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25 Ways to Create A Positive Workplace

By Edward Leigh, MA

Hotels often have a comment card in the rooms. They usually ask this question, “What is the purpose of your trip?” The two choices are often, “Business or Pleasure.” Notice the word “or.” Our work should be a pleasurable experience. Below are 25 ways to energize your workplace.

1. We often can't change situations, but we do have the power to control our perception. If you are driving to a meeting and get stuck in traffic, we can perceive that as stressful and feel upset. Another way to look at the situation is realizing we can't change the situation, but we can change our perception. We could perceive this as a time to listen to our favorite music or motivational CDs.
2. Avoid negative thinking and focus on positive thinking. Next time you are faced with a challenging situation, don't say to yourself, “I will never be able to do that.” Instead, say something like this, “I will work hard at accomplishing this goal.”
3. Take short stress-busting breaks during the day to re-energize yourself. This could be a quick walk or period of quiet meditation.
4. Practice effective time management. Plan your work and work your plan. We all have 168 hours per week. How are you going to use that 168 hours (think of how you would budget \$168 dollars)? Keep in mind, we need to subtract 56 hours for sleeping and 7 hours for personal care. We are now down to 105 hours – use them wisely.
5. Get organized. Does your desk and filing system look like a hurricane just came through? Develop systems to keep your workplace organized. Turn those piles into files. Some people say, “I don't have time to get organized!” Think about how much time it takes to look for misplaced items!
6. Think about what is really significant. Most things are not worth getting upset over. For example, let's say your new copy machine was supposed to arrive at 10 AM and did not arrive until Noon. Of course, it is an inconvenience, but not really very significant. Save your energy for important matters.
7. Find a sense of balance in your life. If you are out of balance outside of the workplace, you will be out of balance in the workplace. Find balance among the four life components: physical, intellectual, social/emotional and spiritual.

8. When planning goals, be SMART. SMART is an acronym that stands for the key components in goal setting: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ceptable, **R**ealistic, and set **T**ime frame.
9. Find a mentor, a more experienced person who provides guidance and direction. The world's most successful people all have mentors. You want someone who can cheer you on during good times and help you cope with bad times. You become who you associate with; get rid of the toxic people in your life.
10. Make meetings enjoyable. There are many ways to achieve this goal: add motivational thoughts, have a theme or use an interesting venue.
11. Reward excellent behavior. Let people know they are appreciated. Rewards work best when they are personalized. If you know someone loves a certain restaurant, the reward could be a gift certificate for that particular restaurant.
12. Surround yourself with inspiration! Put inspirational quotes in emails, on bulletin boards and organizational newsletters.
13. Practice active listening. Wait until a person completes their statement before you comment. Also focus solely on the person you are talking to – give them your undivided attention.
14. Write handwritten notes to people – this is a refreshing change from electronic communication. When you can, hand address the envelope and use a stamp!
15. Accept the fact that conflict occurs in all workplaces. Conflict is not necessarily bad; look at it as an opportunity to grow and create meaningful change. Many times small issues become major problems because no one wanted to say anything early on to avoid potential conflict.
16. Practice empathy. Try to understand what it is like to be in someone else's shoes. Reflect back to them how you think they are feeling, such as "It sounds like that was a difficult situation for you."
17. Eat a balanced diet, including fresh fruits and vegetables. Too much sugar can make you feel sluggish – it is not very good for the waistline either! Also, drink lots of water during the day.
18. Become a life long learner. Always keep reading and studying. In addition to taking programs in your area of expertise, take personal growth workshops. Try something fun and exciting – take a pottery, cooking or karate class!
19. Do not wait for things to happen and react – be proactive. Anticipate stressful events and plan to deal with them. Think of your car; it is important to have regular tune ups. If we wait until our car is ready to fall apart, the damage may be serious and our stress level becomes dramatically elevated.
20. Think about what part of the day you are most energetic. For many people, that is the morning. This would then be an ideal time to catch up on the more intensive projects. We often feel tired in the afternoon since blood is going south to work on lunch and less is going north to our brains.

21. Break big projects into small manageable units. For example, if you are in charge of planning a big meeting, break it down into units, such as: finding a venue, planning the agenda, developing announcements, etc. Plan little rewards for yourself as you accomplish each small step.
22. Have fun. Bring back a sense of childhood amusements – blow bubbles, play games or read funny books.
23. Don't complain about something unless you have a possible solution. If you are upset about a certain policy, think of ways that it can be improved.
24. When talking to a person, give your full attention, which means eye-to-eye contact and a shoulder-to-shoulder stance.
25. Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a dream. Focus on today. They call it the present because it is a gift.

About the Author

Edward Leigh, MA, is the Founder & Director of The Center for Healthcare Communication. Through the use of effective communication skills, he focuses on enhancing the patient experience and decreasing medical errors. He presents high-energy and informative programs to hospitals, medical practices, corporations and healthcare associations. He also coaches healthcare professionals and consults with healthcare organizations to create outstanding patient care. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Health Education. He appears on many national television shows, including interviews on The Montel Williams Show, MSNBC News and The Today Show, where Katie Couric interviewed him. The Discovery Health Channel Show did a 30-minute documentary on his own personal healthcare story. He is the author of the book, *Communicating with Patients*.

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