

Football Teaches Us About the Workplace

On Sunday, more than one-hundred million people will watch football's biggest night and many could care less about who wins. In fact, fewer than half, a full 40 percent are not football fans and only about one-third say the actual game is important. So, why does everyone commit an entire Sunday to this pigskin pursuit?

Here are a few reasons...

- **Friends:** 49% of Big Game fans plan to throw a party, attend one or watch from a bar or restaurant.
- **Fun:** Hallmark Cards calls the Big Game the top at-home party event of the year, even bigger than New Year's Eve.
- **Connections:** People wrote 25.3 million tweets during last year's game connecting about the plays, commercials and the halftime show.
- **Food:** Football's biggest night is the second most gluttonous day of the year, according to the Calorie Control Council, bested only by Thanksgiving.

People crave social interactions. Coalescing around a common theme, such as the most important professional football game of the year, helps foster communication and encourages connections. The same is true in the workplace. Leaders seeking to innovate and attract and retain highly-skilled talent no longer equate socializing at work with a loss of productivity. Instead, there's an understanding that socialization is a balanced part of the workday and can improve employee wellbeing and engagement.

Socializing improves your work by:

- Stimulating the brain and improving creativity
- Nurturing a sense of belonging and fostering strong connections between people.
- Helping people see their relationship to the organization, which leads to a sense of purpose in their work.
- Supporting frequent movement throughout the day for physical and mental vigor.

DESIGN FOR SOCIALIZATION

Traditionally, offices were focused on uniformity and standards. The majority of space was dedicated to individual workstations, separated into departments, where people spent the majority of their time working alone. A cafeteria provided a place to eat lunch and large meeting rooms were used mostly for planned collaboration.

But, by rejecting this sea of sameness, leading organizations are finding better ways to support the new ways in which people are working. An ecosystem of spaces includes social, collaborative and focus areas allowing people to have the freedom to choose how and where to work. A social hub, which may have previously been underused as only a cafeteria, now shifts to become a place for workers to connect and collaborate throughout the entire day.

A winning workplace design embraces and encourages socialization as a part of the overall picture. For the same reason people all gather together to watch the big game on Sunday, connections and relationships matter. When people feel connected to their colleagues at work, they are more engaged and feel good about coming to work each day. Just like people have more fun watching the game together, even if they don't know the difference between Tom Brady and Matt Ryan.

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