Chapter 15
The Paradox of Serious Fun

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Abstract The chapter examines the concept of fun, specifically the contradiction that "serious" learning and positive affect, the fancy way of saying fun, are incompatible in and around the classroom. Despite the fact that pedagogies considered fun are often unique, highly interactive, and impactful; the fun descriptor is perceived as a badge of levity, thus limiting the useful application of otherwise effective educational approaches. This is a particular problem for those trying to help students develop their creative thinking identity and capacity, as well as those utilizing creativity to enhance learning. Lessons are drawn from research and practice on fun in work and educational settings, and numerous guidelines are provided for facilitating serious fun.

15.1 Why Can't We Be Fun?

Are you laughing? Then you can't be serious. There is a general belief that "serious" learning and positive affect, the fancy way of saying fun, are incompatible in and around the classroom, work setting, or any other serious goal-oriented setting. This even despite the fact that pedagogies considered fun are often unique, highly interactive, and impactful. The fun descriptor is perceived as a badge of levity, thus limiting the useful application of otherwise effective educational approaches. This is a particular problem for those with a sense of humor…and those trying to use creativity to enhance learning, and help students develop their creative thinking identity and capacity.

Many excellent resources for developing creativity have been created and tested. The basic premise of this chapter vis-a-vis creativity is that fun, in the most intuitive sense, enhances the potential for creative behavior. Fun runs through nearly all of Sternberg and William's (1996) 25 steps that promote classroom creativity. In many cases fun is a direct facilitating condition (e.g., tolerating ambiguity, encouraging

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sensible risks, imagining other viewpoints), while fun also serves as a personal, social, emotional, and/or contextual enhancement.

Let's start this chapter on serious fun with some serious fun. Think back on your educational experience – perhaps the elementary years. You'd probably describe the most fun facets of your early years, as most kids do today, as recess, lunch, gym, and perhaps art or music class. If you said math or social studies you either had an exceptionally different kind of teacher or you're an academic, which in either case is an exception. In any case, pick a favorite time and topic from your educational past. Now, see if you can describe it in pretend words that really capture the full essence of the experience – like amazzzzingy, wowowee, or smilish. Go ahead, take a minute, this chapter will wait for you… Ok, so it was probably fun to reminisce and make up silly words. Great! More important, why was the experience fun? What felt uncomfortable about encountering this kind of introduction in an academic text? Did it seem too frivolous? Was it too far out of the norm?

This chapter examines the paradoxical relationship we have with fun, particularly in settings that contain some kind of performance outcome and/or expectation – schools, work, maybe even family at times. Starting with the end in mind, here's the BIG message: Fun is an incredibly powerful phenomenon that we consistently fail to capitalize on because it's…well…too fun. Too fun, and by implication, not serious. Yet fun has quite serious foundations in our emotions and psyche, so much so that it allowed you to retain as impressionable what might be quite distant memories of your school days. Fun has highly impactful outcomes on our "serious" performance goals.

We all know the serious goals of life…and fun isn't one of them (until perhaps one reaches a certain age or state of enlightenment – anyone else with a goal of "fun" is not looked upon favorably). One important proviso to note: Fun does not equal crazy, wacky, all-out nonsense. Certainly for some, but in studies of attitudes toward fun, the 'wild and wacky' games were actually considered least fun (Karl, Peluchette, Hall, & Harland, 2005). Engaging and experiencing fun requires a degree of vulnerability – a psychosocial and emotional risk. Thus, Karl, et al.'s work (and others') suggests that trust is a key condition for fun. This can be contrasted with the well-known FISH! Philosophy that tempers wacky with support and trust (Ramsey, 2001).

The FISH! Philosophy profiles the Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington, highlighting four core values that promote a highly engaged (and engaging) culture (Christensen & Charthouse International Learning Corporation, 2002). One of their core tenets, *Play*, is characterized by the employees throwing actual (dead) fish to one another as part of the sales process, as well as generally goofing around with customers. While the entire scene is full of almost hyper energy, a closer look reveals moments where employees effectively "read" the customer and deliver a moment of one-on-one serious connection that makes the fun serious, caring, and accessible.

