

Making work fun: Most jobs can be livened up a bit with some creativity

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When customers walk into Cold Stone Creamery in Lafayette, owner Sabir Hussain wants them to be greeted with more than the tasty frozen stuff.

"It's ice cream. If you're not selling it with a big smile on your face, there's something wrong," he said.

At Hussain's store, having fun is part of the job description. He encourages employees to joke around, laugh and, of course, sing the famous Cold Stone songs that entertain customers. Many business owners, like Hussain, want employees to remember: Even though work is - by definition -- hard, that doesn't mean it can't be fun.

Bob Dearing, owner of Haan Marketing + Communication in Lafayette, expects employees to get their work done on time and put out good products. But he also knows some staffers are armed with Nerf guns, darts and other toys at their desks.

"We have deadlines and quality expectations. But as long as we're hitting those, there's no reason we can't have some fun," Dearing said.

The Haan staff enjoys staff cookouts in the summer, a holiday party outside the office in the winter and the occasional office lunch -- where the agency picks up the tab. Dearing said the social events help build camaraderie and a team spirit in the office.

At Cold Stone Creamery, manager Taz Dickerson says the singing is her favorite part of the job. The tradition throughout the chain is that whenever a customer drops money in the tip jar, employees break out in song -- usually a nursery rhyme with key words in the chorus changed to "Cold Stone."

"Even if you're shy it builds up energy and gets people excited," she said. "When people come in for ice cream, they're usually excited. So we try to keep things alive and happy."

Hussain said he tries to set an upbeat mood for his staff.

"Keeping high energy and positive energy comes from the leadership," he said. "I try to take some pressure off (the employees) when I can and show them I appreciate their work."

Many of his staff are high school students and Hussain knows this isn't a career job for them.



(By Frank Oliver/Journal & Courier)

Taz Dickerson serves a cup of ice cream while working at Cold Stone Creamery in Lafayette.

"But I want them to look back at their time with Cold Stone and say, 'That was a good experience,'" he said.