9 Ways to Celebrate at Work

by Kim & Jason
It’s time to go beyond birthdays and baby showers for workplace celebrations. You know the typical drill: someone is delegated to pick up the marble sheet cake from the local grocery store for so-and-so’s birthday. Then, an equally generic birthday card circulates for everyone to sign their name. Although appreciated and a great first step, we still have a lot to learn from our short friends in kindergarten classes throughout the world. They are serious about celebrating, so much so that they even create holidays in order to do so...ever heard of the 100th Day of School? They manage to find dozens upon dozens of excuses to have cupcakes adorned with three inches of frosting at ten o’clock in the morning.

Instead of bringing in sugar-laden treats every other day, workplaces can get creative to find new, more age-appropriate ways to inject some celebrating into the 9-to-5 grind. Have a pow wow with your coworkers and discuss what types of things you’d like to celebrate together. Every workplace has its own vibe and levels of comfortability, so it’s important to get everyone in on the conversation. If Henry from accounting will feel terribly uncomfortable wearing a funky birthday hat, then it’s counterproductive to make him do so. The whole point of celebrating more is to increase the day-to-day fun!

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Instead of making Friday your fun day, why not celebrate Mondays? Who says you have to live with Garfield’s disdain for the beginning of the week? Allow for casual attire, order lunch in, take turns bringing in a treat, and even make it a rule to leave fifteen minutes early. Sure makes the first half of the week more palatable, while decreasing some of that “Sunday Night Dread.”
Celebrate each other. Everyone likes to be noticed. Each month (or week, depending on the size of your staff) assign a special King or Queen for the Day. Remembering back to second grade, my teacher assigned a “Super Kid” of the day. Knowing you might not have the chance to be line leader or flag holder at work, pick out things that would be fun for the special person’s day of royalty. Maybe they are greeted in the morning with a vase full of fresh flowers on their desk, or helium balloons, or even fancy chocolates. They can sit in an especially comfy chair or get to wear a fun hat. Call a loved one of the recipient and arrange to bring in his/her favorite treat. (Ten bucks says it’s not a marble sheet cake!)
Although surprisingly simple, this one is easily overlooked due to Adultitis-ridden management convinced of losing a day of productivity. Encourage EVERYONE to dress up for Halloween. Conduct a costume contest, with voting and prizes. Take pictures to capture the craziness and while you’re at it, be sure to bring in lots of candy. The playfulness will create bonding opportunities that will serve you months down the road, not to mention it will help unveil new sides to your coworkers.

Who knew Larry in HR was a big Kiss fan? Rock on, Larry!
After a stressful period or busy season, arrange for a childlike surprise that will be meaningful for your group. You can call the local firefighters and ask them to take your staff for a ride around town on a fire engine. Ask a local mascot or celebrity to stop by for a hello. It could also be as simple as a spontaneous afternoon trip to a local ice cream hot spot. Keeping the childlike fun a surprise makes it that much more special.
The Super Bowl has become an American holiday, so why not bring the fun to work also? The Friday before Super Bowl Sunday, have a spread of game time treats in the lounge or a tailgating party at lunch in the parking lot. Invite everyone to wear their favorite sports team apparel. Have everyone guess the score ahead of time. If anyone gets it right, then they get the Monday after the game off from work. Even Sharon, who hates football, will be motivated to make an educated guess.
On the first day of each new season, plan for some extra special fun. For instance, on the first day of fall, bring in the goodies to make homemade caramel apples. Mmm! On the first day of winter, you can make snow cones or maybe decorate the office for the winter holidays. On the first day of spring, invite everyone to bring in kites and you can fly them in the parking lot. On the first day of summer, invite everyone to wear Hawaiian gear and have (non-alcoholic) frozen fruity drinks. Everyone will get a kick out of seeing big Bob holding his drink adorned with that cute little umbrella.
On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, pay respects to the classic Charlie Brown rendition of the holiday by recreating your own version of Snoopy and Woodstock’s feast. Pop bowl-fulls of popcorn, make toast with peanut butter, served with a side of jelly beans and pretzel sticks. Invite everyone to bring in lawn chairs and gather around to watch the Schulz classic together.
Use this national holiday as an excuse to let loose and play some practical jokes on one another. It’s important to lighten up and not take yourself so seriously all of the time. If your coworker finds all of the items on his desk upside down, it may just bring him a smile to know that someone cared enough to have some fun with him. The trick is to have fun without going overboard, making others angry or uncomfortable.
On March 17th, make sure that everyone is Irish. Wear green from head to toe and bring in leprechaun hats and green beads. Make shamrock shakes in the lounge for lunch and while you’ve got the green food coloring out, be sure to add some drops to the bathroom toilets.
The End

Celebrate good times. Come anal.