

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

Richard Sheridan

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Richard Sheridan : Joy, Inc.: How We Built a Workplace People Love before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joy, Inc.: How We Built a Workplace People Love:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book but in not innovative in todays environmentBy garklerFirst off, I loved the book! It was nice to read, the writing is interesting and informative and I read it just a few sit-ins.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 arent great ideas!!!) These are ideas that are already widespread and quite mainstream today in computer software companies.So all in all, i dont 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. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Joy Inc. inspired me By ChickeI 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. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Must reading for anyone in a software development services business By Jay G 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.

The moment you walk into Menlo 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 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.

"Joy Inc. is about a way of organizing work so logical, so effective, and so rewarding that you have to wonder why everyone doesn't do it." —Bo Burlingham, author, *Small Giants* About the Author Richard Sheridan is CEO and cofounder of Menlo Innovations, which has won the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility for six straight years and five revenue awards from Inc. magazine. He frequently speaks at business conferences and to major corporations such as Mercedes-Benz, Nike, and 3M. He lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Praise for JOY, INC. —BO BURLINGHAM, author, *Small Giants*, and editor at large, *Inc* magazine —JOSEPH GRENNY, coauthor, *Influencer* —STAN SLAP, author, *Bury My Heart at Conference Room* —FRANS JOHANSSON, author, *The Click Moment*, and CEO, *The Medici Group* —JOHN GALL, author, *Systemantics*, now in its third edition as *The Systems Bible* About the Author Richard Sheridan is CEO, Chief Storyteller, and cofounder of Menlo Innovations,

which has won the Alfred P. Sloan Award for Business Excellence in Workplace Flexibility for nine straight years and six revenue awards from Inc. magazine. He speaks at business conferences around the world and at major corporations such as Intel, Disney, Nike, and USAA. He lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A few weeks before the launch of Joy, Inc., I checked my Twitter feed at a conference I was attending, and there it was: Inc. magazine editor-at-large Leigh Buchanan's review of my book. Leigh's article, titled "The Most Joyful Company in America—What Every Business Can Learn from the Brilliant Menlo Innovations," concluded with this thought: "I wish the world were full of joyful companies. Personally, I'd settle for decent ones. But joy is aspirational. Add it to the mission statement, by all means. Then sit down and have a good, hard think about what joy means for you." Hers was the first big piece to be published about the book, and it was just the beginning. I was sure I felt like any playwright or director would after receiving the first professional review of their work. I wanted to jump up and shout with happiness to all the people around me, but all I could do was retweet the article and beam joyfully. Since then, Fortune, Forbes, Fast Company, and many other outlets have all weighed in on joy—as did many readers. It's been several months since the release of Joy, Inc., and my life has changed tremendously. Although the journey has sometimes been tiring, it has been a wonderful one. All our effort to make this book happen was worth it because I foresaw the incredible effect that the book would have on the Menlo team and our readers. Prior to the book's release I knew I had written the book I wanted to—and I still liked reading it. I knew the press would be drawn to the message, I knew my speaking engagements would increase, and I knew tours of Menlo Innovations would increase in number and change in composition. I was certain that many new doors would open. All of that has indeed happened, and I have some wonderful new stories to tell. The most delightful surprise occurred within Menlo itself. I could see it in the team, hear it on our tours, and sense it in our client interactions. The Menlo team itself had changed. Many team members read the book and began to see Menlo in a different, more joyful light. Some team members, especially newer employees, commented that until they read Joy, Inc. they hadn't grasped the full depth of my story, my cofounder James Goebel's role in building the Menlo we know today, or the company's journey to joy. In short, this "most joyful company" became even more confident and serious about joy. We began holding each other and our company more accountable to the joy we hoped to produce in the world. Potential clients and tour visitors could sense the renewed electricity of our team's energy. Our tours brought in senior and C-Level visitors from around the world, from companies including USAA Insurance, Steelcase, Bosch, QVC, Liberty Mutual, and McKinsey. Coca-Cola Enterprises was a particularly memorable tour; senior executives were so impressed by our joy that they bade a team member to come back to witness our Extreme Interview event and later attend our weeklong Deep Dive into Joy class. This kind of reaction to our workplace joy became commonplace. If there was ever any doubt on our part that joy would forever be our core message, this heartfelt response from our visitors sealed our conviction that we are on an important path for Menlo and the businesses that hope to adopt our message. At the close of the May 2014 Scrum Alliance Conference in New Orleans, a conference centered on "joie de vivre"—joy of living—I was asked to deliver the final keynote. My experiences at other conferences have taught me that being the closing speaker at an event is an honorable, yet dangerous position. You have the chance to leave a lasting effect on the attendees, but only if they stay to hear it. Each of the six hundred attendees would receive a copy of Joy, Inc., but I knew my job would be more difficult than getting them to take the book home—to create a lasting effect I needed them to read the book. Soon I found out that word was spreading about my closing speech. It wasn't clear to me how this buzz had started, but whatever had triggered it the message being spread was: "Don't miss the closing keynote; you'll be sorry if you do. By the time I gave my speech, the room was full and anticipation was high. As I concluded my talk, the audience leapt to its feet. My first standing ovation. This was the reaction I had hoped for. I gave them hope that change was possible. I gave them practical takeaways. I spoke to their deep desire to be a part of a team that works hard to put the message they believe in out into the world. It was a feeling like no other. I could feel tears welling. After things settled we proceeded to QA, and afterward it happened again—a second standing ovation. I have never experienced a more humbling moment, and it wouldn't be the last time. Joy was the message I was carrying, and the world was hungry for it. The very next morning, I checked my Twitter feed and saw tweets from several attendees who had already read the entire book. They read it into the night, in the airport, and on their plane rides home. Check. I had achieved the desired effect. Since the book was published, Intel, Disney, Walmart, Nike, PayPal, and eBay are just a few of the companies that have called me in to show them a better way of running their teams and improving their company approach. Perhaps the most thrilling call I received was from Virgin, where I was invited to spend a day with a small group exploring people-centered innovation in New York City with Sir Richard Branson. Life had indeed changed in ways I had hoped but could have never expected. So what do I have to offer that companies like Disney, Nike, eBay, and Walmart don't already have? What so many businesses really want is joy and a way to get there. Many teams are operating in fear; they are working hard and they are tired. They want a job with meaning, a reason for all their hard work—a reason that transcends pay, title, or authority. Our message shows businesses not only how to create happier and more successful employees, but also how to produce practical and improved business results. All of this new attention on Menlo is so exhilarating and inspiring that it would be easy to lose the real

