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The Business Value of Joy

A guest article by Rich Sheridan, CEO, co-founder and Chief Storyteller at Menlo Innovations

Joy and work might not seem to be likely companions, especially in the days of inexorable marches towards quarterly results and a hyper focus on competitiveness. Yet, joy is the reason my company, Menlo Innovations, exists. It defines what we do and, more importantly, how we do it.

Deep down we all know there is a better way to run a business, a team, a department. We've always known it. Yet, we fail to take that important first step.

What if we did? What would the results be? Could those results exceed our expectations or imagination? If you could transform your existing organization and it turned out exactly as you hoped ... what one word would describe it?

- Successful?

- Profitable?
- Energized?
- Fun?
- Fulfilling?
- Meaningful?

How about joyful? And how would we define joy?

At Menlo, we look outside ourselves and define joy quite simply by having crisp answers to three basic questions:

- Who do we serve?
- What would delight look like for those we serve?
- How do we systematically produce that delight without harming the human energy of our team?

Note that these questions are first and foremost ... externally focused. We are looking outside ourselves and looking to serve others. For us, as a software design and development firm, our external focus goes beyond our customers, and we focus our attention on the end users of the software we are creating. These end users do not pay us for what we do, they will likely never meet us, and also will never know we did this work. Yet, the focus of our attention is on the people who will one day use the software that our team creates.

We believe that this external, purpose-driven focus is the starting place for a workplace of joy.

We then look to the systems and practices we must put in place to systematically produce this kind of joy so that it is not random, nor dependent on individual heroes.

Ultimately this leads to the important last question ... can we do this while sustaining the human energy of our team? Many teams are hero-based and those poor heroes never get to truly take vacations or turn off work when they get home in the evening after a long, tiring day. Even when they are on vacation, they are in constant touch with the office. We didn't want that, because our belief is that tired people make bad software, and we don't want to make bad software, so we don't want to exhaust our team while doing the work. This is the main reason behind our 40-hour work weeks, our policy of not denying vacation requests, and the peer-pressure we apply to team members to ensure they aren't checking in electronically from vacation. We stress we don't want to catch you checking email from vacation.

There are many reasons we pursue joy in our workplace. Some are actually quite selfish ... we want a place where we want to go to work every day. We believe, like quality guru W. Edwards Deming, that "all anyone asks for is a chance to work with pride."

There are many ways we produce joy for those we serve, and there are many things (some quite unusual) that allow us to keep our spirits high when we are at work. For example, we allow newborns to come into the office with their parent(s), all day, every day.

So, what would an important first step look like to start on a journey to joy? It will be different for everyone. Yet there is a formula for starting and continuing born out of a simple phrase we use here at Menlo: Run the Experiment.

My recommendation to you is to move toward action. Try simple things and see if they work. Don't form a committee, don't start by writing a policy - try something! Do more of what works and less of what doesn't.

Get on your way!

About Rich Sheridan: After an exciting start in the software industry right after college in the 80s, Rich's career quickly turned to disillusionment, even while he was being rewarded and promoted. Along the way, he decided there was a better way of doing things than was customary and started on a journey back to joy in his own career. This pursuit ultimately led him to co-found Menlo Innovations in 2001. He is the author of *Joy, Inc. - How We Built a Workplace People Love*, and he will be the keynote speaker for the mhca Summer Conference on August 15.

Join Us in Detroit!



Summer Conference

Need a fresh perspective? Join behavioral healthcare leaders from across the country in Detroit, Michigan, for **mhca's** Summer Conference Aug. 14- 16. Our hotel block is now closed, so if you still need a room, contact Gena Matthews at gmatthews@mhca.com.

Register Now!

Tigers Baseball Game

For all you sports fans, **Relias** is providing tickets to see the Chicago White Sox vs. Detroit Tigers at **Comerica Park** on Tuesday, August 14. If you're interested, email Gena Matthews at



gmatthews@mhca.com - space is limited and **mhca** members will receive priority status.

Request a Ticket!



Piquette Square Tour

Did you register for the Piquette Square for Veterans tour? Developed and managed by Southwest Solutions, Piquette Square provides permanent supportive housing for 150 formerly homeless veterans. It is the largest facility of its kind in the nation and has been called the "gold standard" of helping veterans rebuild their lives and reintegrate into the community.

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