

At Zappos, it's all fun and business

by [Executive Leadership](#) on April 8, 2014 3:00pm
in [Best-Practices Leadership, Leaders & Managers](#)

Most CEOs abide by social norms. Not Tony Hsieh.

When a consultant, Rana Florida, received an email from Hsieh a few years ago, she was struck by the format. Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, opened by writing, “You probably receive a lot of emails like i do, so i’m going to use bullet points instead.”

Then he listed five concise bullets, each promoting some aspect of his business. Florida admired the email’s passionate tone and how Hsieh ignored capital letters and punctuation while getting right to the point.

Soon after, she visited Hsieh at his Las Vegas headquarters. When she arrived, she tried to shake hands when Hsieh replied, “We don’t shake hands; we give hugs.”

Then she presented her business card. He said, “We don’t have business cards either.”

Leading Florida on a company tour, Hsieh told her that the same tour is available to the public. He embraces transparency and welcomes anyone who’s curious—including competitors—to visit and see how Zappos runs.

Similarly, Hsieh allows any Zappos employee to talk to the media. He wants everyone on his team to speak freely.

During her one-hour tour, Florida noticed that employees dressed as they pleased. Piercings, purple hair and ripped jeans were commonplace.

They also festooned their workspace with streamers and decorated their offices with mismatched furniture and quirky memorabilia.

Yet Florida could see that Hsieh meant business. A sign in a central area provided daily updates on the company’s inventory, sales and units in stock.

— Adapted from *Upgrade*, Rana Florida, McGraw-Hill.