

Putting Humor to Work for More Success and Less Stress

... is one of the easiest, most effective, and certainly the most fun way to manage workplace stress, provide inspiring customer service, attract and keep great employees, reduce conflict, create an atmosphere of trust and openness, spark creative solutions to day-to-day challenges, improve communication, boost morale, and foster productive and healthy workplaces.

Putting humor to work...

- Isn't about telling jokes or being funny – *It's about a sense of perspective*
- Isn't about being *unprofessional* – *It's about being even more professional*
- Isn't about being *unproductive* – *It's a tool to help workplaces improve productivity*
- Isn't just a workplace tool – *It's an indicator as to how healthy your workplace is*

Putting humor to work is about practicing safe humor...

- Safe humor laughs with people, *not at people*; laughs at situations, not people
- Safe humor avoids *sexist, racist, or ethnic topics*
- Safe humor is considerate of the *timing, situation, and audience*
- The safest form of humor, especially as a leader, is *laughing at yourself*

Managing stress with humor

REWARD:

Reward yourself, your employees and your customers when things go wrong. Reward your stressors. Celebrate at your busiest times. Create a "Worst Work Day" weekly or monthly award, or a "I Had to Deal With the Most Obnoxious Customer on the Planet" weekly award.

REFRAME:

Mentally change your perspective on a stressful situation to find the funny in it. Exaggerate wildly, put yourself in someone else's shoes, try the old, "the bad news is _____", but the good news is _____", or ask yourself, in a humorous way, "How could this situation have been much, much worse?"

RELAX:

Take a five-minute "humor break" to regain some clarity and perspective. Remind yourself of how easy it really is to choose your own attitude and reaction. Reflect on a funny story. Create a humor first aid kit for "serious" emergencies. Or use a "laugh-line" and implore someone to make you laugh!

It's a tool to
help workplaces
improve productivity.



INSPIRING WORKPLACES

THE WAY WORK OUGHT TO BE

Say what? Communicating with humor

- “HOW” you say things often matters more than “WHAT” you say!
- People are 5x more likely to comply with a request when it’s served with humor
- Use humorous quotes, funny cartoons, top-10 lists, fun photos and stories to connect with people and deliver any message more effectively
- Create more inspiring meetings by adding humor: create fun agendas, give out door prizes, have a “humor break,” hold “theme” meetings
- HA + HA = AHA! Creating a fun workplace atmosphere stimulates greater creativity and innovation, promotes lateral thinking, and creates a psychologically safe place for people to suggest truly creative ideas

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Inspiring service with humor

- Inspiring service happens once we inspire our employees
- “Good customer service” just meets customers’ expectations, so it only keeps you “out of the doghouse.” Inspiring service happens by exceeding expectations.
- Inspiring service happens through *small, simple gestures*. A genuine smile, referring to the person by his/her name, and/or making a personal connection.
- 68% of customers leave because of “perceived indifference” – you need to be not just in the *service* business, but in the customer *empathy* business
- Use humor to stand out from the herd, and to be heard; to differentiate yourself from your competitors, to brand yourself in a unique and fun way
- Use humor to inspire customer loyalty (consider the LIFETIME costs of losing a customer and the LIFETIME VALUE of retaining a loyal customer)
- Great teamwork = providing great service to your teammates; some of our most important customers are our internal teammates and employees



INSPIRING WORKPLACES

THE WAY WORK OUGHT TO BE

Motivating principles to live and laugh by

- Creating a positive workplace environment isn't a 2 or 6-times-a-year "event" – *it's the small ways you interact, communicate, and work together on a daily basis.*
- Intrinsic motivators outweigh external motivators: *Pride matters more than money!*
- "Carrots" outperform "sticks": *rewarding positive behaviour beats beatings!*
- Different strokes for different folks, so ask! *Everyone has different "on" and "off" switches, so ask people what their specific motivational "ons" and "offs" are!*
- The top motivators are: Recognition. Praise. Thanking people. Tapping into pride. Celebrating successes and milestones. Respect. Creating a fun environment. Asking people for their input *and using it!* *Connecting people to the "bigger picture."* *Relating people's jobs to measurable achievements.* *Letting people know that it matters whether or no they show up!* *Involving people.* *Involvement = engagement!*
- Effective praise is: timely, sincere, specific, and 100% positive.

Include humor as one of your core values!

Creating a Culture That Embraces Humor

1. Create a vision with your team of where you want your workplace to go: what you want your workplace to look and feel like at its most inspiring! Connect all team members to a more inspiring sense of purpose at work.
2. Include humor as one of your core values. And while you're at it, review your core values to make sure they are actually meaningful to everyone on your team.
3. Hire for attitude, hire for a sense of humor, hire people who align with your values.
4. Train, coach, and mentor employees based on your workplace vision and values.
5. Create a culture committee or fun-at-work squad to initiate some simple ideas that will build momentum in the workplace.
6. Look for opportunities to create rituals and traditions at work. Traditions are an easy way to instill a sense of fun and a sense of shared team experience and history.
7. Create a library of workplace culture reading materials, DVDs, and audio CDs.
8. Hold regular "culture chat" meetings to assess the progress and allow employees the chance to offer feedback and ideas on how to build a more open, fun, and innovative culture.
9. Measure it! If you don't continually assess your culture, chances are nothing will change!
10. Give your team explicit permission to have fun. Remember, it's not about choosing between fun OR work, it's a choice for fun AND work!

