



Assorted observations on life, business and other games.

## Raving perspectives

by Chris Faria

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# "This is for the championship of the world!" I yelled

And I jumped on my kid-sized sled with the owl on it, and caught air.

Dear Ravers,

We used my best bud's five-year-old son as an excuse to go sledding. No doubt that the group of 40-somethings and early 50-year-olds was sillier than he was.



Besides my quest for Olympic gold in air and distance, husband Jim, of course, figured out how to seat our adult-sized butts on our sleds for maximum speed. Husband #2 (also named Jim) went for style points, and tested going down head-first. We all ended up with signature moves, improving and adapting on each other's bone-jarring mistakes and frozen face plants. Four out of five of us experienced some type of crack or pop that enlisted a chorus of "**that's gonna hurt.**"

A few rules organically happened -- you couldn't run anyone over (we weren't reenacting the movie *Death Race*), get out of the way if you crashed in the prime sledding zone, and wait your turn once it got more crowded with other families.

After hours of hiking up the slopes at 9000' elevation and screaming all the way down, we ended up on the deck of Mt. Rose, soaking up the winter sun, feeling alive and just plain giddy. We were so pumped, we even had enough energy to get our second wind and go dancing to, yes, KC and the Sunshine Band, later that night. All of us gals have been friends since we were fifteen. No need for expensive therapy or yoga -- a day



of playing added years to our lives.

### **Work hard, play hard. Why are they almost mutually exclusive? Is it a generational thing?**

Seems like "work" and "play" are traditionally mutually exclusive as "workday" and "day off." But what would happen if serious professional adults would add more play into their work environments? Wouldn't it be pretty fantastic to have just a drop of that exhilaration, that expectation of fun, when we clock in? Wouldn't we enjoy our time at work more? Could that translate into better quality of work? More work produced?

How many of us were raised that "play" is for kids and not productive for adults; how many bosses see anything other than being at a work station for that contracted amount of hours as true work? How many times do we sabotage our own play time, and work through our vacation time or don't take vacation at all?

After 28 years of working full-time, this NEED for play, for fun, for making each day special, especially at work, comes from all of my own midlife realizations. Unlike being 20-something, when you assume that you have all the time in the world to knuckle down.

Research shows that [young folks](#) just coming into the workforce *expect* a playful, stimulating and flexible environment. (Shoot, when I first entered the workforce, I was *expected* to wear nylons and dresses!).

According to an article on [SupplyChainBrain](#), "No other generation blurs the lines between work and play like millennials do," says Heidi Farris, vice president of community engagement and marketing at Bloomfire and the business analyst's manager. "They want to play when they feel like playing, and they want to work when they feel like working; you might be surprised at how often (and when) they feel like working given the choice." The article also pointed out that, "A recent survey by Millennial Branding and Beyond.com found a [revolving door among millennials](#). Nearly 60 percent of millennials will leave their jobs within their first three years, an increased ratio of 2 to 1 compared to previous generations, the survey says. It costs a company anywhere from \$15,000 to \$25,000 to replace a millennial worker."

*Hmmm ... if an employer isn't so much interested in happy employees, they've GOT TO BE interested in the costs of replacing new employees, right?*

### **So, General Manager, what's in it for you?**

Experts tell us that more playfulness in the workplace results in:

1. More productivity
2. Better creative solutions and innovation

3. Help problem solving -- employees see problems in new ways
4. Deflating tension between co-workers, resentments and disagreements
5. Decreasing stress
6. Manifests of bonding and team building
7. Helping us feel better overall, increasing energy and preventing burnout
8. Learning becoming a by-product of play

Let's face it. A creative approach, an innovative approach to business, is key to a company evolving.

Consider these three factors of successful and productive play in the workplace:

1. Participants believe that they are in a secure and trusted environment.
2. Play isn't total anarchy; it has rules (think about the rules of brainstorming, you can't say, "that's a stupid thing to say!").
3. There is a transition between play and work.

How does this apply to my sledding example above? Why was our day such a success?

~ All six of us in our group **trusted** each other.

~ Through that trust, we were able to play **uninhibitedly**.

~ There were internal **rules**, making the play safe and not total chaos.

~ Through our individual experimentation, we were able to **maximize** the design of the sled for performance (speed, distance, height, safety).

~ Individually we experienced **stress relief** and **joyfulness**, and as a group we experienced **camaraderie** and **team building**.

Creating a playful, creative and flexible atmosphere at your place of work, just won't happen magically. It is a top-down philosophy. See, most adults:

... are afraid of being embarrassed in front of their peers.

... have a fear of failing, which causes them to be conservative in their thinking and

their actions.

... self-edit so much that they are unable to fully utilize their creative skills.

... do not feel that they are in a secure and trusted environment at their places of work.

