

INSPIRE

On Leadership

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How Humor Strengthens Influence

Humor and laughter go beyond plain old fun. Laughing has been proven to be therapeutic, morale-boosting, and even good for the bottom line. Here are five ways humor can add to your company's wellness and success.

Humor reduces stress

Stress has a profound effect on us, not only on morale but also on physical health. Stress can bring burnout, reduced motivation, and loss of self-esteem, negatively affecting productivity. However, there's a cost-effective answer.

According to the Mayo Clinic, "laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and increases the endorphins released by your brain." The result? Muscle relaxation, a decrease in blood pressure, and other physical symptoms of stress.

Humor builds trust

You should take your business seriously. But don't take yourself seriously. Instead, use a little self-deprecating humor in your next meeting. For example, pick a parenting fail that happened last week. Or share how you tried that event and only two people showed. Being able to laugh at yourself goes a long way to making others feel

comfortable with you. It's a great way to break down weird walls of starchy professionalism and allows people to get to know you personally.

Humor enhances leadership

Leadership is influence. Humor can increase influence. Good humor should never put people down, perpetuate negative stereotypes, or veil criticism. Instead, it should fold people in, release endorphins and strengthen communication. Bad workplace humor creates an 'in-group and an 'out-group. It thrives on gossip, and gossip erodes trust in leadership. You can have both net-income growth and humor in your workplace. In addition, you can have accountability and a mullet in your headshot. You don't have to choose between fun and winning in business.

Two points of application for humor in meetings and talks:

- > Make a sandwich: state your point, illustrate it with humor, and remake the point again
- > Test your story on a spouse/trusted friend who will be brutally honest

I'm rooting for you.

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