

# BUSINESS ACTION GUIDE

Leading at the Intersection of People & Profits

## RECOGNIZE AND REWARD

### Celebrating Success and Having Fun: Zappos

As Dale Carnegie said, "People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing." Celebrating success is an important way to underscore the achievements that the company wants to repeat, inspiring employees to achieve more success by making them feel



KELLY WOLSKÉ,  
SENIOR TRAINER

like winners. To learn more about celebrating success and having fun, we spoke with Kelly Wolske, Senior Trainer at Zappos. Zappos is a Las Vegas-based online provider of consumer products such as shoes and clothing that employs 1,700 people. Zappos is organized around providing great customer service.



Celebrating success and having fun are priorities at Zappos. We have a "work hard, play hard" mentality. It helps us build strong relationships with each other, which means we can work more efficiently together. If we have conflicts, we can default to giving someone the benefit of the doubt. Having fun together makes people more relaxed and innovative in coming up with solutions – some of the best ideas come outside of work. Celebrating the things we achieve is one of the best motivators for helping us repeat those achievements. These are some key lessons we learned in the process:

#### ZAPPOS' FORMULA FOR CELEBRATING SUCCESS:

1. Celebrate wins at every level
2. Budget time and money
3. Change as the company grows
4. Make fun a core value

#### 1. Celebrate wins at every level

It all starts with the graduation ceremony at the end of the on-boarding period. The new hires get a certificate, we set off air horns, and we play Pomp and Circumstance – they are now officially part of the family. After that, we continuously celebrate wins at every level, from the individual to the department to the company as a whole. We have parties, carnivals, employee bonuses, and thank you gifts. Many departments have a bell hanging in their area that can be used to announce goals that have been met or to thank others. Every week we send a "props" email with the latest customer compliments. When we meet big goals, such as a million-dollar sales record, we have a parade through the building, often with costumes. When we hit a new million dollar sales mark, we celebrate with a T-shirt. The Finance and Merchandising departments have a quarterly celebration and give awards for successes. Big company-wide successes are usually announced by an email blast followed by an impromptu happy hour.

#### 2. Budget time and money

Every team gets a set amount of funds per person, per month for team building activities outside of the office. Teams can use these funds as they wish – some go offsite every month, and others go once a quarter. We also make sure to pay people for their time if they attend a company dinner or another official team building event outside of work hours. The expense is well worth it – the time we spend away allow us to come back refreshed and innovative.

Sometimes we tighten our belts, but we still find ways to spend time together off campus. It doesn't have to be a Zappos-sponsored event – some of us like to go to the \$5 movie night on Tuesdays. Sometimes we bring a brown bag lunch and play games, or order pizza and watch movies. Spending time together creates shared experiences and stories, and it pays off in so many ways. From a marketing perspective, we have happy employees who feel valued and take ownership – essentially 1,700 ambassadors for the brand. We've surveyed our managers, and they say that their teams are significantly more productive because of the time they spend together having fun.

**3. Change as the company grows**

Things have changed as we have grown – it was much easier to take the whole company out for happy hour when there were 30 people than today when there are 1,700. As a result, we often bring food and drinks on campus rather than going out. For example, we used to have a happy hour after our training class, but we started bringing ice cream in-house instead, which is less expensive and may even allow people to socialize more effectively.

**4. Make fun a core value**

At Zappos, having fun and humor as part of our daily work is important – it makes the company more interesting and memorable. And individuality is embraced because we believe that people function best when they can be themselves. We also want a company that goes beyond being a team and becomes a family. This means managers who are servant-leaders,

ZAPPOS' CORE VALUES

1. Deliver WOW Through Service
2. Embrace and Drive Change
3. Create Fun and A Little Weirdness
4. Be Adventurous, Creative, and Open-Minded
5. Pursue Growth and Learning
6. Build Open and Honest Relationships With Communication
7. Build a Positive Team and Family Spirit
8. Do More With Less
9. Be Passionate and Determined
10. Be Humble

and team members who spend time together at work and beyond, building strong bonds of trust that facilitate collaboration and caring.

**FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM**

When you encourage people to have fun and be themselves at work, they are able to think outside the box and be more innovative. Frequently celebrating our achievements is one of the best motivators for more success. In the end, the time and money spent on team-building, parties, and happy hours yields big returns in terms of engaged employees and satisfied customers.

**HOW DO WE LEARN MORE?**

[11 Easy Ways to Make Work Fun](#)

[10 Ways to Make Your Office Fun to Work in](#)

[Celebrate the Good Times](#)

[How to Celebrate Success in the Workplace](#)

*Other companies that actively celebrate success and have fun include SRC and Zingerman's.*

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