

Play and professionalism at work: Boosting engagement while maintaining standards



A Personnel Today webinar

Personnel Today

In association with

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The status quo

30%

Search for
jobs

45%

Not
engaged

26%

Actively
disengaged

82%

Lack of
recognition

40%

Feel
stressed

70%

Likely to go
sick

You've got to be joking!



What is fun at work?



To discover the brilliance in everyone and set it free.

Passion & mastery



"Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." Albert Einstein



Breaking the rules



Taking risks



It pays to play

67%

More
creative

33%

More
valued

12%

More
productive

22%

More
motivated

63%

Less likely
to go sick

87%

Less likely
to leave



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Go on, be brilliant!

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Rob B Briner

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Some key questions

- ◆ Just what is fun at work anyway?
- ◆ Can you *make* people have fun at work?
- ◆ Why would you want to make people have fun at work?
- ◆ When might fun be A Good Thing (mostly evidence-lite)
- ◆ When might fun be A Bad Thing (mostly evidence-lite)
- ◆ Party-pooper? Me?
- ◆ And finally...

Just what is fun at work anyway?

- ◆ Really hard to define
 - Positive emotions? Which ones?
 - Laughter?
 - Games or activities?
 - The work itself?
- ◆ Fun at whose expense?
- ◆ May be quite idiosyncratic – my idea of fun could be your idea of hell

Is this your idea of fun?





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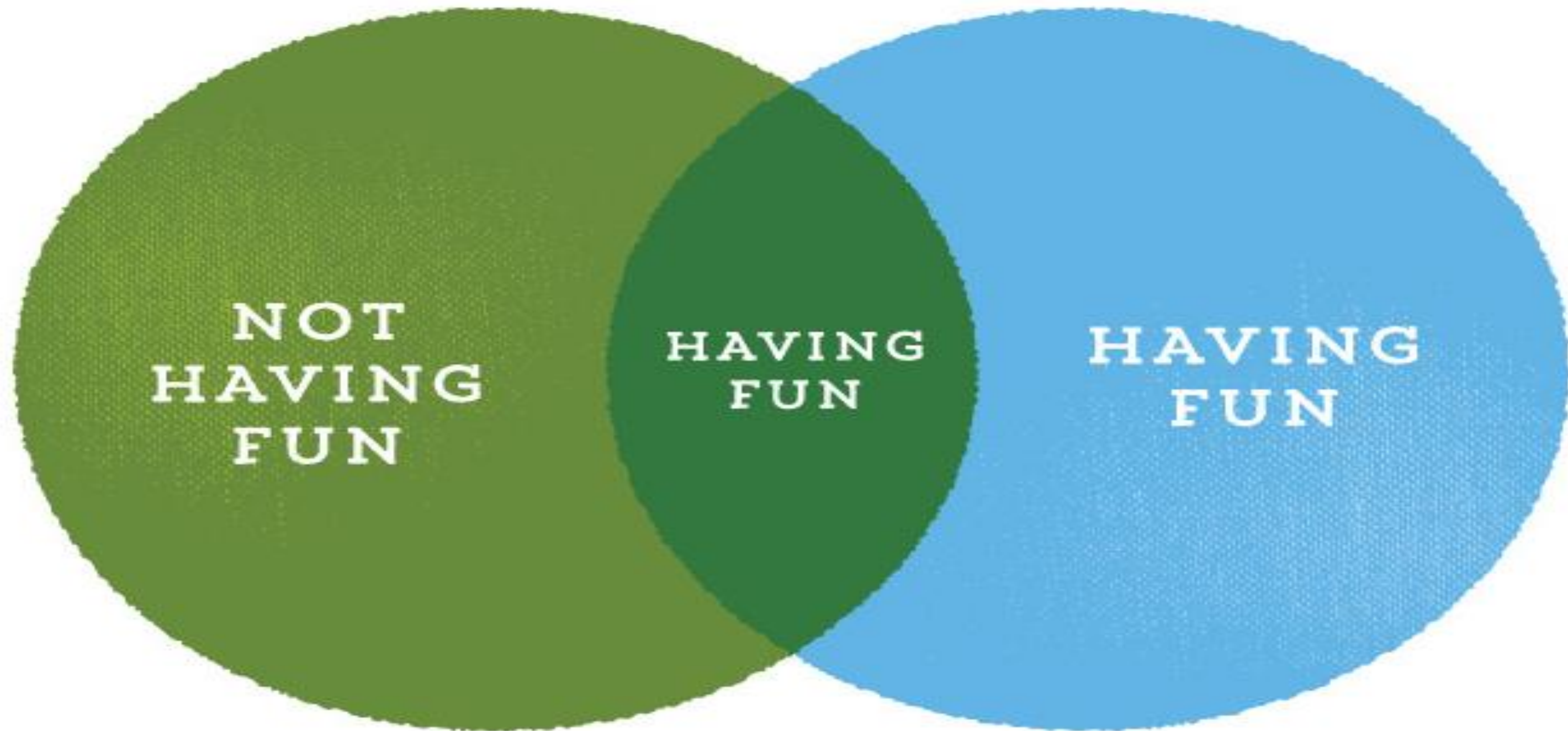
**“Look at me! Look at me! Look at
me NOW! It is fun to have fun.
But you have to know how.”**

