FUN IN THE WORKPLACE: TOWARD AN ENVIRONMENT-BEHAVIOR FRAMEWORK RELATING OFFICE DESIGN, EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY, AND JOB SATISFACTION

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Interior Design

FUN IN THE WORKPLACE: TOWARD AN ENVIRONMENT-BEHAVIOR FRAMEWORK RELATING OFFICE DESIGN, EMPLOYEE CREATIVITY, AND JOB SATISFACTION

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This study explored the role of office design in creating a “fun” work environment with the aim of improving creativity and job satisfaction. Moreover, this study tested an empirical framework of fun in the workplace. This framework was explored through a narrative case study examining PUSH, an advertising agency located in Orlando, Florida. PUSH was selected for this research based on their explicit inclusion of fun as a goal in their core values, recognition for their innovative office design, and their success as an award-winning advertising firm.

PUSH was comprehensively investigated in three stages. First, employees completed standardized tests for creativity, job satisfaction, and demographics to create an in-depth profile of those who worked in the organization. Second, the workplace was photographed and observed to understand the role of the physical environment. Third, interviews and on-site observations took place to capture processes relating to fun in the
workplace. Then, combining data from all three stages, a narrative was created that explored employees’ perceptions and experiences of fun at work.

Findings supported a multi-dimensional model of fun in the workplace. Worker characteristics, management style, and the physical work setting were all related to fun in the workplace at PUSH, where high creativity and job satisfaction levels were also found. Combining all of these components, the narrative “Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play” provided a true account of fun in the workplace as employees prepared for a pitch with a large prospective client. In particular, the story reflected the role of office design in supporting workplace fun; and showed how this related to employee creativity and job satisfaction.

In sum, PUSH advertising agency provided an excellent model for fun in the workplace and how it related to office design, employee creativity, and job satisfaction. Given the lack of empirical research on the subject, a great deal of additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of workplace fun and its possible benefits for employees and businesses. Nevertheless, this study shows fun in the workplace to be a promising concept and supports the need for further research on the subject.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Imagine walking into an office where instead of sitting calmly at their desks, employees are playing miniature golf and shooting rubber bands at one another. Imagine employees returning from meetings to find their doors glued shut or sealed off by a web of hot-glue-gun strands. These may not sound like the workings of a successful and productive business; but in fact, they are. This is the home of IDEO, located in Palo Alto, California, one of the world’s leading product-design companies. IDEO has created such famed products as the Apple computer mouse, Palm V handheld organizer, and Crest Neat Squeeze toothpaste tube. David Kelley, CEO and founder, believes that the company’s fun work environment is key in fostering its high level of innovation (Butler, 1999).

Does the interior design of an office have a significant impact on the employees inhabiting the space? Many businesses are willing to turn to office design as a way of improving factors such as employee satisfaction, performance, recruitment, and retention (Laabs, 2000). As evidenced at IDEO, a recent trend in office design is the incorporation of “fun” into the workplace. This is evident in growing numbers of offices with features such as ping-pong tables, video games, and indoor golf greens.

However, these offices are not just limited to the West Coast. Prominent companies such as Lands’ End, Gymboree, and MicroStrategy all subscribe to the ideas of a fun work environment (Meyer, 1999). Companies such as these believe that a fun workplace may improve employee morale, communication, performance, recruitment,
and retention (Ford, McLaughlin, & Newstrom, 2003). Despite all of these suggested benefits, few studies have examined the role of interior design in promoting an environment that supports workplace fun.

**Purpose**

This study explored the role of office design in creating a “fun” work environment with the aim of improving creativity and job satisfaction. This was explored through a narrative case study examining PUSH, an advertising agency located in Orlando, Florida. PUSH was selected for this research based on their explicit inclusion of fun as a goal in their core values (PUSH website, 2005), their recognition for innovative office design (Zelinsky, 2002), and their success as an award-winning advertising firm (Orlando Advertising Federation website, 2005). An in-depth investigation of PUSH involved interviews with four key employees, standardized instruments, photographs, and on-site observations. End results of this study were a profile of PUSH that examined the social and physical environment and a narrative capturing employees’ first-hand experiences working in an office environment designed to embrace fun.

Key variables in this study were creativity and job satisfaction. Creativity was defined as the “production of novel and useful ideas and things” (Amabile, Burnside, & Gryskiewicz, 1999, p.1). This is different from innovation, defined as the “successful implementation of creative ideas by an organization” (Amabile et al., 1999, p.1). Job satisfaction was defined as “the feelings a worker has about his or her job or job experiences in relation to previous experiences, current expectations, or available alternatives” (Balzer, Kihm, Smith, Irwin, Bachiochi, Robie, Sinar, & Para, 2000, p. 7).
For the purpose of this study, workplace fun was defined as follows: “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.” Simply put, a fun workplace may be defined as "a work environment that makes people smile" (Ford et al., 2003, p. 22).

Companies can realize workplace fun in a wide variety of ways. Ford (2003) divides these activities into ten categories: recognition for personal milestones, social events, public celebrations of professional achievements, opportunities for civic volunteerism, stress-release activities, humor, games, friendly competitions, opportunities for personal development, and entertainment. This study explored how the physical environment relates to these social dimensions of fun in the workplace.

Work-related attitudes were evaluated through a measure of self-reported job satisfaction. Instead of defining productivity as the traditional “output per hour of labor” (United States Census Bureau, 2004), this study evaluated more qualitative aspects of productivity. Since this study focused on the inventive field of advertising, productivity was evaluated through a self-reported measure of the creative environment (a factor that is critical to success in this profession).

The experience of fun in the workplace was explored through the narrative method, also known as storytelling. The narrative method is particularly valuable, as it was recently recognized in the interior design field as an excellent tool for understanding human perceptions of the physical environment. “With its ability to capture the myriad voices of end-users, clients, and designers, narrative inquiry is uniquely suited to tapping into the reservoir of practitioner knowledge in interior design” (Portillo, 2000, p. iv).
This ability to recognize multiple perspectives is one of the largest benefits of narrative inquiry.

Assumptions

A number of assumptions underlie this study. First, the researcher assumed that PUSH exemplifies a fun work environment. This assumption was based on (1) the inclusion of fun as a goal in the company’s published core values; (2) the company’s website, which contains features that most would consider fun (i.e., photographs of employee’s heads pasted on silly bodies, and a video clip of employees playing with hand puppets); and (3) their playful office environment, which features vibrant colors, bold artwork, and even a basketball hoop.

Second, it is assumed that all data were collected under normal working conditions at PUSH, without any extraneous circumstances affecting the employees. For example, if the business had recently laid off a large number of employees, or if employees had an unusually large workload, this might negatively impact employee morale. Similarly, if employees had just received their annual bonus checks, employee moral might be higher than during normal pay periods.

Third, this study assumed that employees provided truthful and accurate answers when completing questionnaires concerning self-perceptions of creativity and job satisfaction. It is also assumed that during interviews employees provided accurate accounts of their workplace experiences.

Significance

Fun in the workplace is a relatively new concept. While numerous articles in the popular press suggest the importance of fun at work for improving employee morale and productivity (Mariotti, 1999, McGhee, 2000, Meyer, 1999), there is little empirical
knowledge on the subject. Ford and colleagues (2003) conducted what might be the most extensive research to date on “what a fun work environment is, its component characteristics, and its advantages for employees, work teams and organizations (p. 18).” While they examined the perceived social outcomes of fun, they failed to consider the factors that may be used to stimulate fun, such as the physical environment.

This precedent study will examine the impact of office design on promoting fun in the workplace. Since more time and resources may be required to create a fun and innovative environment, it will be informative to know if benefits outweigh any extra costs. Knowledge gained through this study will be useful to architects and interior designers creating offices aimed at promoting fun.

In addition to helping designers, this study will also benefit business owners. Factors such as job satisfaction, creativity, and productivity are essential considerations in business. They can have a large impact on the success and profitability of an organization. Thus, if the design of an office can promote workplace fun and consequently affect these factors, this knowledge will be valuable for employers. It may allow them to produce happier, more creative employees and more productive businesses.

Finally, this study is important because of the long hours that many employees spend in their workplaces. Business owner John Mariotti (1999) states, “Social interaction with people from work often can occupy more of our waking lives than any other activity- even time spent with spouses and children” (p. 63).

In 2002, executive, administrative, and managerial workers averaged 40 hours per week. Administrative support workers averaged 36.4 hours. In total, white-collar workers in the United States averaged 36.1 hours per week (United States Census
This means that with a traditional 5-day workweek, the average worker spends approximately 7.2 hours a day working.

Employees in the advertising field often exceed this average, working on tight deadlines to produce creative products (Hecker, 1999). This adds up to a substantial amount of time spent in office environments. Therefore, it is important to study ways of creating more enjoyable atmospheres for office workers.

**Delimitations**

PUSH, an advertising agency located in Orlando, Florida is the only business that was investigated. While it would be valuable to examine a larger number of firms, this does not fall within the scope of this master’s research. Therefore, one business was studied comprehensively.

Participants consisted of the 42 employees currently working at PUSH. Data was based on 35 workers’ self-reported assessments of job satisfaction and perceived environmental support for creativity. Interviews also tapped into four employees’ perceptions of the work environment.

**Research Questions**

With the lack of empirical knowledge regarding fun in the workplace, this study attempted to gain a better understanding through a case study of PUSH advertising agency, an exceptionally fun business. By creating a detailed profile of the business and examining the physical environment, this study hoped to discover how one real-life company implements fun in the workplace.

This study asks the following research questions: Does fun in the workplace have any effect on employee perceptions of creativity and job satisfaction? How does office design relate to fun in the workplace and what experience does this create for employees?
Also, what impact do individual characteristics and management style have on workplace fun?

**Conclusion**

A number of successful companies subscribe to the idea that having fun at work can improve factors such as employee satisfaction, performance, creativity, and retention. However, there is little empirical research on the subject. As a result, this study investigated the role of interior design in promoting workplace fun, targeted at improving creativity and job satisfaction. A case study of the advertising agency PUSH was conducted through interviews, standardized tests, photography, and on-site observations. The end product of this study was a detailed profile of the business, including creativity and job satisfaction, as well as a narrative account of employees’ experiences demonstrating workplace fun.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Gifford (2002) proposes a theoretical framework for the study of the workplace, using an environment-behavior model (Figure 2-1). In this model, he identifies six main components: physical work setting, worker characteristics, work policies, worker-environment interaction, psychological processes, and outcomes. The framework is centered on worker-environment interaction, with three factors contributing to it (physical work setting, worker characteristics, and work policies) and two factors resulting from it (psychological process leading to a series of outcomes).

Figure 2-1. Model for workplace environmental psychology (Gifford, 2002, p. 339)
With the numerous factors that come together to make up a workplace, this model identifies and organizes them into a comprehensive framework through environment-behavior interaction. Gifford’s model serves as the basis for this research, guiding the methodology for the present study. Therefore, each of the six categories is further addressed in the literature review.

Gifford’s framework was then adapted to serve as a model for this study of workplace fun (Figure 2-2). In this model, individual worker characteristics, physical work setting, and management style all affect worker-environment interaction. However, in this model, worker-environment interaction is specifically defined as fun in the workplace. This fun then influences creativity, based on Amabile’s 1997 Componential Theory of Creativity, which combines expertise, creative thinking skills, and intrinsic motivation. The final outcomes are creative products, job satisfaction, and productivity.

![Diagram of workplace fun model](image-url)

Figure 2-2. Model for fun in the workplace, adapted from Gifford (2002) and Amabile (1997)
Fun in the Workplace (Worker-Environment Interaction)

The concept of fun in the workplace began in Silicone Valley during the dot-com era of the nineties when start-up companies, replete with technology-driven employees just out of college, began to create a new corporate culture (van Meel & Vos, 2001). While spending 80 plus hours a week at work, employees began changing the office environment to suit their needs. They began making it a place for not only work, but also leisure activities. Pool tables, golf greens, beanbag chairs, and other fun items were incorporated into the office environment to offset the long hours at work.

The physical environment was not the only characteristic that dot-com companies changed. Employees began dressing casual, not just on Fridays, but everyday (Oleck & Prasso, 2001). The whole atmosphere took on a fun, youthful spirit at these dot-com companies. Business became less associated with work and more related to play (van Meel & Vos, 2001).

While the dot-com era has undergone changes, the idea of making work fun has remained in some sectors. Meyer (1999) asserts that a growing number of U.S. companies are incorporating fun into the workplace in order to boost employee morale, communication, recruitment and retention. A handful of businesses are examined by Meyer, focusing on how they implement fun and the benefits they have received. For example, Massachusetts PR firm Schwartz Communications features ping-pong tables, dartboards, video games and “Thank God it’s Thursday” parties where employees drink beer and eat pizza. This fun atmosphere has been credited for the company’s low 12% turnover rate, one third of the industry’s average.

Some may find the idea of playing games at work to be surprising, as work and play are generally considered opposites; however, this idea can be misleading. Blanchard
and Cheska (1985) use four general attributes to define play: voluntary, intrinsically motivated, involving active engagement, and having a make-believe quality. They maintain that the opposite of work is leisure, while work has the potential to be considered play. Furthermore, extensive research on play asserts that it is an important mediator for learning and socialization (Rieber, 1996).

Yet, fun in the workplace is not a panacea. Fun cannot compensate for poor managers, a lack of resources, or a number of other significant problems. Furthermore, clients may not take such unorthodox companies into consideration as serious enterprises, choosing to hire more traditional companies instead. Employees as well may think twice before working for such an unconventional company. Finally, businesses must consider the additional worker downtime in which no money is being made. In spite of all this, Meyer maintains that the benefits of a fun work environment outweigh the risks.

Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom (2003) conducted an e-mail survey of 527 human resource managers to learn about fun at work. The most common ways of promoting fun were found to be casual dress days, recognition for employee achievements, and gatherings involving food and beverages. Managers believed that fun at work can lead to improved employee recruitment, lower turnover rates, less absenteeism, more communication and commitment, improved organizational culture, and greater customer satisfaction. However, most managers believed that their employees were not having as much fun at work as they should. Overall, the human resource managers surveyed were strongly in favor of promoting fun at work.

A limitation of the Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom study is that it is conducted solely through surveys. It relies on self-reported answers, without the verification of on-
site assessments. The study is also limited by focusing on the opinions of human resource managers, not the majority of lower-level employees who may have different views on fun in the workplace.

With all of the recent attention on having fun at work, the question arises- will fun become a permanent objective for businesses, or is it merely a trend? For example, the dot-com inspired trend of casual dressing has met a recent backlash. With 34% of 3,500 executives polled blaming sloppy dressers for crossing the line, some companies are now returning to more formal business attire (Oleck & Prasso, 2001). This raises the question- will the concept of fun in the workplace meet a similar fate?

**Physical Work Setting**

Since the 1950s, one ideal advanced by the International style movement was the high-rise office expressed in glass, steel, and concrete, designed to impress clients and passersby. Lobbies were filled with marble and rich wood and executives were placed in high-up corner offices (van Meel & Vos, 2001). This style transcended borders, as a way for businesses to demonstrate their success, stability, and power.

However, with today’s ideas of fun in the workplace, certain companies no longer want to express themselves in such a traditional and hierarchical way. While the executives of the past were seen sitting at large mahogany desks, conveying the appearance of security and reliability, this is no longer true for all. One venue of today’s successful managers seeks to express individuality and a sense of humor through office design. The office environments of such professionals may display an unconventional prop, perhaps a snowboard hung from the ceiling, expressing their personal interests and making them more approachable (van Meel & Vos 2001).
According to a study by Hixson (Laabs, 2000), a Cincinnati-based Design, Architecture, and Engineering firm, many managers are unsatisfied with their office facilities. The study surveyed over 650 managers of Fortune 1000 and dot-com companies. When evaluating the impact of their workplaces on productivity and business objectives, 72% gave their space a grade of C or lower. The managers held that employee productivity, satisfaction, recruitment, retention, and teamwork could be aided through improved workspaces. In fact, 61% said they would be willing to reduce employee benefits by 50% to improve office spaces.

This may be a worthwhile investment when considering life cycle costs of the workplace. Wineman (1986) states that over the 40-year life cycle of an office facility, 2 to 3% is spent on initial costs, 6 to 8% is spent on maintenance, and 90 to 92% is spent on employee salaries and benefits. Further research may investigate if investments in office design (such as creating a fun work environment) can improve organizational effectiveness, thereby lowering personnel costs.

In addition to explicit life cycle costs, there are a number of implicit costs that may also be affected by improvements in office design. A well-designed office may improve a business’s ability to recruit new workers, reducing recruitment expenses and attracting top-quality employees. Danko (2000) demonstrates this idea, using the narrative method to examine how one company’s office design helped to recruit a highly sought after employee.

Successful office design may also help to retain current employees, lowering turnover rates, and therefore reduce training costs. Furthermore, an effectively designed office can aid productivity, allowing more work to be done in less time. Yet these are just
the most concrete benefits. Less obvious advantages may include improving employee morale, making an impression on clients, and inspiring creativity in employees.

Worker Characteristics

The concept of fun in the workplace can be linked to a changing labor market. With the new information era has come a new generation of employees. These workers are “educated, professional, self-managing, independent and increasingly mobile, moving upwards from job to job with little concern for the old security of ‘job for life’” (van Meel & Vos, 2001, p. 328). These recent college graduates consider work as a form of self-expression, not just a way to earn money. They not only want a great salary and stock options; they want a fun and interesting job. Therefore, companies who are interested in attracting such employees are attempting to create workplaces that fit their modern lifestyles (van Meel & Vos, 2001).

Ford, McLaughlin, and Newstrom’s 2003 study addresses how worker characteristics relate to fun in the workplace. Their survey of human resource managers investigated whether worker characteristics determine the type and amount of fun that employees desire. They found that while the age of the employees made little difference in the amount of fun, the age of managers predicted the number of fun activities, with younger managers being associated with more fun. The study also found that organizations with managers holding higher education levels were more likely to offer fun activities such as personal development measures, recognition of personal milestones, and stress relief activities than organizations with less educated managers.

Management Style

A study by human resource consulting firm, William M. Mercer Inc. suggests that a number of companies have work policies aimed at promoting fun in the workplace
(Employers stress workplace fun, 1999). In a survey of 286 employers, 8% had mission or value statements that advocated fun or humor as a company goal. Twenty-nine percent of employers said that fun was encouraged, just not in formal terms. Sixty-two percent of the respondents believe that promoting fun and humor through the management style benefits employees and the entire organization. However, 8% formally or informally discouraged workplace fun, suggesting that fun in the workplace may not be for everyone.

In addition to policies on fun, there are a number of other management procedures that can affect the work environment. Mayfield and Mayfield’s 2004 study examined the effects of management communication on worker innovation. The motivating language scale survey was administered to 133 university students with previous work experience. The study found a significant relationship between leader communication and worker innovation. The results predicted a 2.7% increase in employee innovation for every 10% increase in motivating language.

Outcomes

Creativity

While it is often assumed that creativity comes from naturally creative people, the Componential Theory of Creativity proposes that “all humans with normal capacities are able to produce at least moderately creative work in some domain, some of the time- and that the social environment (work environment) can influence both the level and the frequency of creative behavior” (Amabile, 1997, p. 42). According to this theory, the three main components of individual and small group creativity are expertise, creative thinking skills, and most importantly, intrinsic task motivation. Creativity is most likely
to occur when these three components overlap. Furthermore, higher levels of each of the three components will lead to higher levels of creativity (Amabile, 1997).

When examining organizational creativity, there are some ambiguities, as creativity is a broad term that can apply to many different processes. Wise (2003) created a model that categorized businesses into four different categories of creativity. First, the model distinguishes between creativity-centered industries, which must constantly create new products to survive, and creativity-enhanced industries, which benefit from creative enhancement of current services. Second, the model differentiates between aesthetic creativity, which relates to communication and visual arts, and technological creativity, which relates to innovation in computer hardware, software, or physical and biological sciences.

Firms that demand high levels of both aesthetic and technological creativity are considered Technical Artists. Firms that require high aesthetic creativity, but low technological creativity are defined as Artists. Firms that demand constant technical innovation, but only use aesthetics for communication, packaging, and facilities design are known as Inventors. Finally, firms that require neither aesthetic nor technological creativity, relying on distributing others’ products or adapting to the innovations of others, are considered Distributors and Adaptors.

A study by Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, and Herron (1996) examined the work environments surrounding highly creative team projects versus less creative team projects. The study took place at an international electronics company using KEYS: *Assessing the Climate for Creativity* as the primary instrument. Middle-level managers were asked to nominate projects from the last 3 years that demonstrated the highest and
lowest creativity. After selecting the projects, members of each project team were asked to complete the KEYS survey to assess the creative climate for their particular project.

The projects nominated for high-creativity scored significantly higher than those nominated for low-creativity on all six stimulant scales and the two outcome scales. However, some factors played a more significant role than others. Resources, workload pressure, and freedom carried moderate weight. Meanwhile, striking differences were found in positive challenge in the work, organizational encouragement, work group supports, supervisory encouragement, and organizational impediments, suggesting these are critical factors in team creativity. However, this study was limited by its examination of only one business; therefore, these findings need to be replicated in multiple organizations.

There are numerous factors that can affect the creativity of an organization. The impact of humor on creativity was investigated in a study by Isen, Daubman, and Nowicki (1987). In their experiment, 65 psychology class students were given a task that could be solved through creativity. This involved using a group of everyday objects to solve a specific problem. Prior to the task, half the students watched a funny film, while the other half watched a neutral film. Subjects exposed to the humorous film produced significantly more solutions than those who watched the neutral film.

In a study by Stokols, Clitheroe, and Zmuidzinas (2002), the physical and social predictors of perceived creativity in the workplace were examined. Ninety-seven employees from five different offices participated. They received questionnaires evaluating their perceptions of support for creativity, the importance of creativity, social climate, personal stress, and job satisfaction. Additionally, researchers objectively
recorded workspace conditions. This included documenting square footage, levels of enclosure, pedestrian traffic and noise, and visual exposure.

The findings of this study showed that a more positive social climate was related to greater perceived support for creativity at work. Meanwhile, higher environmental distraction (e.g. high pedestrian traffic, noise levels, and visual exposure) was related to lower perceived support for creativity at work. In addition, the social climate and level of environmental distraction significantly predicted job satisfaction.

One limitation of the Stokols, Clitheroe, and Zmuidzinas study is that it was cross-sectional, as opposed to longitudinal. Therefore causal relationships cannot be inferred, merely correlations. Nevertheless, this study is important in suggesting that the physical and social work environment affect creativity and job satisfaction.

Leonard and Swap (1999) also suggest that the physical environment can have an effect on group creativity. Based on normative research, they assert that a well-designed space can facilitate divergent thinking, incubation of ideas, and team convergence, all of which are essential steps in the creative process. To do so, the environment should contain spaces that encourage spontaneous or unplanned interaction between employees. Leonard and Swap also state that the design of a workplace can reflect a company’s mission and values, particularly the importance of creativity. It is also noted that creative groups tend to surround themselves with physical icons, cultural icons, and playful objects that can help to create a stimulating and fun environment.

**Job Satisfaction**

Research on job satisfaction has been carried out for decades. In the process, a number of different instruments have been developed to measure job satisfaction. Van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek, & Frings-Dresen conducted a study in 2003 comparing 29
different instruments, based on reliability and validity. Through a systematic literature review, they found seven instruments that met all of their criteria. These were the Andrew and Withey Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, Emergency Physician Job Satisfaction Scale, McCloskey/Mueller Satisfaction Scale, Nurse Satisfaction Scale, Job Satisfaction Survey, Measurement of Job Satisfaction Scale, and Job in General Scale. Surprisingly, the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) did not meet the requirements for validity and reliability, although it is the most commonly used instrument.

The largest limitation with the Van Saane study was its aim to determine the best tools for measuring job satisfaction in a hospital setting. However, since many of the instruments were applicable to all fields, the results can be useful in studying office environments. The instrument with the highest reliability and validity for all fields was the JIG, suggesting it is the best measure of job satisfaction for this study.

When evaluating the psychometric properties of the Job in General (JIG), the instrument scored 0.91 for reliability in terms of internal consistency. It scored between 0.66 and .80 for convergent validity when compared to the Brayfield-Roth Scale, 0.76 compared to the Adjective Scale, and 0.75 compared to the Faces Scale. Finally, the JIG was also the only instrument to provide information on responsiveness to change.

According to a 2005 press release from The Conference Board, only half of all U.S. workers are satisfied with their jobs (U.S. job satisfaction, 2005). This shows a decline since 1995, when almost 60% of workers were satisfied. These lower satisfaction levels can be found across all age groups and income levels. The employees with the lowest satisfaction rate were those between ages 35 to 44 and those earning between $25,000 and $35,000 per year. Older workers were found to be the most satisfied employees.
These results, based on a survey of 5,000 workers, suggest that methods of improving job satisfaction should be investigated.

In one such study, Morrison (2004) examines the association between office friendships and job satisfaction (among other factors). Her study consisted of two parts. The first used questionnaires to survey 124 employees of a large hospital in New Zealand. The second used an Internet questionnaire to study 412 employees from diverse fields in New Zealand and the United States. Both parts used the Workplace Friendship Scale to assess friendship and the Job Satisfaction Scale to measure job satisfaction. The results showed that more opportunities for friendship had a direct positive relationship with job satisfaction.

A limitation of the Morrison study is that the majority of respondents were from New Zealand, not the United States. Yet, the question arises- could fun in the workplace help people to develop relationships that lead to friendships? If this is the case, as many believe, this study suggests that workplace fun may be associated with improved job satisfaction.

Conclusion

Gifford’s 2002 model for workplace environmental psychology serves as the framework for this study and was adapted to examine fun in the workplace. Based on this model, a thorough literature review investigated fun in the workplace, physical work setting, worker characteristics, management style, creativity, and job satisfaction. Over the course of this review, three major themes became apparent. These themes were fun activities, team building, and the expression of self.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Research Design

This study combines a case study approach with a qualitative research method known as narrative inquiry. Through this amalgamation, a noted advertising agency was comprehensively investigated in three stages. First, employees completed standardized tests for creativity, job satisfaction, and demographics to create an in-depth profile of those who worked in the organization. Second, the workplace was photographed and observed to understand the role of the physical environment. Third, interviews and on-site observations took place to capture processes relating to fun in the workplace. Combining data from all three stages, a narrative was created that expressed employees perceptions and experiences of fun at work.

By mixing the qualitative narrative inquiry with quantitative methods, the study’s construct validity was strengthened. The benefits were twofold. First, interviews and observations provided rich, detailed knowledge, while standardized tests measured creativity and job satisfaction in quantifiable terms (and offered a means to compare the case to national norms). Second, the multiple methods allowed dual perspectives. Interviews and questionnaires assessed subjective perceptions of creativity, job satisfaction, and workplace fun, while on-site observations provided an objective point of view.

The narrative method was selected for a number of reasons. First of all, narrative inquiry has received a great deal of attention in the interior design field recently. A
special issue of the *Journal of Interior Design* was dedicated to the narrative approach, featuring three articles and two reports on the subject (Portillo, 2000). Ganoe (1999) expresses the reasons for recent attention on narrative inquiry: “It provides a comprehensive method for analyzing the human experience of environment. Interpreting interior space as a narrative adds depth and breadth to the understanding of how environment is psychologically inhabited by the individual’ (p. 4). Narratives have the ability to capture thoughts, emotions, sensory details, and tension points in a manner unlike any other research method. Furthermore, a well-crafted narrative has the ability to capture all of these aspects from multiple perspectives, providing a holistic view of the environment.

