

## **The Importance of Happiness, Play, and Idle Time**

**Allow Workers to Play.** While giving your employees time to 'play' seems counter-productive, studies have revealed that it reduces stress, and as a result playing can lead to more ideas, enhanced creativity and increased innovation. Companies like Google, Facebook, LEGO, and Zynga all work play into their daily corporate culture.

What ways could your organization add more play and fun into the workplace, through special events or ongoing activities? Some examples include: Fun outings, office karaoke, funny videos before meetings or brainstorming sessions, etc.

**Allow time for spacing out and being idle.** According to modern neuroscience, the network of brain regions that become active during idleness is referred to as the Default Mode Network (DMN). Only when activated by quiet, empty mental space can the brain look at problems in new ways. The brain also becomes active in areas that are associated with creativity such as the hippocampus, medial prefrontal cortex, and the precuneus, which increases “aha” moments.

For these reasons, it's important to stimulate your team's minds by turning OFF the stimulation. Encourage ways to unwind and distress. Add more break time into the day. Discourage the use of stimulating activities to fill empty time, unless it's play, as mentioned previously. Consider turning break rooms into play rooms that encourage employees to truly take a break, read, doodle, or just relax.

One of the best times to plan in idle time for your team is immediately after a brainstorming session or other meeting. This allows their minds to process the ideas from the meeting and ruminate freely. Often the most creative ideas are generated outside of official meetings, once individuals have had time to sit quietly and think.

In what ways and when can idle time be worked into your internal processes and schedules?