

Going a Little Bit Bananas Helps Spark Creativity at Town Center Offices

A banana republic has taken over a small corner of Ford's Town Center offices. And you'd have to be wearing blinders to miss it, or rather, them.

Lounging comfortably on a couch, decked out in festive garb reflecting the season, are two life-sized, stuffed bananas, affectionately by their "handlers" as Jason and Jason. (They were recently named in a contest during Ford's Take Your Child to Work Day.)

The silly stuffed fruit is comfortably arranged on a couch behind glass windows overlooking a large common area. Ford employees often stop to check out their outfits, snap pictures, and, inevitably, giggle.

So what's the story? Don't make like a banana and split ... read on:

It all began with an outing for a team of Ford block layout engineers at Dave and Buster's. "Owner" **Joe Provenzano**, Technical Supervisor DPA0/1, and the team were apparently on a Skee-Ball roll at the arcade. They cashed in a huge pile of tickets for the first large, stuffed banana. Since purchasing Jason No. 1 (what we'll call him here) was a joint decision, it was only natural that Provenzano bring him to work.

Jason No. 1 had a much quieter existence in PDC before he and his second banana sidekick were moved to the Town Center offices. Now these top bananas have some celebrity clout – they were even captured in a local TV news segment about the new Town Center offices.

Despite their new-found fame, there are no second bananas when it comes to their handlers – it's truly a team effort.

For example, on a recent day in early June, the Jasons were wearing graduation caps, one of which Block Engineer **Danielle Kozak** brought from her closet.



The "banana handlers" from left: Joe Provenzano, Chintan Sharma, Dawn Chianetta, Madelyn Coin, and Danielle Kozak.

Other banana handlers include:

- **Dawn Chianetta**, Senior Block Engineer;
- **Madelyn Coin**, Project Manager, Block Layout Engineering
- **Chintan Sharma**, Block Engineer, and Provenzano.

Every season, it seems, brings a new theme for the two [musa sapientum](#), which, coincidentally, means “fruit of the wise men.” For example, shortly before the Memorial Day weekend, the bananas were surrounded by American flags, with Jason No. 2 proudly clutching Old Glory.

“It takes very little time on our part to make everyone smile,” Chianetta said.

This creative team in Block Engineering may be onto something. According to a recent Wired Magazine article entitled “[Laughter Marks a Successful Culture of Innovation](#),” laughter can help spark new ideas and a whole lot more:

“Fostering a culture of innovation — and having fun while doing it — is a crucial part of business success,” according to the article. “Humor can lighten things up, foster camaraderie, strengthen your support network, build a family atmosphere, and remind you that you can’t take yourself too seriously. Those elements create a fantastic motivator that can drive you to be creative and excel. Work hard and work smart, but don’t forget to laugh and [have fun](#).”

There’s no question this team is dedicated to their real jobs, but let’s just say the bananas help they and passersby peel away extra layers of stress.

“They’re part of what we do ... They solve issues. They’re probably two of my best block engineers,” Provenzano joked.

Plus, as Provenzano noted, people “seem to get a kick out of it.”

“Anytime you’re in a work environment, the more fun you have the more creative you are,” he said.