The narrative approach is particularly conducive to studying business organizations. As businesses are large complex environments, narratives have the ability to express their intricate workings as a set of specific events or experiences. Business guru Stephen Denning (2004) believes that narratives are one of the most effective tools a leader can use. He suggests that while facts generally drive business thinking, “Storytelling can translate those dry and abstract numbers into compelling pictures of a leader's goals” (2004, p.123).

**Case Selection**

In order to select a workplace for this case study, a four-part case criterion was developed as follows. First, the office must house a business that generates new products or designs, relying heavily on creativity, such as an advertising or architecture firm. Second, the office must have received some form of external recognition for exceptional workplace design. Third, the office needs to demonstrate an innovative management
style. Lastly, the business must incorporate “fun in the workplace” as a goal for improving employee performance and satisfaction.

The business selected for this case study is PUSH, an advertising agency located in Orlando, Florida. Founded in 1996, the business currently has 42 employees. PUSH has been recognized for its innovative office design, appearing in the book *The inspired workplace: Interior designs for creativity and productivity* (Zelinsky, 2002). Most importantly, the business has an innovative management style, including fun as a goal in its published list of core values. The value statement asserts,

“Have fun. Fun plays a key role in the success of any business. Smile a little more. Talk a little more. Spend more time together discussing what makes you feel good about the job you’re doing. If you’re having fun the work will be that much better” (PUSH website, 2005).

After determining that PUSH advertising agency met all of the case criteria, the company’s participation was requested. A letter was first sent to one of the business partners explaining the purpose of the study, the reasons for selecting PUSH, the amount of time required for participation, and the benefits (See Appendix A). Two weeks later, the researcher made a telephone call to the partner, requesting the business’ participation. Upon verbal agreement of the partner, PUSH agreed to be a part of the research study.

Since the study involved human subjects, approval from the University of Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required. An abstract of the study’s methods, along with a series of consent forms, was submitted to the board. After reviewing the documents, the IRB granted complete approval to the study.
Instruments

Preface

Since this study explores the role of workplace fun aimed at improving creativity, innovation, and job satisfaction, it is important to examine these constructs. The *Job in General Scale*, or *JIG*, was selected to measure PUSH employees’ overall feelings toward their jobs. In addition, *KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity* was selected to evaluate the creative environment at PUSH. The *JIG* and *KEYS* evaluations were not used to examine individuals, but to gather an overall understanding of PUSH.

*Job in General*

The first instrument selected for this study was the *Job in General scale* (Bowling Green State University, 1985). The *JIG* was developed by Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, and Paul to provide an overall evaluation of how employees feel about their jobs. It was designed as an addition to the *Job Descriptive Index* or *JDI* (Bowling Green State University, 1997), the most frequently used measure of job satisfaction (Balzer et al., 2002). While the *JDI* assessed the five main facets of job satisfaction (work on present job, pay, opportunities for promotion, supervision, and people on your present job), it was felt than at overall measure of satisfaction was needed. The JIG was created for this purpose.

In developing the JIG, a list of 42 adjectives and short phrases describing general feelings about the job were assembled. These items were administered to a sample of 1149 civil service workers. The best of these items were selected based on traditional item analysis techniques, factor analysis, and item response theory models. These items then went through further analyses and were eventually narrowed down to the final items (Balzer et al., 2002).
The *Job in General* scale contains a total of 18 items that assess the global, long-term evaluation of the job. Respondents are asked to answer each item by circling Yes, No, or “?” (meaning the respondent cannot decide). About half of the items are worded favorably (e.g., “superior”) and half are worded unfavorably (e.g., “undesirable”). In total, the test takes approximately five minutes to complete.

Based on the Bowling Green data pool of 3566 respondents, *JIG* reliability estimates exceed .90 (Balzer et al., 2002). Construct validity is established through correlations with other scales of global satisfaction, including the Brayfield and Rothe (1951) and the Faces scale (Kunin, 1955). These correlations range from .66 to .80 (Balzer et al., 2002).

**KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity**

The second instrument selected for this study was *KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity* (Center for Creative Leadership, 1995). Teresa Amabile, a leader in the field of creativity research, created the *KEYS* to measure how employees perceive stimulants and obstacles to creativity (Ovid, 2004). The survey was developed through a group of interviews in which participants described work experiences demonstrating high and low creativity. Through a content analysis of the transcribed interviews, a group of creativity-inhibiting and creativity-promoting factors was produced. After undergoing four revisions, these factors were translated into the 78 items of the *KEYS* (Amabile, Burnside, & Gryskiewicz, 1999).

These 78 items are divided as follows: 66 items form the eight work environment scales (6 stimulants and 2 obstacles to creativity) and 12 items form the two outcome scales. The stimulants to creativity are: Organizational Encouragement of Creativity, Supervisory Encouragement of Creativity, Work Group Supports, Freedom, Sufficient
Resources, and Challenging Work. The obstacles to creativity are: Organizational Impediments and Workload Pressure. The two outcome scales are creativity and productivity. At the end of the survey, there are three checklist questions addressing the most important factors for creativity. In addition, the survey collects basic demographic data.

The KEYS takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete and is conducted as a pencil-and-paper survey. Each of the 78 items is bubbled in using a four-point response scale. The possible responses are: never, sometimes, often, and always. By using a four-point scale, a middle point is eliminated, preventing respondents from taking a neutral position.

Using a sample of 12,100 respondents, KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity has internal scale reliability estimates ranging from .66 to .91. The median was .84, with only two scales showing reliabilities less than .80 (Freedom and Workload Pressure). Convergent validity was testing using the Work Environment Scale (WES; Insel and Moos, 1975) and showed a moderate correlation (Amabile, Burnside, & Gryskiewicz, 1999).

Development of Interview Protocol

Prior to data collection, the researcher pilot tested the interview portion of the methodology by conducting two practice interviews. The first was administered to a licensed designer who reflected on his recent experiences working at a large architecture firm in Washington DC. This interview was highly successful as the firm encouraged workplace fun, providing genuine accounts of fun at work. The second interview was conducted with a former manager of a Fortune 500 company and focused on management practices. Both interviews were analyzed for fluidity and appropriate content. Overall,
the interview protocol was effective; however, there were two minor modifications. These included removing a question that was redundant and rewording the question which asked participants to trace the development of a specific project at PUSH.

**Procedures**

For this study, all data was collected on-site by the researcher. Data collection was divided into four parts. First, two standardized questionnaires were distributed to the entire office. The *Job in General Scales* or JIG (Bowling Green State University, 1985) was used to measure overall job satisfaction, while *KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity* (Center for Creative Leadership, 1995) was used to measure perceived stimulants and obstacles to creativity. Second, the researcher observed the office over the course of three days, from May 31\(^{st}\) through June 2\(^{nd}\) 2005, while collecting data. Third, photographs were taken throughout the workplace to document the office design. Fourth, interviews were conducted with four employees, three from the Creative Department and one from Accounts Supervision, to gather their perceptions of fun at work. Figure 3-1 illustrates how the four stages of data collection fit within the model of workplace fun.

**Standardized Tests**

In order to gain cooperation from the PUSH employees, a business partner introduced the researcher during the start-of-the-week staff meeting. The researcher gave a brief explanation on the purpose of the study, as well as the data collection methods to be used. All references to creativity, job satisfaction, and fun were eliminated from the description to prevent any biases based on hypotheses guessing, or when participants alter their answers on the basis of what they believe the study is about.

Questionnaire packages were distributed to all employees present during the staff meeting, which took place at 9:00 AM on a Tuesday morning. These packages included:
two consent forms, the *Job in General Scales*, *KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity*, a number two pencil, and a candy lollipop as an incentive to promote high response rates.

Figure 3-1. Fun in the workplace model, showing methods used to assess each component (adapted from Gifford, 2002)

First, instructions were given to sign both consent forms, returning one and keeping the other for personal records. Next, participants were advised that the questionnaires should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete, and should be filled out using the provided pencil. They were also informed that there were no “right” or “wrong” answers, and that individual results would be kept confidential. Finally, employees were asked to complete the questionnaires by 3:30 PM that business day.

To improve the response rate, an e-mail was sent to the entire office staff reminding them to complete the surveys. The e-mail reiterated the announcement made during the staff meeting for any employees who were not present. It also informed
employees that the finished questionnaires should be turned in at the reception desk by the end of the day.

Additionally, the researcher walked around the office at 3:30 PM, asking each employee if they had submitted their questionnaires. The employees who had not completed the questionnaires were asked to turn them in by the end of the day. During this walk-through, a number of employees revealed not being present during the staff meeting and were given questionnaire packages to complete.

Of the 42 employees at PUSH, 41 received the questionnaire package at some point during the three-day period. The single employee who did not receive one was away on vacation. Of the 41 employees who were given questionnaires, 35 responses were collected, resulting in an 85% response rate.

Observations

The second stage of data collection was observations. First, the researcher received a tour of the workplace from one of PUSH’s founding partners. During this tour, information was provided on each space, including its functional purpose and why the design was chosen. The researcher was also given the opportunity to ask questions and take notes on the office and its design. After this, the researcher walked through the workplace again, independently, taking more detailed notes on the design of each space and how employees functioned within it.

To observe group behavior among employees, the researcher sat in during three PUSH staff meeting. The first was the beginning-of-the-week staff meeting, used to discuss events of the previous week as well as upcoming events. Second, the researcher attended a small meeting between four Public Relations employees, discussing their current agendas. The final meeting was open to the entire office and traced the
development of a recent advertising campaign, from market research all the way to completed print ads.

**Photography**

The third stage of data collection used photography to document the physical work environment. This process consisted of photographing the entire office, systematically documenting each major space. These major spaces included the building exterior, entryway, reception area, conference room, break room, open work areas, and the largest individual offices. In addition to taking photographs of the overall spaces, pictures were also taken of specific design details (i.e. decorative metal pieces on the reception desk).

**Interviews**

The final stage of data collection consisted of interviews. These interviews were semi-structured and lasted approximately one hour each (Appendix B). They were tape-recorded using a lapel microphone to receive clear sound and two recorders to insure at least one successful recording.

Since this study focuses on the relationship between fun and creativity, the majority of employees interviewed were from the Creative Department. To select the specific employees, a member of management was asked to recommend employees from the creative department, as well as from another department, who would have articulate and diverse stories to share of their experiences at the company.

In total, four interviews were conducted. Three interviews were conducted with lower-level employees and one interview was conducted with management. Three of the employees, including the management member, were in the Creative Department, while
one employee was in the Accounts Supervision Department. In addition, three of the participants were male, while one was female.

The interviews were divided into four sections. The first section asked general questions on workplace fun and then about specific occurrences at PUSH. For the second part, participants were shown eight photographs of the PUSH office (previously taken by the researcher) and asked about the workplace design. The third section asked participants to compare PUSH’s office design to others. For the fourth and final section, participants were asked to share stories about fun experiences at PUSH.

The management interview differed slightly from the other three. In the management interview, the photograph section was replaced by a series of questions regarding management structure, corporate culture, employee incentives, and other management-related topics.

**Analysis**

The data collected at PUSH was analyzed in three stages. First, the photographs and observations of the physical environment were compiled into a detailed description of the office design and how workers functioned within the space. Second, the standardized tests were statistically analyzed and compared to national norms. Third, the interviews were dissected and used to create a narrative account of workplace fun.

For the first phase of analysis, the physical environment was examined. Based on photographs and observations, each major workspace was described in detail. These spaces were examined in terms of both design and function. The spaces investigated were the building exterior, entryway, reception area, conference room, break room, open work areas, and management’s individual offices.
The second phase of analysis began with the *Job in General* scales. First, the *JIG* scores were summed for each individual to determine the level and percentage of employees who were satisfied overall with their jobs. Descriptive statistics of the employee scores were calculated and compared with national norms for the *JIG*.

Next, the *KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity* surveys were assessed. Scores were determined for the six environmental stimulants to creativity (Organizational Encouragement of Creativity, Supervisory Encouragement of Creativity, Work Group Supports, Freedom, Sufficient Resources, and Challenging Work), two obstacles to creativity (Organizational Impediments and Workload Pressure), and two outcome scales (creativity and productivity). Descriptive statistics of these scores were then computed and compared to national norms for the *KEYS*.

For the final phase, the interviews were transcribed and then reviewed to identify the major issues and themes, as well as a detailed story reflecting fun in the workplace. The following criteria were used to develop the storyline for this study:

1. Told from multiple perspectives
2. Involved a large segment of the workplace
3. Contained sensory detail
4. Represented the company’s approach to workplace fun
5. Showed how the interior environment supported fun

This story was then used in combination with Labov’s six-point framework to create a narrative account of fun in the workplace. The framework is as follows: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Riessman, 1993). In addition, the researcher examined a number of case studies from the Harvard Business Review, such as “What’s stifling the creativity at Coolburst?” (Wetlaufer, 1997), as examples of successful business narratives. Finally, a number of drafts were written
before the narrative went through emic verification, which involved sending the story back to the central characters for approval. Based on their responses, minor changes were made, insuring that the final narrative accurately reflected their experiences.

Limitations

Although a number of measures were taken to insure high survey response rates, 15% of the employees chose not to complete the standardized tests. No analyses are available to establish the differences between those employees who chose to participate and those who did not. In addition, of the employees who completed the standardized tests, not all provided responses to every single item. As a result, the response rates are lower for items that some employees left blank.