The potential role of fun can more readily be seen where it is not utilized, namely by educator complaints: My students are disengaged, and they don't seem to care about the content, all they want to do is socialize and goof around, they have no

motivation for learning, and consequently ignore the serious things that we educators know will help them succeed. Intuitively, and based on research, we know that fun can help address these complaints. But somehow it doesn't seem right – fun is just too fun.

15.2 Fun Matters

Fun can be a noun (feeling of enjoyment or pleasure), an adjective ("That was a fun activity!"), or even a verb if you think 'funning' is a word. Most often we think of fun as the personal feeling or mood resulting from our interaction with something, even if it is the abstract interaction with a memory or thought. Closely related, and often used interchangeably, are the two jesters causing all this fun: Humor and play. Humor and play bring their own extensive lines of research across multiple domains. However, it is helpful to note that when considering the contradiction of serious fun in practice, humor and play are the objects of frowned-upon frivolity. In other words, the 'serious' would be perfectly fine with you *feeling* fun as long as you are engaged in serious work.

From psychology, fun is an element of personality, specifically the fun-seeking disposition of Carver and White's (1994) behavioral inhibition system-behavioral approach systems (BIS-BAS) theory. For the practitioner, this theory frames human behavior as navigating the balance between activities that activate behavior and those that inhibit. Fun-seeking comprises a behavioral *approach* mechanism, implying that it is not so far from achievement as we might think. Yet even the BAS theory contrasts *Fun Seeking* with *Drive*.

15.2.1 Fun and Work

Paradoxically, much of the effort to examine fun has been done in the context of work, i.e., what does fun look like, how is it beneficial, and how can fun be incorporated into work – always with the caveat that it benefit the serious work. Karl, Peluchette, and Harland's (2007) model of fun at work focuses on the *attitudes toward* and *the experience of* fun. Other approaches describe fun as *activity* or *environment*. Workplace fun is, "…playful, social, interpersonal, recreational or task activities intended to provide amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure." (Lamm & Meeks, 2009, p 614) And, workplace fun is: "A fun work environment intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities that positively impact the attitude and productivity of individuals and groups." (Ford, McLaughlin, & Newstrom, 2003, p 22).

Not all workplace fun looks the same. In the framework of humor, Stromberg and Karlsson (2009) lay out a continuum of humor from pure amusement to humor with a serious point, noting that fun and humor exist organically in organizations

whether organized by management or not. More recently, Plester, Cooper-Thomas, and Winquist (2015) examine three kinds of fun, "…organic, which emerges from employees; managed, which stems from managers; and task, which results from an interaction of employees with the tasks they are assigned." (p 381) They note that these forms of fun often are happening at the same time, leading to underlying tensions in how different individuals perceive fun and how they reconcile those notions between each other.

With perhaps a few exceptions, we all would prefer a state of fun. But let's pretend for a moment that you are the boss, leader, teacher, parent, or person who has to answer to self and others regarding performance. How can you possibly justify fun as a strategy for achievement? Well, here is a quick list of the benefits of fun:

- Increases engagement
- Increases job satisfaction
- Increases task performance
- Increases organizational citizenship behavior
- Increases competence
- Increases trust
- Reduces anxiety
- Reduces emotional exhaustion

(Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Karl et al., 2005; Karl, Peluchette, & Harland, 2007; Lamm & Meeks, 2009).

To sum, fun can be a personality component, a personal feeling, an activity, an environment, and/or an attitude. We know that fun comes in a range of forms. And, we know that there are considerable benefits to incorporating fun, as well as some detriments to not doing so.

15.2.2 Fun and Learning

If you have managed to read all the way to this chapter, you have also likely done pretty well in school. From the vantage point of the learned, incorporating fun into education seems like it should be a pretty fun-duh-mental. Indeed, a stream of studies illustrates the many benefits of fun (and its cousins – play and humor) to the classroom (Browne, 2013; Gorham & Christophel, 1990; McCarthy & Anderson, 2000; and Tews, Jackson, Ramsay, & Michel, 2015, just to name a few across various fields of study and practice). As Tews, et al., (2015) note, "The fundamental belief is that greater knowledge and skill acquisition will result when learners have more fun, are actively involved, and enjoy the learning process." (p 16)

An interesting study by Van Winkle (2014) examined the impact of fun on learning in a "free-choice learning setting" in which there are many learning opportunities yet the environment is not formal education, i.e., museums, historic sites, zoo, etc. Results indicated that participants found fun to have a lesser cognitive load, meaning students perceived the information as less demanding and difficult (and

thus more understandable and easier to engage). The more fun the experience, the more it was perceived that something valuable was learned. The perception of fun was positively correlated to both transfer and perceived learning. Although not causal, this study reinforces our own experiences that visits to these places are more engaging and memorable relative to how much fun the experience offers.