reason the book came to be: You, the reader. You might be a CEO, a CIO, or an executive trying to lead in a new, different, and compelling way. Equally likely, you are none of those—rather, you are a dedicated, caring employee trying to bring joy into your work life in the same way I had struggled to do so in the earliest part of my career. I have met you at conferences or interacted with you via e-mail, Twitter, or LinkedIn. Like many people, you may feel that you’ve lost your shot at a happy career. The truth is, while you may have become disenchanted with your workplace, it isn’t too late to work in a place you love. With the lessons laid out in this book, you have in your hand the guide to making the difference in your work life that you have always wanted. The Menlo message has helped many employees out of low points in their careers. One young German named Christian wrote to tell me: “You saved me.” He went on to describe at great length his journey to career joy, then disillusionment. He shared a low point of his professional life: “I dropped everything, I was broken and my parents were worrying about me. I promised myself never, ever to work in a company again, because I realized the system is broken—the system we all live in today. Well, tell someone that you won’t work in a company because the system is broken, it gets you very strange responses; they all think you’ve lost your mind.” But from the many employees I have encountered at low points in their careers, there are many who know that accepting an unhappy and broken workplace is not necessary. As Samina, an e-Commerce Release Manager, passionately wrote me from deep inside one of the world’s largest and most successful organizations: “I do believe that we have an opportunity of a lifetime to make joy happen. As history has proved time and again, it only takes a handful of folks with sincerity, passion, strategy, and a ready-to-do-whatever-it-takes attitude to win a battle against a thousand-times-bigger crowd of passive and self-focused individuals.” I have seen and worked with many people who’ve made positive changes to their difficult career situations since reading this book. Many changes were small at first, but every person who has taken steps to improve their workplace environment and satisfaction has reported joy from even the most gradual improvements they have made. Perhaps they tried paper planning, or a stand-up meeting, or they took down a wall or two and tried pairing a few times. They didn’t have to quit their jobs or change their entire company. Often it started with the phrase, “Let’s try something new, let’s run an experiment.” You have this same opportunity. There is no reason to give up on the idea of working in a workplace you love. Finally, I want to thank you for picking up a copy of Joy, Inc. and allowing me into your life, even if for only a few hours. And thank you for the humbling opportunity to make a difference in your work and in your joy. For me, this is the deepest joy of all.

