

Introduction —

When *Looking Forward to Monday Morning* was first published, I felt I'd shared every possible morale-boosting idea in my brain, and never entertained the possibility of writing a sequel. During my book tours across the United States and Canada, numerous educators told me, "In my school we are doing _____." They had amazing ideas to share with other educators. What a wonderful profession we are in—people share so freely! I felt much like a troubadour, carrying ideas from district to district, state to state, and country to country. This book is a compilation of those incredible ideas, suggestions that can help you and your colleagues look forward to Monday morning!

It's Monday Morning!



Do you start the workweek on Monday—or MOANday—mornings? (It's also been referred to as “Monday MOURNings.”) There's a scientific explanation behind the Monday morning blues: over the weekend, our bodies build up a sleep deficit of at least one hour. So when Monday morning rolls around, we want to stay snuggled in bed, not get up and face the workweek routine.

Monday has long had a negative stigma surrounding it. The former Soviet space agency banned Monday for any launches after four space ships blew up on Monday launches. It is a well-known perception that you should never purchase a car that was manufactured on Monday. People who call in sick after the weekend are known to have the “Monday flu,” and more people die of heart attacks on Monday than any other day of the week. The term “Monday morning quarterback” refers to rearview thinking rather than strategic planning. There is an old wives' tale that “Marry on Monday, always poor.”

One of my friends works for a very well-known computer company. Each Monday morning his supervisor meets with the staff. These meetings are called “Monday Morning Beatings” by those who attend. They hear about the mistakes they made the previous week and are criticized for them. Not surprisingly, they dread Monday mornings.

But Mondays are one-seventh of our lives, so we may as well learn to make the most of them—even enjoy and look forward to them! In this book, you'll find dozens of ideas to help change your attitude about Mondays from dread to delight. Here's one, just to help get you on your way:

Organizations always seem to plan special events on Fridays, but Friday is the start of the weekend (and often payday), so people are inclined to feel eager about it anyway. Why not schedule fun events on Monday, so people will look forward to and celebrate that day as well? It can only help boost morale, enjoyment, and creativity in the workplace. Give it a try—there's really nothing to lose!

Fun in the Workplace

A common fear (misconception) about having fun in the workplace is that it's a "waste of time." But taking time away from the job can actually increase productivity. Many people suffer from the disease of being too serious. But it is possible to be professional and still have fun—really.

I taught at the university level for 15 years as an adjunct professor. One semester I shared a media center with another extension class held at the same time. About half way through the semester, the Dean called me to her office. The professor with whom I shared the media center had complained about me. She told the Dean that my class laughed too much, so my students were obviously not learning. In reality, there was a great deal of learning going on, but we were *enjoying* the journey as well.

Another way of infusing fun into an organization can be seen in the following example. A year or two ago, I received a call from a woman who ordered a copy of my book and wanted to pick it up in person. When she arrived she explained that her husband was the *Minister of Fun* at one of the area universities. *Minister of Fun*? I'd never heard of that job title before. What a great occupation that must be! I asked her what he did, and she explained that his job was to create an environment that was rich, fun, rewarding, and creative. Since then I've found that there are many similar job titles, including *Director of WOW*, *Minister of Joy*, *Manager of Mirth*, *Ambassador of Playfulness*, *Vice President of Solutions*, *Vice President of Social Responsibility*. I wonder how much these jobs pay; I think I want to apply!

The presentations I give (based on my book) are sometimes attended by people who aren't fun. There's a part in the session when the group is asked to stand and sing "I'm the Principal," "I'm the Counselor," or "I'm the Assistant," depending on the audience. This often results in the mass migration of male principals who are very uncomfortable with that activity. It makes me wonder about the atmosphere in their schools.

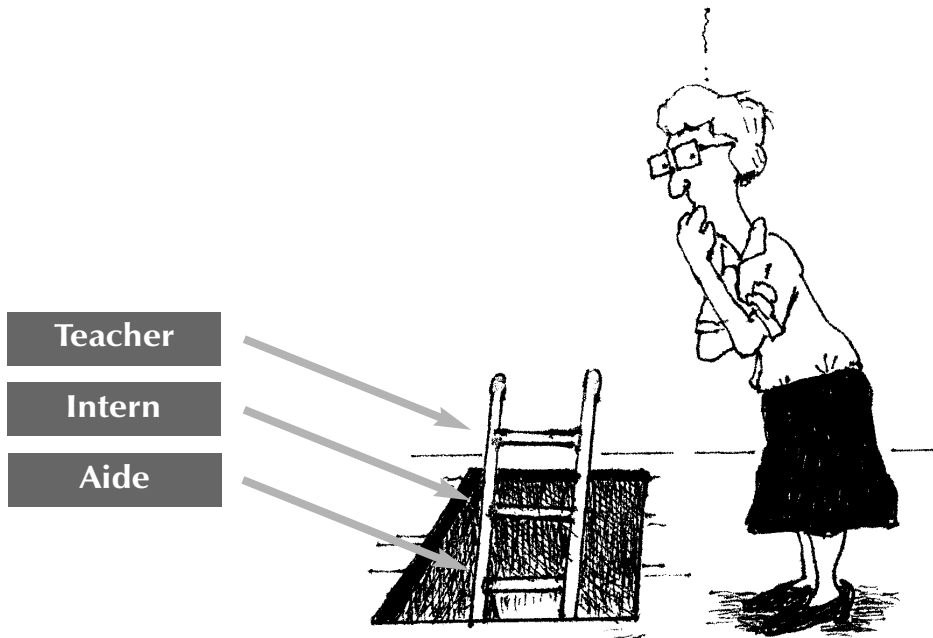
After one presentation, two teachers stayed and asked a lot of questions. They lamented about how they had a new principal and the climate had changed from joyous to glum. One of the teachers said, “We are just going to have appoint ourselves as the *Ambassadors of Fun* for our school.” As they walked out, I heard one of them say, “Today is the first time I’ve laughed in two weeks.” If you find yourself in this situation, it’s up to you and your colleagues to make your workplace fun—in spite of your principal.