The instructor may be the key to whether fun works or not. Building off of research showing the value of fun in the classroom, Tews et al. (2015) developed a scale to assess fun in the classroom. Their work divides fun into two major categories: fun activity and fun delivery. "Fun activities reflect a variety of hands-on exercises and ways to promote social involvement," (p 24) while fun delivery focuses on the instructor and his or her style of interaction. Their work suggests that fun delivery is more impactful to student engagement than fun activity. Robinson and Kakela (2006) alluded to this outcome in their work, suggesting that the instructor's work in, "…creating a space for fun, interaction, and trust, teachers and students can build a learning environment that promotes engagement, deep learning, and meaning." (p 202) "Teaching is an intensely personal activity and in many ways much like nursing – you deliver it from within 'yourself'; by using the skills you have as a person, be they extraversion and dynamism or gentleness and ability to hear others," note Baid and Lambert (2010) in their examination of fun activities in nursing education (p 551).

15.3 Connecting Fun and Creativity

Much of the connection between fun and creativity comes from anecdotes of initiatives that some rogue manager or educator tried out in an effort to do something different, wake people up, or spark engagement. Although not empirical research, these kind of stories matter – they are evidence that there is a perceived connection between fun, creativity, and some important outcome for individuals and organizations. Generally these stories go something like this: Our group was not performing/not happy/not engaged, and so we thought, "What the heck, let's try to have some fun!" We played this game/held this contest/put on this event, and (surprise, surprise) people reengaged, reconnected, reenergized, and produced more and creative things! A good example of this can be found in Kumar and Raghavendran's (2014) article *Bringing Fun and Creativity to Work*, where they introduced a team-based contest into Deloitte, LLP's India operations. It is not clear that there was any empirical work that informed their project, yet their assessment from participants indicated "extremely positive impact on the Deloitte culture." (p 95)

One essential pre-condition of fun, and funny, is the juxtaposition of very different or opposing ideas – an incongruity. For example, using a clothespin to fasten objects together is not funny…it's what a clothespin is generally supposed to do. But to consider 'fun' uses of a clothespin would require moving outside the expected, like to clip your nose shut while swimming, or envisioning behind the scenes gods pinning clouds together, or even further where the giant clothespin is a new

gymnastics event, or further still as angry clothespins descend from a spaceship to take control of appliance stores. Utilizing fun to consider very different perspectives inevitably encourages creativity and new ideas. Dekker and Teule (2012) highlight this notion in their analysis of the growing use of fun in economics (yes…you read that correctly).

How one frames a task also seems to influence the types of thinking individuals utilize. Framing a task as fun necessarily lowers performance expectations, and with that also lowers stress and anxiety, and broadens focus. Friedman, Forster, and Denzler (2007) found that a task framed as fun resulted in better performance on the alternative uses task. Similarly, Barsoux (1996) explains how humor reframes the introduction of new ideas as low-risk, and encourages divergent thinking by loosening the constraints of logic and serious discussion. Humor has been linked to creativity across many studies, primarily focusing on the role of humor in setting a tone of openness, playfulness, and positive affect (see Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, for a nice overview of humor in the work setting).

Fun and creativity can also be considered at the group or team level. A culture of fun, which will be discussed later in the chapter, wields a powerful social influence on expectations, activities, feelings, and aspirations. The greater the group cohesion, the stronger these influences will be. Fun and humor facilitates group cohesion by, "…clos(ing) the communication gap between leader and followers, making organizational confusion more bearable, drawing attention to areas in need of managerial attention, facilitating change and encouraging plurality of vision. In short, it helps to break down barriers between people and make an organization more participative and responsive." (Barsoux, 1996, p 507) The consequent increases to organizational citizenship behavior may result in greater creativity as strong team identification is positively related to creative effort (Hirst, van Dick, & van Knippenberg, 2009).