RICH SHERIDAN CEO, Chief Storyteller Menlo Innovations@menloprez Rich Sheridan was close to writing the wrong book. I stopped him dead in his tracks during the latest stages of his manuscript writing and implored him to change direction. This wouldn’t be a difficult change in what he’d already written to that point, but it was profoundly important for what he was going to say to the world. The book he thought he was writing was Joy, Inc. The book he was almost going to send to the world could have been called Change, Inc. Perhaps a good book, perhaps an important book, but not this book. Not the book I thought the world needed. Not the book I knew—from personal experience and from seeing his firm—that Rich was capable of writing. Not the book you all needed to read. Not the book that perhaps only Rich could write. In short, he was not about to write one of the most important business culture books of all time. I told him it was time to take a stand. For joy. Too many business books do the same thing. They equivocate, they hedge, they apologize. They let you, the reader, off the hook and in the process they take away your hope—hope that things could be profoundly different than they are right now. This could have been that kind of business book. Quite frankly, I was going to do everything in my power to make sure that didn’t happen. If I didn’t, the world would be denied a very important message—one it is desperate to hear and needs to hear. It’s also a message that Rich Sheridan, through a combination of his wiring, experience, and passion, is uniquely qualified to give you. You see, when you tantalize readers with the notion of joy, and then tell them how to get there, that’s a big promise. Everyone promises to help you change your culture. We’ve been writing about it for over three decades. I personally want to be Menlo. I want the joy. I told Rich, “I don’t think you need to equivocate by suggesting that readers can pick the target they want.” That message was unnecessarily tolerant. Crap—anyone can pick money, performance, or whatever. But joy—whom’s had the guts to promise that? To be honest, I’m sick to death of writers who don’t take a stance. The TV shows I watched as a boy typically opened with the scene of a business-suited father coming home from work at the end of the day, carrying an expensive briefcase and whistling a happy tune. As the inconsequential sitcom plot unfolded, there were no references to Dad’s actual work “back at the office.” No writer dared bring down the mood with sordid details about work. Consequently, the message of the fifties was as vague as it was odd. Work was a place that called for a suit and hat and required actions of a mysterious nature—that left employees whistling show tunes at the end of the day. My own father painted a very different picture of his workplace. We watched our TV from the other side of the tracks. The people in our neighborhood wore thick aprons and gloves at work to keep the gunk, slime, and glue off their clothes. You didn’t see Dad or any of our neighbors sporting a fedora any more than you spotted one of them whistling as he came home from work. And most certainly the woman next door, who worked at the fish cannery, didn’t skip her way into her doily-adorned living room. After work, she went straight to the kitchen, where she tried her best to wash the stench of fish from her

