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Joy, Inc.: How We Built A Workplace People Love



Synopsis

The moment you walk into Menlo's Innovations, you can sense the atmosphere full of energy, playfulness, enthusiasm, and maybe even . . . joy. As a package-delivery person once remarked, "I don't know what you do, but whatever it is, I want to work here." Every year, thousands of visitors come from around the world to visit Menlo Innovations, a small software company in Ann Arbor, Michigan. They make the trek not to learn about technology but to witness a radically different approach to company culture. CEO and "Chief Storyteller" Rich Sheridan removed the fear and ambiguity that typically make a workplace miserable. His own experience in the software industry taught him that, for many, work was marked by long hours and mismanaged projects with low-quality results. There had to be a better way. With joy as the explicit goal, Sheridan and his team changed everything about how the company was run. They established a shared belief system that supports working in pairs and embraces making mistakes, all while fostering dignity for the team. The results blew away all expectations. Menlo has won numerous growth awards and was named an Inc. magazine "audacious small company." It has tripled its physical office three times and produced products that dominate markets for its clients. Joy, Inc. offers an inside look at how Sheridan and Menlo created a joyful culture, and shows how any organization can follow their methods for a more passionate team and sustainable, profitable results. Sheridan also shows how to run smarter meetings and build cultural training into your hiring process. Joy, Inc. offers an inspirational blueprint for readers in any field who want a committed, energizing atmosphere at work "leading to sustainable business results."

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Customer Reviews

First off, I loved the book! It was nice to read, the writing is interesting and informative and I read it just a few sit-ings. Secondly, the book could have easily been called "how agile can work in your workplace" as many elements of kanban and agile are presented here (not to say these aren't great ideas!!!) These are ideas that are already widespread and quite mainstream today in computer software companies. So all in all, I don't come out of this book with a WOW factor but it is good to read on positive examples of successful agile implementations and reassurance of modern methodologies.

I recently completed my first book, an allegorical business novel, and joy was a thread that I had woven throughout my book. Just a week after finishing the manuscript, the producer of my weekly radio show scheduled Rich Sheridan as my guest to talk about Joy, Inc. I thoroughly enjoyed my interview with Rich and am completely intrigued as to how my company can adapt some of the winning strategies that Rich has deployed at Menlo. I was completely energized by the book and after interviewing Rich, I ended up adding a cameo appearance by Rich into the epilogue of my book. I am planning a field trip for my leadership team to Ann Arbor to see firsthand what Rich and his team have accomplished and to understand the challenges as well. I believe that Rich has hit on a formula that, while geared for a software development firm, can be tweaked for any type of firm. At minimum, the book will make you think about how the status quo may be paralyzing your business and holding back growth and innovation. At my technology and consulting firm, we are adapting the moveable tables in the open work area to a series of "living rooms", where our teams can work together on the wide variety of projects and client implementations, changing from one area to another as their work assignments change. We are going to look at how we might also take the

"origami" project management process and use the visual nature of the project board to help our teams understand scope and how to manage complex client projects. Giving is core to who we are, so we've incorporated giving back a percentage of our revenues to the charity of choice of our clients into our contracts. Like Menlo, we are also creating a business incubator, weaving the funding of that part of our business into our model. Thanks Rich for the inspiration and for showing companies that through thick and thin, if you have the right building blocks and the right metrics, you can create a sustainable business that attracts and retains talent.

If you are in the software development services business this is must reading. If you are interested in new management methods and their underlying values, read this. I am an agile and entrepreneurial coach and have recommended Joy Inc to my clients who loved it and are now working hard to transform their companies to be more like Menlo. Software people will especially appreciate what Joy Inc and Menlo has done to fulfill: "Our mission as an organization is to end human suffering in the world as it relates to technology." The next time you experience an app or some other tech and think "who ever designed this never understood me and what I need!" we can be pretty sure that it was NOT created by Menlo with their "High-Tech Anthropologist" and quality software development processes.

I met Rich a few months back through a very random encounter. This Book, Rich, and Menlo are experiences few ever get to enjoy in life. They all remind me of Walt, Mickey, and the Magic Kingdom. This might be an odd statement from someone with such a practical professional experience as a CFO. However, I have found inspiration in the former as well as the later. I have read many books about and have made educational visits to Walt Disney World. However, I have never found the practical application that I have found in Joy, Inc. We all want to do something professionally bigger than ourselves. Rich does not leave you hanging with just a "what could be", he takes you through his journey in creating something real. Think all of this is pixie dust? After making a six hour drive to Ann Arbor, Michigan I found tangible results that I could see for myself. I am thankful for caring individuals like Rich that choose to share their success with others. Buy the book, at a minimum you will be challenged going forward by "what could be". Don Davis, CFO Rural King

For those of us who have long suspected there is a better approach to work, Rich Sheridan has now documented proof of what is possible! And it's not a fairy tale being told by some theoretical

professor who hasn't had to actually make things happen in the real world. It was done by real people in the real business world and in an industry plagued by professional burn-out and high-dollar project failures!! Personally, I can't wait to begin shifting the culture of my own workplace and trying mini-Menlo experiments of our own... Even though we don't make software, I can see how these basic principles and strategies can apply to transform any workplace into one that fosters a culture of joy - and all the positive things that follow!

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