15.4 What's the Hold-Up? Blocking Fun…and Creativity… and Learning

We love to have fun, and we know how to have it – at home, at school, and at work. We know how to have shared fun and find mutual fun, even across generations (Lamm & Meeks, 2009). We know the great benefits of fun, both intuitively and from research. With fun, we are more engaged, satisfied, competent, and creative; we are less anxious, stressed, emotionally exhausted, and afraid of risk and ambiguity. So, why are we so reluctant to introduce and utilize fun when we deem a task as serious?

The big hold-up to capitalizing on the power of fun sits on your shoulders (yes, that refers to your head). The brain constructs our perception of the world and all that is in it through the many interactions we have with the world –direct interactions, social interactions, observation, and reflection. The best way to visualize this

Table 15.1 Student's misconceptions about learning

Things are black and white – Students conceptualize activity and content in terms of black and white – dichotomous and incompatible – work versus play, serious versus fun, productive activity versus frivolous.
Learning is acquiring – Students conceptualize learning as acquisition of information and only a cognitive endeavor, when we know that acquisition is just the very first step in learning, just as cognition is one of many facets of understanding.
Learning is not fun – Students see fun as completely disconnected from learning, and associate 'not fun' feelings with learning.
School is lecture by experts – Students have a traditional concept of education, which is generally the lecture-based, 'sit and get' model. The more strongly embedded this concept, the more uncomfortable students are with any variation in pedagogy.
Serious is not playful – Students conceptualize 'work' similarly. As Tim Brown (2008) notes in his TED Talk on creativity and play, "…it's very easy to fall into the trap that these states are absolute. You're either playful, or you're serious, and you can't be both. But that's not really true. You can be a serious professional adult, and, at times, be playful."
I am limited – Students underestimate both their capacity for learning and the amount of engagement required to fully understand.

notion is with the phrase: Your brain is a lean, mean, pattern-making machine (credit to Dr. Michael Dickmann from Cardinal Stritch University). Once constructed, these conceptualizations inform your perceptions. In other words, how you think about the world is how you see the world. This now common understanding of the constructive nature of the brain bears repeating. Your brain craves organization, so much so that even when confronted with randomness, we struggle to make up connections and relationships. How you think about the world – your construction – determines how and what you see in the world. If your mental construction of children is little brats who cause trouble, then the only things you *see* in children are those potentially trouble-making behaviors. This phenomenon informs both your perception and your consequent behaviors. This is no different regarding fun – one's attitude toward fun affects the degree to which one experiences fun (Young, Kwon, & Kim, 2013).

"A group has a culture when it has enough shared history to have formed a set of basic assumptions which guide behaviour, perceptions, thoughts and feelings" (Schein, 2004, p 21). The educational culture we have created has left students with a number of misconceptions that block their use of fun as a learning tool. Obviously this is not the case for all students, all classrooms, or all the time; but these misconceptions are prevalent, consequential, and in need of further research to more fully understand and address. Table 15.1 summarizes some of the most common misconceptions students maintain. Which ones look familiar? More important, in what ways could you help students see beyond these constructed ideas?

Just as students are filled with misconceptions about fun and learning, their ideas about creativity are even more troubling. Blocks in creativity are well-documented, and include much more than the conceptual. Creativity blocks can be emotional, social, and cultural (Adams, 1986). Even serious fun cannot foster creativity in the

