How a Fun Work Environment Is Created**

Respondents were asked to indicate what actions their organizations have used to bring fun into the work environment. Both employee recognition and awards and casual dress days were indicated by 83 percent. Company-provided food and refreshments are also a popular means to generate fun, with 82 percent of responding organizations participating in this activity. These activities in and of themselves do not create “fun,” but coupled with organization culture and the efforts of top and middle management, they may indeed create fun in a work environment. It is not surprising that organizations offer casual



dress days as a fun work activity. Casual dress creates a relaxed atmosphere that may allow managers and employees to feel more comfortable about having fun. In fact, casual dress days are increasingly becoming commonplace in the workplace, not only as a way to create a more relaxed and fun-friendly workplace, but also as an employee benefit. The SHRM® 2002 Benefits Survey reported that 53 percent of companies offer casual dress days every day of the week, a marked jump from 1998 when only 37 percent did so.

Organizations also frequently used the following actions to create fun: bringing your child to work

days (44%), “costume” days (39%), and release time for community projects (34%). According to respondents, the actions least likely to be offered are pets in the office and employee musical groups (both indicated by only 5% of respondents) and talk show formats (3%).

Respondents were offered the opportunity to write in specific examples of activities that promote fun in their organizations. Some of the most frequently cited examples include all-company outings to professional sports events, free vending machine day, ice cream socials, and events at which managers cook hamburgers and wash cars for employees.

**Table 6** Actions Used to Create a Fun Work Environment

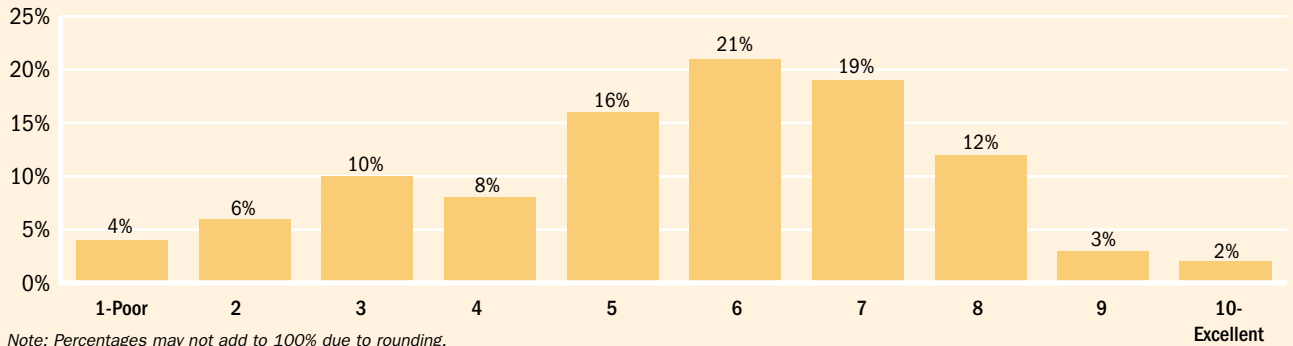
(Number of Respondents = 574)

a. “Fun” (or “Joy”) committees	21%
b. “Costume” days (e.g., “ugly socks” or Halloween costumes)	39%
c. Use of entertainers (musicians; clowns/artists)	16%
d. Casual dress days	83%
e. Pets in the office	5%
f. Supply of fun toys, games, and humorous reading materials available	16%
g. Creative skits and songs for company events	20%
h. Employee-generated names for teams and meeting rooms	19%
i. Employee “roasts”	9%
j. Employee musical group (e.g., kazoo band chorus)	5%
k. Use of humorous titles (e.g., “Humor Hero,” “Comic Colleague,” or “Vice-President of Fun”)	6%
l. Special props (e.g., balloons, flowers, hats, signs)	24%
m. Suggestion box exclusively for “fun” ideas	6%
n. Talk show formats (e.g., Rosie O’Donnell, Oprah Winfrey, or David Letterman)	3%
o. Employee release time for community projects (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, or house “Paint-a-thons”)	34%
p. Game show formats (e.g., “Jeopardy,” “Wheel of Fortune,” or “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?”)	17%
q. Photos and funny captions (e.g., “Most Beautiful Baby” contests)	27%
r. Company-provided food and refreshments	82%
s. Stress-reduction rooms (e.g., for meditation or massage)	13%
t. Employee recognition and awards	83%
u. Exercise room	21%
v. Creative working experience	17%
w. Bring your child to work day	44%

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Chart 9** Organizational Regard to Fun At Work

(Number of Respondents=564)



Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

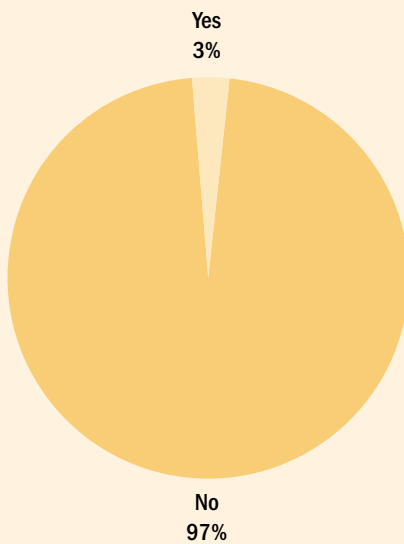
**Overall Rating of Organizations' Fun Work Environment**

Respondents were asked rate their organization with regard to its fun work environment on a 1 to 10 scale, with 1 representing poor and 10 representing excellent. As shown in Chart 9, more than half of respondents (57%) rated their organization 6 or high-

er, indicating that their organizations were better than average when it comes to fun work environments. However, only 5 percent gave a rating of 9 or 10, even though almost all respondents (99%) stated that employees should have the opportunity to experience fun in the work environment (Chart 2) and stressed the importance of such opportunities in the workplace today and in the future (95%) (Charts 5 and 6).

**Chart 10** Organization Fun At Work Policy

(Number of Respondents=561)



Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

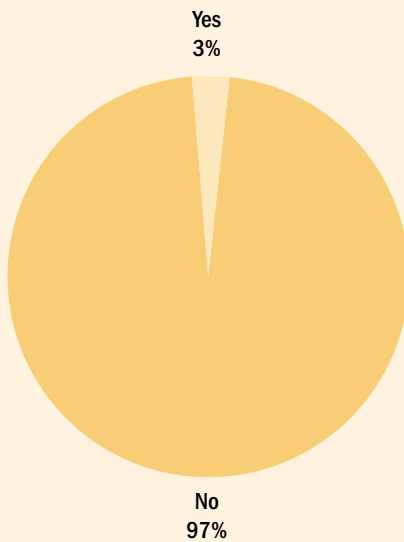
### Organizational Fun Policies

Almost all respondents (97%) stated that their organizations do not have a policy relevant to a fun work environment. These data are depicted in Chart 10. These results are not surprising considering respondent perceptions of managerial resistance arising from time and financial constraints. These barriers must be overcome before fun at work is supported to the extent that formal policies governing its inclusion are developed.

As shown in Chart 11, almost all respondents (97%) indicated that their organizations do not explicitly reward managers who consciously promote a fun work environment. This result is consistent with previous findings. Organizations without formal policies on fun at work would likely not have rewards in place for managers who promote such environments.

**Chart 11** Rewards for Managers Promoting Fun At Work Environment

(Number of Respondents=555)



Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

# Analysis by Industry

The following section depicts the results of the manufacturing (durable goods), manufacturing (non-durable goods), utilities (including oil, gas, power), wholesale/retail trade, finance (including insurance and real estate), service (profit and non-profit), health, education (including library), government, and high-technology industries. Industries with twenty or more respondents answering the survey are included in this analysis. Although respondents from other industries participated in the study, it was felt that industries with fewer than twenty respondents would yield inconclusive or questionable results. In cases in which no patterns were observed based on industry, a decision was made not to include the corresponding tables and charts.

Table 7 reflects respondent perceptions, by industry, about the degree to which organizations endorsing or promoting fun work environments experience change in twenty-nine listed outcomes (refer to Table 1 for overall respondent results). A scale of 1 to 5 was employed: 1 represented a substantial decrease, 3 no effect, and 5 a substantial increase in an outcome due to a fun work environment. The table presents an overall respondent mean along with the mean for each industry.

Overall, across industries, a majority of respondents indicated that consequences of fun at work

resulted in the same outcomes stated earlier in the overall survey results: employee enthusiasm, an ability to attract new employees, employee satisfaction, communication among employees, employee creativity, and employee friendships at work. Almost every industry achieved a mean score of 4.00 or above (representing a moderate increase or greater due to a fun work environment) in these categories. Only manufacturing (durable) included strength of the corporate culture in its top list of possible consequences that may come from fun work environments.

