

▶ WORLD CUP

England fans have a reason to celebrate

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MANY people define work as being wedged in a warehouse willing the minutes away. So how exactly is this a break?

There are 400 of us crammed into a unit in Byker's Hoult's Yard. Every other face is twisted into a knot that only Picasso would call a smile. Solicitors, designers and PR agents have left work to fulfil their other gruelling duty, supporting England through a World Cup.

The World Cup in a Warehouse event has been organised to allow businesspeople to gaze pleadingly at England's final group match.

But organisers have been careful to dangle enough carrots to drag bosses away from their desks in daylight. For the philanthropic, there's a raffle for the Tony Blair Sports Foundation. For the deal-makers, it's been branded a networking event, a term used to justify everything from golf to dinners and mud wrestling. And for everyone else, there are burgers and beer.

Hoult's Yard managing director Charlie Hoult said: "During the last World Cup, I went to a very similar event in Brick Lane. Everyone wants to watch England, and we've got the right environment for it."

Coco Moon managing director Sharon Kell called it "an excuse to watch without feeling guilty", while Phil Cambers of SITS Group left the projector on at work for staff to watch the game.

He said: "It's a bit of a jolly but also a good networking event. It's also a sign things are improving, because last year I



BACK OF THE NETWORKING North East business people world cup party at Hoult's Yard

wouldn't have taken the time to do this." Mere Mortals MD Steve Walmsley gave all 46 staff the afternoon off, while new UNW partner Paul Kaiser said the company let employees watch TVs in the meeting room.

"It's part of creating a caring employee culture", he said, before adding: "I'm here for the networking opportunities really. Football's not my number one sport, I'm more of a rugby man."

As England fans, we demand certain things from our football. We want to discuss real issues and then make up

more to fill the extra space. We expect it to be difficult, and to pull victory from the jaws of defeat.

And, more often than not, we expect to embarrassingly drop victory into a muddy puddle and ruin it.

Spectators didn't seem all that surprised that England made them sweat by not adding to Jermain Defoe's goal. And the injury time American goal that knocked them off top spot gave them that familiar sense of mild disappointment that many of us secretly crave.

Viz Comics founder Chris Donald, who

video

For videos following last night's match, go to www.journalive.co.uk/worldcup

also won the raffle prize of £500, said: "It's been superb. There's an interesting mix of van drivers and solicitors here."

"Next to me there were some working class people and in front of them was a bunch of solicitors."