Table 15.2 Common creativity blocks for students

I must be artistic, witty, or I am not creative – Conceptually, students believe creativity is generally related to artistic talent or to witty personalities, both of which you either have or you don't. So it follows that if you are not creative, no amount of fun in the world will change that.
I must find the answer! – As creative problem-solvers students tend to be satisficers – whatever idea arises that seems to satisfy the problem will suffice (versus generating many ideas and choosing the best one).
Only "good" answers count. – The habitual process of 'finding the answer' has been deeply ingrained such that students self-edit and squelch their own creative process (see Davis, 1986 for a great list of squelching statements). When asked to generate ideas students struggle to produce what they perceive as a quality or creative idea, rather than generating a quantity of ideas.
I really don't explore. – Students limit the range of creative possibilities – limiting their perspective to theirs and those around them, limiting ideas to their field or related fields, and not considering radically different contexts for idea possibilities.
I am too busy to be creative. – Contextually, students stifle their creative potential by being overbooked, overcommitted, overanxious, and when they have any sliver of daylight to think, they fill it with social media or other online adventures.
I am (still) limited. – Students underestimate their capability and capacity to be creative. Many believe that they simply are not creative because their false concept of creativity. Every semester students surprise themselves with their divergent thinking ability…but only when pushed, and then pushed more.

face of blocks. Right at the top of the blocks list is the assumption (or even declaration) that we like and want creativity! "It's all a lie," writes Jessica Olien (2013). "This is the thing about creativity that is rarely acknowledged: Most people don't actually like it. Studies confirm what many creative people have suspected all along: People are biased against creative thinking, despite all of their insistence otherwise." Questioning our basic assumptions about creativity and fun, particularly in a context where we are leading a serious task, is a necessary first step. Table 15.2 summarizes many of the most common blocks students apply to themselves.

Finally, you cannot have fun if you're hungry – or tired, scared, insecure, afraid, or lacking any number of foundational needs. Looking at the relationship between well-being and fun, Baptiste (2009) describes well-being perspectives vis-à-vis fun from in-depth interviews of local government senior managers, noting that, "… experiences of well-being at work are strongly associated with material aspects of employment relations which have to be addressed before the philosophy of 'fun at work' can have meaning or relevance." (p 609) These concerns include issues of work-life balance, stress, relationship with management, and safety.

The perceived limitations to creative activity and engagement that comprise a student's way of seeing themselves and the world ultimately stifles their potential. This conception is a product of experience – the way we do things around here, and countless interactions with those teachers (and parents, mentors, leaders, etc.) after whom students model what serious achievement entails. Unfortunately, those students then become the teachers, modeling and passing on this cultural and conceptual blockade to the next generation.

For one full semester of teaching research methods to doctoral students I responded to numerous questions with the response, "It depends." On the last day of the semester, for the holidays, the students brought me a very large, festively wrapped gift. My delight was soon shifted to wry amusement when upon opening it I found a large box of Depends – undergarments that serve an important purpose, but not quite yet for me, and certainly not the gift I was expecting. From that semester on, every question was met with a new response: "Well, that is the million-dollar question!" I have yet to receive that gift. But, the million-dollar question for this chapter is: How can we reconcile the 'serious' necessary for learning and achievement with the 'fun' that actually enhances those ends?

15.5 Rules of (Serious) Fun (Seriously)

Unless you've recently seen some post-apocalyptic zombie movie, "no rules" seems like it would be fun – unless, of course, your idea of fun is not on the menu. Unlimited chaos turns out to be not so fun, nor productive (Hill, Brandeau, Truelove, & Lineback, 2014). And, this fun-equals-chaos fallacy is the greatest fear of those who are in a position of leadership…like teachers. Fun, oddly, requires rules – to clarify goals and norms, to focus activity, to ensure psycho/social/emotional safety – essentially to set the parameters within which individuals can play.

Designer Tim Brown (2008) discusses the idea of play as a means of better understanding problems and generating ideas. Brown highlights exploratory play, role play, and playful building, each of which require a set of rules to participate. For example, a role playing activity does not work (nor is it fun) if you are playing a role and others are not, or others are playing a different storyline, or a different story altogether. As Brown notes, "When kids play tea party, or they play cops and robbers, they're following a script that they've agreed to. And it's this code negotiation that leads to productive play."

In the work setting, Plester (2009) discusses the importance of workplace boundaries, asserting that they both enable and constrain workplace fun in such a way that fits with culture and encourages harmony. "Formality and fun can coexist," notes Plester (p 593), but only when the boundaries are clearly communicated either through the culture or, failing that, through managers or employees. Clear boundaries also provide parameters for defiance, edginess, and challenge, which some speculate enhances fun (Carver, 2013). What happens when the boundaries between work and fun are blurred? Fleming (2005) conducted an 8-month field study of an organization known for their culture of fun. Surprising even to the researchers, the study turned out to be a fascinating look at how *not* to integrate fun. The activities and interactions imposed by managers were perceived as juvenile, condescending, and inauthentic, resulting in employee cynicism. Definitely not fun.

