



Joy, Inc. by Richard Sheridan

Think you might want to read this book?

Joy, Inc. by Richard Sheridan is a blueprint for creating a workplace that people love. If you are interested in group dynamics, motivation, and industrial organization, you will find this book quite fascinating. It challenges the status quo across the board. If you lead a school, it will push your thinking, and if you are an edupreneur, it will give you ideas of different ways to structure your school. Ever personal,

Sheridan walks the reader through all aspects of Menlo Innovations, his software design and development company. Everything from hiring, marketing, billing, promotions, HR policies, and workflow are comprehensively explained. Most of the decisions at Menlo are counter-cultural and will make the reader question traditional practices. Perhaps the two most radical components of life at Menlo are (a) the card system - no work is done unless it is on an index card tacked on a public board, and (b) the pairing of workers on one computer. The idea is that work is visible to all and everyone is constantly collaborating and learning from a new colleague each week. A great read for anyone interested in efficiently running their school.

What would Socrates ask?

- What would change at your school if administrators evaluated the learning experience of students instead of teachers?
- Should all administrative teams be named something with “Learning” or “Learners” in their title?
- Should teachers be planning, assessing, and/or teaching in pairs?
- What are the structures we could put in place so that students are constantly sharing out their successes?
- Do you have systems in place that allow students and teachers to fail/reflect faster?
- Is the current state of teaching sustainable? If not, how can we change that?
- What is the right amount of time-off for a teacher each week/month/year/decade? Does it look the same for administrators?
- If we believe it’s the joyful teachers who make the best teachers, then why not make it an emphasis in hiring, and our school cultures?
- Does giving employees a cell phone/laptop imply that they are expected to be available at all hours and every day?
- How do we create student learning experiences where many different adults onboard seamlessly and give feedback seamlessly?
- Can we create a system where we report out on learning and joy?

Concepts

- Silence while working is anathema to productivity and joy; however, working in an open space full of chatter and activity leads to productivity and joy.

- “Scope creep” is when the primary focus of a group or action gets derailed by side priorities.
- We need everyone in our schools to have down time so that they can be well-rounded, and therefore, innovative and diligent over the long-term.
- Promotions that are peer-based are more satisfying and are accepted more readily.
- Banning earbuds promotes communication and innovation.
- Hiring and firing, as well as promotions should be peer led.
- Menlo workers frequently share-out new knowledge at a “Lunch ‘n Learn.”
- Menlo has no email. All communication is “High-Speed Voice Technology” (i.e., they talk face-to-face).
- Around 3:00, someone yells, “Walkies” and everyone walks around the building to stretch their legs.
- As part of the interview process, candidates are paired with multiple workers to see how well they partner.
- The interview process is quick. Sheridan feels companies lose good workers when the process is drawn out.
- “Sunk costs” refers to money/time already invested in a project.
- Don’t always assume low turnover is a sign of a healthy culture, as it could just be a complacent culture.

Quotes from the author

- (You should) “align the world’s outside perception of your company with your inside reality.”
- “Having honest critics is a good problem to have, even if it doesn’t feel that way in the moment.”
- “Pairing is the foundation of our work style and our learning system...it is one of the most potent managerial tools I have ever discovered because of all the traditional problems it helps solve. Pairing fosters a learning system, builds relationships, eliminates towers of knowledge, simplifies onboarding of new people and flushes out performance issues.”
- “Part of the vulnerability of not having all the answers is the humility to share your ideas with your team before they are fully formed.”
- “If members of your team show a spark of inspiration or passion, support them. Feed their dream and encourage them as they pursue it. It’s the best way to support someone’s leadership development.”
- “Fear manufactured by authority figures produces unethical behavior even in the most honest people.”

Quotes from others

- “A leader is best when people barely know he exists.” - Lao-Tzu
- “All anyone asks for is a chance to work with pride.” - W. Edwards Deming
- “(The traditional) formula is actually backward: happiness fuels success, not the other

