

Trust, Friendships and Having Fun at Work

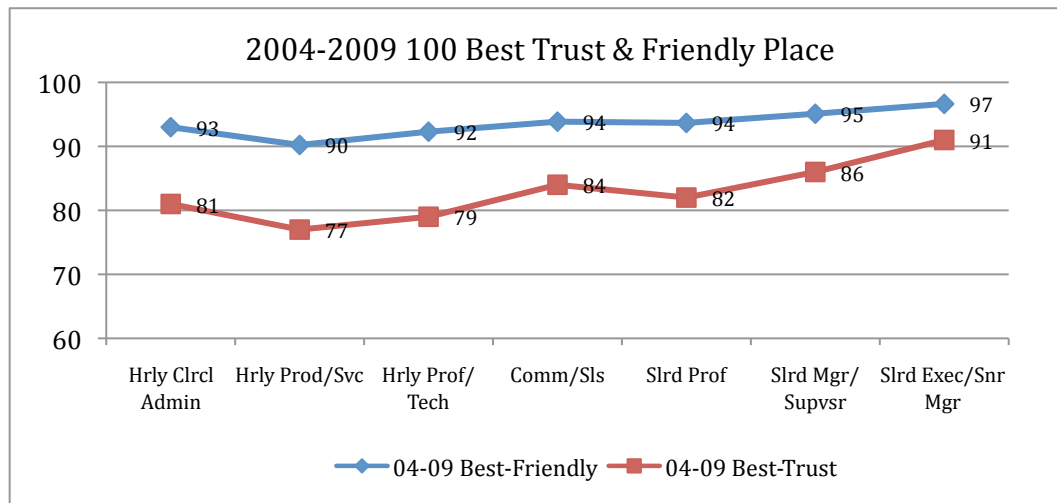
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Great Place to Work® Institute

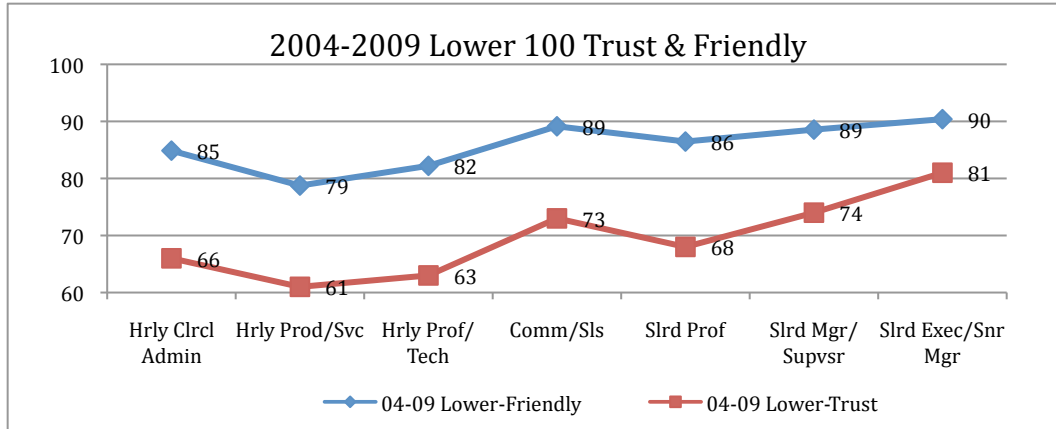
In great workplaces employees experience both a friendly welcoming atmosphere and also a fun enjoyable spirit to the workplace. Many good organizations are able to create a friendly atmosphere in the workplace yet creating an environment in which people can have fun is more challenging.

Friendliness is a first step on the path of creating a great workplace. The initial friendship that one experiences helps to invite a person into the workplace and create a sense of comfort that facilitates an ability to focus on work. Friends at work and a friendly atmosphere help new employees to feel comfortable, and support their efforts to find answers to questions so they can focus on work instead of trying to figure out how to run the copy machine or fill out a health insurance form.

In the good workplaces that make up the Lower 100 Companies in the applicant pool for the 100 Best list, close to 85% of employees indicate that their workplace is a friendly place, while at the 100 Best Companies 93% of employees experience a friendly workplace. Both of these sets of survey results indicate that friendliness in the workplace is a common experience for most employees, and something that is essential for an organization to be considered a good place to work.