Interestingly, high-tech industries did not outrank other industries with respect to valuing the positive benefits of fun. The notion of fun at work generated interest after its pervasiveness in the dot.com corporate climate of the late 1990s, when creative uses of fun were often touted as a benefit to entice talent in a highly competitive job market. In fact, although high-tech respondents still credit the ability to attract new employees as the outcome with the greatest increase as a result of a fun work environment, its mean score of 4.46 was slightly lower than the highest industry mean score for this outcome, 4.50 reported by the utilities industry. It is also interesting to note that high-tech respondents were least likely to consider employee creativity (mean score of 4.12) an outcome of fun at work. The idea that “play” at

**Table 7** Possible Consequences, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	484-460	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
1. Accident rates (frequency).	2.63	2.49	2.48	2.56	2.63	2.73	2.72	2.61	2.63	2.28	2.65
2. Ability to attract new employees.	4.37	4.36	4.19	4.50	4.40	4.42	4.39	4.12	4.35	4.23	4.46
3. Absenteeism rates.	2.33	2.05	2.13	1.85	2.57	2.75	2.19	2.31	2.64	2.24	2.39
4. Communications among employees.	4.25	4.16	4.00	4.60	4.50	4.17	4.24	4.36	4.14	4.15	4.34
5. Customer satisfaction.	4.13	3.92	3.96	4.35	4.24	4.12	4.27	3.94	4.00	4.00	4.21
6. Cost of operations.	3.07	3.32	2.97	2.58	3.00	3.17	3.05	3.06	2.75	3.20	2.98
7. Employee anxiety and stress.	2.00	1.93	1.97	1.50	1.97	2.06	2.09	2.09	2.41	2.27	2.00
8. Employee complaints of boredom.	2.01	1.97	2.10	1.55	2.00	2.10	2.11	2.03	2.41	2.12	2.04
9. Employee creativity.	4.22	4.19	4.19	4.45	4.23	4.23	4.26	4.09	4.36	4.19	4.12
10. Employee enthusiasm.	4.43	4.45	4.25	4.60	4.63	4.42	4.32	4.39	4.50	4.27	4.33
11. Employee satisfaction.	4.31	4.32	4.19	4.42	4.47	4.25	4.28	4.36	4.29	4.15	4.25
12. Employee friendships at work.	4.19	4.19	4.23	4.35	4.28	4.17	4.14	4.30	4.14	3.88	4.26
13. Employee turnover rates.	2.16	2.06	2.16	2.00	2.31	2.50	2.23	2.34	2.24	2.24	2.02
14. Equipment damage caused by playfulness.	2.99	3.11	3.04	3.12	2.78	3.11	2.93	3.00	2.95	3.25	2.96
15. Frequency of employee errors made.	2.78	2.89	2.90	2.63	2.77	2.96	2.75	2.73	2.72	2.88	2.60
16. Group cohesiveness.	4.17	4.10	4.26	4.32	4.13	4.04	4.12	4.27	4.09	4.12	4.17
17. Interpersonal conflicts.	2.29	2.29	2.23	2.05	2.27	2.41	2.33	2.31	2.32	2.31	2.36
18. Level of employee commitment to the organization.	4.07	4.08	4.06	4.15	3.97	4.04	4.06	3.94	4.15	4.00	4.07
19. Mutual trust among employees.	3.90	3.77	3.90	4.00	3.90	3.82	3.89	4.06	4.11	3.73	3.81
20. Organizational citizenship (voluntary acts of helping behaviors) by employees.	3.98	3.96	3.96	4.20	4.00	3.84	3.94	4.06	4.20	3.84	3.95
21. Professionalism at work.	3.14	3.14	3.10	3.37	3.00	2.96	3.16	3.16	3.32	3.12	3.17
22. Quality of employee productivity.	3.77	3.77	3.68	3.95	3.73	3.71	3.82	3.52	3.81	3.73	3.79
23. Reports of sexual harassment.	2.96	2.94	3.04	2.89	2.82	3.07	2.93	2.90	3.05	2.95	2.91
24. Respect among coworkers.	3.66	3.68	3.47	3.79	3.68	3.60	3.67	3.81	3.62	3.69	3.66
25. Respect from higher-ups.	3.39	3.36	3.52	3.47	3.37	3.37	3.36	3.47	3.24	3.42	3.42
26. Speed with which new tasks are learned by employees during training programs.	3.63	3.64	3.71	3.89	3.60	3.57	3.54	3.53	3.67	3.72	3.49
27. Strength of the corporate culture (shared values and norms).	4.01	3.92	4.20	4.00	4.04	4.12	3.92	3.93	4.14	3.77	4.05
28. Understanding of the organization's mission and priorities.	3.63	3.58	3.76	3.80	3.54	3.67	3.53	3.48	3.70	3.52	3.59
29. Work taken seriously by other departments.	3.28	3.28	3.57	3.21	3.10	3.11	3.19	3.41	3.37	3.42	3.42

1 Manufacturing (Durable)

2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)

3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)

4 Wholesale, Retail Trade

5 Finance (including Insurance &amp; Real Estate)

6 Service (Profit &amp; Nonprofit)

7 Health

8 Education (including Library)

9 Government

10 High Technology

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question, regardless of industry.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing a substantial decrease, 3 no effect, and 5 a substantial increase due to a fun work environment.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

work lends itself to increased creativity and to employees who “think outside the box” was frequently used in the 1990s to validate the sometimes frivolous nature of fun touted by high-tech companies.

Several differences stood out among industries. Absenteeism rates, for example, were notably different between utilities (mean score of 1.85) and finance (mean score of 2.75), indicating that finance respondents view fun as having less of an effect on

this outcome than those in utilities. The utilities industry (mean score of 4.60) also believes more than any other industry that communication among employees increases substantially as a result of fun at work. Manufacturing (non-durable) gave this outcome a mean score rating of 4.00, the lowest in the group. Utilities industry respondents believe fun work environments substantially decrease employee anxiety and stress and employee complaints of boredom

**Table 8** Frequency of Practices, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	553–560	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	2.41	2.36	2.19	2.60	2.67	2.45	2.44	2.15	2.14	2.50	2.51
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	1.97	1.72	1.77	2.05	1.57	2.11	1.89	1.62	2.14	2.00	2.22
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	3.15	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.43	3.33	3.05	2.97	3.23	2.69	3.24
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	1.91	1.96	1.78	2.05	2.10	2.04	1.78	1.84	2.18	1.38	2.02
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	2.26	2.37	2.25	2.10	2.23	2.42	2.20	1.84	1.77	1.69	2.73
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	3.15	3.27	2.97	2.80	3.27	3.21	2.98	3.48	2.64	2.69	3.22
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	3.38	3.32	3.13	3.20	3.73	3.74	3.27	3.27	2.91	3.35	3.22
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	2.77	2.57	2.56	3.85	2.47	3.40	2.75	2.27	2.67	2.84	2.57
9. Stress-release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	2.60	2.23	2.31	3.25	2.60	2.75	2.50	2.64	2.32	2.65	2.80
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	2.21	2.11	2.03	2.15	2.93	2.36	2.20	2.19	1.50	1.65	2.19

1 Manufacturing (Durable)

4 Wholesale, Retail Trade

6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)

9 Government

2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)

5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)

7 Health

10 High Technology

3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)

8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of industry.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all used, 3 moderately used, and 5 extensively used in the respondent’s organization.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

(mean scores of 1.50 and 1.55, respectively), while the education industry feels that its effect is moderate to none (mean score of 2.41 in both outcomes). In fact, utilities industry respondents were more likely to believe in the efficacy of fun work environments than other industries in many different areas, including employee turnover rates, group cohesiveness, and professionalism at work.

Table 8 depicts the responses, by industry, to the question that asked the frequency with which organizations used activities leading to a fun work environment (refer to Table 2 for overall respondent results). Respondents assessed frequency on a 1 to 5 scale: 1 indicated not at all used, 3 moderately used, and 5 extensively used. Again, industry analysis produced results similar to overall responses for the majority of respondents reporting the use of recognition of personal milestones, followed by fun social events and public celebrations of professional achievements as the activities most frequently used to foster fun-at-work environments. Differences from this norm were found in utilities respondents, who cited opportunities to engage in community volunteerism as the most frequently used activity (mean score of 3.85), followed by stress-release activities (mean score of 3.25) and then recognition of personal milestones (mean score of 3.20). Utilities, finance, education, and government also included opportunities to engage in community volunteerism in their top three most frequently practiced activities.

In addition to utilities, high-tech industries report the use of stress-release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days) at high rates of frequency with a mean score of 2.80. Manufacturing (durable and non-durable) and education were among the least likely to offer stress-release activities. Education, in fact, ranked lowest in using all of the following activities: humor, fun social events, recognition of personal milestones, and friendly competition among employees. The education industry did, however, use entertainment with the most frequency among all industries. Government used entertainment the least and was also least likely to use public celebrations of professional achievements and

games as a way to instill fun in the workplace.

Games (mean score of 2.73) and opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (mean score of 2.22) were most frequently employed by high-tech industries. Friendly competitions among employees (mean score of 2.93), humor (mean score of 2.67), and public celebrations of professional achievements (mean score of 3.43) were most commonly used activities by the wholesale, retail trade. Industries use activities that match their organizational climate with greater frequency; a good example is friendly competitions among employees. Education (mean score of 1.50) in particular, as well as government and manufacturing (durable and non-durable) industries, were much less likely than wholesale, retail trade to use this activity in their workplaces.

The utilities industry offers many more opportunities to engage in community volunteerism activities (coaching, participation in civic and community service groups), with a mean score of 3.85, much higher than the lowest mean at 2.27 for the health industry. The health industry, however, utilized fun social events with greater frequency than the others, with a mean score rating of 3.48. It makes sense that industries use activities that not only fit within the existing culture and norms, but that are practical in their application to the work environment.

Responses to the question asking respondents to assess the utility or contribution of certain activities toward fun work environments (refer to Table 3 for overall respondent results) were analyzed by industry. Table 9 depicts these results. The same 1 to 5 scale used in the preceding question was applied, this time with each label referring to the activity's contribution to a fun workplace. Industry analysis mostly produced the same activities as those found in the overall survey results (fun social events, recognition of personal milestones, and public celebrations of professional achievement), with a few notable exceptions. Utilities and government respondents reported stress-release activities as their top choice for potentially contributing to a fun work environment (mean scores 4.45 and 4.00, respectively).

Although this activity rated second in terms of its actual use (refer to Table 8) by utilities industries and much lower by government, clearly respondents feel that it has a high degree of utility for their organizations. Finance and high-tech also indicated stress-release activities among their top choices (mean scores 4.15 and 3.93, respectively). These industries reported the actual use of these activities with much less frequency, as illustrated by mean

scores of 2.75 (finance) and 2.80 (high tech) (refer to Table 8).