hands. Given the circumstances on our side of the tracks, people complained endlessly about the backbreaking and mind-numbing nature of their jobs along with the stupidity and pettiness of their bosses. They hated their jobs. It's what they talked about. It's what they told jokes about. It's what they wrote songs about. To paraphrase a line from City Slickers, if my dad's hate for his job had been people, he'd have been China. With this in mind, imagine my surprise some twenty years later when one day I found myself whistling as I walked out the door on the way to work, no less. I loved what I did. I wore neither suit nor fedora, but somehow I had found a way to extract joy from my job. What a shock. At first I thought my satisfaction at work stemmed from the fact that I had a career rather than a job. Not true. A couple of years later, as the exhilaration of first creating a nifty product of my very own gave way to managing the unrelenting demands of customers and employees who were both interdependent and at each other's throats, I learned that it wasn't the side of the tracks you worked on that determined your satisfaction. It was something else—something far more elusive. Working in a job you call a profession or in a building that's part of a "campus" or, for that matter, a mine chock-full of jewels doesn't necessarily lead to whistling as you skip along your path homeward. Joy doesn't spring from the nature of your product or service; it lies in the something else. But what? Then I met Richard Sheridan. Four decades earlier, Rich had entered the field of software development, filled with the notion that creating software would be a genuine hoot. But then, like me, he learned that clients—no matter how cool the products or nifty the gadgets his firm was producing for them—changed their minds in mid-development, leading to ugly meetings with tons of finger-pointing and much gnashing of teeth. Code-writing employees became content experts who didn't dare take a day off work or, heaven forbid, leave on vacation, for fear of causing a costly intellectual vacuum in their absence. What had started as a gentle romp down Candy Cane Lane was now a tortuous grind through the valley of unfulfilled expectations—the same valley I occasionally visited and was now trying to avoid. Where had we gone wrong? Better yet, how could we return our firms to places that left us with a spring in our step and a tune on our lips? Rich had the answer. While I plowed away at creating interpersonal training, he studied joy and worked it into his company, and now all of those insights are in this book. I visited his place of work and hung on his every word. It was amazing to watch people eagerly creating, collaborating, and interfacing with customers, brainstorming in teams, and eventually meeting harsh deadlines and demanding product specs—all with a clear sense of passion and accomplishment. A few months passed while I tried to implement what I had learned from Rich back at my place of work. One day, he sent me an e-mail informing me that his new book was coming out soon and it would focus on how to shape an organization's culture, with some emphasis on shaping it into a joyous workplace. The primary message would be that you could choose whatever type of organization you wanted and shape it into that. The point would be that you had to be intentional about your culture. What? Had Rich gone mad? So I wrote him the following: Rich, your book needs to have one message. If you're going to call the book Joy, Inc. it can't be a book that says you can create whatever corporate culture you want and here's how. Everyone promises to help you change your culture. I personally want the joy you allude to in the title, and what I saw firsthand. I went on to tell Rich, Your voice is the voice of hope, followed by the voice of practical wisdom. For the love of Mike, don't stop short of telling people to seek a culture of joy. You're being far too modest by hinting they can choose whatever. Somebody needs to stand up for joy. Please consider it your calling. Please don't equivocate your way into another book on culture change. Anything that steps off the stance of "Joy is the purpose and here's how to get it" lessens your message, raises doubt in the reader, and throws the title into question. I was successful in my exhortations. Joy, Inc. is the book you need to read. Joy, Inc. takes a stand—for joy in the workplace. It's about darn time. **KERRY PATTERSON** Cofounder, VitalSmarts Author, Influencer, Crucial Conversations, Crucial Confrontations, Change Anything **INTRODUCTION** Why Joy? Joy in business sounds ridiculous. Perhaps that's why, early on, I hedged on writing about building a culture of joy, why I was tempted to equivocate. Joy is a pie-in-the-sky, cymbals-clanging, music-playing, radical dream. Joy is a word that carries connotations of love, happiness, health, purpose, and values. Joy might work at home, or at church, or with a hobby—but not at the office. It's a concept that has no place in the corporate world. It certainly does not sound profitable. It may sound radical, unconventional, and bordering on being a crazy business idea. However—as ridiculous as it sounds—joy is the core belief of our workplace. Joy is the reason my company, Menlo Innovations, a customer software design and development firm in Ann Arbor, exists. It defines what we do and how we do it. It's the single shared belief of our entire team. And joy is what brought you to me. You see, I know why you're reading this book. It's because you are hoping, somewhat beyond hope, to bring joy into your own workplace. Deep down you know that there is a better way to run a business, a team, a company, a department. You've always known it. These thoughts come to you just before falling asleep or just after waking. Then your day begins, and the idea of transformational change evaporates like a maddening dream you can't seem to reassemble after waking from it. Although you may be silently (or not so silently) tortured in your current broken company culture, you haven't given up completely. Change is still possible. I was in the same place once—deeply unsatisfied with my work and my own ability to do anything about it. But things can be better. My company, Menlo Innovations, has captured joy and made it true and sustainable for everyone who works with us and for us. In this book, I will give you a good look