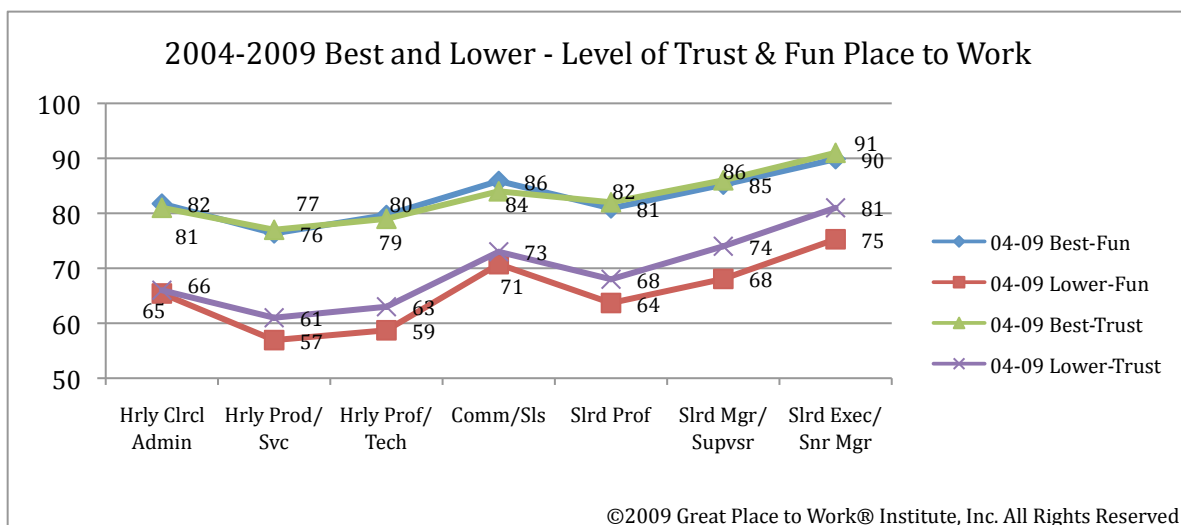
The point difference is close between these two groups (8.72), and the level of improvement that is needed to go from being a good place with respect to friendliness to being one of the Best (as indicated by considering the percent change represented by the point difference from the Lower 100 Companies to the 100 Best) is about 10% of the overall effort as measured by employees positive responses to the survey statement “This is a friendly place to work.”



In the above graphs the similarity in the overall level of friendliness found in both good workplaces and great workplaces is obvious, although when the data is considered by job type, it is possible to see that the variation in experience is greater for employees in good workplaces (the Lower 100) vs great ones (the 100 Best).

When employees' perception of their workplace as a fun place is considered there is a more interesting story to tell. For all employees – hourly and salaried – their perception of their workplace as a fun place is almost an exact mirror copy of the perception that they also experience Trust through management's credibility, the respect with which they are treated, and the fairness of the workplace environment.

While this mirroring of experience between the concepts of fun at work and trust is consistent across the Best Companies and the Lower 100 Companies the percentage of employees in each category of companies who actually experience trust and fun is notably different. The graph below affirms that in great workplaces – like the 100 Best – approximately 81% of all employees experience high levels of trust and think their workplaces are fun places to be. Among employees in the good companies – the Lower 100 – approximately 63% of employees experience high levels of trust and fun at work.



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While there is an overall point difference of 18 between the level of positive response from employees in these two groups of companies, there is a proportionally greater level of effort needed to improve on people's perception that they can experience fun at work (28.5%), than we saw when considering the friendliness of the workplace – where a 10% improvement would move the 'friendliness' perception of employees in good workplaces up to the level found in great workplaces. It takes more effort to create a great place in which people can have fun than it does for people to experience the friendliness of their work colleagues.

In order for employees to have fun at work – true fun that involves a shared sense of community and an ability to relax and enjoy the event or the moment of joy that often characterizes fun times – there needs to also be a high level of trust. Trust and fun are mutually beneficial experiences that employees have and they reinforce each other.

If you are looking for a quick way to determine whether or not there is high trust in your workplace you can look to people's genuine experience of fun throughout the organization. If you want to understand what may be holding back some people from being able to enjoy the workplace then exploring people's experiences of credibility, respect and fairness – the trust they experience - is necessary.

Fun can not be forced, and people can not be required to 'have fun', yet offering opportunities for people to spend time with each other in fun ways – at a company picnic, in informal gatherings, outside at tables set up for small meetings, or through an event at a special location – can reinforce people's positive experiences of the workplace and strengthen people's mutual trust.