- Dr. Seuss, The Cat in the Hat

Can you *make* people have fun at work?

- ◆ If you can't then what's the point of discussing this?
- ◆ Contradiction: Fun, by definition is spontaneous
- ◆ You can't *make* people have fun but you can *perhaps* set up contexts where it's more likely to happen
- ◆ Enforced or engineered fun likely to backfire and alienate some people who feel like they are being treated like children who need to have fun

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
HAVING FUN TO BE **HAVING FUN**



Why would you want to make people have fun at work?

- ◆ Assumed causal link: Fun > positive affect, satisfaction, engagement > performance
- ◆ Three dodgy assumptions:
 - You can make fun happen
 - Fun is an important cause of positive affect, satisfaction and engagement
 - Positive affect, satisfaction and engagement important drivers of performance: No or weak effects – and positive affect good for some types of performance not others

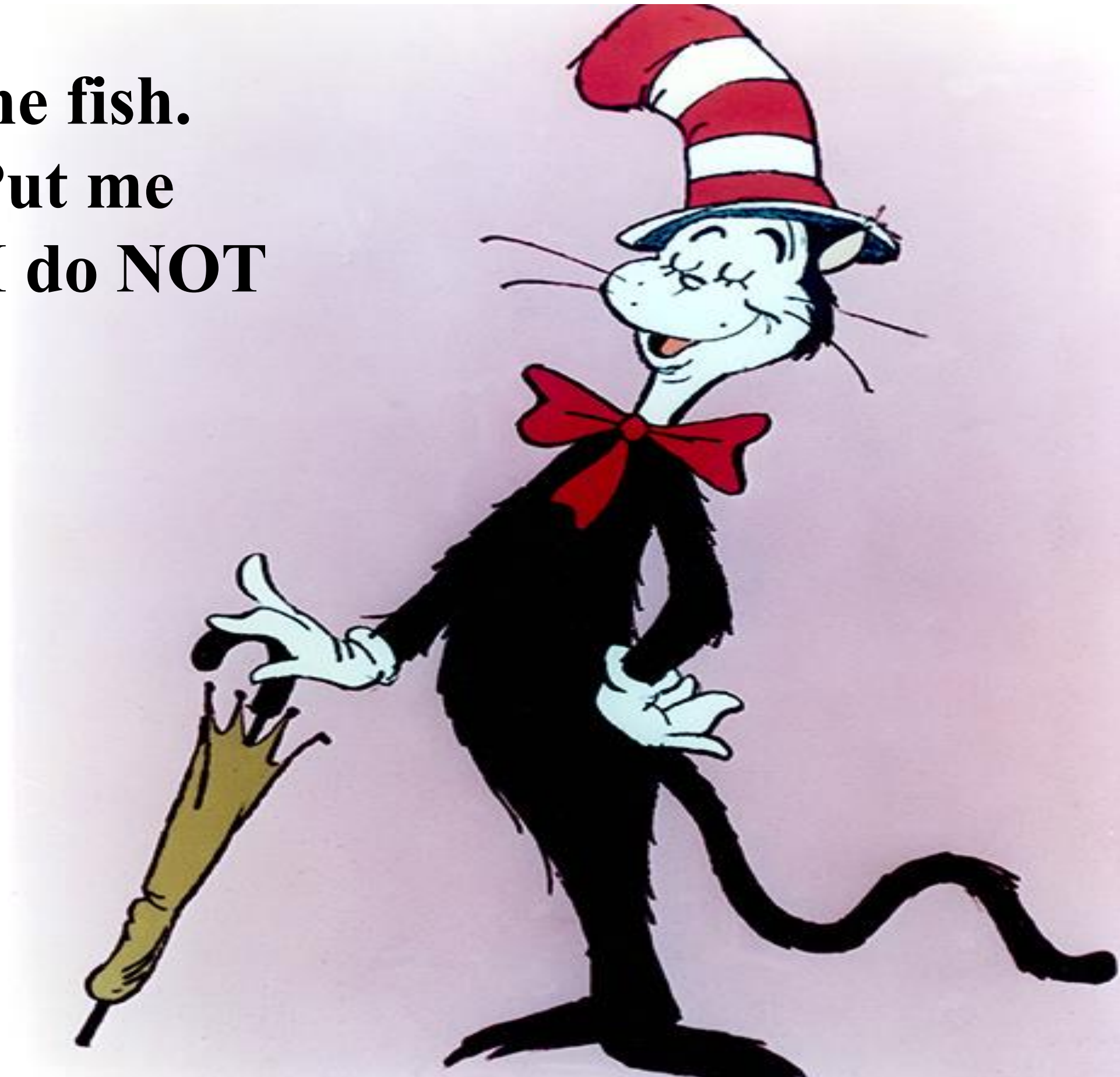
When might fun be A Good Thing (mostly evidence-lite)

- ◆ Perhaps early in socialization (but could give wrong impression of what it's really like to work there)
- ◆ In building team cohesion where this is important (depends on type of work and whether genuine team)
- ◆ Where your work involves how to give customers or clients a fun experience
- ◆ Where people enjoy having fun and you want them to stay in organization

When might fun be A Bad Thing (mostly evidence-lite)

- ◆ Where it excludes or discriminates against individuals or particular groups – introverts, cultural difference
- ◆ Where it detracts from performance
- ◆ When it leads to counter-productive work behaviours
- ◆ Where it's fun at someone else's expense

**“Put me down!” said the fish.
“This is no fun at all! Put me
down!” said the fish. “I do NOT
wish to fall!”**



Party-pooper? Me?

- ◆ I love having a laugh with work colleagues
- ◆ I have had and organized lots of fun at work (trips, Christmas parties, office pantomimes, 'triathlons', leaving dos)
- ◆ But was any of this 'fun' good for my work? Or the organization?
- ◆ I'm more interested in validity of claims made about fun at work and whether it matters practically for organizations

And finally...

- ◆ Professionalism almost as hard to define as fun but three main components
 - Competence (doing what works, evidence-based)
 - Ethical standards
 - Maintaining/promoting the profession
- ◆ Can't see how fun is necessarily a problem
- ◆ Beware of claims about generational difference – mostly myths
- ◆ There is no good quality evidence about the causes or effects of fun at work so this is ALL mostly speculation

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