High-tech respondents, more so than those in other industries, selected humor and games (mean score rating of 3.69 for both) as contributing to a fun workplace, while manufacturing and wholesale, retail trade both gave humor the lowest rating and education gave games the lowest. High-tech industries also reported using games at the highest frequency,

**Table 9** Utility (Contributions) of Fun Practices, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	538–556	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	3.49	3.31	3.42	3.65	3.31	3.58	3.52	3.42	3.50	3.58	3.69
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	3.43	3.32	3.48	3.30	2.83	3.45	3.74	2.97	3.75	3.52	3.28
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	4.04	3.97	4.10	4.05	4.21	4.17	3.97	3.91	4.00	3.81	3.79
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	3.11	3.10	3.18	3.60	3.19	3.14	3.05	3.00	2.86	3.00	3.18
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	3.43	3.51	3.47	3.65	3.46	3.43	3.20	3.30	3.00	3.21	3.69
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	4.06	4.18	4.23	4.00	4.10	4.04	3.87	4.24	3.73	3.81	4.24
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	4.15	4.25	4.06	4.25	4.21	4.13	4.09	4.09	3.76	3.85	3.98
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	3.58	3.42	3.59	3.90	3.32	3.81	3.61	3.09	3.27	3.68	3.59
9. Stress-release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	3.89	3.68	3.71	4.45	3.75	4.15	3.84	3.50	3.68	4.00	3.93
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	3.62	3.58	3.60	3.75	4.07	3.83	3.62	3.52	3.41	3.48	3.58

1 Manufacturing (Durable)

4 Wholesale, Retail Trade

6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)

9 Government

2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)

5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)

7 Health

10 High Technology

3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)

8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of industry.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all, 3 moderately, and 5 extensively contributing to a fun work environment.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

as shown in Table 8. It is logical for an industry to use with greater frequency an activity it believes contributes more to a fun work environment. An exception to this trend is seen with wholesale, retail trade, which reported using humor with the highest frequency in Table 8 although it rated it low in terms of contributing to a fun workplace. It may be that although

humor is actually used most in wholesale, retail trade, experience has shown respondents that it is not as useful as some other activities, such as public celebrations of professional achievements, which this industry rated as having the highest utility.

Both high-tech and health industries believe that fun social events contribute to workplace fun more

**Table 10** Factors Employees May Seek at Work, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	557–562	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
1. Being able to relax, have fun, and enjoy oneself at work.	4.06	3.88	4.03	4.40	4.00	4.15	3.94	3.73	4.09	4.27	4.12
2. Being free to express oneself openly at work.	4.18	4.12	4.00	4.45	4.13	4.28	4.09	4.03	4.23	4.04	4.25
3. Having control over one’s own decisions at work.	4.19	4.03	4.16	4.20	4.23	4.25	4.12	4.12	4.36	4.27	4.24
4. Having control over resources (physical and human) at work.	3.86	3.63	3.81	3.95	3.77	3.91	3.69	3.79	4.05	3.88	3.86
5. Feeling listened to at work.	4.80	4.82	4.72	4.80	4.83	4.89	4.75	4.52	4.86	4.81	4.79
6. Feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work.	4.47	4.48	4.41	4.50	4.43	4.46	4.42	4.24	4.43	4.62	4.51
7. Having autonomy and independence at work.	4.11	3.95	4.00	4.25	3.77	4.08	4.03	4.09	4.41	3.92	4.31
8. Having the opportunity to play at work.	3.27	3.11	3.13	3.50	3.27	3.27	3.10	3.24	3.23	3.31	3.53
9. Building interpersonal friendships with others at work.	3.87	3.80	3.91	3.85	4.03	3.92	3.79	3.85	4.00	3.92	3.88
10. Satisfying job security needs (economic survival) at work.	4.35	4.38	4.31	4.40	4.10	4.40	4.36	4.31	4.41	4.15	4.37
11. Having the opportunity to belong to a group of people at work.	3.88	3.78	4.00	3.95	4.00	3.91	3.73	3.73	4.05	3.62	3.90
12. Having the opportunity to express and receive caring at work.	3.81	3.74	3.91	3.85	3.90	3.81	3.68	3.76	4.05	3.62	3.66
13. Satisfying physiological needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, warmth) at work.	3.82	3.89	3.69	3.89	3.97	3.75	3.73	3.70	3.86	3.81	3.84
14. Satisfying psychological well-being needs (emotional security) at work.	3.94	3.92	4.19	3.84	4.17	4.04	3.83	3.67	4.09	3.81	3.86
15. Receiving personal recognition at work.	4.54	4.34	4.38	4.55	4.73	4.54	4.50	4.27	4.64	4.38	4.59

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)                      8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of industry.  
 Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all, 3 moderately, and 5 extremely important to employees.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

than other industries, although only health respondents used this practice with the greatest frequency (refer to Table 8). Education gave fun social events the lowest rating compared to all industries. In fact, the education industry consistently gave the lowest ratings to more of the activities listed than any other industry. In addition to humor and fun social events, education gave recognition of personal milestones and friendly competition among employees the lowest ratings. Education gave one of its highest utility ratings to opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning, which it used with less than moderate frequency (see Table 8).

Utilities respondents displayed consistency between their actual use and their perceived utility of opportunities to engage in community volunteerism. Utilities respondents rated this practice highest in both frequency and utility more than any other industry. Not surprisingly, wholesale, retail trade views friendly competition among employees as most contributive to fun in the workplace and also uses this activity with greater frequency than any other industry. Comparing industry responses about actual use of fun practices to their perceived utility (whether it is actually used in the organization or not) shows that some industries tend to engage in fun practices that they perceive as being useful. Other industries, while understanding the utility of certain practices, may not have the resources to partake in them although they see their merit.

What factors do employees expect to be fulfilled while at work? Table 10 represents, by industry, the importance of factors thought to be valued by employees (refer to Table 4 for overall respondent results). A rating scale of 1 to 5 was used, with 1 indicating not at all, 3 indicating moderately, and 5 indicating extremely important. The top factors across industries mirrored overall survey results, with the majority of industries selecting feeling listened to at work, receiving personal recognition at work, and feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work as the top factors. Exceptions were seen in manufacturing (durable), service (profit and nonprofit), and health

industries, all of which included satisfying job security needs (economic survival) at work among their top factors. Wholesale, retail trade also stood out in that it selected having control over one's own decisions at work as one of its top three factors.

The importance of factors by industry generates interesting information about the corporate culture of these industries. Not surprisingly, high-tech respondents rated having the opportunity to play at work (mean score of 3.53) as more important than other listed industries. Being able to relax, have fun, and enjoy oneself at work was rated highest by utilities respondents (mean score of 4.40) and lowest by health respondents (mean score of 3.73). The utilities industry stood out from other industries in its selection of being free to express oneself openly at work (mean score of 4.45).

The education industry had the highest mean scores in six of the fifteen employee factors, indicating that these factors were most important to its employees. The factors ranged from having control over one's own decisions to autonomy and independence to the opportunity to express and receive caring at work. Interestingly, manufacturing (durable) respondents rated having control over one's decisions at work and having control over resources (physical and human) at work as least important compared with all other industries. Government respondent data show that employees value feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work (mean score of 4.62) more than the other listed industries. Wholesale, retail trade employees feel more strongly about receiving personal recognition at work (mean score of 4.73), building interpersonal friendships with others at work (mean score of 4.03), and satisfying physiological needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, warmth at work) (mean score of 3.97) compared with other industries.

Table 11 depicts respondent perception by industry of the actual level of fun in their organizations compared to what they believe the level of fun ought to be (refer to Chart 1 for overall respondent results). Again, similar to the overall survey results, the most respondents reported that the level of actual fun was

**Table 11** Perception of Actual Fun in Organization Compared to Optimum Level of Fun, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	567	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
a. Much less than there should be	21%	14%	29%	25%	3%	17%	25%	15%	27%	20%	25%
b. Moderately less than there should be	28%	44%	32%	50%	10%	28%	31%	24%	36%	20%	25%
c. A little bit less than there should be	27%	22%	16%	25%	59%	30%	21%	36%	23%	16%	30%
d. About the right amount	22%	21%	16%	0%	24%	21%	23%	24%	14%	44%	17%
e. A little bit more than there should be	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
f. A moderate amount more than there should be	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
g. Much more than there should be	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of industry.  
 Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 12** Employees Should Have the Opportunity to Experience Fun in Organization, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	560	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
1. Never	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
2. Infrequently	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	2%
3. Occasionally	21%	27%	19%	20%	17%	21%	27%	15%	19%	12%	19%
4. Frequently	59%	64%	53%	70%	72%	58%	49%	70%	57%	54%	59%
5. Very Often	19%	8%	25%	10%	10%	19%	22%	15%	24%	27%	19%

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)                      8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of industry.  
 Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

less than the right amount of fun. However, wholesale, retail trade was much less likely than other industries to state this definitively, with only 13 percent stating that there was much less or moderately less fun than there should be. Utilities respondents were unique in that all respondents felt that the amount of fun was less than it should be and no respondents indicated that the level of fun was about the right amount. Forty-four percent of government respondents, nearly double the percentage of

all others, state that the amount of fun in their organizations is about right.

Across industries, a majority of respondents stated that employees should have the opportunity to experience fun occasionally to very often, mirroring overall survey results; however, the majority believe that optimally fun should occur frequently in their organizations (refer to Chart 2 for overall respondent results). Manufacturing (durable), utilities, and wholesale, retail trade respondents were approximately half as likely

**Table 13** Companies Promoting Fun at Work Are More Effective, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	571	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
1. Very Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%
2. Strongly Disagree	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
3. Disagree	3%	3%	0%	5%	3%	0%	3%	19%	0%	0%	3%
4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	12%	14%	9%	5%	13%	13%	17%	9%	14%	19%	3%
5. Agree	42%	51%	41%	35%	47%	38%	40%	44%	50%	35%	40%
6. Strongly Agree	32%	22%	28%	55%	27%	34%	30%	19%	36%	35%	42%
7. Very Strongly Agree	10%	11%	19%	0%	10%	15%	11%	9%	0%	12%	10%

1 Manufacturing (Durable)

4 Wholesale, Retail Trade

6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)

9 Government

2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)

5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)

7 Health

10 High Technology

3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)

8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of industry.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

as respondents in other industries to report that fun should occur very often; however, they tended to be more likely than other industries to believe that employee opportunities to experience fun should occur frequently. Table 12 depicts these data.