The rules for effective, serious fun will certainly vary by persons and context. With that variability in mind, what follows are a number of 'rules' from which leaders and educators could draw to facilitate serious fun. The first four rules comprise the "Laws

of Fun" as established by The Fun Dept, a company who's mission is: "To create opportunities for people to have fun at work" (Measley & Gianoulis, 2015, p vii). "Fun (at least workplace fun) is not about hopping on one foot blindfolded, wearing embarrassing costumes, or forcing employees to be silly. Fun at work is building solidarity, connection, and an outlet for workplace stress," they note in their book *Playing it Forward* (p 5). The challenge posed in this chapter – reconciling and facilitating serious fun – comprises much of what The Fun Dept has wrestled with over their years of developing and delivering fun. While their primary focus has been the work setting, their insights are easily transferable to the educational setting.

And so, without further delay, the ten rules of serious fun:

Rule 1: Fun requires leadership buy-in and participation.

"It all starts at the top," notes The Fun Dept. (p 8):

> If leadership isn't leading the charge, employees will hesitate to engage, and that will undermine the initiative from before the first fun idea leaves the planning group and makes its way into the office. Leaders launch the fun; informing employees not only that it's OK to have fun, but that they are going to be right there with them. When it comes to fun – or any major organizational initiative, leadership support is key to success and impact. (p 9)

Support is critical, but it is not enough. Leaders model the cultural norms, and if fun is an acceptable part of work, authentic participation by leaders communicates that priority. "You do not need to be the center of attention. You just need to be present, both physical and emotionally." (p 15) This notion is further reinforced in the educational setting. Tews', et al. (2015) found that instructor-focused fun delivery is more related to student engagement than fun activity: "Based on these findings, one can conclude that students particularly value instructor-centered fun…" (p 24).

Rule 2: Fun is a shared experience – and needs to include leadership buy-in.

Fun is highly subjective, and yet facilitating serious fun in education or work settings means finding the fun that works for all. The Fun Dept runs an exercise with groups to help find that shared fun. The exercise starts with individuals generating a list of what each person does for fun or considers fun. Facilitators then ask individuals to compare lists in overlapping Venn diagrams, looking for obvious mutual interests or creating unique connections. The process continues until all individuals have connected. At first glance this exercise appears helpful but unworkable beyond a very small group. Expanding this to a larger group is where the creative reconceptualization of "a fun activity" emerges. As The Fun Dept explains in an example:

> We asked two volunteers to jot down their lists, share their interest with the class, and hopefully uncover that 'x' (indicating a mutual interest).
>
> Indeed, the two volunteers had one thing in common: cliff diving. That's right. Cliff diving.
>
> We asked the other 48 students, "Who would NOT want to go cliff diving"? At least 20 students raised their hands. Then, we asked, "If we still chose a cliff-diving activity, like a competition, how would you want to participate?" Our goal was to find middle ground (for those who preferred staying on the ground). The 20 students came up with great ideas:
>
> 1. We can be the judges, scoring the dives from 1 to 10.
> 2. We can be in charge of the food.

3. We can take pictures and short videos and post them on social media.

   One student said, "I'm a DJ. We can bring music and make introductions. As long as I'm not cliff diving, I'm happy!" (p 34–35).

Reinforcing the idea that fun must be shared and mutual, perhaps an interesting sub-rule for fun may lie in team membership. In fact, Hirst et al. (2009) suggest that "identity based regulation" might serve as a precursor to creative behavior.

Rule 3: The 3C's: Consistency, company time, culture compliance.