into the radical practices we employ at Menlo that make our work such a unique experience. I'll also share my personal journey from youthful joy to deep disillusionment to endless optimism in a workplace of joy. Imagine JoySetting out to intentionally design and transform an organization is a monumental task. And yet you must have an idea of what your dream company would look like and how it would run. If your company could look like anything you wanted, what one word would describe the resulting organization? Successful? Profitable? Energized? Fun? Fulfilling? Productive? Dominant? Innovative? Engaged? How about joyful? If you assemble a team of human beings to create something new and compelling, joy can be described quite simply: Joy is designing and building something that actually sees the light of day and is enjoyably used and widely adopted by the people for whom it was intended. Tangible joy means delivering a product or service to the world that's so enjoyed, in fact, that people stop you on the street and say, "Really, you did that? I love it." If you can accomplish this outcome while elevating the spirit of the hardworking team, you will have achieved a result that most companies only dream about. Menlo Innovations, my version of a joyful company, is on a personally selfish yet noble journey. I desperately wanted to work in a joyful place with joyful people achieving joyful outcomes. I wanted to have fun at work while producing wonderful results within a sustainable business. My first serious pursuit of joy came as vice president of RD at a public company where, for two years, I achieved the culture I was seeking—before the Internet bubble burst and took it all away. What I learned in those two years became the prototype for what would become Menlo Innovations in 2001. Since its founding, Menlo has grown steadily. We've won five Inc. magazine growth awards, tripled our physical office three times, and produced products that dominate markets for our clients. We've also received quite a bit of notice for our unique culture, have been recognized as one of the ten happiest places to work on the planet by the Chief Happiness Officer in Denmark, and were named one of 2013's twenty-five most audacious small companies by Inc. magazine. Menlo is noted annually as one of the world's Most Democratic Workplaces by WorldBlu, founded by Traci Fenton. Every year, thousands of people come from all over the world just to visit Menlo and experience our culture firsthand. And I sleep well every night, knowing I have personally achieved the joy I sought, within a company that has been profitable every year without any outside investment. Our countercultural approach is not complicated, although getting to simple is almost never easy. Joy? Yoursure Kidding Joy is not a word often associated with business success. This is particularly true in my industry: designing, building, launching, and maintaining complex software. The software industry, after all, defined the term "death march" in a business context: programmers pulling all-nighters, bringing sleeping bags to work, jettisoning time with loved ones, canceling vacations. These death marches often lead to the saddest story of all: projects canceled before they ever see the light of day. The programmers look back over the litter of their personal lives and wonder why they put in so much effort. That same software industry also foisted on the world the idea that users are stupid. Those "stupid users" will need Dummies books to help them successfully use our beautifully designed technology because they're not smart enough to comprehend what we've built. Our industry taught the world to accept awful programming errors and gaping security holes as a natural outcome of technological progress. I know this as well as anyone. After an incredibly hopeful beginning, for most of my career I was as far from joy as you could get. As I advanced from a programmer in the trenches to an executive of a high-flying public company, I was an active member of those death marches. I was burning out and had difficulty sleeping at night as I wrestled with customer promises that couldn't be kept and the demands I placed on my team. We shipped poor-quality products that offered mountains of trouble for the users. When I voiced my concerns, executive peers assured me that there would be plenty of time to fix problems after delivery. I never saw that promise come true. When abundant problems did arrive as predicted, my bosses told me they never asked me to create such crappy products. I used to think it was just me and that everyone else was doing okay. Now I know I was not alone. So many people now reach out to me to see how they can bring joy into their workplaces: health care systems, schools, colleges, churches, nonprofits, automotive companies, medical equipment manufacturers. I also hear from some of the highest-flying companies on the planet, companies that win awards for their cultures. Even they haven't found joy. It doesn't have to be that way. In our pursuit of this elusive joy, Menlo has changed everything about our approach and our process—and along the way, turned traditional ideas about management and culture and sustainability on their head. From our radical changes, we've developed lessons that can be applied to any organization, not just software teams. I hope our experience with building joy into the core of our business inspires you to seek the change you have always hoped was possible. In the following pages, we'll explore disciplines that executive management can use to bring joy into their own work environments: simple, repeatable processes that actually feed into predictable outcomes; powerful human resources management without traditional HR; products designed specifically for the intended consumers; and quality practices that ensure the phone never rings with problems. Joy, Inc. will teach you about implementing structure without bureaucracy and making decisions without meetings. You will learn about the effect of removing "manufactured fear" from the workplace and how to build human energy by removing ambiguity. We'll also look at preserving basic human principles such as dignity, teamwork, discipline, trust, and joy. While I use many examples from my own journey, it is not my intention to suggest that the way we do things at my company is exactly the way you should do things at yours.