Table 13 describes agreement, by industry, with the following statement: “Companies that promote fun at work are more effective than companies that don’t.” More so than other industries, 55 percent of utilities and 52 percent of high-tech industry respondents indicated that they strongly or very strongly agreed with the statement. Interestingly, health industry respondents (19%) were much more likely to disagree with the statement than all other industries.

Table 14 illustrates analysis by industry of the potential sources of managerial resistance to employee attempts to introduce fun in the workplace. Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of resistance using a 7-point scale: 1 represented very unlikely, 4 neutral, and 7 very likely. Similar to overall results, respondents from almost all the industries regarded time constraints and financial costs as the most significant impediments underlying managerial resistance. There were a few notewor-

thy exceptions. Government was the only industry that did not select time constraints as the number one reason for managerial resistance. Rather, respondents cited fear of losing control as the top reason. Service and health industries indicated that unproven impact was among the top reasons for resistance. Finance reported that fears of feeling silly may be the culprit.

Interesting results emerged among industries in their perceptions of the reasons for managerial resistance. Education had the highest mean score ratings for more than half of the rationales listed. This suggests that education respondents believe that managers in this industry are likely to display greater resistance to fun work environments compared to other industries. Several differences are worthy of mentioning: fears of feeling silly, for which education gave the highest mean score (5.41) and high tech gave the lowest (4.23); unproven impact, for which education gave the highest mean score (5.18) and high tech the lowest (4.48); fear of non-support from above, for which education gave the highest mean score (5.45) and wholesale, retail trade gave the lowest (4.33); and inconsistency with the organization’s productivity culture, for

**Table 14** Reasons for Managerial Resistance to Employee Desires to Create Fun Work Environments, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	559-571	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
a. Time constraints (e.g., I can't afford the time).	5.46	5.43	5.69	5.65	5.30	5.17	5.52	5.64	5.68	5.23	5.58
b. Financial costs (e.g., It will cost too much).	5.21	5.18	5.44	5.11	4.97	5.08	5.06	5.30	5.36	4.92	5.25
c. Fears of feeling silly (e.g., I don't want to look stupid).	4.59	4.77	4.72	4.95	4.63	4.90	4.31	4.70	5.41	4.84	4.23
d. Lack of personal creativity (e.g., I don't know how to have fun).	4.33	4.59	4.34	4.60	4.80	4.19	4.22	4.21	5.05	4.23	4.46
e. Unproven impact (e.g., There's no evidence that it will pay off).	4.74	4.85	4.97	5.10	4.70	4.58	4.72	4.97	5.18	5.04	4.48
f. Perceived employee apathy (e.g., I don't think that they would care).	4.36	4.56	4.19	4.50	4.53	4.04	4.31	4.42	4.64	4.54	4.07
g. Fear of non-support from above (e.g., My superior[s] wouldn't condone it).	4.74	5.01	5.00	5.30	4.33	4.67	4.58	4.73	5.45	5.00	4.53
h. belief of non-responsibility (e.g., It's not part of my job).	4.61	4.88	4.69	4.70	4.75	4.50	4.33	4.82	5.55	4.81	4.39
i. Fear of losing control (e.g., I'm afraid they'll get carried away if I create a little bit of fun).	4.58	4.96	4.88	4.40	4.93	4.37	4.46	4.92	5.00	5.35	4.34
j. Inconsistency with the organization's productivity culture (e.g., We're here to work, not play).	4.68	4.99	5.09	5.17	4.21	4.43	4.41	4.67	5.50	5.08	4.78
k. Fear of offensive responses (e.g., Someone will take offense or legal action at whatever I do).	4.19	4.46	4.75	3.53	4.38	3.81	3.89	4.78	4.64	4.85	3.98
l. Some employees will be distracted (They won't pay attention).	4.52	4.89	4.72	4.58	4.59	4.34	4.14	4.91	4.82	4.92	4.23
m. Fear that department work won't be taken seriously (They'll become too playful).	4.66	5.20	4.72	4.79	4.55	4.32	4.34	4.68	5.32	4.85	4.66

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)                      8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of industry.  
 Note: A scale of 1 to 7 was employed, with 1 representing very unlikely, 4 neutral, and 7 representing very likely to underlie managerial resistance.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

which education gave the highest mean score (5.50) and wholesale, retail trade again gave the lowest (4.21).

Government respondents gave the highest mean score for fear of losing control (mean score of 5.35) compared to the high-tech industry's mean score of 4.34, which was the lowest. Government also seems to be more worried about fear of offensive responses,

for which it gave the highest mean score, 4.85, compared to utilities, which gave the lowest mean score (3.53). These results illustrate how corporate norms and expectations imbedded within each industry generate potential challenges from managers and supervisors when it comes to implementing fun at work.

Table 15 shows that half of the industries report substantial differences across departments/units in

**Table 15** Differences in Fun Across Departments/Units in Organizations, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	568	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
Yes	61%	64%	44%	85%	59%	66%	56%	49%	81%	72%	47%
No	39%	37%	56%	15%	41%	34%	44%	52%	19%	28%	53%

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)                      8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of industry.  
 Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 16** Origination of Fun Work Environment in Organization, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	505	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
a. Overall organizational culture	24%	26%	21%	0%	21%	20%	26%	17%	9%	23%	35%
b. Top management’s efforts and actions	25%	20%	14%	46%	28%	31%	22%	17%	32%	18%	26%
c. Middle management’s efforts and actions	20%	26%	32%	23%	21%	18%	14%	17%	14%	23%	13%
d. First-line supervisor’s efforts and actions	10%	9%	11%	8%	10%	20%	14%	10%	14%	5%	9%
e. Employees’ efforts and actions	17%	14%	14%	15%	14%	11%	22%	37%	23%	32%	13%
f. Do not know	4%	5%	7%	8%	7%	0%	1%	3%	9%	0%	6%

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)                      8 Education (including Library)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of industry.  
 Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

their organizations in the amount of work fun that is demonstrated. The utilities industry more than any others exhibited the most difference (85%) across departments, followed by education at 81 percent and government at 72 percent.

Where does the primary impetus for a fun work environment originate? High-tech industry respondents report the highest percentage of influence coming from overall organizational culture (35%), while

utilities (0%) and education (9%) respondents report almost no influence from this factor. The efforts and actions of top management (46%) appear more important in the utilities industry as the main impetus for fun at work. Health (37%) and government (32%) respondents indicate that the driving force for fun in the workplace is the effort and actions of employees. These data are shown in Table 16.

**Table 17** Actions Used to Create a Fun Work Environment, by Industry

	Overall Responses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Respondents	574	74	32	20	30	53	81	33	22	26	60
a. “Fun” (or “Joy”) committees	21%	23%	13%	15%	23%	21%	16%	46%	23%	15%	27%
b. “Costume” days (e.g., “ugly socks” or Halloween costumes)	39%	32%	31%	45%	60%	55%	40%	58%	18%	19%	33%
c. Use of entertainers (musicians; clowns/artists)	16%	16%	13%	15%	20%	17%	12%	18%	14%	4%	15%
d. Casual dress days	83%	85%	81%	95%	73%	91%	83%	88%	73%	81%	85%
e. Pets in the office	5%	3%	3%	0%	10%	2%	4%	3%	0%	4%	12%
f. Supply of fun toys, games, and humorous reading materials available	16%	3%	9%	15%	13%	17%	19%	18%	0%	31%	35%
g. Creative skits and songs for company events	20%	12%	13%	20%	17%	26%	21%	21%	32%	19%	18%
h. Employee-generated names for teams and meeting rooms	19%	27%	19%	25%	23%	21%	10%	15%	5%	12%	28%
i. Employee “roasts”	9%	8%	9%	30%	7%	2%	4%	9%	14%	19%	12%
j. Employee musical group (e.g., kazoo band chorus)	5%	3%	3%	0%	7%	6%	3%	0%	14%	8%	2%
k. Use of humorous titles (e.g., “Humor Hero,” “Comic Colleague,” or “Vice-President of Fun”)	6%	3%	3%	10%	7%	2%	5%	3%	0%	27%	13%
l. Special props (e.g., balloons, flowers, hats, signs)	24%	22%	28%	15%	27%	30%	31%	27%	14%	19%	23%
m. Suggestion box exclusively for “fun” ideas	6%	4%	0%	0%	10%	6%	4%	24%	0%	0%	10%
n. Talk show formats (e.g., Rosie O’Donnell, Oprah Winfrey, or David Letterman)	3%	1%	3%	5%	0%	6%	4%	0%	5%	4%	3%
o. Employee release time for community projects (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, or house “Paint-a-thons”)	34%	42%	22%	55%	20%	43%	30%	18%	32%	27%	30%
p. Game show formats (e.g., “Jeopardy,” “Wheel of Fortune,” or “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?”)	17%	10%	13%	5%	30%	36%	22%	12%	9%	15%	10%
q. Photos and funny captions (e.g., “Most Beautiful Baby” contests)	27%	31%	19%	35%	13%	26%	35%	15%	5%	27%	25%
r. Company-provided food and refreshments	82%	92%	75%	65%	90%	79%	85%	91%	59%	65%	85%
s. Stress-reduction rooms (e.g., for meditation or massage)	13%	8%	13%	20%	7%	25%	6%	15%	9%	8%	18%
t. Employee recognition and awards	83%	77%	78%	90%	80%	85%	78%	91%	82%	89%	82%
u. Exercise room	21%	8%	25%	50%	13%	21%	10%	6%	32%	54%	37%
v. Creative working experience	17%	8%	9%	30%	13%	21%	15%	18%	9%	15%	17%
w. Bring your child to work day	44%	34%	44%	25%	43%	55%	28%	42%	27%	50%	67%

1 Manufacturing (Durable)                      4 Wholesale, Retail Trade                      6 Service (Profit & Nonprofit)                      9 Government  
 2 Manufacturing (Non-durable)                      5 Finance (including Insurance & Real Estate)                      7 Health                      10 High Technology  
 3 Utilities (Including Oil, Gas, Power)

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of industry.  
 Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

Table 17 depicts, by industry, actions organizations use to create fun work environments. Industry results mirror overall results, with the same top three activities used to introduce fun into the workplace: company-provided food and refreshments, casual dress days, and employee recognition and awards. However, differences do exist among industries on a few of the actions identified. For example, finance and manufacturing (durable goods) are each twice as likely as health to offer employee release time for community projects. This may be due to scheduling difficulties in health-related organizations, but it is still a notable difference. Government (54%) and utilities (50%) respondents are far more likely to have

exercise rooms than all other industries, with the next closest being high tech (37%). Wholesale, retail trade industries (60%) are three times more likely to use “costume” days than government (18%), which again is probably a function of the type of work of each industry. High tech (35%) and government (31%) supply fun toys, games, and humorous readings at much higher rates than all others, especially education, which reported no use of this action. Twenty-seven percent of government respondents report the use of humorous titles, followed by 13 percent of high-tech respondents; all other industries report this action at considerably lower percentages.