The three components of this Fun Dept rule focus on the implementing fun in an organization. They explain consistency as, "When it comes to fun in the workplace, consistency is key. Fun should feel as natural and typical to the staff as the morning commute, coffee break, lunch, afternoon stretch, happy hour, and commute back home…Fun is like exercise. Stick to a consistent regimen, and you'll enjoy long-lasting results." (p 37)

Regarding company time: "…company leaders hesitate to schedule fun events on company time. Doing so, they believe, impacts productivity and is merely a distraction. Often, plans are made to usurp valuable down-time for employee engagement with events scheduled during evening hours or weekend. Work is stressful enough…fun can take less than 15 min. And it should!" (p 39) The equivalent in education would be cutting into recess and lunch!

Finally, culture compliant refers to the subjectivity of both individual and group. "Compliant fun will: Integrate with your company's culture and encourage everyone to participate – in their own way. First, make sure you have a good sense of the likes, dislikes, tolerances, and intolerances of the folks who make up your organization. Remember the Venn diagram we drew earlier?" they explain, "Second, fun needs to appeal to extroverts and introverts alike. Some employees will gladly do the limbo; others will prefer watching." (p 41)

The Fun Dept provides the following chart to help explain how these three components go into making BIG FUN:

	Consistent	Company time	Compliant	Challenges
BIG FUN	√	√	√	The company should regularly update its list of fun ideas
More Fun	√	√	X	Less trust in leadership and risk of employees getting in trouble.
	√	X	√	Compromised work time or personal time.
	X	√	√	Uncertainty as fun is not part of the cultural fabric.
Some Fun	√	X	X	Disconnect between the fun at work and the company's culture.
	X	√	X	Disjointed waste of work time.
	X	X	√	Disjointed waste of personal time.
No Fun	X	X	X	Total disregard for the entire workforce.

Rule 4: Fun for all the senses.

The experience of fun is primarily emotional. “Fun should strike an emotional chord by tantalizing all the senses. It should look good, sound good, feel good, smell good, and taste good.” (p 48) As any educator will attest, excellent pedagogical design will strive to maximize the sensory input, and thus maximize the connections with the content.

Rule 5: Fun comes in many flavors.

In addition to being highly subjective, as well as an often shared and dynamic experience, fun takes on many forms. Winter (2011) created a taxonomy of 21 types of fun, including Fellowship, Altruism, Discovery, Challenge, Danger, and Reflection among them. Understanding the broad range of fun enables leaders to better identify what followers find fun, and offers an array of options to suit the individuals, task, context, and moment.

Rule 6: The sources of fun are broad and endless.

Each type of fun can be executed from a variety of sources, offering those planning and facilitating fun a great many options. The most impactful source of fun is other people. Shared fun is contagious, and often what is slightly amusing to the individual becomes uproariously memorable when shared with others. Leaders must create unique ways to group individuals and encourage interaction. Other sources of fun include objects, places, novelty, the unexpected, and even one’s own mind and past memories.

Rule 7: Forced fun, isn’t.

Autonomous, emergent, organic, open, self-directed – all terms related to the contextual feelings that speak to delicate encouragement…and require the trust noted earlier. You cannot force fun. Period.

Rule 8: Know what is NOT fun (and what is not funny).

Awareness of what is not fun is as important as determining what is perceived as fun. “Not fun” has great power to thwart the activity, stall a group, and erode a leader’s credibility. This rule goes along with the notion of The Fun Dept’s culture compliant idea and can serve as a critical facilitation tool. Plester (2016) provides an excellent overview of the dangers of not fun, noting, “…fun, though enjoyable, is not necessarily funny – thus fun does not necessarily incorporate humour, although humour does often occur during fun activities. This contrasts with the complexity of humour and although it can be light-hearted, humour can also have a dark side…” (p 5).

Rule 9: Facilitating serious fun is a balancing act.

Awareness of mental constructs and blocks, strategies to overcome those blocks, and activities to develop creative and fun dispositions are foundational. However, the real genius of facilitating fun rests with the leader’s ability to balance the

competing paradoxical actions and goals with a given person or group, on a given task, in a given context. The six paradoxes of leading innovation suggested by Hill et al. (2014) are an excellent start to identifying and tracking these balances. The paradoxes are presented as scales with degrees of emphasis rather than either-or. These paradoxes include: (a) honor individual identity versus encouraging collective identity, (b) encourage support between peers versus confrontation, (c) emphasizing learning and development versus performance, (d) allowing improvisation versus imposing structure, (e) expressing patience versus urgency, and (f) encouraging bottom-up initiatives versus top-down projects.

