

Name: _____

READING: A successful organization

Success can be a game with many players

by Sarah Murray



One of the side effects of the free food for Google staff is what is known as the 'Google 15' – the number of pounds that employees typically gain after joining the Internet company. But whether it is providing snacks and gourmet meals in the canteen, annual skiing trips or games rooms at the office, the philosophy behind such perks is the same – getting staff to meet each other, interact in informal settings and encourage teamwork.

One way the company does this is to hold competitions in everything, from office decorating to dancing and football, with prizes for the

winners. Managers also receive a quarterly 'celebratory fund' either to reward accomplishments or to build teamwork by going bowling, go-karting or dining out.

The Best Workplaces survey indicates that such initiatives have a powerful effect. At Google Italy, for example, 90 per cent of the employees agreed that 'people celebrate special events around here'. Also in Italy, 100 per cent agreed that 'this is a friendly place to work' and 96 per cent agreed that 'there is a "family" or "team" feeling here'.

Another part of Google's objective is to make its workplace feel fun. Massage chairs, table-tennis tables, video games, lava lamps, hammocks, beanbags, bicycles, large rubber balls, couches and scooters are all part of the furniture in Google offices.

However, when it comes to the serious business of work, great emphasis is placed on engaging employees. 'What makes Google a great workplace is that the nature

of the work itself is very challenging and interesting,' says Nick Creswell, the company's university programmes manager for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. 'And for the type of people who really enjoy an intellectual challenge, that's the biggest appeal of working here.'

Fostering this intellectual activity is a policy giving employees a large degree of independence in deciding how to work – both in terms of the hours they work and how they do their jobs. 'There's a real culture of autonomy and empowerment,' says Mr Creswell. 'Individuals within the business understand what their own goals are within the context of their teams, and they have a lot of freedom to go out and make those happen.'

Even when it comes to learning and development, many programmes are voluntary and informal. Often it may be a case of inviting university faculty in to discuss their latest research. Google also invites prominent writers to give lunchtime talks about their books.



Read paragraph 1 of the article and choose the best definition for *perks*.

- Happiness and confidence in the workplace.
- Something your employer gives you in addition to your pay
- High-quality food and drink

B Read the article. Look at these phrases that summarize paragraphs 1-3. Then write similar phrases for paragraphs 4-7.

1. Philosophy behind the perks
2. Competitions and celebratory funds
3. Celebrating special events / friendly place to work

C Read the text, decide if these statements are true (T) or false (F).

| | TRUE | FALSE |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Google promotes the idea of staff getting together. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Every month, managers get money to build teamwork or reward staff. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Ninety per cent of Google Italy workers thought it was a friendly place to work. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. The furniture in Google offices is different to that in most offices. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. The work is challenging, and you need a university degree to work there. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Employees know what their objectives are and have the freedom to achieve them. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Employees have the opportunity to listen to well-known or important authors. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

D Match these nouns from the article (1-5) to their meanings (a-e).

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Accomplishments (paragraph 2) | a. Important new plans to achieve an aim |
| 2. Initiatives (paragraph 3) | b. Success in doing something |
| 3. Autonomy (paragraph 6) | c. Giving people the power to do something |
| 4. Empowerment (paragraph 6) | d. Teaching staff |
| 5. Faculty (paragraph 7) | e. Independence/freedom to make your own decisions |



Discuss these questions.

1. Would you like to work in a company like Google? Why? / Why not?

Yes, because _____

No, because _____

2. Would Google's philosophy work in your organization? Why? Why not?

Yes, because _____

No, because _____

3. Which of the perks or ideas mentioned in the article appeals to you the most?

_____, because _____