# Analysis by Size

The following section depicts the results of the organization size analysis. Organizations were grouped into three categories: small (1–99 employees), medium (100–499 employees), and large (500 or more employees). Data from each question were examined to determine if patterns exist based on organization size. In cases in which no patterns were observed based on organization size, a decision was made not to include the corresponding tables and charts.

Does the frequency of fun-related practices vary according to organizational size? Table 18 shows

how frequently these practices were used, by organization size. The means across organization size indicated that no size used the reported practices with greater than moderate frequency.

It appears that large organizations use opportunities to engage in community volunteerism and stress-release activities more frequently than small and medium-sized organizations. However, large organizations use humor and fun social events less frequently than their smaller counterparts. The practices used with the greatest frequency are parallel to overall respondent and industry results.

**Table 19** Utility (Contributions) of Fun Practices, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	538-556	112	83	336
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	3.49	3.62	3.59	3.43
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	3.43	3.51	3.44	3.38
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	4.04	4.06	4.05	4.02
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	3.11	3.02	3.27	3.09
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	3.43	3.29	3.55	3.45
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	4.06	4.17	4.04	4.02
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	4.15	4.17	4.16	4.14
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	3.58	3.35	3.67	3.63
9. Stress-release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	3.89	3.75	4.00	3.89
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	3.62	3.38	3.67	3.67

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of size.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all, 3 moderately, and 5 extensively contributing to a fun work environment.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

Organization size appears to be inversely related to beliefs about the utility of certain fun practices. These data are shown in Table 19. As organization size increases, the mean score rating decreases (only slightly in some cases) in terms of how respondents feel these practices contribute to creating fun work environments. This pattern is observed in the following activities: humor, opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning, public celebrations of professional achievements, fun social events, and recognition of

personal milestones. This finding may indicate that certain activities are more conducive to creating fun in smaller organizations where employees have more opportunities to interact and share in the fun together. Medium and large organizations perceive opportunities to engage in community volunteerism and stress-release activities as more likely to contribute to a fun work environment than small organizations. The fun practices rated with the greatest utility again mirror overall respondent and industry results.

**Table 20** Factors Employees May Seek at Work, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	557-562	112	83	336
1. Being able to relax, have fun, and enjoy oneself at work.	4.06	4.09	4.11	4.03
2. Being free to express oneself openly at work.	4.18	4.19	4.07	4.21
3. Having control over one's own decisions at work.	4.19	4.09	4.24	4.20
4. Having control over resources (physical and human) at work.	3.86	3.80	3.71	3.92
5. Feeling listened to at work.	4.80	4.70	4.80	4.83
6. Feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work.	4.47	4.49	4.63	4.40
7. Having autonomy and independence at work.	4.11	4.13	4.06	4.12
8. Having the opportunity to play at work.	3.27	3.28	3.34	3.26
9. Building interpersonal friendships with others at work.	3.87	3.80	3.78	3.93
10. Satisfying job security needs (economic survival) at work.	4.35	4.28	4.47	4.35
11. Having the opportunity to belong to a group of people at work.	3.88	3.82	3.81	3.91
12. Having the opportunity to express and receive caring at work.	3.81	3.78	3.77	3.83
13. Satisfying physiological needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, warmth at work).	3.82	3.88	3.84	3.81
14. Satisfying psychological well-being needs (emotional security) at work.	3.94	3.73	3.90	4.01
15. Receiving personal recognition at work.	4.54	4.39	4.44	4.60

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of size.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all, 3 moderately, and 5 extremely important to employees.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

Table 20 illustrates, by organization size, the factors employees expect to have fulfilled at work. The top factors that employees expect to have fulfilled at work again mirror overall respondent and industry results. Across organization size there is relative agreement of the importance of factors that employees may seek in the work environment. It is curious that in medium-sized organizations, being free to express oneself openly at work (mean score of 4.07) is rated less important than in small or large organizations, yet feeling the freedom to engage in laughter at work (mean

score of 4.63) is rated more important. Small organizations give lower importance to the factors satisfying job security needs (economic survival) at work (mean score of 4.28) and having control over one's decisions at work (mean score of 4.09). Smaller companies may be less compartmentalized than their counterparts, allowing employees the opportunity to wear different hats. In return, employees might feel secure in their worth to the organization and their ability to execute decisions on their own.

**Table 18** Frequency of Practices, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	553-560	112	83	336
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	2.41	2.53	2.59	2.33
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	1.97	2.03	1.77	2.01
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	3.15	3.09	3.17	3.17
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	1.91	1.87	1.99	1.89
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	2.26	2.11	2.34	2.30
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	3.15	3.33	3.23	3.08
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	3.38	3.44	3.54	3.31
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	2.77	2.58	2.55	2.89
9. Stress-release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	2.60	2.56	2.47	2.65
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	2.21	2.17	2.13	2.24

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of size.

Note: A scale of 1 to 5 was employed, with 1 representing not at all used, 3 moderately used, and 5 extensively used in the respondent's organization.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 21** Perception of Actual Fun in Organization Compared to Optimum Level of Fun, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	567	110	82	332
a. Much less than there should be	21%	15%	17%	24%
b. Moderately less than there should be	28%	20%	23%	32%
c. A little bit less than there should be	27%	31%	31%	24%
d. About the right amount	22%	32%	28%	18%
e. A little bit more than there should be	2%	2%	1%	2%
f. A moderate amount more than there should be	1%	0%	0%	1%
g. Much more than there should be	0%	1%	0%	0%

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of size.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 22** Employees Should Have the Opportunity to Experience Fun in Organization, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	560	112	83	331
1. Never	1%	1%	0%	0%
2. Infrequently	0%	0%	2%	2%
3. Occasionally	21%	15%	23%	22%
4. Frequently	59%	61%	53%	59%
5. Very Often	19%	23%	22%	16%

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of size.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 23** Companies Promoting Fun at Work Are More Effective, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	571	112	83	334
1. Very Strongly Disagree	0%	1%	0%	0%
2. Strongly Disagree	1%	1%	0%	1%
3. Disagree	3%	7%	4%	2%
4. Neither Disagree nor Agree	12%	13%	12%	11%
5. Agree	42%	37%	39%	45%
6. Strongly Agree	32%	34%	31%	32%
7. Very Strongly Agree	10%	8%	15%	10%

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of size.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

Table 21 illustrates, by organization size, respondent perception of the actual level of fun in their organizations compared to what they believe the level of fun ought to be. As organization size increases, the level of fun is perceived as being moderately less than it should be. Conversely, as organization size decreases, more respondents feel that the amount of fun at their organizations is the right amount. Small companies appear to be the most satisfied that the amount of fun in their workplace is the right amount. Again, it may be that smaller organizations, by nature of their size, find it easier to create opportunities for fun in the workplace.

Table 22 depicts, by organization size, how often HR professional believe employees should have fun

at work. Small organizations, by a slight margin, are more likely than medium and large organizations to believe that fun should exist frequently to very often.

Are companies that promote fun at work more effective than companies that do not? Table 23 illustrates the responses to this question by organization size. Interestingly, as organization size increases, so does the percentage of respondents who agree to very strongly agree. Although respondents from small organizations described their organizations as having the right amount of fun, and believe fun should occur more frequently than respondents from medium and large organizations, they are less likely to agree that companies promoting fun are more effective.

**Table 24**

Reasons for Managerial Resistance to Employee Desires to Create Fun Work Environments, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	559—571	112	83	336
a. Time constraints (e.g., I can't afford the time).	5.46	5.02	5.41	5.60
b. Financial costs (e.g., It will cost too much).	5.21	4.72	5.13	5.38
c. Fears of feeling silly (e.g., I don't want to look stupid).	4.59	4.00	4.71	4.78
d. Lack of personal creativity (e.g., I don't know how to have fun).	4.33	3.69	4.17	4.56
e. Unproven impact (e.g., There's no evidence that it will pay off).	4.74	4.29	4.71	4.93
f. Perceived employee apathy (e.g., I don't think that they would care).	4.36	3.79	4.49	4.53
g. Fear of non-support from above (e.g., My superior[s] wouldn't condone it).	4.74	4.11	4.43	5.02
h. Belief of non-responsibility (e.g., It's not part of my job).	4.61	3.95	4.43	4.85
i. Fear of losing control (e.g., I'm afraid they'll get carried away if I create a little bit of fun).	4.58	3.92	4.85	4.77
j. Inconsistency with the organization's productivity culture (e.g., We're here to work, not play).	4.68	4.01	4.44	5.01
k. Fear of offensive responses (e.g., Someone will take offense or legal action at whatever I do).	4.19	3.55	4.10	4.42
l. Some employees will be distracted. (They won't pay attention).	4.52	3.93	4.62	4.66
m. Fear that department work won't be taken seriously (They'll become too playful).	4.66	3.94	4.83	4.85

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of size.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

Organization size appears to be directly related to increases in the likelihood of managerial resistance. Table 24 presents these data. This pattern exists in every rationale except for fear of losing control. The degree of variability between small and large organizations is quite substantial for almost every rationale. The largest differences between small and large organizations exist in the following rationales: inconsistency with the organization's productivity culture, fear that department work won't be taken seriously, fear of non-support from above, belief of non-responsibility, lack of personal creativity, and fear of offensive responses.