**So, General Manager, what can you start doing today to help your employees be more productive and creative (and healthier and happier)?**

1. Believe in the need for play, and that it will benefit the entire organization.
2. Integrate some sort of play every day (doing something "fun" once a year doesn't change an otherwise conservative culture).
3. Playfulness can take on many forms -- don't just think of "physical games."  
*Thoughtfulness and surprises (funny thank you cards, impromptu lunches, mini-pumpkins on desks during Halloween, plastic Easter eggs, desk decorations for an employee's birthday ...)*
4. Do your meetings consist of the leader talking and employees listening? *Put a little creativity into your meetings. Is getting feedback like pulling teeth? Try role playing, especially if you have a guest service issue. Take the meeting outside. Start off the meeting with an ice-breaking game, preferably one that doesn't have anything to do with the agenda of the meeting. Give employees crayons or a "toy" to work with, like Play-Doh.*
5. Do we really have to spend more time with the folks we work with? How to take team building events and retreats to the next level. *If you make folks come in on their days off, no matter how "fun" or valuable you think the activity is, it will most likely be resented. Consider optional baseball games, surprise field trips to the bowling alley, arcade, movies, pee wee golf. Optional opportunities to do team 5K runs/walks and volunteer charity events.*
6. Create a playful back of the house environment. *If you have the space, put ping pong tables and pool tables in the employee area ([see Gary Galonek's Flash! Report about Mohegan Sun Casino](#)). Not only will you be getting folks physically moving instead of sitting throughout their entire lunch, but it's a great stress reducer. Create an employee garden, install a basketball hoop. Give office employees flexibility in decorating their cubicles. Offer specialty classes -- self-defense, drumming, introduction to Latin dance ...*
7. Is there a way to create a more flexible work environment? *Instead of saying "can't be done," is there a way that you can give employees options when it is a perfect snow day, surf day, walk day ... can an employee shift their hours for that week? Do you make it easy for them to swap shifts with other, say, parents? Is there a reason*

*why an office employee can't work mobile? Either at home or by taking their laptop outside? What parameters can be set in order to make it a win-win for everyone?*

## **How we do it at Raving**

You'd think that working for a company with the name "Raving" -- we'd be partying all the time. Well, we try, but with most of our group out on the road a lot, our core group in Reno is awfully small (not enough people for a bowling team). However, this is how we try to integrate playfulness into our work environment:

~ If a casino or gaming-themed movie comes out, Dennis will surprise us and take us out, during business hours, to do a little "research" over soda and popcorn.

~ At our holiday parties, Dennis and Becky will do a trivia game for cash -- a mix of company history, as well as off-the-wall trivia. It's also tradition for Dennis to dress up as Santa Claus, or wear one of his famous Bill Cosby sweaters that we hassle him about so much.

~ When Amy Hergenrother gets a signed contract from a new client, she puts a pin in her map on the wall and I ring the tambourine. Amy then sends an email with some creative subject line to all of our remote partners, so they are all aware that we have new family members.

~ At Raving Conferences and at tradeshow, we believe that having the time to learn from each other and develop friendships is just as important as the "book learning." During the day and after hours, we make this a priority -- some of you may have been to our "Insider Parties." This year, at our Indian Gaming National Marketing Conference, instead of doing a luncheon keynote, everyone played their very own drums, guided by [Drum Café West!](#) [Check out the video!](#) Attendees told us that they were energized and that it was one of the best experiences of the conference.

Remember: *"Play -- it's more than a delightful pastime. It's an effective tool that brings out the best in us, revealing our true natures. It is a powerful force for healing stress, depression and general grumpiness."* -- Susan Ann Darley

You know, with all of these new "kids" coming into the workforce, it's not just high-tech companies like [Google](#) that are investing in more playful work environments to attract and retain employees. And us old dawgs who have been working for decades



can certainly use some rejuvenation, right? Check out [Outside Magazine's Top 100 List of Best Places to Work](#), which combine "work-life balance; a healthy, active staff; and a willingness to give back."

Before you say, "It could never work here ..." say, "Why not?" Plus, most of you work in one of the best places in the world -- a casino!

Sincerely,



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PS -- Speaking of Google, they want "to create the happiest, most productive workplace in the world." That just sounds nice, doesn't it?



**There is a terrible misconception by casino traditionalists who believe that the introduction of online gaming is going to cannibalize your land-based revenue.**

This is simply not true.

**In fact, the exact opposite has been the case over the years.**

What is your casino doing RIGHT NOW to migrate online players to your land-based casino, and vice versa?

YOUR customers WILL be playing online, and WHERE they play is entirely up to you. You will not stop the proliferation of online and social gaming by ignoring it. Your competition is going to forge ahead in the space with or without you.

Let Raving train your staff to prepare an online plan for your customers, and generate additional revenues for your casino.

Contact Amy Hergenrother today at  
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