



The Power of Humor

A proven approach for boosting productivity in the workplace

BY CAROL BROOKS, SR/WA

While working in corporate America, I was blessed with a few great bosses. These leaders were a standout because they regularly exercised their charismatic muscle. Not only were they brilliant, they embraced an important ingredient in leadership: a healthy sense of humor. Their propensity to laughter and keeping the work environment light caused their teams to feel more secure, more trusting, and in the long run more creative and productive. These managers had the capability of dealing with tough top-

down decisions and communicating new policies that brought cohesion to the team versus divisiveness. By using their charisma, they became miracle workers in the workplace. You simply wanted to do your very best for this kind of leader.

I travel extensively on Southwest Airlines, and even though their planes aren't designed for comfort, they try to make up for it with their humor. For example, an attendant will break into a song about why so many travelers choose Southwest

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with its free snacks and beverages. You can tell that some attendants are forcing themselves to be funny. Yet, as we sit neatly squished into our teeny tiny seats, we appreciate them just for their effort. Southwest uses humor as their branding, and by doing so they create a fun corporate culture.

According to Michael Kerr, an international business speaker, President of Humor at Work and author of *The Humor Advantage: Why Some Businesses are Laughing all the Way to the Bank*, surveys suggest that humor can be at least one of the keys to success. More than 90 percent of executives believe a sense of humor is important for career advancement, while 84 percent feel that people with a good sense of humor do a better job. Another study found that the two most desirable traits in leaders were a strong work ethic and a good sense of humor.

Here are the top five reasons why humor creates a successful work environment:

1. People Will Enjoy Working With You. Let’s face it. People want to work with people they like. Tasteful humor is a great way to win friends and influence people. But how can we be funny when there may be absolutely nothing to laugh about? Try being tastefully funny but not offensive. As a leader, don’t allow stress to rob your sense of humor. For starters, don’t take yourself seriously.

2. Humor is a Potent Stress Buster. “It’s a triple whammy,” says Kerr. “Humor offers a cognitive shift in how you view your stressors. It’s the emotional and physical responses that relax you when you laugh.”

3. It is Humanizing. Humor builds common ground. It has a way of bringing people together.

4. Humor Puts Others at Ease. Humor is a way to break through the tension barrier. Those who are able to laugh in response to a conflict are more effective because they can more quickly shift from a single mindset solution to a collaborative and collective one.

5. Ha + Ha = Aha! Since humor relieves stress and puts people at ease, it’s fair to say that it leads to creative thinking. Humor and creativity enable us to observe a challenge in a new way and make new connections we’ve not thought about before. Humor creates an environment for innovation because people are more inspired when they’re relaxed.

It’s never too late to hone your leadership skills and master the art of humor in the workplace. Once you do, you will witness the evolution of creativity and success in yourself and your team. 🌟



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