Across organization size, similar to overall respondent and industry results, the top two rationales for resistance were time constraints and financial costs; however, the next most commonly cited reason for managerial resistance varied in relation to size. Small organizations indicated unproven impact (mean score of 4.29); medium organizations belief of non-responsibility (mean score of 4.43); and large organizations fear of non-support from above (mean score of 5.02). Clearly, the infrastructure of large organizations creates a context of less flexible boundaries and a perception of greater resistance by managers, who may be compelled to think "inside the box" when it comes to fun at work.

**Table 25** Differences in Fun Across Departments in Organizations, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	568	112	82	333
Yes	61%	46%	61%	66%
No	39%	54%	39%	35%

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of size.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 26** Origination of Fun Work Environment in Organization, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	505	92	74	300
1. Overall organizational culture	24%	28%	22%	22%
2. Top management's efforts and actions	25%	23%	32%	25%
3. Middle management's efforts and actions	20%	13%	15%	24%
4. First-line supervisor's efforts and actions	10%	9%	8%	12%
5. Employees' efforts and actions	17%	22%	22%	13%
6. Do not know	4%	5%	1%	5%

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents regardless of size.

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

As shown in Table 25, all organizations, regardless of size, exhibit differences in the amount of fun across departments. This is especially apparent in medium and large organizations. In larger organizations, departmental cultures and practices are often at the discretion of the manager. The amount of workplace fun may largely depend on the leadership style of the department manager and how willing that manager is to face potential resistance from senior management and the overall organizational culture.

The primary impetus for fun at work is more likely to come from the overall organizational culture (28%) in small organizations. Medium and large organizations stated that the major influence comes from the efforts and actions of top management at 32 percent and 25 percent, respectively. Interestingly, the

efforts and actions of employees are almost twice as likely to be an influence in small and medium-sized organizations (both at 22%) as at large organizations (13%). In smaller organizations it is likely that an atmosphere in which employees contribute to the overall organizational culture and vice versa develops a reciprocal approach to fun. Middle management in these organizations has less weight in the impetus toward fun work environments. The case is nearly opposite in large organizations, in which middle management's weight is parallel to that of top-level management. While middle managers have more say on the inner workings of the company structure, the employees are more alienated from the existing bureaucracy in large organizations. This explains the higher levels of managerial resistance

toward employee efforts to create fun work environments exhibited in Table 24. Employees are likely to encounter more managerial resistance in large organizations because managers, not employees, possess decision-making powers over whether fun is integrated into the work environment. These data are depicted in Table 26.

Table 27 depicts by organization size the type of activities used to create fun work environments. The activities used with the greatest frequency mirror overall respondent and industry results. Although for most of the listed actions there are not major differences with organization size, there are a few noticeable differences. For example, small and large organizations use the same actions at the same or close to the same percentage, while medium organizations use the actions in question quite a bit less. This was observed in the following: the use of “fun” committees, entertainers, humorous titles, and stress-reduction rooms. It may be that large companies promote certain strategies to reach out to employees by cre-

ating a more satisfying work environment while small organizations use employee impetus to spontaneously foster fun actions. In both cases it seems that these organizations (21% for small and 24% for large) rely on “fun” committees to organize their efforts. Another vehicle for employees in small organizations is the opportunity to use a suggestion box exclusively for “fun” ideas (14%), an action that is much less prevalent in medium (1%) and large (5%) organizations. Small organizations (22%) also report using creative working experiences as an avenue to reach fun more often than medium and large organizations (15% for both). Some actions are used most often in large organizations, and in some cases much less in small and medium sized organizations. The two that stand out are employee release time for community projects (used by 40% of large, 31% of small, and 18% of medium organizations) and bring your child to work day (used by 49% of large, 40% of small, and 35% of medium organizations).

**Table 27** Actions Used to Create a Fun Work Environment, by Organization Size

	Overall Responses	Small Organization (1-99)	Medium Organization (100-499)	Large Organization (500 or more)
Number of Respondents	574	112	83	336
a. "Fun" (or "Joy") committees	21%	21%	15%	24%
b. "Costume" days (e.g., "ugly socks" or Halloween costumes)	39%	32%	33%	42%
c. Use of entertainers (musicians; clowns/artists)	16%	18%	10%	17%
d. Casual dress days	83%	84%	81%	86%
e. Pets in the office	5%	8%	8%	3%
f. Supply of fun toys, games, and humorous reading materials available	16%	20%	18%	14%
g. Creative skits and songs for company events	20%	22%	18%	20%
h. Employee-generated names for teams and meeting rooms	19%	13%	17%	21%
i. Employee "roasts"	9%	6%	12%	9%
j. Employee musical group (e.g., kazoo band chorus)	5%	8%	2%	5%
k. Use of humorous titles (e.g., "Humor Hero," "Comic Colleague," or "Vice-President of Fun")	6%	7%	2%	6%
l. Special props (e.g., balloons, flowers, hats, signs)	24%	31%	27%	22%
m. Suggestion box exclusively for "fun" ideas	6%	14%	1%	5%
n. Talk show formats (e.g., Rosie O'Donnell, Oprah Winfrey, or David Letterman)	3%	3%	0%	4%
o. Employee release time for community projects (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, or house "Paint-a-thons")	34%	31%	18%	40%
p. Game show formats (e.g., "Jeopardy," "Wheel of Fortune," or "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?")	17%	13%	19%	16%
q. Photos and funny captions (e.g., "Most Beautiful Baby" contests)	27%	31%	22%	26%
r. Company-provided food and refreshments	82%	83%	84%	82%
s. Stress-reduction rooms (e.g., for meditation or massage)	13%	13%	5%	15%
t. Employee recognition and awards	83%	79%	80%	85%
u. Exercise room	21%	13%	16%	25%
v. Creative working experience	17%	22%	15%	15%
w. Bring your child to work day	44%	40%	35%	49%

Note: Number of respondents shown is the total number of respondents answering each question regardless of size.

Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

# Demographics

**Table 28**

Region

(Number of Respondents=548)

*Area 1*

Northeast (CT, DE, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)	19%
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*Area 2*

Southeast (AL, DC, FL, GA, KY, MD, NC, SC, TN, VA)	22%
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*Area 3*

Upper Midwest (IA, IL, IN, MI, MN, ND, OH, SD, WV, WI)	22%
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*Area 4*

Plains/South Central (AR, KS, LA, MO, MS, NE, OK, TX)	15%
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*Area 5*

Northwest (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY)	8%
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*Area 6 Southwest*

(AZ, CA, CO, HI, NM, NV, UT)	14%
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**Table 29** Industry

(Number of Respondents=574)

Other	15%
Service (Profit and Nonprofit)	14%
Manufacturing (durable goods)	13%
High Technology	11%
Finance, Including Insurance and Real Estate	9%
Manufacturing (non-durable goods)	6%
Health	6%
Wholesale, Retail Trade	5%
Government	5%
Utilities, Including Oil, Gas, Power	4%
Education, Library	4%
Publishing, Including Newspapers	2%
Mixed Category, Including Construction, Agriculture, Fishing, and Mining	2%
Transportation	2%
Independent Consultants	1%

**Table 30** Size of Total Organization

(Number of Respondents=564)

Less than 100	17%
100–499	35%
500–999	11%
1,000–2,499	11%
2,500–4,999	6%
5,000–9,999	7%
10,000–24,999	4%
25,000 or more	9%

### Unionization

Eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated that fewer than 20 percent of employees at their location are unionized.

### Number of Employees in Unit

The total number of employees at respondent units ranged from fewer than 100 to 25,000 or more. Most respondents (22%) indicated that their units had 500 to 900 employees, followed by 21 percent of respondents with fewer than 100 employees.

**Profit/Not for Profit**

Profit	77%
Not for profit	23%

**Table 31** Age of Production and Service Workers

(Number of Respondents=551)

Younger than 20	*
20–29	24%
30–39	50%
40–49	25%
50–59	1%
60 or older	0%

*\*Indicates less than 1 percent.*

Fifty percent of respondents reported that the average age of workers in their organizations is 30 to 39. A significant proportion of workers also fall into the ages of 40 to 49 (25%) or 20 to 29 (24%).

**Table 32** Age of Supervisors and Managers

(Number of Respondents=557)

Younger than 20	0%
20–29	1%
30–39	28%
40–49	59%
50–59	11%
60 or older	*

*\*Indicates less than 1 percent.*

Most supervisors and managers (59%) fall into the age group 40 to 49.

**Table 33** Gender of Workforce

(Number of Respondents=551)

Dominantly male (80% and up)	13%
Primarily male (60–79%)	24%
About equally male and female (40–59% each)	35%
Primarily female (60–79%)	21%
Dominantly female (80% and up)	7%

The composition of the workforce in terms of gender is about equally male and female at the majority of respondent organizations (35%). Only 7 percent of the organizations have a workforce that is dominantly female, while 13 percent have a workforce that is dominantly male.

**Table 34** Education of Exempt Workforce

(Number of Respondents=556)

Less than high school	*
High school graduates	3%
Some college	21%
College graduates	56%
Some graduate work	10%
Graduate degrees	10%

*\*Indicates less than 1 percent.*

Most of the exempt workforce at respondent organizations have graduated from college (56%), and 10 percent have graduate degrees.

