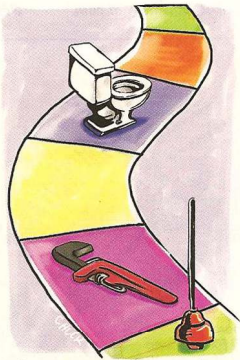




Games People Play

Motivate your employees to succeed by playing games on the job.



I have a big, noisy, fun family. Growing up, we lived around the corner from the McCartheys, a family with a set of kids that matched ours. So, we hung out together. Not all together. The big kids hung together. The middle kids hung together. And the youngest kids, my group, wished we could hang with the big and middle kids.

Once in a blue moon, we would all play together. We played only one game and only under absolutely perfect conditions. The game: Football. The conditions:

- There had to be snow on the ground, at least one foot deep and less than 24 hours old.
- It had to be cold.
- It had to be nighttime.
- We had to have at least a dozen, preferably three dozen, players.
- The big kids had to play. It wouldn't work without big kid representation and leadership. The middle kids and little kids wouldn't dare suggest the game.

As the conditions developed, the little kids would extend hopeful hints. "Man, it is cold out. And the snow must be 10 feet deep!" The big kids would feign disinterest until the promise of fun overshadowed the fear of being uncool. After all, to make the game work, you needed a lot of kids. That meant allowing the little kids to play. You couldn't relax the boundaries too often.

Once the decision was made, we all set into action. We called friends to call friends to come over right now. And, we dressed for battle.

Of course, only the McCarthy kids had instant access to actual snow clothes because we gathered at their house. Not to worry. A key element of

the game was finding enough clothes to keep warm and relatively dry. We improvised: Shaun once wore a pair of striped toe socks as gloves; Maureen was fond of her colander/helmet (not much protection from the cold, but wonderfully intimidating).

Veterans knew the trick of many, many layers — for warmth as well as padding. One kid attempted to use Mrs. McCarthy's mink stole as shoulder pads. It was a technically sound concept, however it didn't fly with Mrs. McCarthy.

On the field, the two biggest male kids (sexist!) would assume the roles of quarterback. Then, the *de rigueur* and humiliating team selection process. After that, we were off and playing and it was so much fun. We would run and tackle and pile on each other in the deep snow. You might get hurt and cry but not for too long because you would have to go in. We would laugh like babies, for the sheer delight of the moment. Time stood still and went too fast, like it does when you are deliriously happy.

At some point, enough of us would get cold, wet and hurt and we would pile into the house. Then, we would peel off thousands of layers of clothes and drink hot chocolate. Instantly, we would replay the game with impeccable recall: "Remember when I sacked you about a hundred miles behind the line of scrimmage? That was great!"

Are you smiling? It's fun to play a game. When was the last time you felt like that? Are you ready to stop taking yourself so darn seriously?

Good Game Guidelines: People play games. As we get bigger, the games sometimes deteriorate — "I'm not going to wear my uniform today and see if anyone even notices."

Illustrated by: Chuck Hagen