

# Celebrate Something Silly at Work

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Every HR professional understands the power of recognition and celebration. Maybe that statement should be restated. Every HR professional **should** understand the power of recognition and celebration.

## Recognition Pays Dividends

Research going back 100 years or more shows that productivity and job satisfaction increase when good performance and achievement are recognized and rewarded. It should be a no-brainer – we get more of the behavior that is rewarded. It is a basic tenet of how we raise our kids. Actions have consequences. Bad actions have bad consequences, good behaviors get rewarded.

Most of our organizations use recognition to highlight achievement (whether it be individual or work team), holidays and special events that we feel enhance our mission. I have several posts on the recognition and a recent post highlighted the 2021 healthcare recognition dates that every HR professional should keep in mind.

The ongoing recognition events are a part of our organizational culture. Employee of the Month, Outstanding Patient Care Awards, Service Awards, Holiday Celebrations are part of who we are and have become an expectation of our staff.

## Have Some Fun

When was the last time that you celebrated something silly just for the fun of it?

We tend to always make sure that our recognition activities are work-focused and further our organizational mission. We are deadly serious about patient care. God forbid that we ever do something just for fun!

I am not talking about acting like the Dunder-Mifflin employees in the popular TV program, “The Office”. They rarely seemed to actually work, were always partying over something or having employee meetings over some inappropriate personal

issue. We don't have to go that far, but again, when was the last time you did something unexpected and fun to surprise your staff?

I bring this up now because of the winter months ahead of us. We all celebrate the holidays in some way or other. After the first of the year, there is that long stretch until Spring. For many of us the weather is colder limiting outside activities. For all of us the days are shorter. Whether employed or a student, the months of January-March are one of the most difficult grinds of the year.

As someone who was employed in the Great Lakes region, I can attest that there were periods where one did not see the sun for 2-3 weeks at a time. Gray, overcast, damp and cold coupled with high census and workloads.

It was the time of year for frequent (and low cost) celebrations. Surprisingly, some of these were the ones that were most remembered by our staff.

Who wouldn't love celebrating Gumby's 50th anniversary? This was a weeklong celebration that included Gumby erasers (purchased 1000/\$15), highlights of his career (cartoons shown in the cafeteria), birthday cake, and an opportunity to get your picture taken with Gumby or Pokey (inflatable figures).

Sound silly? It was. However, we had doctors come over from their offices to have a photo of taken of them with Gumby or Pokey.

How about celebrating Iceland's Independence Day (June 17)? Typical Icelandic foods were served in Cafeteria, was played, etc. When asked, "why Iceland?" we replied, "why not? They're harmless!"

Many of us have contests to decorate pumpkins for Halloween. Have you done the same for National Pickle Day? How about that Kumquat Festival (March 27)?

We also had an annual Arts Festival. Painting, sculpture, photography, sewing, is surprising the talents that your staff possess. We had over 200 entries from our 1500 employees. Employees enjoyed sharing their talents and seeing what their coworkers could create. It was even covered by the local media.

March madness always gave us ideas for basketball or college themed activities. In Ohio, we were all familiar with tailgate parties during the football season. How about tailgate cookouts in March?

# Just-for-fun Celebrations

If you want to find some really fun and wacky things to celebrate, I urge you to visit . Not only will you find a listing of the “legitimate” recognition days, you will find some really offbeat days. There is something being recognized every day of the month.

Here are some examples from January:

- Run up the Flagpole and see if Anyone Salutes Day (Jan. 2)
- Festival of Sleep Day (Jan. 3)
- Fruitcake Toss Day (Jan. 3)
- National Rubber Ducky Day (Jan. 13)
- Take the Stairs Day (Jan. 13)
- Compliment Day (Jan. 24)
- Global Belly Laugh Day (Jan. 24)
- Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day (Jan. 25)
- Fun at Work Day (Jan. 28)

These were just a few from the first month. There are literally hundreds more for the year. Some can actually be used to reinforce good ideas (Take the Stairs Day), and others just for fun (National Kazoo Day- Jan. 28).

Again, there should be some cost-benefit consideration. The just for fun celebrations should meet two criteria: they should be inexpensive and they should not interfere with work.

Get creative and surprise your staff with something unpredictable. Think of ways to let them show off their talents and creativity. Have your own “Fun at Work Day” every month.