**Table 35** Education of Non-Exempt Workforce

(Number of Respondents=554)

Less than high school	1%
High school graduates	52%
Some college	36%
College graduates	9%
Some graduate work	1%
Graduate degrees	*

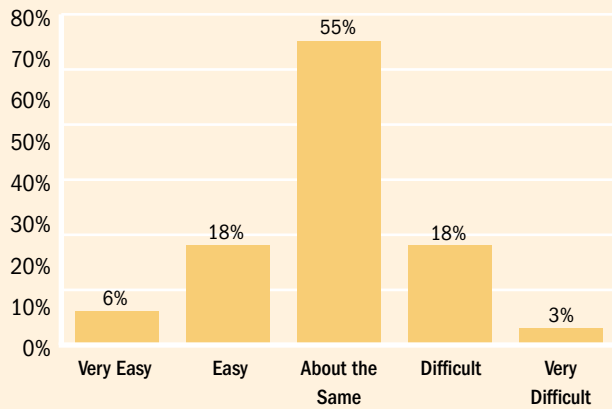
\*Indicates less than 1 percent.

**Ability to Attract New Employees**

More than half the respondents (55%) indicated that the ability to attract new employees for their organizations is about the same compared with other organizations. These data are shown in Chart 12.

**Chart 12** Task of Attracting New Employees Compared to Other Organizations

(Number of Respondents=558)



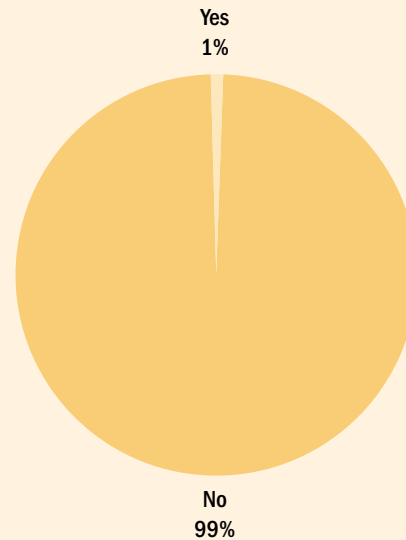
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.  
Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Table 36** Gender of Respondents

Male	20%
Female	80%

**Chart 13** Participation in Fun At Work Day

(Number of Respondents=532)



Source: SHRM® Fun Work Environment Survey

**Fun at Work Day**

Virtually all respondents (99%) indicated their organization has never participated in National Fun at Work Day. These data are shown in Chart 13.

**Table 37** Education Level of Respondents

(Number of Respondents=557)

High school	1%
Some college	18%
Bachelor's degree	35%
College above bachelor's degree	17%
Master's degree (including MBA)	28%
Doctorate	2%

Thirty-five percent of the respondents completing this survey have a bachelor's degree and 28 percent have a master's degree (including MBA).

# Conclusion

The outlook of the work environment has changed considerably in recent years as companies attempt to find ways to increase employee satisfaction and productivity. Investments in human capital have led to greater flexibility in the workplace, work-life balance efforts, and a range of benefits that meet the personal needs of employees. The idea of integrating fun into the workplace is yet another attempt to boost employee morale, motivation, and creativity. Results from this report show that fun in the workplace, more than ever before, is becoming significant for companies today and in the future. As the workforce experiences widespread demographic changes and HR professionals amplify their efforts to manage talent, finding a common thread to transform a diverse group of individuals to a collective interactive group of employees will require a more concerted effort.

Even as the economy is in a downturn, the personal needs of employees continue to be important, in terms of both new hires and the retention of talent. A fun work environment where employees can engage with one another through the use of humor, fun social events, and public celebrations of professional achievement may be a way to loosen up the traditional work environment and create a relaxed, less stressful workplace. Respondents indicated that the most beneficial consequence of a fun work environment is its ability to attract new employees. While

more than half the respondents stated that the ability of their organizations to attract new employees is about the same as other companies, a fun work environment may become a competitive staffing advantage as more companies incorporate the principle of fun into their workplaces. Data from this study also demonstrate the expectation that fun should exist in the workplace and that the importance of fun has steadily risen and could continue to rise in the years to come. This suggests that employees may come to expect work to be more “fun” and to offer activities ranging from casual dress days and company-provided food to social events recognizing personal milestones and achievements.

Interestingly, regardless of size or industry, a large majority of respondents believe that companies that promote fun at work are more effective. This perception will undoubtedly influence the future integration of fun activities into the workplace. Whether this belief is accurate or not, respondents appear to perceive employees as more productive and content when their needs for fun are satisfied—thus increasing their overall effectiveness.

While there may be agreement that fun work environments should exist, very few companies actually have policies specifically designated to promote fun. In fact, this study has found that the level of fun varies across departments, indicating that “fun” is not a centralized concept within company cultures.

The data also show that most companies do not explicitly reward managers who consciously promote a fun work environment. It could be that fun, while it is valued, is not given enough priority to be formally institutionalized in the corporate culture. Rather, it is allowed to develop spontaneously. This may be positive in that dictating fun may not be as effective as letting it develop on its own. The downside may be that unless an atmosphere for fun is supported in the organization, employees and midlevel managers may not take steps to promote it, fearing resistance.

Data from this report show that organizational culture along with top-level management and employees, to some degree, appear to be the force behind promoting a fun work environment. In addition, responses shed light on the two major reasons managers tend to resist attempts to integrate fun in the workplace—financial costs and time constraints. The benefits and limitations of fun in the workplace in relation to the investment of keeping employees happy and satisfied may be a matter of perception, and there are almost no empirical studies that support or refute this belief. Yet the idea of fun at work has become more and more widespread.

Fun began its infiltration of the workplace in the boom economy of the late 1990s, when creating fun work environments was a necessity in recruiting employees, especially in the IT and dot.com industries. This belief system appears to persist in the

high-tech industry. High-tech respondents—more than any other industry—credit the impact of organizational culture with fostering fun work environments. Another factor playing into this situation may be that the average age of top-level management in high-tech companies is younger than management in more traditional companies. Age could contribute to the cultural notion espoused by the New Economy IT and dot.com companies—work hard and play hard. And while the “extreme fun” culture adopted by these organizations may have been taken to excess, it has left a legacy that appears to have infiltrated corporate culture across industries. In fact, age may have played a role in the outcomes of this report. According to respondents, exactly half the production and service workers in their organizations were between the ages of 30 and 39, while more 59 percent of the supervisors and managers were between 40 and 49. As the workforce becomes younger and makes space for Generation Y workers, expectations about the workplace are projected to change. HR professionals, aware of these changes, may be more open to shifting workplace patterns and in tune with what employees want from their employers.

# Survey Questionnaire

Please make your selections below, then click the submit button at the end of this form.

## Section A. Possible Consequences

Listed below are several statements regarding the possible effects or results of a fun work environment. Please indicate, to the best of your ability, the degree to which you believe that fun work environment produces each of the listed outcomes.

(Indicate the degree to which you believe that a fun work environment increases or decreases the following outcomes by *clicking on one of the responses in the 5-point scale shown*. Click **No Opinion** if you are totally unsure as to its probable effects.)

Organizations that endorse and promote a fun work environment are likely to experience how much change in their:

Sec. A	Possible Consequences					
	Substantial Decrease	Moderate Decrease	No Effect	Moderate Increase	Substantial Increase	NO Opinion
1. Accident rates (frequency).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
2. Ability to attract new employees.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
3. Absenteeism rates.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
4. Communication among employees.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
5. Customer satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
6. Cost of operations.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
7. Employee anxiety and stress.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
8. Employee complaints of boredom.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
9. Employee creativity.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
10. Employee enthusiasm.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
11. Employee satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
12. Employee friendships at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
13. Employee turnover rates.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
14. Equipment damage caused by playfulness.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
15. Frequency of employee errors made.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
16. Group cohesiveness.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
17. Interpersonal conflicts.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
18. Level of employee commitment to the organization.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
19. Mutual trust among employees.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
20. Organizational citizenship (voluntary acts of helping behaviors) by employees.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
21. Professionalism at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
22. Quality of employee productivity.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
23. Reports of sexual harassment.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
24. Respect among coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
25. Respect from higher-ups.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
26. Speed with which new tasks are learned by employees during training programs.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
27. Strength of the corporate culture (shared values and norms).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
28. Understanding of the organization's mission and priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
29. Work taken seriously by other departments.	1	2	3	4	5	NO

**Section B. Frequency Of Practices**

Listed below are several statements regarding activities potentially leading to a fun work environment. Please indicate **your personal assessment** of the **frequency** with which your organization actually uses the following items.

Sec. B	Frequency Of Practices					
	Not at All		Moderately		Extensively	NO (No Opinion)
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an “employee of the month”).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
9. Stress release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	1	2	3	4	5	NO

**Section C. Utility (Contributions) Of Fun Practices**

HRM professionals are in a good position to assess the utility of various activities designed to produce a fun work environment. In this section, we are soliciting your insights into the **potential effectiveness** of each fun activity. The responses below relate directly to **your beliefs** regardless of the extent they are actually used in your organization.

Listed below are several statements regarding activities potentially leading to a fun work environment. Please indicate, to the best of your ability and using the response scale shown, the degree to which **you** feel each practice below **contributes** to creating a fun work environment.

Sec. C	Utility (Contributions) Of Fun Practices					
	Not at All		Moderately		Extensively	NO (No Opinion)
1. Humor (e.g., cartoons, jokes in corporate newsletters, e-mails, and managerial messages).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
2. Opportunities for personal development growth through opportunities for non-job-related learning (e.g., quilting classes, book clubs, aerobics).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
3. Public celebrations of professional achievements (e.g., award banquets, recognition for outstanding results, naming an "employee of the month").	1	2	3	4	5	NO
4. Entertainment (e.g., bands, skits, plays).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
5. Games (e.g., dart boards, bingo, company-sponsored athletic teams and events).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
6. Fun social events (e.g., social gatherings, picnics, parties).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
7. Recognition of personal milestones (e.g., celebrating individual birthdays or anniversaries of employment).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
8. Opportunities to engage in community volunteerism (e.g., coaching, participation in civic and community service groups).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
9. Stress release activities (e.g., massage, exercise facilities, casual dress days).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
10. Friendly competitions among employees (e.g., prizes for attendance, awards for crazy costumes, sales contests).	1	2	3	4	5	NO

**Section D. Importance Of Various Employee Needs**

HRM professionals are also in a good position to assess the relative **importance** of a fun work environment in comparison to other typical needs of employees. In this section, we are soliciting your insights into the importance of a wide range of things that employees may desire.