Conclusion

Using an environment-behavior framework, this study combined quantitative methods with narrative inquiry to gather both objective and subjective data. A successful advertising agency was examined through a case study consisting of three stages. First, employees completed standardized tests for creativity, job satisfaction, and demographics to gain an in-depth understanding of the organization. Second, the office facilities were photographed and observed to investigate the role of the physical environment. Third, interviews and group observations were conducted to gain a detailed understanding of fun in the workplace. Finally, data from all three stages was combined to create a narrative account of employees’ experiences working in a fun environment.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The Social Environment at PUSH

Company Profile

The advertising agency PUSH was founded in 1996 by partners Julio Lima, John Ludwig, and Rich Wahl. The company was established on the idea “that we are in business to make things happen for our clients” (PUSH website, 2005). Yet being client-centered was not enough for the partners, who had greater goals for their agency. Therefore, PUSH published the following vision statement- “to become a sought after company that constantly surprises our clients, our peers, our industry and ourselves with creativity, clarity, and fearlessness” (PUSH website, 2005). This statement suggests that the company places a high premium on innovation and is not afraid to take risks in order to succeed.

Nearly ten years since the company’s inception, PUSH has grown from just a few employees to 42 at present. The management has also changed, with partner Chris Robb joining the firm in 2003, in place of partner Julio Lima. Today the company provides a complete range of services including brand strategy, media, design, and public relations.

PUSH has clients ranging from regional to national companies and their client roster includes AAA, the Consumer Credit Counseling Service, and the Orlando Sentinel. In one recent account, PUSH created the “It’s the Frog” campaign for Middleton Lawn & Pest Control, consisting of three 60-second radio spots and six 30-second TV spots (PUSH Website, 2005). The TV ads bring Middleton’s frog icon to life as he comically
exterminates animated bugs using items such as a ray gun, magnifying glass, and poison-filled martini.

Acknowledging their standing, PUSH has received a number of awards for their work in the advertising field. At the 2005 Orlando ADDY Awards honoring excellence in creative advertising, PUSH won 50 awards, more than any other company in Central Florida. They collected 21 Gold ADDY’s and 25 Silver ADDY’s (Orlando Advertising Federation Website, 2005). PUSH also won six national ADDY awards, with only two other agencies in the country receiving more (PUSH Website, 2005).

**Employee Demographics**

To learn about the employees at PUSH, demographics were collected for age, gender, education level, field of study, and company tenure. All of the demographic information was based on data from the *KEYS* and *JIG* surveys, as well as three locally developed measures. The *KEYS* is an 81-item survey assessing stimulants and obstacles to creativity, while the *Job in General* is an 18-item survey measuring overall job satisfaction. The results represent the 35 employees who completed these questionnaires, an 83% response rate.

Of the 35 employees, the ages ranged from 23 to 48, with a mean age of 31.89 and standard deviation of 7.407. When comparing gender, 45.7% (n=16) of employees were male while 54.3% (n=19) were female.

Employees were also classified by education level, with nearly three fourths of the employees (n=26) having received a college degree. Following this, 14.3% of employees (n=5) attended some graduate school or received a graduate degree and 8.6% (n=3) attended some college. Figure 4-1 shows a pie chart reflecting these categories and percentages of responses.
In addition, employees were asked to provide their fields of study. The most common response was Advertising/Public Relations, with 43% of employees (n=15) studying this. This was followed by Art/Design (n=5), Marketing (n=4), and Communications (n=4). Figure 4-2 shows a pie chart reflecting the complete list of responses. Responses that appeared only once were placed into the Other category and included Psychology, History, and Photography.

Using demographic data from the KEYS survey, employees were also categorized by their years of service at PUSH. Since PUSH was formed just nine years ago, the 33
responses were divided into two categories. Twenty-five employees or 75.8% have
worked at PUSH for five years or less, while eight employees or 24.2% have worked at
PUSH for six to nine years.

Creativity

*KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity* allowed PUSH employees to gauge
their perceptions of the work environment compared to normative data from the *KEYS*
database, consisting of 12,525 managers and employees. The scores for each subscale
were computed in two steps. First z-scores were computed by taking PUSH respondents
raw mean scores and subtracting the database means, then dividing this by the database
standard deviation. Next T-scores were calculated by multiplying the z-scores times 10,
then adding 50.

Table 4-1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores for each of the six
stimulants to creativity (organizational encouragement, supervisory encouragement, work
group support, freedom, sufficient resources, and challenging work). It also shows scores
for the two obstacles to creativity (organizational impediments and workload pressure)
and the two outcomes (creativity and productivity).

Table 4-1. Normative *KEYS* data for PUSH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Encouragement</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>81.5755</td>
<td>22.74232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lack of) Org Impediments</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>74.4907</td>
<td>18.07059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lack of) Workload Pressure</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>62.2222</td>
<td>23.61640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Encouragement</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>60.777</td>
<td>27.67939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58.8492</td>
<td>19.66866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Group Support</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56.8067</td>
<td>26.25655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>54.9465</td>
<td>29.96438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Resources</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>52.6588</td>
<td>20.49117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46.5873</td>
<td>29.63012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging Work</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45.7792</td>
<td>28.60995</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n = number of employees who completed all questions for the subscale
For each scale, “a higher score is generally associated with higher creativity” (Amabile et al., 1999, p.183). Therefore, organizational impediments and workload pressure were scored in reverse to reflect a lack of organizational impediments and a lack of workload pressure. A set of percentile ranges allows PUSH scores to be classified according to the KEYS as: Very High (above 60), High (55-60), Mid-range (45-55), Low (40-45), and Very Low (below 40).

Organizational Encouragement, (Lack of) Organizational Impediments, (Lack of) Workload Pressure, and Supervisory Encouragement all scored in the Very High category. Following this, Productivity and Work Group Support fell in the High category, with Creativity falling between the High and Mid-range. Finally, Sufficient Resources, Freedom, and Challenging Work scored in the Mid-range.

When considering PUSH’s success in the creative field of advertising, their score for Creativity was lower than expected. Therefore, the creativity subscale was examined in further detail. First, the scale was broken down by departments, where the creative departments (n=19) scored 65 and the non-creative departments (n=15) scored 42. Next, the creativity subscale score was broken down by item as seen in Table 4-2 and Figure 4-3. The highest scoring item was item number 69, with a mean score of 61. The lowest scoring item was number 76, with a score of 43.

| Table 4-2. Creativity subscale scores by individual item |
|---|---|---|
| n | Mean | Std. Deviation |
| 5. Area is Innovative | 35 | 56.7582 | 29.15958 |
| 47. Area is Creative | 35 | 46.1714 | 40.66671 |
| 52. My own Creativity | 35 | 58.9011 | 30.20656 |
| 55. Great Creativity | 35 | 51.0714 | 34.86382 |
| 69. Group Creativity | 34 | 61.3043 | 32.11082 |
| 76. I am Creative | 35 | 43.8312 | 38.77598 |
In addition to assessing creativity, this study also examined overall job satisfaction at PUSH using the *Job in General* Scale. To assess job satisfaction in absolute terms, the *Job In General* scale was divided into three scoring ranges: unsatisfied (0-22), neutral (23-31), and satisfied (32-54). PUSH employee scores ranged from a minimum of 33 to a maximum of 54. Remarkably, every single employee surveyed fell into the satisfied range, with nine employees receiving scores of 54, the highest possible score for job satisfaction. When analyzing the group as a whole, the mean score was 47.77 with a standard deviation of 7.08.

To assess job satisfaction relative to other businesses, PUSH data was compared to national *JIG* norms, stratified by company tenure, organization type, age, education, and gender. When comparing the PUSH data to the national norms, the median score, rather than the mean, was used to prevent skewed results.
Table 4-3 shows how PUSH median scores compared to the national norms by percentile. For example, PUSH employees under the age of 25 had a median score of 52, falling into the 98th percentile. This indicates that 98% of employees under 25 nationally score the same or lower on the JIG scale than employees at PUSH.

### Table 4-3. Normative JIG data for PUSH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Median Score</th>
<th>Percentile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-5 Years</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>81-83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 Years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Type</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-49</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* n = number of employees in each category

Most PUSH scores showed little variation, with medians ranging from 49 to 54 and percentiles in the eighties and nineties. However, one notable exception is the employees between the ages of 40 to 44. These workers have significantly lower scores, with a median of 37, placing them in the 33rd percentile of national scores.

**Workplace Fun**

Fun in the workplace was examined through interviews with four PUSH employees, consisting of three lower-level workers and one member of management.
Also, three of the participants were males in the Creative Department, while one was a female in the Accounts Supervision Department. These interviews investigated employees’ descriptions of the work environment, definitions of fun, perceived benefits of a fun workplace, and specific fun activities at PUSH.

First, participants were asked what adjectives they would use to describe their workplace, prior to being introduced to the topic of workplace fun in the semi-structured interview. The most common answers all expressed a sense of excitement in the workplace, using adjectives such as vibrant, chaotic, energetic, exciting, passionate, and lively. The other adjectives that appeared more than once were fun, creative, and stressful.

Employees were also asked to define fun in the workplace in their own terms. One employee described fun as “when you can come to work everyday and ‘high five’ your workmates, meaning that you don’t dread coming to work everyday.” Another employee responded, “I think it’s just being able to have a good conversation without feeling like you’re up against time constraints or rigidity of any kind.” When analyzing the responses, three main themes emerged: enjoyment of the job, camaraderie between employees, and freedom from rigidity and time constraints.

In addition, employees were asked what they believed the benefits of a fun work environment were. One employee responded, “Hands down, the benefit of workplace fun is being able to get the most out of employees…People work 70 and 80 hours a week with no hesitation because it’s fun and you don’t hate doing it.” Overall, the employees perceived three main benefits: increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, and lower stress levels.
Finally, specific examples of fun activities at PUSH were examined. Based on the interviews, a list of fun activities was compiled, along with their settings within the work environment (Table 4-4). These items were then organized into the Ford’s ten categories of workplace fun: recognition for personal milestones, social events, public celebrations of professional achievements, opportunities for civic volunteerism, stress release activities, humor, games, friendly competitions, opportunities for personal development, and entertainment (Ford et al., 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tippy-Tap (basketball game created by employees)</td>
<td>Workspaces</td>
<td>Game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scooter races</td>
<td>Hallway</td>
<td>Game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubicle volleyball</td>
<td>Workspaces</td>
<td>Game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf putting</td>
<td>Hallway</td>
<td>Game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual lake party</td>
<td>Off-site</td>
<td>Social event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy hour (almost every Friday at 5:00)</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Social event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Post-ADDY’s party</td>
<td>Off-site</td>
<td>Public celebration of professional achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tequila shots (when big accounts are won)</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Public celebration of professional achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating goofy pictures, videos, etc. for website</td>
<td>Workspaces</td>
<td>Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pranks (e.g. filling an employee’s office with cotton)</td>
<td>Workspaces</td>
<td>Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throwing soft stress balls at one another</td>
<td>Workspaces</td>
<td>Stress release activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthday parties</td>
<td>Break Room</td>
<td>Recognition for personal milestones</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fun activities that seemed to occur most frequently at PUSH were games, followed by social events, public celebrations of professional achievements, and humor. The other categories found were stress release activities, humor, and recognition for personal milestones, while PUSH lacked opportunities for civic volunteerism, friendly competitions, opportunities for personal development, and entertainment. Activities took place in all of the major spaces except for the lobby and conference room.
The Physical Environment at PUSH

When PUSH was first formed in 1996, the business was housed in a decrepit old warehouse. As the company grew, acquiring new accounts and employees, the warehouse space became too small and cramped. PUSH commissioned Orlando based architecture firm The Evans Group to design their new office building.

An empty lot in a mixed-use area of downtown Orlando was selected as the site for the new office building. Using the PUSH’s metal business cards as inspiration, The Evans Group designed an 8,000 square foot structure with a stainless steel façade (See Figure 4-4). The firm stated that their goal was to “design a building that reflected their [PUSH’s] energy and imaginative nature” (The Evans Group website) and in June of 2000, PUSH moved their 22 employees into the new office space.

Figure 4-4. Exterior of building

The PUSH building shell consists of a simple rectangular form, featuring large window apertures on all four sides. The floorplan, also laid out in rectilinear forms, is
divided into two distinct zones for public and private functions (See Figure 4-5). The public zone is located near the revolving door entrance, consisting of the lobby, conference room, restrooms, and kitchen. The remainder of the space makes up the private zone, consisting of offices and workstations.

Figure 4-5. Floorplan. The highlighted area shows the new workstations constructed to accommodate additional employees.

The interior design of the PUSH office is quite innovative, instantly communicating to visitors that this isn’t your typical company. The office is painted in a number of saturated hues, including orange, yellow, green, and blue (Figure 4-6). The building offers floor-to-ceiling windows throughout, as well as a number of skylights to capitalize on day lighting. In addition, the exposed ceilings are painted white, maximizing light reflectance.
Angled elements are a common theme throughout the design of the PUSH office. Explaining the significance of this, partner John Ludwig states, “There is so much creative energy, it’s pushing the walls out.” Beginning with the exterior, the stainless steel façade is composed of slightly angled planes that expand outwards as they gain height. Next, angled bars divide the windowpanes. Angles can also be found in the walls of employee workstations, which slope upwards towards the back plane. Furthermore, fluorescent light fixtures are hung at random angles, instead of in a traditional grid pattern. All of these angled elements combine to create a dynamic atmosphere within the space, used to spark innovation.

![Figure 4-6. Office design](image)

**Entry/Lobby**

When entering the PUSH office, one must pass through a large revolving door. While more costly and difficult to install, this door serves a symbolic purpose. In the original warehouse space all of the doors were pulled open, contradicting the company’s
name. Therefore, the new building was designed with a revolving door, which is always pushed and never pulled (Figure 4-7A).

![Figure 4-7. Lobby space. A) Interior view of the revolving door. B) Lobby seating area, featuring artwork taken from PUSH campaigns.](image)

The walls of the lobby are painted with PUSH’s signature chartreuse green (Figure 4-7B). Partner Rich Wahl explained “we wanted to use the chartreuse because green is the color of moving forward, and of prosperity” (Zelinsky, 2002). This color is used to make a first impression, but is rarely used in the rest of the building, heightening its impact. In contrast to the bright green walls is the cool gray concrete floor. The slightly distressed concrete floor lends an industrial feeling to the hip and youthful space.