And even if you’re not a fun person, you can contribute to a fun work environment just by letting others implement fun activities. Schedule the first “Fun Committee” meeting, elect a chairperson, and watch it grow from there. People *crave* the chance to have fun.

Recognition and Appreciation

In addition to a fun environment, recognition and appreciation are crucial for educators. With this framework, it became apparent to me that a teacher reaches the top of the career ladder the first day he or she steps into the classroom.

People who spend their lives teaching will not receive promotions, bonuses, matched 401(k) contributions, profit



sharing—motivators in other career fields. What motivates us is recognition and appreciation from colleagues, administrators, community members, parents, and students for a job well done.

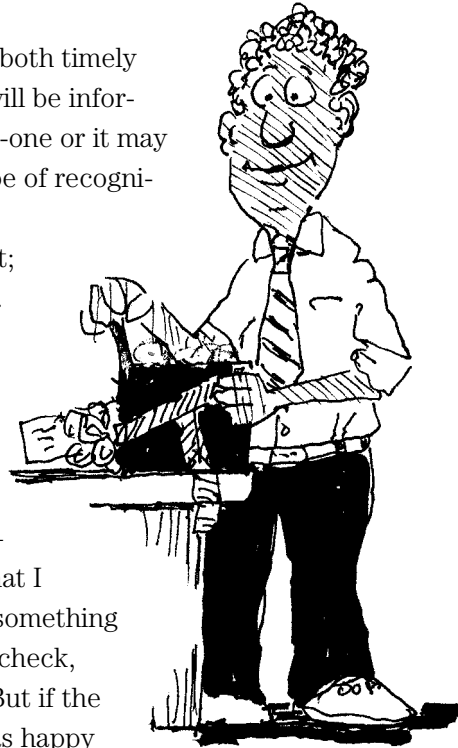
Ask yourself if you typically acknowledge good performance. When you go to a theater and watch the singers, dancers, actors, what do you do at the end of the show? Do you say, “That’s their job. They are paid to perform and entertain me,” and then just leave the theater? Or do you applaud, shout, whistle, even stand up, for a job well done?

Now think about your school or office. How do you acknowledge a colleague when that person does really good work? Do you say, “The staff members are getting paid to do a good job so they don’t need praise”? Remember, there’s a huge difference between compensation (money) and recognition.

Staff members need to be appreciated for their efforts; they need to be thanked and recognized when they do a good job. People want to work where their skills are appreciated; the best people will stay in those environments.

It’s important that the recognition be both timely and sincere. Sometimes the recognition will be informal, other times, formal. It may be one-to-one or it may be public. It’s important to know what type of recognition each person wants and needs.

I always gave my boss a Christmas gift; each year I sent him a cheese assortment. That was a generic gift, appropriate for a female employee to send to a male supervisor. After 10 years, he casually mentioned in a staff meeting, “. . . you know, I really hate cheese.” Gulp! I’d been giving him something he *hated*—for an entire decade! Did he appreciate that I sent him a gift? Probably. But I gave him something he didn’t like. When you receive your paycheck, you’re grateful to be paid for your work. But if the paycheck was in Euros, you wouldn’t be as happy



because even though you received a paycheck, it was in a currency you couldn't use. Keep the recipient in mind so you can give the person the appropriate kind of recognition.

This reminds me of a story about someone who was to be given an award for perfect attendance. This person was very private, and the recognition was going to be very public. The award was to be given at a big staff gathering; recipients were going to be on stage in front of all the other employees. This was such an uncomfortable situation that the person with perfect attendance actually called in sick that day—to avoid the public recognition! Think about the recipient; what would make that person happy?

Educators often hear that there just isn't money in the budget for recognition events, or that the Board would never allocate funds for these types of events. But the truth is simple: Recognition doesn't need to be "budgeted." What's really important is what happens when everyone is together. It doesn't have to be a gala, catered event—it can be a community potluck and still be meaningful. Some of the most effective forms of appreciation—saying thank you, giving someone a smile, a note, a hug, or a handshake—cost nothing. Just make sure they have the two essential elements: timeliness and sincerity.

And although everyone is worthy of receiving praise, sometimes people aren't comfortable giving it. During a break in one of my seminars on recognition and appreciation (the audience was a group of educators, many of whom were principals), a woman from another session asked how one of the participants was doing. I said he was doing great, but wondered why she asked. She explained that he was her principal and that the staff had taken up a collection to pay for his registration because they wanted him to develop the skills.

If you sometimes find it awkward to express appreciation, take heart—the pages of this book are brimming with ideas that can help you and your colleagues develop the ability to comfortably give recognition and appreciation.

A Final Note

Creating a rich, rewarding school workplace is everyone's job; we are all part of the "village" that it takes to raise (or educate) a child—and to contribute to future generations. In addition, we cannot help but thrive when working with motivated, enthusiastic colleagues; our own lives become richer as a result. Use the ideas in this book freely to invigorate yourself and "rev up" your coworkers so that everyone can benefit from the positive energy in your work environment.

Drive your colleagues HAPPY!