I have, however, learned over the years that tangible examples can be very helpful, and yet they are rare in business books. I have lived the stories in this book over a career that has spanned more than forty years. This book is intended as experiential storytelling, meant to encourage and inspire because, all too often, leading cultural change is a very lonely pursuit. We are lucky to host many smart, conscientious academics who come to visit our company to see firsthand what we have created. They often espouse theories of why Menlo works, and are puzzled when they find out we didn't develop our practices by first deeply studying the more complex theories of organizational design and teamwork. For Menlo, building a culture of joy was simple: we wanted to create a place where we were excited to come to work every day. A Joyful Culture Is Shared A joyful culture draws in people from outside the company, including clients, the local community, and the press. A cornerstone of Menlo's success is our ability to pass along our ideas and practices to others. In 2012 alone, we hosted 241 separate tour groups, totaling 2,193 visitors. These visitors came from all around the world to visit the basement of a parking structure in downtown Ann Arbor in what many consider to be the flyover zone of the United States. The tours are promoted almost entirely by word of mouth; we don't advertise the tours, other than with a passing mention on our Web site. Some are paid, but most are free. I personally lead many of them. The visitors come seeking what I was searching for so many years before and what you are seeking now. When I lead tours, I start by saying, "Welcome to Menlo, a place that has created an intentional culture focused on the business value of joy." Visitors are often stunned to hear Menlo described this way. They believe that we are an interesting software company, and by visiting us they might gain some clever takeaways that can help their own technical team. But once they are here, they are confronted by joy that is so tangible and out front it is impossible to avoid. Our version of joy in business has implications for a much wider audience within their own company, regardless of industry. Why does joy need to be the focus? "Well," I ask visitors, "what do you think would happen if half the Menlo team had joy and half didn't? Which half would you want us to assign to your imagined project?" Of course, they always pick the joyful half of my team. "But why would you want the joyful half of my team?" I ask. "What difference would that make?" Answers come pouring out: "They'd be more productive." "They'd be more engaged." "They'd be easier to work with." "They'd do better work." "They'd care more about the outcome." Anyone can quickly and easily recognize that a joyful team will produce better outcomes. And our joy is not only internal. Our focus is to ensure that the work we do in this room gets out into the world, to be widely adopted and delightfully used by large numbers of the intended audience. A joyful company cares deeply about the change it is making in the world. You can't sustainably achieve that outside joy unless there is also inside joy. With this book, I invite you, too, to peek inside our doors at Menlo and see what joy can look like. Feel the energy of a space that is wide open, flexible, and devoid of physical barriers to human communication. Hear the team at work, as pairs of people engage in active and animated conversations. See the walls covered with paper and yarn, pushpins and colorful sticky dots. Learn everything you can about how we created our Joy, Inc. and search, along with us, for answers to the following questions: What is an intentionally joyful culture? How do you reinvent a broken culture and get to joy? Can you do this while being profitable? Joy Will Lift You and Your Team The principles that drive human organizations are similar to those that lift airplanes off the ground. Think of the contrast between modern flying machines and the failed attempts of ancient man. In my early career, I tried the managerial equivalent of those, like Icarus, who strapped on feathered wings and flapped with all their might, yet never succeeded in getting airborne. I accomplished little despite all the effort, and became tired and frustrated. We all know that the Wright brothers broke through and flew—but why were they the first to succeed where myriad men had failed? They also had plenty of stiff competition among their contemporaries, including Samuel Pierpont Langley. Langley led a well-funded, highly educated team of scientists in the race to build the first powered, manned airplane. It lost the flight race to the Wright brothers, who were total unknowns at the time, and promptly quit any further exploration into flight. There are many theories about why the Wright brothers were able to fly and Langley was not. I have a simple one. Langley was trying to build an airplane. The Wright brothers wanted to fly.