The semi-circular reception desk is also made from concrete, with a glass surface placed on top to form a counter. The glass rests on small orange rubber bases, an unexpected shot of color that adds a bit of fun to the desk. In addition, the front of the desk features three round metal details, which appear to be pieces of industrial hardware.
Behind the reception desk, the name PUSH is designed to be projected onto the wall with light. However, at the time observations were conducted for this study, the light was broken, leaving an oddly blank wall behind the desk (Figure 4-8).

Figure 4-8. Reception desk

The design of the lobby demonstrates near-symmetry. Upon entering, a front view of the reception desk is centered between two doors. The wall to the left of the reception desk displays a grid of squares, each square featuring artwork from a different PUSH campaign (Figures 4-7A and 4-8). The wall to the right of the reception desk features a display case showcasing the company’s numerous awards (Figure 4-9A). Along the perimeter of both right and left walls is comfortable leather seating for visitors, with two armchairs on the left and a sofa on the right.

The lobby space is expansive in scale due to its openness and nearly 15-foot high ceiling height. The exposed metal ceiling is painted white, further emphasizing the sense
of loftiness. In addition, the ceiling features a large pyramid-shaped skylight, allowing natural light to flood the space (Figure 4-9B).

![Figure 4-9. Additional lobby features. A) Display of awards. B) Skylight in the center of the lobby.](image)

**Conference Room**

When entering the conference room, the deep blueberry color of the walls offers instant character to the space, and this hue reflects the history of the original office space (Figure 4-10A). Years earlier when pitching to a client, PUSH painted their conference walls the same shade as their client’s signature blue color. PUSH succeeded in winning the account and retained the blue conference room as a good luck measure.

The conference table is made up of two glass sheets, supported by thin metal bases. Each leg of the bases features a small orange spring at the bottom, adding a fun detail that reinforces their ability to surprise their clients (Figure 4-10B). Around the table, which can seat approximately 15 individuals, are black ergonomic conference chairs. In
addition, low black storage cabinets run along two walls of the space, serving as additional seating space during large meetings.

The ceiling of the conference room is exposed; however, black fabric panels stretch across the ceiling to improve acoustical quality. Also hung from the ceiling are three large pendant lights, each featuring five adjustable arms with exposed bulbs on the ends, giving the impression an undersea creature with wild tentacles. Natural lighting comes from the floor-to-ceiling windows that run along one side of the conference room. These windows contain black roll-down shades to darken the room when necessary.

Workspaces

In their original warehouse building, PUSH found that having too many walls hindered communication between employees. As a result, the new office building has fewer full-height walls. The majority of workers are placed in cubicle-sized enclosures with sloping partitions. These partitions are approximately four-feet at the lowest point,
allowing others to easily see in (Figure 4-11). In fact, the low walls often act as ledges, supporting employees as they lean over to have impromptu conversations.

![Figure 4-11. Open workspaces](image)

A few private offices can be found around the perimeter of the building, with two of the corner offices occupied by company partners (Figure 4-12). Some of these private offices have doors, while the others simply have openings. One would never notice the difference, however, since the office doors were always left open during the three-day on-site observations for this study. This was even true for the partners, who appeared easily approachable.

The workspaces are painted in vivid yellow, orange, green, and blue hues. While the bright colors are credited with adding an element of fun to the space, some employees objected to the saturation level. In particular, the yellow found in many of the offices and workspaces seems to be distracting to some employees. One member of the creative team stated “I think its anxiety inducing…it drives me nuts.”
PUSH employees have the ability to arrange their workspaces according to their personal preferences. Some workers place their desks facing a wall, while others place their desks facing forward. They also have the opportunity to bring in furniture and other items to personalize the space. For instance, one employee placed an old school desk in his workspace, using it mostly as a surface to pile papers on. Other items such as photographs, framed posters, and inspirational print ads can be found throughout the office (Figures 4-11 and 4-12).

The workspace area also features a number of places for ideas and projects to be displayed. In particular, the wall between founding partner John Ludwig’s office and new partner Chris Robb’s office is used to display current campaign ideas (Figure 4-13). This allows employees from all departments to follow the creative process and discuss their opinions with the creative team. At the time observations were conducted, this surface displayed a number of concepts for the Orlando Sentinel campaign.
When the PUSH office was completed in 2000, there were only 22 employees on staff. With plenty of extra room, the area in the center of the workspace was used as an open conference area, containing tables, chairs, and even a basketball net (Figure 4-14). However, as the company grew to over 30 employees, more individual office space was needed and the open conference area was replaced by six additional workstations (Figure 4-14).

While the newly constructed workstations provided much needed space for additional employees, there were also negative effects. First, with the conference space removed, the lack of meeting areas became a problem. This was somewhat alleviated when PUSH purchased a small house across the street to use as additional meeting and storage space. The second consequence was that there was less space for employees to have fun. For example, the basketball hoop was moved to the kitchen where it is no longer in use.
The additional workspaces only alleviated the space problems temporarily. At the time of observations, PUSH had grown even larger. The building was cramped once again, with employees sharing offices and being placed anywhere available. For instance, one employee was located in the small space next to the copy machine. As a result, PUSH was on the verge of relocating to a new building. During observations, this new space was under construction at a large office building in downtown Orlando.

**Kitchen**

Compared to the other spaces at PUSH, the kitchen is quite functional but lacks the same level of innovation in its design. The space features white walls, as well as white kitchen cabinets and countertops (Figure 4-15). Yet one element of fun appears in the bold black and white floor tile pattern. In addition, a large collection of tequila bottles form a line stretching across the kitchen cabinet tops (Figure 4-16).
The kitchen table can seat approximately ten employees at a time. Generally, employees gather in the space to prepare and eat lunch. However, the room also affords fun activities, such as when PUSH workers meet on Friday afternoons to drink beer and catch up with one another.

The kitchen also serves as a makeshift storage area. Extra boxes, not yet moved to the house across the street, are piled up in front of the full-length windows, blocking the
view. Next to the boxes, a metal rack holds clothing from the dry-cleaners. Also stowed in the kitchen is the basketball hoop previously located in the open conference area.
Orientation to Narrative

The following narrative, entitled “Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play,” is based on four employees’ accounts of their experiences working at PUSH, an Orlando advertising agency. The story follows two members of the Creative Department, Gary and Matthew, as they prepare for and pitch to a large prospective client. The story illustrates how PUSH brings fun into the workplace, as well as how this influences the creative process.

Gary is a Senior Copywriter at PUSH, responsible for concepting ideas, writing copy for ad campaigns, and assisting junior copywriters. As an experienced copywriter in his early thirties, Gary has worked at PUSH for approximately three years. On the other hand, Matthew is in his late forties and a Partner with the company after joining a few years earlier. Matthew is also the Creative Director, responsible for overseeing the quality and strategic direction of creative work at PUSH.

Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play

Gary glanced down at his watch. It was 11:43 PM and he was still at work. Rubbing his sore neck, he couldn’t recall the last time he had stopped to take a break. It was no surprise that Gary’s body was aching. He was standing on a ladder in the middle of the conference room taping newspapers to the wall. Not alone in this endeavor, about eight of Gary’s coworkers at PUSH surrounded him, forming an assembly line to tape and hang the papers.

The goal of this seemingly odd project was to prepare the office for a meeting with a prospective client at 9:00 AM the following morning. Not just any client, this was the largest newspaper in the Orlando area, The Orlando Sentinel. This would be a major account to land. For that reason, PUSH decided to go all out by wallpapering the entire conference room with copies of the newspaper.
Section by section, the bright blue conference room walls were rapidly disappearing as they transformed into a giant collage of newspapers. As Gary reached down for Sarah to hand him the next sheet, he realized that she was not paying attention, too busy snacking on a slice of pizza. “Sarah!” he said, “I need another page to put up! And get me a beer while you’re at it.” She laughed and retrieved both items for Gary.

There was an electric feeling in the office that night. Employees from all departments were pitching in to prepare the office for the next morning. Outside in the parking lot, workers were cutting particleboard and then fastening it to the reception desk, transforming it into a newspaper stand complete with papers, magazines, and candies. Back inside, other employees were scurrying around placing doormats at the entrances to all 36 workspaces, each with a copy of the Sentinel deposited on top.

Gary felt exhausted, yet excited to be part of such a large and exciting project.

* * *

How did PUSH come up with all of these crazy ideas? Gary began thinking back. Well, this certainly wasn’t the first time they had transformed the conference room to impress a client. There was the time they were pitching to a lawn company and covered the entire conference room floor in fresh sod. That was backbreaking work, carrying those huge pallets up the stairs of the old building. And man did it smell. But at the end of the day, PUSH sold the client on their company and landed a major account.

With the Orlando Sentinel pitch, it began one afternoon while Gary was sitting at his bright yellow workstation checking his e-mail. Partner and Creative Director Matthew walked up the aisle of the creative department, stopping in the center near Gary’s desk.

“Hey everyone, why don’t you all gather around for a few minutes?” The low walls allowed the whole creative group to hear the announcement, and they quickly assembled together. Gary stood up and leaned against his workstation half-wall, curious to see what the impromptu meeting was about.

“The Orlando Sentinel pitch is coming up soon. We need to come up with something big to catch their attention” Matthew announced. “This is a huge project so it’s critical that we win this account,” Matthew added in a serious tone. Gary could hear the stress in Matthew’s voice.

Just then, a small bright red object sailed over one of the cubicle walls, hitting Matthew squarely on the head. It was a spongy stress ball, one of many that the PUSH employees had gotten from a recent trade show. The entire group burst out laughing, along with Dan, the employee who had thrown it.

Matthew hurled the ball back at Dan, causing a stress ball war to quickly ensue. The whole creative group got involved, throwing balls and ducking behind workstations to avoid getting hit. After about five minutes, the group sensed that the surrounding employees, who were trying to concentrate on their work, were starting to get annoyed.

The group stopped goofing around and reconvened together.

A bit more relaxed, Matthew continued “So, as I was saying, we need to come up with something really impressive to grab their attention as soon as they walk in the door. Do you have any ideas?”
The group tossed ideas around for about ten minutes before hitting on one they really liked.

Thinking back to the time they covered the conference room floor with sod, Gary said, “What if we cover the whole conference room with newspapers? It could be all over the walls and the floor!”

“Its an interesting idea, but walking all over their product might not send the best message” someone rebutted. Gary agreed.

“But . . .” Matthew added, “What about if we just cover the conference room walls with newspaper?” Growing more excited, he said, “It would look like custom Orlando Sentinel wallpaper.”

“Yeah!” several in the group responded. Everyone agreed it was a great idea, so they decided to go for it.

Building from that concept, the other ideas came quickly. Dan said, “What if we build a newspaper stand in the lobby? Or better yet, turn the reception desk into a newsstand!”

“Yeah!”

Then someone else said “We should put welcome mats in front of each workstation so it looks like each one is the entrance to a house. And then we should put newspapers on every mat so it looks like the Sentinels were just delivered!” Another great idea.

Within twenty minutes, the whole plan was put together. The group agreed that this was a surefire way to wow the Orlando Sentinel executives.

As the idea spread across the office, excitement mounted as the details were worked out. Every time Gary mentioned the idea to someone, they would say “Wow! I want to be a part of that. Sign me up.” Even those employees completely unrelated to the Sentinel project wanted to pitch in.

Reflecting on all of their ideas now becoming a reality, Gary wished he could be there to see the Orlando Sentinel’s reaction. Unfortunately, he would be out of the office in the morning, helping with a recording session for another ad campaign. But he knew that Matthew and the other partners would make a great pitch. He had a feeling they would blow the Orlando Sentinel executives away.

***

Groggy from the previous late night, Matthew blinked hard, trying to focus on the task ahead. The Orlando Sentinel group was due to arrive any minute now. In his head, Matthew was trying to rehearse his part of the pitch, explaining the superior creative capabilities found at PUSH.

Looking around at the space, Matthew couldn’t believe everything the employees had accomplished the previous night. The reception desk now stood as a convincing newspaper stand, complete with all of the Orlando Sentinel products, as well as a variety of candies. The conference room showed no signs of its original blue wall color. It was now covered in newspapers up to the ceiling. “Its fantastic” thought Matthew who was becoming reenergized.
Just then, two older men and a conservatively dressed younger woman arrived from the Orlando Sentinel. When they walked into the lobby and saw the newsstand, their eyes all widened in surprise. They stood there stunned for a moment, taking it all in. The woman was the first to break the silence. “This is amazing! I can’t believe you did all of this.” The men concurred, nodding in agreement.

Matthew and the other partners introduced themselves and then led the Orlando Sentinel group into the conference room for the pitch. Once again, the prospective clients were clearly impressed. “I really didn’t expect this,” one of the men said. “You really know how to get our attention.”

During the pitch, the PUSH partners carefully laid out all of the reasons why the Orlando Sentinel should give their advertising campaign to PUSH. They explained the agency’s capabilities in brand strategy, advertising, design, and media. Each point was underscored with examples of successful campaigns they had done for other companies. At the end of the presentation, Matthew and the other partners capped off the pitch with a tour of the office. Interestingly, this was a selling technique that PUSH always used. The fun and innovative office design really showed clients what the company was all about - that this wasn’t just a run-of-the-mill ad agency.

The clients were excited to see the doormats in front of each workspace, replete with the latest copy of the Sentinel. After the initial excitement subsided, the prospective clients focused on the design of the office. The bright colors, bold artwork, and the overall dynamic feeling of the space enthrusted the group. They all agreed that their own office space mundane compared to the environment at PUSH. “Can I move in?” the woman joked.