Paradoxical thinking may be the most valuable guideline for those facilitating serious fun. Effective execution requires awareness of and ability to balance these competing tensions. One could add the balance between organic, managed, and task-driven fun (Plester, Cooper-Thomas, & Winquist, 2015) as well as Brown's consideration of when to play: "Kids don't play all the time… They transition in and out of it. …good teachers spend a lot of time thinking about how to move kids through these experiences."

There you have it – ten rules of serious fun! Wait…what about rule 10?! Oh, right, rule #10 of serious fun: Surprise individuals by ending the day earlier than they expect. Everyone enjoys recess!

15.5.1 From Myth to Practice – Go Get Yourself Some Fun!

Incorporating fun seems to be gaining traction as a necessary component of leading, managing, and educating – resulting in positive contributions to multiple bottom lines (Bolton & Houlihan, 2009). Fun done right offers amazing possibilities for enhancing teaching, leading, and creativity. It offers a plane of mutual understanding and enjoyment, social and emotional connection, and the promise of finding the balance between personal joy and achievement.

"At the core of innovation," and for the purpose of this chapter, creativity, "… lies a fundamental tension, or paradox, inherent in the leader's role: Leaders need to unleash individual's talents, yet also harness all those diverse talents to yield a useful and cohesive result" (Hill et al., 2014). This chapter sought to unpack the concept of fun as a vehicle to reconcile that tension. If you are not yet convinced, The Fun Dept debunks six of the most common myths around utilizing fun:

> Myth #1: Creating fun is expensive and time-consuming.
> Wrong! – Fun can be cost-effective, brief, and well-designed…delivered to small groups over time. And there are many, many sources of great ideas for generating fun in big and little ways (e.g., see Jonas, 2010 for numerous practical suggestions applied to the educational setting).
>
> Myth #2: Fun is frivolous.
> Wrong! – Companies lose over $2000 on average per disengaged employee per year. What is the 'cost of a disengaged student?

> Myth #3: Employees don't want to make fools of themselves; they won't want to participate.
> Wrong! – Through deliberate planning, and with experience, trust and optimism will win the day. Leahmann-Willenbrock and Allen (2014) found that under conditions of job security, humor related to team performance sparked positive communication and solution finding. However, under conditions of job insecurity, those positive effects were not present.
>
> Myth #4: I don't want to deal with the office politics that might crop up.
> Wrong! – Turns out that fun programs, when done right – actually serve to bond your staff together. Office politics and drama take a back seat to fun.
>
> Myth #5: I am not sure I know how to create fun that my staff will enjoy.
> Wrong! – There are many, many techniques for generating hundreds of ideas for employee engagement and fun programs!
>
> Myth #6: I don't feel comfortable promoting fun (and I don't feel like I'm the most fun person, either).
> Wrong! – Relating to your staff, employees or workforce (or students) isn't always a natural or innate talent, that's true. Leadership in employee engagement begins with taking responsibility for the uptick in morale, productivity, and creativity. (p 9–12)

Without engagement, there is little learning. One of my earliest challenges in working with children was how to get them engaged in activities with which they were unfamiliar, i.e., try new things. We would explain how fun a new game was, show them all the cool parts, model authentic excitement, try to convince them that they'd enjoy it, frame it as a challenge or a mystery, offer prizes, and a host of other strategies. Some worked, some of the time, to some degree. But by far the most effective approach was to simply sit down, without saying a word, and start to play. "What are you doing?" came the inevitable inquiry. "Playing a new game," was the vague response. "What's it about?" they pressed. "Oh, I'm trying to (objective)." And from there the student drew themselves into the challenge…and fun…and learning. And within the context of the activity, their creative problem-solving brains kicked into gear in a reciprocally reinforcing relationship with fun. I have never seen anything taken more seriously than kids having fun as they immerse in an activity.

The paradox of serious fun is actually not such a paradox after all. In order for students to authentically experience fun, there needs to be a degree of serious reality. "The meaning makes it fun," summarizes Schaller (2011) in his article highlighting game-based learning in museums. And, the fun makes it meaningful.

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