Listed below are several statements regarding factors that employees may seek at work. Please indicate, on the five-point response scale shown, the degree to which you feel each is important to typical employees in your firm today.

Sec. D	Importance Of Various Employee Needs					
	Substantial Decrease	Moderate Decrease	No Effect	Moderate Increase	Substantial Increase	NO (No Opinion)
1. Being able to relax, have fun, and enjoy oneself at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
2. Being free to express oneself openly at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
3. Having control over one's own decisions at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
4. Having control over resources (physical and human) at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
5. Feeling listened to at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
6. Feeling freedom to engage in laughter at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
7. Having autonomy and independence at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
8. Having the opportunity to play at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
9. Building interpersonal friendships with others at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
10. Satisfying job security needs (economic survival) at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
11. Having the opportunity to belong to a group of people at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
12. Having the opportunity to express and receive caring at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
13. Satisfying physiological needs (e.g., hunger, thirst, warmth at work).	1	2	3	4	5	NO
14. Satisfying psychological well-being needs (emotional security) at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO
15. Receiving personal recognition at work.	1	2	3	4	5	NO

**Section E. Comprehensive Assessments**

On the following questions, please use the response scales or space provided to indicate your reactions and assessments.

1. Compared to what you think there **ought** to be (optimum level of fun at work), what is your perception of the **actual** level of fun in your organization? **(Check only one.)**
  - a. Much less than there should be
  - b. Moderately less than there should be
  - c. A little less than there should be
  - d. About the right amount
  - e. A little bit more than there should be
  - f. A moderate amount more than there should be
  - g. Much more than there should be

<b>2</b>	Overall, how often do you believe employees should have the opportunity to experience fun in your organization? <b>(Check only one.)</b>					
Never 1	Infrequently 2	Occasionally 3	Frequently 4	Very Often 5	No Opinion 6	

<b>3</b>	Other things being equal, at what level do you agree or disagree with this statement: "Companies that promote fun at work are more effective than companies that don't."					
Very Strongly Disagree 1	Strongly Disagree 2	Disagree 3	Neither Disagree nor Agree 4	Agree 5	Strongly Agree 6	Very Strongly Agree 7

<b>4</b>	Looking <b>back</b> five years ago, how important did you think it was to have a fun work environment for your employees? <b>(Check only one.)</b>					
Very Unimportant 1	Moderately Unimportant 2	Neutral Importance 3	Moderately Important 4	Very Important 5	Not Here 5 Years Ago 6	

<b>5</b>	At the <b>present</b> time, how important do you think it is to have a fun work environment for your employees? <b>(Check only one.)</b>					
Very Unimportant 1	Moderately Unimportant 2	Neutral Importance 3	Moderately Important 4	Very Important 5		

<b>6</b>	Looking <b>ahead</b> five years from now, how important do you think it <b>will be</b> to have a fun work environment for your employees?					
Very Unimportant 1	Moderately Unimportant 2	Neutral Importance 3	Moderately Important 4	Very Important 5		

**7** On occasion, some managers and supervisors resist employee desires to create a fun environment at work. In your opinion, using the 7-point scale below, how likely is it that each of the rationales shown below underlie managerial resistance to creating a fun work environment in your organization?

	Very Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very Likely	No Opinion
a. Time constraints (e.g., I can't afford the time).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
b. Financial costs (e.g., It will cost too much).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
c. Fears of being silly (e.g., I don't want to look stupid).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
d. Lack of personal creativity (e.g., I don't know how to have fun).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
e. Unproven impact (e.g., There's no evidence that it will pay off).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
f. Perceived employee apathy (e.g., I don't think that they would care).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
g. Fear of non-support from above (e.g., My superior[s] wouldn't condone it).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
h. Belief of non-responsibility (e.g., It's not part of my job).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
i. Fear of losing control (e.g., I'm afraid they'll get carried away if I create a little bit of fun).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
j. Inconsistency with the organization's productivity culture (e.g., We're here to work, not play).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
k. Fear of offensive responses (e.g., Someone will take offense or legal action at whatever I do).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
l. Some employees will be distracted (e.g., They won't pay attention).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		
m. Fear that department work won't be taken seriously (e.g., They'll become too playful).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NO		

8. Are there substantial differences across departments/units in your organization in the amount of workplace fun that is demonstrated there?

Yes

No

If yes, please explain why:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Where does the *primary* impetus for a fun work environment originate in your organization **at this location for which you are reporting?** (Check only one.)

a. Overall organizational culture

b. Top management's efforts and actions

c. Middle management's efforts and actions

d. First-line supervisors' efforts and actions

e. Employees' efforts and actions

f. Do not know

10. Which of the following actions has your organization used to create a fun work environment?

**(Check all that apply.)**

- a. “Fun” (or “Joy”) committees
- b. “Costume” days  
(e.g., “ugly socks” or Halloween costumes)
- c. Use of entertainers  
(musicians; clowns/artists)
- d. Casual-dress days
- e. Pets in the office
- f. Supply of fun toys, games and humorous reading materials available
- g. Creative skits and songs for company events
- h. Employee-generated names for teams and meeting rooms
- i. Employee “roasts”
- j. Employee musical group (e.g., kazoo band chorus)
- k. Use of humorous titles  
(e.g., “Human Hero”, “Comic Colleague”, or “Vice-President of Fun”)
- l. Special props  
(e.g., balloons, flowers, hats, signs)
- m. Suggestion box exclusively for “fun” ideas
- n. Talk show formats (e.g., Rosie O’Donnell, Oprah Winfrey, or David Letterman)
- o. Employee release time for community projects (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, or house “Paint-a-thons”)
- p. Game show formats (e.g., “Jeopardy”, “Wheel of Fortune”, or “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?”)
- q. Photos and funny captions  
(e.g., “Most Beautiful Baby” contests)
- r. Company-provided food and refreshments
- s. Stress-reduction rooms  
(e.g., for meditation or massages)
- t. Employee recognition and awards
- u. Exercise room
- v. Creative working experience
- w. Bring your child to work day

11. Are there other examples that you can provide?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Overall, how would you rate your organization with regard to its fun work environment?

**(1=poor, 10=excellent)**

Poor										Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**Section F. Organizational Policies And Characteristics**

1. Does your organization have a policy relevant to a fun work environment?

- Yes
- No

(If so, and if it is brief, quote it here. If it's not brief, please send the appropriate section of your policy to Dr. John Newstrom, jnewstro@d.umn.edu.)

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2. Does your organization explicitly reward managers who consciously promote a fun work environment?

- Yes
- No

3. What state is your unit of the organization located in?

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4. Which classification best describes the product or service produced by the unit of your organization that you represent? (Check only one.)

- a. Manufacturing (Durable goods)
- b. Manufacturing (Non-durable goods)
- c. Utilities, Including Oil, Gas, Power
- d. Wholesale, Retail Trade
- e. Finance, Including Insurance and Real Estate
- f. Service (Profit and Non-profit)
- g. Health
- h. Education, Library
- i. Government
- j. High Technology
- k. Publishing Including Newspapers
- l. Independent Consultants
- m. Mixed Category, Including Construction, Agriculture, Fishing, and Mining
- n. Transportation
- o. Other (please specify)

5. Approximately, what is the number of employees in your total organization? Please check the most appropriate response.

- Less than 100
- 100-499
- 500-999
- 1,000-2,499
- 2,500-4,999
- 5,000-9,999
- 10,000-24,999
- 25,000 or more

6. Approximately, what percentage of employees at this location are unionized (under a collective bargaining agreement)?

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7. Approximately, what is the total number of employees (full and part-time regular) in the unit for which you are reporting?

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8. Is your organization: For profit or not for profit?
- For profit
  - Not for profit
9. How would you describe the **average age of your production and service workers** (non-exempt)?
- a. Less than 20
  - b. 20-29
  - c. 30-39
  - d. 40-49
  - e. 50-59
  - f. 60 or more
10. Approximately, what is the **average age of your supervisors and managers** (exempt) at this location for which you are reporting?
- a. Less than 20
  - b. 20-29
  - c. 30-39
  - d. 40-49
  - e. 50-59
  - f. 60 or more
11. Our workforce is:
- a. Dominantly male (80% and up)
  - b. Primarily male (60-79%)
  - c. About equally male and female (40-59% each)
  - d. Primarily female (60-79%)
  - e. Dominantly female (80% and up)
12. Please indicate what level of education which would best describe your organization's exempt workforce:
- a. Less than high school
  - b. High school graduates
  - c. Some college
  - d. College graduates
  - e. Some graduate work
  - f. Graduate degrees
13. Please indicate the level of education which would best describe your organization's non-exempt workforce:
- a. Less than high school
  - b. High school graduates
  - c. Some college
  - d. College graduates
  - e. Some graduate work
  - f. Graduate degrees
14. In comparison to other organizations, that task of attracting new employees to join your organization is:
- a. Very easy
  - b. Easy
  - c. About the same
  - d. Difficult
  - e. Very difficult
15. Has your organization ever participated in "National Fun at Work Day" (this year it was April 5, 2001)?
- Yes
  - No
  - Do not know

Responses to the following two questions, along with questions 4 and 5 in section F, allow us to be sure that our sample is a valid representation of all SHRM members. It is very *important data*. We appreciate your giving it to us. Please remember that individual data will not be disclosed.

The gender of the person completing this questionnaire is:

- Male
- Female

Which level given below best describes the educational achievement of the person completing this questionnaire?

- a. High school
- b. Some college
- c. Bachelor's degree
- d. College above bachelor's degree
- e. Master's degree (including MBA)
- f. Doctorate

**Thank you.**

**The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is a sponsor of this research.**