***

After the Orlando Sentinel executives left and the adrenaline subsided, Matthew felt a sense of relief. The pitch had gone well. Moreover, the clients had been impressed by the newspaper-themed lobby and conference room. The PUSH team had really worked hard and come together to show the clients the creativity and performance that defined their company.

Yet in the week ahead, Matthew felt his uncertainty growing with each passing day. The pitch was good, but was it good enough? Would the clients base their decision on PUSH’s creative presentation? Or would they choose to go with a more conventional and established advertising agency? Matthew tried to push his doubts aside. Only time would tell.

***

Exactly two weeks later, PUSH received a large manila envelope from the Orlando Sentinel. Matthew and the other partners gathered around the unopened envelope, anxious to learn what was inside. “This is it!” Matthew though to himself.

The seal was torn off and inside was a copy of the Sentinel newspaper, with a large headline reading “PUSH wins Sentinel Account!”

The news spread quickly across the office, with everyone cheering and congratulating one another on the success. Gary was especially excited, having participated in the pitch preparations. He was one of the first employees to lead the way into the kitchen.
Soon the whole office filled the kitchen, surrounding the central table. As was the tradition, someone grabbed a bottle of tequila and began pouring shots into glasses. Gary helped to pass the drinks around. Within minutes, everyone who wanted to take a shot was holding one, including all three PUSH partners.

“To the Orlando Sentinel!” someone yelled out.

“To the Orlando Sentinel!” the group replied, clinking their shot glasses together in celebration.

Everyone downed their tequila shots in unison, coughing and making pained faces afterwards.

“Cheer up everyone” Matthew said. “Now that we have the account, the real fun begins.”

**Interpretation**

The narrative “Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play” illustrates the creative process at PUSH, following two employees as they prepare for a pitch and successfully win a large client. The two main characters in the story are Gary, a copywriter and Matthew, a partner and creative director. Through these characters’ experiences one can see the role of interior design in promoting workplace fun, particularly aimed at improving creativity and job satisfaction.

The narrative can be divided into five major themes based on the model of fun in the workplace (Figure 5-1). These themes are: (1) fun and worker characteristics, (2) fun and the physical setting, (3) fun and management style, (4) fun and creativity, (5) fun and job satisfaction (6) fun and stress, and (7) fun and client relations.

When examining the relationship between *fun and worker characteristics* in the narrative, the two main characters must first be analyzed. Beginning with age and job level, Gary is in his late twenties and a middle-level employee, while Matthew is in his mid-forties and one of the three partners at PUSH. Yet despite the differences in age and job level, both employees participate in the same fun activities, including a stress ball
fight and a tequila shot. Yet what remains to be seen is if Matthew would pull rank if the fun got out of hand.

When exploring gender, both main characters are male and represent a male perspective, while the female perspective is somewhat overlooked. The reason for this is that the story focuses on the Creative department, which is made up of mostly males. Therefore, it is difficult to compare male and female perspectives of fun in this particular workplace. Nevertheless, some females are included, such as Sarah who assists in the conference room transformation and the female executive representing the Orlando Sentinel.

The narrative also illustrates that not all employees are comfortable with spontaneous acts of fun in the workplace. In the scene where the creative team is having a stress ball fight, they eventually notice that other employees are becoming annoyed by the distraction. While for some the annoyance may be caused by a need to concentrate, it also suggests that some employees may have individual characteristics that make them less supportive of fun in the workplace.

The next concept explored in the narrative is fun and the physical setting. This topic is examined as fun activities take place throughout the PUSH office environment. The conference room is the first setting for fun as employees enthusiastically prepare the space for the Orlando Sentinel pitch. While this is not an area that facilitates fun on a daily basis, it shows how employees can take a space traditionally used for meetings and turn it into a fun setting with pizza and beer.

The conference room also demonstrates how PUSH frequently changes the physical environment to suit its clients, an idea not often utilized in business. The main
example provided is the Orlando Sentinel pitch, transformed with a newspaper-covered conference room and a newsstand reception desk. However, references are also made to an occasion when PUSH covered the conference room floor in sod when pitching to a lawn company. This suggests that PUSH frequently transforms their physical setting to create a fun atmosphere for clients.

Next, the narrative shows how the open workspaces facilitate fun at PUSH, as represented in the brainstorming session. First, the open workstations allow everyone to hear one another, illustrated when Matthew announces an impromptu meeting, which gathers the entire creative team’s attention at once. The open workspace also allows the employees to gather together informally for the brainstorming session. Next, the workstations are depicted as the site of the stress ball fight, with employees ducking and hiding behind the low-height walls. While this is not the intention of the space, it shows how the low walls encourage interaction, whether it is through the exchanging of ideas or, in this case, the playful throwing of balls.

On the other hand, the open workstations had several disadvantages. These spaces provide little privacy and can cause employees to become distracted by surrounding noise and activity. The narrative illustrates this difficulty during the stress ball fight when certain employees become irritated by the distraction. As a result, the creative team halted their game in consideration of the other employees.

The final physical setting that supports fun in the narrative is the kitchen. With its large size, this environment allows the whole office to gather together in celebration after the pitch is won. Also, designed as a space for activities involving food, the kitchen provides an ideal setting for the group as they take a victorious shot of tequila.
Next, the relationship between *fun and management style* is seen through the character of Matthew. As a partner with the company, one might expect Matthew to generally remain in his office dealing with important management issues. However, Matthew does not hesitate to participate in fun activities with the rest of the employees. In the narrative, he can be seen instigating the stress ball fight, as well as participating in the tequila shot. This shows that the management style at PUSH is casual and supportive of fun in the workplace. However, the partners also have corner offices, which shows that they retain a certain level of hierarchy.

The next theme explored by the narrative is the relationship between *fun and creativity*. This concept is mainly depicted in the brainstorming session used to generate ideas for the Orlando Sentinel pitch. At the beginning of the session, someone throws a stress ball at Matthew, starting a fight that lasts about five minutes. This serves as an icebreaker for the group, helping them to get into a fun and creative state of mind. The technique appears successful, because after the game, the employees come up with a number of creative ideas for the pitch.

The narrative also explores the relationship between *fun and employee satisfaction*. While these ideas are not directly stated, the employees at PUSH appear to be generally upbeat and enthusiastic about their jobs, as supported by the *JIG* data. The employees’ eagerness to pitch in with preparations for the pitch shows that they are excited about the project and anticipate that it will be an enjoyable experience. Furthermore, the employees’ willingness to stay late at work shows their dedication to the company and its success.
The narrative also explores some additional outcomes of fun in the workplace, not represented in the model. First, the story illustrates how fun can be used as a means of reducing stress. In the scene where Matthew is explaining the importance of winning the Orlando Sentinel account, his level of stress becomes evident. As a result, one of the employees hits him with a soft stress ball, inciting a stress ball fight. This helps him to put things in perspective, and at the end of the game, Matthew finds himself calmer and more relaxed about the issue. Playful activities such as this can allow employees to temporarily take their minds away from stressful situations and allow them to return with a cleared head.

In the narrative, another outcome of the fun atmosphere at PUSH was that the clients became involved in the fun too. With the amusing transformation of the reception desk into a newsstand and the conference room wallpapered in newspapers, the Orlando Sentinel executives sensed the fun attitude that embodied PUSH. As a result, the Sentinel was inspired to continue with the imaginative and fun experience at its own workplace. Instead of calling or sending a letter to PUSH letting them know they won the account, the Sentinel creatively made the announcement on the headline of a newspaper. This demonstrates how a fun workplace can inspire others to become more fun and innovative.

**Conclusion**

The narrative entitled “Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play” captures a true experience of how PUSH uses the creative process to develop and implement strategic ideas. The story vividly illustrates how the workplace is transformed to secure a large client account, as well as demonstrates the results of this transformation. Furthermore, it shows how fun in the workplace affects PUSH employees, as well as the prospective clients.
Given the complexity of this narrative, the central themes were categorized according to the model of fun in the workplace. The primary surfacing themes were: fun and worker characteristics, fun and the physical setting, fun and management style, fun and creativity, fun and job satisfaction, fun and stress, and fun and client relations. By allowing these multi-faceted themes to blend together in one story, the narrative provided a comprehensive picture of fun in the workplace at PUSH.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

This study addressed how interior design related to fun in the workplace and what experience this created for employees. It also examined the relationship between a fun workplace and employee perceptions of creativity and job satisfaction. Finally, it investigated the link between individual characteristics and management style on having fun at work.

This study was based on the model of workplace fun in Figure 3-1. In order to understand each of the six factors, a number of data collection methods were combined. These included qualitative methods including interviews, observations, photographs, and floorplans as well as quantitative methods including surveys assessing creativity and job satisfaction.

The results of this study provide evidence that the factors of the model are linked together. Worker characteristics, management style, and the physical setting can all be related to fun in the workplace at PUSH. The outcomes of high creativity and job satisfaction can be found at the company as well. Overall, the findings of this study support a multi-dimensional model for fun in the workplace.

The narrative “Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play” is the final piece that ties all of the model’s factors together as a real-life example showing how worker characteristics, management style, and the physical work setting come together to make PUSH a fun workplace and relate it to creativity and job satisfaction. Worker characteristics are examined by age, gender, and job level, while management style
explores the roles of the company’s partners. Finally the narrative shows how the physical work setting affords fun in terms of both design and functionality.

The Social Environment at PUSH

Company Profile

Founded in 1996, PUSH is a relatively new advertising agency. With nine years in the industry, the company has established a name for itself; however, it is not yet steeped in traditions. Having grown steadily since its inception, PUSH has grown from XX to 42 employees. This is large enough for the company to provide a wide range of services, yet small enough for everyone to know one another.

This combination of a new business, along with a relatively small staff, may explain the competitive advantage PUSH has over older, more established companies. This is evident in the company’s vision statement, which encourages creativity, clarity, and fearlessness. It can also be seen in PUSH’s ad campaigns, which have a young and imaginative tenor. For example, in the Middleton Lawn & Pest Control campaign, PUSH created a series of digitally animated TV spots featuring Middleton’s frog icon. In one ad, the talking frog destroys an obnoxious cockroach using a ray gun.

The numerous ADDY awards won by PUSH suggest that the company is highly respected in their industry. These awards also suggest that PUSH’s risk-taking and fun-promoting ideals have been successful. It would be interesting to investigate if the company retains these ideals as it matures over time.

Employee Demographics

With a range from 23 to 48, the mean age of PUSH employees surveyed was 31.89 years old, reinforcing the relatively young workforce. In part, this can be explained as a standard of the advertising business. As stated by one of the PUSH partners, companies
often prefer to hire young employees because they have fresh ideas and are more in touch with young consumers. In fact, as creative advertising employees get older, they are often expected to switch to other areas of the field. Nevertheless, the low age of PUSH employees may contribute to the company’s fun and innovative work culture. However, this is not the only factor, as managers must also retain a youthful attitude as they create the policies that shape the work culture.

In terms of gender, 45.7% of the participating employees were male and 54.3% were female. This is a closely balanced ratio of men to women, with a slightly higher number of women. As a result, the general findings of this study are unaffected by gender and apply equally to both men and women. However, it is important to note that PUSH does not have any female partners, meaning that gender may affect the management style.

When examining education level, nearly three-fourths (74.3%) of PUSH employees were college graduates. In addition to this, 14.3% of employees attended some graduate school or received a graduate degree. Therefore, in total, 88.6% of PUSH employees received some college degree. In addition, no employees were hired with simply a high school diploma. This suggests that, as a whole, PUSH employees were well educated.

The greatest percentage of employees completing the survey for this research (42.9%, n=15) listed Advertising/Public Relations as their field of study. This is not surprising since PUSH is an advertising agency. The remaining respondents (57.1%, n=20) were evenly distributed between Art/Design, Marketing, Communications, Business, and Other. Since most of these fields are closely related to advertising, this
suggests that most PUSH employees attended school with plans to enter the advertising business.

Finally, company tenure was examined at PUSH. Approximately one-third of the workers had 6-9 years tenure, while three-fourths of the workers had five years or less. This is indicative of the company’s growth since its inception in 1996. It shows that a quarter of PUSH employees remained with the company since its first few years in business, while the majority was hired later as the company grew.

Based on the demographic data, a general picture can be painted of the employees working at PUSH. In sum, the employees are young, balanced between males and females, and have worked at PUSH for five years or less. They also have a college degree and went to school with intentions of entering the advertising business.

Creativity

PUSH places a high premium on creativity; yet there are many different types of creativity within organizations. According to the Wise (2003) model of organizational creativity, businesses can fall into four different categories: Technical Artists, Artists, Inventors, and Distributors and Adaptors. Based on observations, PUSH falls into the Artists category, which combines high aesthetic creativity with low technological creativity. This is because PUSH uses high levels of aesthetic creativity when creating ad campaigns, and although they use computer technology to aid this process, they are not responsible for inventing the technology.

To learn about employee perceptions of creativity at PUSH, KEYS: Assessing the Climate for Creativity, developed by Teresa M. Amabile, was utilized. First, this was used to test the assumption that PUSH is a creative organization. Second, the survey determined the stimulants and obstacles to creativity, as well as the outcomes. Finally,
the survey allowed the company to be compared to others, determining where it falls compared to national norms.

PUSH employee scores were compared to the KEYS norms for each of the survey’s ten subscales. After reversing the two obstacles to creativity scores (so that a higher score represented a lack of obstacles) the scales were categorized as follows: three scales fell into the Very High range, two scales fell in the High range, four scales fell in the Middle range, and one score fell in-between the High and Middle ranges. None of the overall PUSH scores fell into the Low or Very Low ranges. Each of the six stimulants to creativity, two obstacles to creativity, and two outcome scales is addressed in further detail below.

When examining the KEYS results, the highest scoring subscale at PUSH was Organizational Encouragement of Creativity. This was defined as “an organizational culture that encourages creativity through fair, constructive judgment of ideas, reward recognition for creative work, mechanisms for developing new ideas, an active flow of ideas, and a shared vision of what the organization is trying to do” (Amabile et al., 1999, p. 15). PUSH scored in the 82nd percentile for this scale, falling into the Very High category. Therefore, the organizational encouragement of creativity appears to be one of PUSH’s greatest strengths.

