

# SHOULD WORK BE FUN?

## THE IMPACT OF FUN ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

A WHITE PAPER BY ECSELL INSTITUTE



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## WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

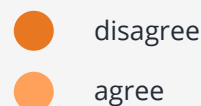
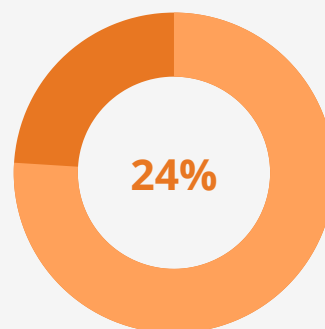
A few years ago, the research team at Ecsell was working on uncovering what the best teachers and coaches were doing differently to improve the experience of their students and athletes. As we conducted focus groups, we kept hearing them praise their favorite teachers or coaches with a consistent phrase - "they make it fun." We then started surveying on the concept of "fun" to measure how much it had an impact it had on the student experience. A year later, the results were astonishing.

"Fun" had one of the strongest relationships to the overall student experience and, specifically, to students' rating of the effectiveness of their teacher or coach. These results begged an important question: if having fun impacts engagement in the classroom, maybe it impacts engagement in the workplace as well. Turns out, it does.

Over the past year, we have surveyed over 1,000 employees from a myriad of industries, asking them to rate their manager on numerous behaviors, including whether the manager makes work fun. According to these surveys, about a quarter of all team members don't think that their manager makes work fun.

Importantly, **whether or not a manager creates a fun work environment has a strong impact on how effective they are in their roles**, according to their team members' ratings. In fact, "fun" managers are four times more likely to have team members who are happy in their role than "non-fun" managers, and they are seven times more likely to be rated as a top manager by their team members.

*"My manager makes this a fun place to work."*



### Managers who make work fun are:

- **FOUR** times as likely as likely to have team members who are happy in their role
- **FOUR** times as likely to have team members want to stay with the company
- **SEVEN** times as likely to be rated as a top manager by their team

Of course, what it means for employees to have fun at work is very different from students having fun in the classroom or athletes having fun at practice. So we dove into our survey data to better understand what employees actually mean they rate their manager as creating a fun work environment. That is, what are the actions and behaviors of “fun” managers?

By analyzing which manager behaviors correlate the most to the “fun” question and by specifically asking employees what their manager does to make work fun, we were able to identify three key ways managers can increase the fun factor on their teams.

## WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO MAKE WORK FUN

1

### **Building positive, jovial and caring relationships with team members**

Over 62% of team members surveyed said that their manager creates a fun work environment through basic personal interactions. For some, their manager creates a more fun work environment through being positive, jovial or happy around their team members, while others mentioned the importance of their manager getting to know them on a personal level. And other employees said their manager creates fun by simply showing they care about them as person. Overall, the most important thing a manager can do to significantly increase how much fun their team is having at work is to simply build genuine and positive relationships with their team members.

2

### **Showing team members they value them through rewards and recognition**

Nearly a quarter (22%) of team members surveyed said their manager creates fun through recognizing, rewarding or showing appreciation for their efforts. Whether it's celebrating the winner of a fun team contest or simply writing a heartfelt note of gratitude, managers who make the extra effort to let team members know how much they appreciate them create a more fun work environment.

3

### **Creating challenging opportunities for team members to develop their skills**

For 13% of team members, their managers create a more fun work environment when they challenge them to use, grow, and develop their skills. Team members like the positive feeling that comes from accomplishing a difficult goal and getting a chance to use their strengths. So, another key way that a manager can create fun is by helping their team members find new, challenging ways to utilize and maximize their skills.



## CONCLUSION

While not everyone recognizes the value of creating a fun work environment (in fact, 2% of survey respondents mentioned work shouldn't be fun at all), the best managers understand how it can lead to happier employees and better, more productive coaching relationships. And ultimately, if employees are enjoying their work more, they also tend to be better at it. **So when employees are having fun, employers also reap the benefit. Isn't that fun?**

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Sarah Wirth is president of Ecsell Institute, as well as one of the world's foremost authorities in metric-based performance coaching and growth.

She has 20+ years of experience in employee assessment, leadership development, executive coaching, and customer service. Sarah joined Ecsell Institute in 2011 to help executive leaders, managers, athletic coaches, teachers, and more master how coaching done correctly is the #1 enhancer of performance. Her best-selling book, *The Coaching Effect*, was written to bring Ecsell Institute's mission to more people.