

## Fun for fun? L'art pour l'art?

In the course of the various hypes that we have experienced in the recent past, functions or roles have been creatively renamed time and again. Instead of a Human Resources Manager, for example, there is now a "Chief Happiness Officer". Very cool. How can you have anything against a company that wants its employees to be happy? "Human resources", on the other hand, sounds downright exploitative.

And I agree, it can't be exploitative. But there's still something a bit off, or are you completely comfortable with the idea of having a Chief Happiness Officer in the company? I'm left with a sense of unease: what exactly does he or she do? And is it still socially acceptable to be in a bad mood? Is that measured? Or what?

Of course I'm in favor of employees being in a good mood and happy, as this has been proven to have a hugely positive effect on performance. But that's where things start to go wrong with the Chief Happiness Officer. You should put the cart before the horse.

The purpose of an organization is still to provide a service and generate added value. Having fun is certainly a very beneficial and desirable ingredient, but it is only really adequate if the fun comes from the core and not from the periphery. If you create an organization that is really good at performance and learning, then the fun comes naturally and without intrusive appeals and prescribed cheerfulness.

Meaningfulness is becoming increasingly important for work - and rightly so. But sometimes the blossoms drift in the wrong direction and we lose ourselves in organizational tinsel: the higher purpose of an organization lies in the benefit for its relevant environment, not in the happiness of its employees. Otherwise, this happiness would logically also be the business model, and then the employees would actually have to pay something for the company to make them happy. But then they would be customers rather than employees, which in turn raises the question of who the employees actually are, who would then also be happy and immediately become customers...so that doesn't add up, does it?

If I have to hire a clown so that my people have fun in the office, then something is wrong. I'm reminded of the laugh detector and the cat videos... Then we end up in the same trap as we did with the "work-life balance": work here, life there, i.e. only zombies walking around the office? That doesn't work with fun either: we get to play ping-pong so that we can cope better with the frustrating work afterwards? No, no, fun and work belong together, not separately.

You don't have to remove the ping-pong table, but it shouldn't be your main approach in your efforts to attract and retain good employees.

Cheering them up from the sidelines is the wrong approach. And if there is to be a Chief Happiness Officer, it should definitely not be a staff function, but a line function. In order to solve the admittedly massive problems in organizations at the moment, we don't need to reinvent organizations (sorry, Mr Laloux). Rather, we need to do things better that have been known for a long time. And if you are looking for a good starting point, take a look at leadership quality.

The internal part of your job as a manager is mainly organizational development. Make sure that working for you is fun all by itself. Then save yourself the Happiness Officers. If you need them, something is going wrong.