The KEYS subscale with the second highest score was the lack of Organizational Impediments. This was defined as “An organizational culture that impedes creativity through internal political problems, harsh criticism of new ideas, destructive internal competition, an avoidance of risk, and on overemphasis on the status quo” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 15). PUSH received a mean score of 75, which also fell into the Very High
category. PUSH’s encouragement of risk-taking may be a large reason for such a high score on this scale.

Also scoring highly was the lack of Workload Pressure, described as “Extreme time pressures, unrealistic expectations for productivity, and distractions from creative work” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 15). PUSH scored a mean of 62, placing them in the Very High range. This suggests that PUSH places less workload pressure on employees than the majority of companies. The time taken out of the workday to facilitate fun activities may contribute to this.

The next subscale was Supervisory Encouragement of Creativity, defined as “A supervisor who serves as a good work model, sets goals appropriately, supports the work group, values individual contributions, and shows confidence in the work group” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 15). For this scale, PUSH scored in the 61st percentile, just falling into the Very High range. This suggests that PUSH supervisors are better than most at encouraging creativity in their employees.

The next subscale was Productivity; defined as “An efficient, effective, and productive organization or unit” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 16). PUSH scored in the 59th percentile for this scale, falling at the upper end of the High range. This shows that PUSH employees rate their productivity as being higher than average. However, since this is a self-reported measure, it would be informative to learn if an objective measure of productivity reinforced these results.

Work Group Supports was the next highest subscale assessed by the KEYS survey. Amabile defined this as “A diversely skilled workgroup in which people communicate well, are open to new ideas, constructively challenge each other’s work, trust and help
each other, and feel committed to the work they are doing” (1999, p. 15). Compared to KEYS norms, PUSH scored in the 57th percentile, falling into the High range. Therefore, it can be ascertained that PUSH employees are successful in supporting one another.

The outcome scale of Creativity followed Work Group Supports. Creativity was defined as “A creative organization or unit, where a great deal of creativity is called for and where people believe that they actually produce creative work” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 16). PUSH received a score of 54.94, which was rounded up to the 55th percentile. According to the KEYS manual a score of 45-55 is Mid-range, while 55-60 is considered High. Due to this discrepancy, the PUSH score for Creativity falls into both the Middle and High categories.

The finding that creativity was in the Middle-to-High range was unexpected. Since advertising agencies are known for high levels of creativity and PUSH has won many awards in the field, it was predicted that the business would have a Very High score. Using two means of further analysis, this unexpected finding was clarified.

First, the scores were compared by departments, with the creative departments (n=19) scoring in the 65th percentile and the non-creative departments (n=15) scoring in the 42nd percentile. This showed that the employees responsible for PUSH’s creative campaigns had a Creativity score in the Very High category, as expected. However, employees with jobs in other departments had a Creativity score in the Low category. These findings suggest that employees in the non-creative departments perceive fewer opportunities for creativity.

Next, the Creativity subscale was broken down by individual items. The highest scoring item was for group creativity, with a mean score of 61 (n=34). On the other
hand, the lowest scoring item was for respondents’ individual creativity, with a mean score of 44 (n=35). This suggests that PUSH employees feel the group is very creative as whole, but do not consider themselves as creative individuals.

Another subscale that was scored lower than most at PUSH was Sufficient Resources. This construct was defined as “Access to appropriate resources, including funds, materials, facilities, and information” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 15). PUSH scored in the 53rd percentile, falling into the Middle range. This suggests that PUSH provides average resources for its employees.

The next subscale examined was Freedom, described as “Freedom in deciding what work to do or how to do it; a sense of control over one’s work” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 15). PUSH scored in the 47th percentile, a Mid-range score. While close to the database average, Freedom was one of PUSH’s lowest scores. This suggests that there is room for improvement in the amount of freedom that PUSH gives to employees.

Finally came Challenging Work, defined as “A sense of having to work hard on challenging tasks and important projects” (Amabile et al, 1999, p. 15). For this subscale, PUSH was placed in the 48th percentile. Although this was a Mid-range score, Challenging Work was the lowest scoring scale for PUSH. This may be related to the lack of workload pressure at PUSH. Nevertheless, this is the creativity stimulant in greatest in need of improvement for the company.

**Job Satisfaction**

To investigate overall job satisfaction at PUSH, the *Job in General* scale was used. In addition to assessing employee satisfaction in absolute terms (e.g. satisfied vs. not satisfied), this survey allowed the company to be compared to national averages from
other companies. Furthermore, it allowed the study to examine if fun in the workplace would be associated with higher job satisfaction levels at PUSH.

Using the JIG scale to assess job satisfaction at PUSH, significant results were found. All 35 respondents received scores falling into the satisfied range, with nine respondents receiving the highest possible score for satisfaction. When comparing the PUSH data to national norms by category, PUSH employees scored in the 80th and 90th percentile for nearly all of the categories. For example, as a for-profit organization, PUSH scored in the 85th percentile compared to other companies. These findings indicate that fun in the workplace is in fact linked to high job satisfaction at PUSH. The other JIG norm categories are examined in further detail below.

First, what impact did company tenure have on job satisfaction? Employees with less than five years at PUSH scored in the 81st to 83rd percentile, while employees with six to nine years at PUSH scored in the 90th percentile. This may be explained by the company’s recent formation as those employees who have been with the company since its inception may take pride in helping to bring about its success. The explanation may also be that employees who have been with the company longer generally have higher-ranking positions and larger salaries. Finally, the scores may reflect that less satisfied employees leave the company, while those who are more satisfied remain.

When comparing PUSH satisfaction levels by age, employees were divided into six different categories: less than 25, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, and 45-49. The two age groups with the highest scores compared JIG norms were those less than 25 (in the 98th percentile) and those 35-39 (in the 99th percentile). The lowest scoring employees were
those 40-44, with a score in the 33rd percentile. This score was drastically lower than the rest at PUSH, without any clear explanation.

One possibility is that the employees from 40 to 44 are older than the majority at PUSH, yet have not moved up to the managerial level, causing them some dissatisfaction. Another explanation may be that this age group has a difficult time balancing high demands at both home and work, leading to lower job satisfaction. Finally, it is possible that these scores are simply skewed as a result of the small sample size (n=5).

When examining education levels at PUSH, the mean scores for all three levels (some college, college degree, and graduate degree) fell between 50 and 51. Compared to JIG norms, the most satisfied employees were those with a college degree, in the 85th percentile. Next, those with some college fell into the 83rd percentile, while those with a graduate degree were in the 76th percentile.

Finally, the impact of gender on employee satisfaction was examined. Males had a mean score of 51, which placed them in the 87th percentile. Meanwhile, females had a mean score of 50, which placed them in the 82nd percentile. The mean scores themselves showed little variation between males and females. However, according to the norms, females generally had a slightly higher satisfaction level than males, whereas the opposite was true at PUSH. This may be related to the male dominated management style or it may be the result of a small sample size. Yet it a question that can be addressed in future research investigations- do males and females perceive workplace fun differently from one another?

The PUSH job satisfaction levels are not consistent with the 2005 Conference Board findings, which state that only half of all U.S. workers are satisfied with their jobs
(U.S. job satisfaction, 2005). Since 100% of PUSH employees surveyed were satisfied, this suggests that PUSH employees are unusually happy with their jobs. The PUSH data offers some confirmation of the Conference Board report, which states the least satisfied workers are between ages 35 to 44. PUSH employees between 35 and 39 had the highest job satisfaction, while those between 40 and 44 were the least satisfied.

Overall, the job satisfaction level at PUSH was exceptionally high, as predicted. With numerous factors that can contribute to job satisfaction, there is no way of knowing specifically what caused the high satisfaction levels. However, there appears to be a connection between fun in the workplace and high job satisfaction levels at PUSH. More research is needed to learn if fun in the workplace is correlated to high job satisfaction at other companies.

**Workplace Fun**

Employee perceptions of fun in the workplace were explored through interviews with four PUSH employees. First, employees were asked what adjectives they would use to describe their workplace to test the assumption that PUSH is a fun office environment. All four employees described PUSH with words related to excitement, terms that most people do not associate with work, showing that PUSH is not a typical business. In addition, two of the employees described the workplace using the specific adjective “fun”, confirming the study’s basic assumption. Further, two of the four employees interviewed described PUSH using the term “creative,” while the same number described the workplace as “stressful.” This shows that despite the exciting, fun, and creative atmosphere, there is a sense of pressure for employees to complete their work.

The employees interviewed were also asked to define fun in the workplace, with the most common themes relating to: enjoyment of the job, camaraderie between
employees, and freedom from rigidity and time constraints. The common theme of enjoyment shows that PUSH employees directly relate fun to job satisfaction and this supports a primary premise of the study. Furthermore, employees associate fun with camaraderie or social interaction, a factor that may be related to office design through features such as open/flexible workstations, informal meeting areas, and spaces designated for fun activities. Finally, they associate fun with freedom to participate in non-work related activities, a factor related to management style.

Additionally, employees were asked what they perceived to be the benefits of a fun workplace, with responses of: increased productivity, higher job satisfaction, and lower stress levels. Employee perceptions of productivity were examined in the KEYS survey, with PUSH scoring at the top of the Mid-range in relation to the KEYS database. This suggests that there may be some relationship between fun and high productivity at PUSH. Job satisfaction was also measured empirically at PUSH, with employees receiving exceptionally high scores. This shows a strong relationship between fun and high satisfaction at PUSH. Finally, the reduction of stress was not objectively examined; however, this concept was addressed in the narrative, guided by employees’ descriptions of their experiences.

Additionally, based on a review of interview transcripts, a list was compiled of fun activities that have taken place at PUSH. Nine fun activities were described and then sorted into Ford’s ten categories of fun activities (2003). Six of Ford’s categories were found at PUSH, with games appearing the most, followed by social events, public celebrations of professional achievements, and humor. According to Ford’s study, the three most frequently practiced categories were (in order) personal milestones, social
events, and public celebrations of professional achievements. This shows that PUSH incorporates more game-based activities into the workplace than other companies. The four activities not found at PUSH were: opportunities for civic volunteerism, friendly competitions, opportunities for personal development, and entertainment.

It is also important to note that employees themselves created many of the fun activities at PUSH, not management. The stress ball throwing, Tippy-Tap game, and scooter races were all spontaneously created, without any organization or instruction from management. This demonstrates how in the right environment employees can take it upon themselves to create a fun workplace.

**The Physical Environment at PUSH**

According to a literature review by Johannessen, Olsen, & Lumpkin (2001), the most widely used definitions of innovation focused on the concepts of novelty and newness. Based on this understanding, the physical environment of PUSH can be described as innovative in many respects. From the exterior of the building to the smallest interior details, PUSH’s office design projects a sense that the company is unique and special.

The building exterior, clad in gleaming stainless steel, is the first signal to visitors that this is not an ordinary office. While one might expect to see a large high-rise constructed in steel, to see this in a small one-story building is unexpected. Due to this uniqueness, clients visiting PUSH for the first time can easily spot the building. In addition, the building draws a great deal of attention from passersby, who frequently stop inside to ask what the place is.
Entry/Lobby

When entering the building, the revolving door is the next innovative design feature found at PUSH. While many buildings have revolving doors in Northern regions of the United States (used to keep cold drafts out), it is extremely rare to find one in sunny Florida. However, this feature is not simply added for the sake of novelty. What makes the revolving door so successful is the meaning behind it- the door is always pushed and never pulled. This type of symbolic design can be found in many areas of the PUSH office environment.

After being compressed through the tight revolving door, visitors are released into the expansive volume of the lobby. The lobby space is generally successful in providing visitors with an accurate first impression of the company. Painted in PUSH’s signature chartreuse green, the lobby surprises visitors with its vivid hue, while introducing them to the PUSH brand. Next, the modern materials (e.g. the concrete floors, exposed metal ceiling, and sleek leather furniture) exemplify PUSH as a young and contemporary ad agency. Finally, the artwork taken from the company’s print campaigns shows their products, while the shelves of awards illustrate the company’s success.

The one element lacking from the lobby is the PUSH logo, which was intended to be projected onto the back wall with light. However, with the light temporarily broken, the focal point remains empty and the company name cannot be found. This illustrates how designs relying on hi-tech devices can be impaired by technological failure.

Conference Room

The conference room is also brightly painted, using a vivid blueberry hue. Originally painted for a client pitch that PUSH won, the company retained the color for good luck. As a result, this color symbolizes the firm’s history, as well as its success. It
is also a reminder of PUSH’s tendency to transform the conference room, personalizing it for each large prospective client.

The conference space also contains a few innovative design features. The most prominent are the pendent lights hanging above the conference table. These fixtures, containing adjustable arms that resemble tentacles, are unusual and offbeat. They send a message that the company is fresh and forward-thinking. The other innovative features are the small orange springs located at the base of the conference table legs. While these springs are not terribly obvious, they subletly represent the company’s fun attitude.

In terms of functionality, the conference room design appears to be successful. While the table only seats twenty, the low storage cabinets provide extra seating for meetings where the entire PUSH staff is present (for example, Monday morning gatherings). However, some employees are still forced to stand. This problem could be alleviated if the storage cabinets were also added along the rear wall. It is also important to note that the PUSH employees’ willingness to hop onto the storage cabinets demonstrates their informal approach to business meetings.

**Workspaces**

The mostly open plan at PUSH appears to be successful in promoting worker communication. First, it allows employees to easily converse with neighboring employees. Second, the plan allows for impromptu conversations as employees pass by one another.

However, there are also a number of enclosed offices. While these spaces are not as likely to encourage impromptu meetings, they still facilitate communication. There are two reasons for this: (1) many of the offices lack doors and (2) employees with doors are willing to leave them open throughout the day. Therefore, PUSH’s successful
communication results from a combination of open design and employees who make themselves accessible.

Moreover, the fact that the company’s partners leave their doors open throughout the day reveals a great deal about their management style. This communicates to employees that they can approach the partners anytime regarding problems both large and small. It also represents the company’s non-traditional management style, in contrast to companies where upper-management is hidden and inaccessible. On the other hand, two of the partners have corner offices, a traditional symbol of hierarchical management. This shows that while the partners are open and approachable, they also maintain a certain level of hierarchy.

The workstations themselves are painted in bright hues such as yellow, orange, green, and blue. While the bright colors found in the lobby and conference room are used successfully, the workstation colors are not, receiving criticism from some employees. In particular, the yellow color makes certain employees anxious. The reason bright colors work in the lobby and conference room is that these spaces are larger and used for shorter periods of time. In contrast, the workspaces are smaller and employees spend most of their day in these spaces doing tasks that require concentration. As a result, for some workers the bright colors may be overwhelming and distracting.

A more successful feature of the PUSH workspace is the opportunity employees have for personalization. While many companies allow workers to post pictures and personal affects, PUSH allows employees to bring in large furniture items, such as the school desk found in one office. This level of flexibility is conducive to creative personalities, allowing employees to imaginatively furnish and decorate their own spaces.
It also provides employees with a sense of freedom, which as stated the KEYS survey, is a stimulant to creativity.

Another successful feature found in the workspace zone is the wall devoted to posting current campaign ideas. Since the company has grown larger in recent years, employees aren’t always aware of what other teams are working on. The wall allows employees to see different projects and provides an opportunity for discussion. From a design perspective, the somewhat haphazardly posted images lend a casual feeling to the space. They show that PUSH isn’t a pristine place; it is a creative company with works constantly in progress.

It is also important to discuss the changes made to the workspaces over the years as PUSH grew. With numerous employees joining the company, PUSH had to build additional workstations to accommodate this growth. While this solved the issue of where to place employees, it resulted in less space for fun activities. For instance, employees used to frequently play a basketball game called Tippy-Tap. However, this ended after the new workstations were built and the basketball net was relocated to the kitchen.

Furthermore, the PUSH office has become even more crowded in recent times, resulting in a greater decline of fun in the workplace. With so many employees crammed into a small space, it is difficult to participate in fun activities without disturbing those nearby. While this does not affect organized fun activities such as Friday Happy Hours, it does impinge on games and other spontaneous methods of fun. The PUSH case study illustrates how important open space is to facilitating impromptu fun activities.
**Kitchen**

Functionally, the kitchen is successful in meeting the needs of PUSH employees. It provides space for preparing and eating lunch, hosting gatherings such as birthday parties, and even serves as an extra meeting area at times. In addition, the space has become a catchall for items needing storage, such as boxes and dry-cleaning.

However, the space is aesthetically lacking when compared to the rest of the PUSH office. With white walls and white kitchen cabinets, the space is a sharp contrast to the bright colors found throughout the rest of the building. The kitchen design also lacks details, such as the artwork and unusual light fixtures, found in other parts of the office. It has a back-of-the-house appearance despite its importance as an activity gathering space.

One innovative feature of the kitchen design is the row of tequila bottles placed along the top of the cabinets. This is certainly an unusual item to see in a business office, yet it holds a special meaning for employees. It represents the company’s fun spirit and tradition of taking shots after large projects are won.

**Suggestions for Designers**

Through interviews and on-site observations of the physical environment at PUSH, many successful, as well as a few unsuccessful, design features were discovered. Based on these, a list of guidelines was created for businesses and designers who wish to promote fun in the workplace through office design. The suggestions are as follows: (1) open/flexible workspaces, (2) design symbolism and meaning, (3) saturated hues and color contrast, (4) fun details, (5) unusual geometries, (6) areas designated for fun, (7) creative license for employee expression, and (8) novel lighting design.
Open and flexible workspaces can facilitate informal interaction between employees, which can lead to spontaneous acts of fun. At PUSH, the open workstations allow employees to have impromptu conversations as well as participate in unplanned fun activities such as stress ball fights. However, when designing an open or flexible office, it is necessary to provide supplementary private meeting spaces where employees can get away from the noise and activity.

Design elements such as color, form, and detail are more successful when they hold some symbolism or meaning for the company. For example, the revolving door at PUSH represents the company’s name as well as their goal of pushing boundaries. A fun design for the sake of looking fun lacks the significance that can make it meaningful to employees and clients.

Saturated and contrasting colors can be used to enliven an office space, stimulating employees and visitors through their sense of playfulness. For instance, PUSH uses their signature chartreuse green color in the lobby to make a large first impression on visitors. However, designers should be careful not to use saturated colors in excess, particularly in confined workspaces where they may become overwhelming or distracting.

Architectural or interior design details that are surprising or whimsical can bring an element of fun to the space. PUSH has one such detail in their conference room with the small orange springs at the base of the conference table legs. Elements such as this can help to communicate the uniqueness of a business and spark conversations between employees or visitors.

Unusual geometries, such as angles or curves, can be used to create a dynamic atmosphere for employees. These forms can be incorporated into the floorplans, reflected
ceiling plans, and elevations of a space. At PUSH, the fluorescent light fixtures are not placed in a traditional grid pattern, but hung in various angled directions to create a dynamic ceiling plane.

Spaces designated for fun activities can encourage employees to have fun, in addition to providing a specific area for the fun to take place. For example, when PUSH had space for a basketball hoop in the workspace area, employees were more likely to play basketball games than when the hoop was squeezed into the kitchen.

Employees should also be provided with the opportunity to personalize their own workspaces. This gives them a creative outlet, as well as offering a sense of freedom. Employee expression can also be encouraged in shared workspaces, such as the wall space that PUSH uses to post recent campaign ideas.

Innovative methods of lighting, particularly when layered together, can be used to create a dynamic work environment. For example, the tentacle-like pendant fixtures found in the PUSH conference room add a surprising, yet fun element to the space. However, it is important to keep up with the lighting maintenance, as in the case of the PUSH lobby light, which was broken and never replaced.

Suggestions for Further Research

The narrative method was an excellent tool for expressing the composite relationships between all six components of the workplace fun model. In addition to exploring complex relationships, the narrative method was also able to gather a unique collection of data. Because the interviews aimed to collect information that would lead to writing a descriptive narrative, they produced a level of specificity and detail, as well as tapping into emotions and behaviors that would not be otherwise gathered.
As a result, this study supports further research using the narrative method. First, it would be informative to examine PUSH in the future to see what changes take place as the company matures. Furthermore, it would be useful to conduct similar studies looking at other creative businesses, perhaps in other fields such as architecture or graphic design. This would show the variation between different companies and how they implement fun in the workplace from an environment-behavior perspective.

Since this is a single case study examining only one business, it would be valuable to examine the model for workplace fun on a larger scale and in a more quantitative manner. By examining each of the factors in greater detail, the following questions can be answered: Are there specific employee characteristics that are correlated to workplace fun (e.g. age, gender, education)? Is there a correlation between certain design features and fun in the workplace (e.g. open plan vs. closed plan, bright colors vs. neutral colors, number of sq. ft. per employee)? Can certain management styles and procedures increase the amount of fun in the workplace? Also, are outcomes such as creativity, job satisfaction, or productivity linked to fun in the workplace?

**Conclusion**

The findings at PUSH support a multi-dimensional model of fun in the workplace. Worker characteristics, management style, and the physical work setting are all related to fun in the workplace at PUSH, while high creativity and job satisfaction levels are found as well. Combining all of these components, the narrative “Pushing the Boundaries of Work and Play” provides a true account of fun in the workplace as employees prepare for a pitch with a large prospective client. In particular, the story reflects the role of office design in supporting workplace fun and helping to secure a major client account, as well as how this relates to employee creativity and job satisfaction.
In sum, PUSH provides an excellent model for researching fun in the workplace and how it relates to office design, employee creativity, and job satisfaction. Yet, given the lack of empirical research on the subject, this study merely scratches the surface. A great deal of additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of workplace fun and its possible benefits for employees and businesses. Nevertheless, this study shows fun in the workplace to be a promising concept and supports the need for further research on the subject.
March 14, 2005

Chris Robb
PUSH
101 Ernestine Street
Orlando, FL 32801

Dear Mr. Robb:

As a Master’s student at the University of Florida, I am conducting a study on the role of interior design in promoting employee creativity and job satisfaction. My research will be carried out through a case study, consisting of interviews, observations, and standardized tests. As your workplace has been recognized as one of Florida’s top advertising firms, I would like to request your participation in this study.

Why do I want to profile your firm? First of all, I’m looking for a highly creative business. As an award-winning advertising firm, creativity is required for your success. Secondly, the office must have received recognition for exceptional workplace design. Your office was prominently featured in The Inspired Workplace: Interior Designs for Creativity and Productivity. Lastly, I require a business located in Central Florida, such as yours.

How much time will you need to commit to this? Interviews will be conducted with three to five employees, each lasting between 30 minutes to an hour. Standardized tests for creativity and job satisfaction will be distributed to the entire office, requiring just 25-30 minutes for both tests. Finally, observations will take place over the course of a day or two, requiring no assistance from you.

Are there any benefits for you? Yes. All of the results from this study will be shared with you. In particular, you will receive an overall profile of your employees’ job satisfaction and creativity, compared with national averages. Furthermore, the results of this study may be submitted for publication in a prominent interior design journal, with your consent, promoting your business as a national model for creative office design.

As one of the few offices in Central Florida meeting all of my criteria, your participation in this research project would be invaluable to me. I will contact you within the week to discuss the details of my project and answer any questions that you might have. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Miller

Margaret Portillo, Ph.D.
Department Chair
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Standard Interview Questions

1. What is your position? What are your primary responsibilities? What is your length of employment at PUSH? Describe your career path.

2. What adjectives would you used to describe your workplace?

Orientation: I’m conducting a study on the role of interior design in creating a fun work environment. The goal of this study is to produce a short narrative, or story, exploring what it’s like to work in a fun office environment. So the more stories you can tell and the more detail you can get into, the better. The first part of this interview will ask some general questions about workplace fun, then about specific occurrences at PUSH. For the second part, I will show you some photographs of the office to get your opinions on the office design. The third section asks some comparative questions. For the final section, I would like to hear some specific stories about your experiences working at PUSH.

3. How would you define fun in the workplace?

4. What are the benefits of workplace fun?

5. How do you balance fun and workplace productivity?

6. Do you feel all organizations should incorporate fun into the workplace?

Core Values: Have fun. Fun plays a key role in the success of any business. Smile a little more. Talk a little more. Spend more time together discussing what makes you feel good about the job you’re doing. If you’re having fun the work will be that much better.

7. How well do you feel this part of the mission statement is realized at PUSH?

8. Can you provide a specific example?

9. What is the most notable fun activity that you have participated in at work?

Photographs: I will now show you a set of photographs taken of the PUSH office and have you respond to these.

10. Where do fun activities take place in this space?
11. Which spaces work well? Which spaces don’t?

12. How do you feel about the overall design of the office?

13. How do you think this office design compares to competitors’?

14. How does this office design compare to other offices you’ve worked at?

15. What are clients’ reactions when seeing the office for the first time?

16. When moving into your new office, what aspects of the design would you want to retain? What do you think could be improved?

17. Do you think the new office should be more fun, less fun, or stay the same? Why?

18. Can you trace the development of a specific project at PUSH, including the problems you encountered and how you overcame them?

19. Is there anything else that you would like to share?
Management Interview Questions

1. What is your position? What are your primary responsibilities? What is your length of employment at PUSH? Describe your career path.

2. What adjectives would you used to describe your workplace?

Orientation: I’m conducting a study on the role of interior design in creating a fun work environment. The goal of this study is to produce a short narrative, or story, exploring what its like to work in a fun office environment. So the more stories you can tell and the more detail you can get into, the better. The first part of this interview asks some general questions about workplace fun. The second part deals with specific occurrences at PUSH. For the third part, I will ask some questions regarding management. The final section asks comparative questions.

3. How would you define fun in the workplace?

4. What are the benefits of workplace fun?

5. How do you balance fun and workplace productivity?

6. Do you feel all organizations should incorporate fun into the workplace?

Core Values: Have fun. Fun plays a key role in the success of any business. Smile a little more. Talk a little more. Spend more time together discussing what makes you feel good about the job you’re doing. If you’re having fun the work will be that much better.

7. What methods do you use to encourage a fun work atmosphere?

8. Do you believe office design plays a role in promoting fun? Why or why not?

9. What image do you think the office design projects to employees?

10. What image do you think the office design projects to clients?

11. How are employees motivated to be productive at PUSH? Are there any incentives?

12. What is the organizational structure at PUSH? How does this compare to other advertising firms?

13. How would you describe the corporate culture at PUSH?

14. How would you describe your personal management style?

15. Do you feel this office design reflects the management style and structure? Why or why not?
16. How do you think this office design compares to competitors’?

17. How does this office design compare to other offices you’ve worked at?

18. When moving into your new office, what aspects of the design would you want to retain? What do you think could be improved?

19. Do you think the new office should be more fun, less fun, or stay the same? Why?

20. Can you trace the development of a specific project at PUSH, including the problems you encountered and how you overcame them? Details, dates…

21. Is there anything else that you would like to share?
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alexandra Miller entered the University of Florida in 2000 to pursue a degree in interior design. During her undergraduate education, she participated in a study-abroad program, spending 6 weeks in Vicenza, Italy. She also won third place in the 2003 Gini Pettus Portfolio Awards, which recognized the outstanding incorporation of art into an interior design project. Alexandra graduated with high honors, receiving a Bachelor of Design in Interior Design in 2004. After receiving her master’s degree, she plans to join a commercial design firm in the Atlanta area, specializing in corporate interiors.