

**Humor That Works** presents

## **10 Reasons YOU Should Use Humor**

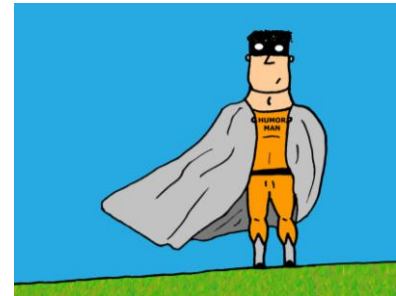
I know that you don't think of humor as a *bad* thing, but do you know that humor is a **GREAT** thing. Everyone knows it is fun to laugh or smile or Photoshop pictures of their managers on the faces of the cast of the *Brady Bunch*. But maybe not everyone knows the additional benefits besides just fun.

So here are 10 reasons YOU (yes, you, the one reading this right now) should use humor at work.

### **#10. Humor Beats Stress**

80% of Americans feel stressed, with 39% saying work is the biggest contributor<sup>1</sup>. This isn't a good thing. Stress causes muscle tension in the body, increases blood pressure and decreases immunity. Emotionally, stress can cause anxiety, depression, sadness and burnout.<sup>2</sup>

However, if stress is the villain, then humor is the superhero.



Humor relaxes muscles, decreases blood pressure and improves our immune system<sup>3</sup>. It can also increase happiness, productivity and improve relationships (but more on those benefits later).

### **#9. Humor Improves Health**

Though humor isn't actual medicine, it can improve your health in a number of ways. It can combat stress, may reduce the risk of heart disease<sup>4</sup> and burns calories. In fact laughing 100 times can burn as many calories as 10-minutes on a stationary bicycle<sup>5</sup>, and 10-15 minutes of laughter a day can help shed up to 4 pounds per year<sup>6</sup>.

So, if you want the ultimate workout next time you're on the bike at the gym, just start laughing maniacally. Not only will you be burning more calories, you'll also be left alone.

### **#8. Humor Increases Productivity**

Humor has a snowball effect on productivity in the workplace. Not only can it help with the productivity of individuals, when it's used organizationally, it can drastically improve an entire company. Humor in the workplace has been shown to reduce absenteeism, increase company loyalty, prevent burnout and increase productivity<sup>7</sup>.

Humor is particularly effective on repetitive tasks (whether it's data entry, factory line work or email processing)--humor can increase the length of time you're willing to do a task without detracting from your ability to concentrate.**Error! Bookmark not defined..**

## #7. Humor Develops Creativity

Humor and creativity go together like two Ps in a ppod (I've never understood that saying). But nevertheless, it's true. Research suggests that humor and creativity go together because in both, you're tying things together in a new way, seeing new connections<sup>8</sup>. In fact, humor is highly correlated with both creativity and intelligence<sup>9</sup>.

The link between humor and creativity isn't new—studies dating back to the 1950s have documented their close relationship. What is new is understanding why: a dose of humor releases the chemical serotonin in your brain, which improves focus, increases objectivity and improves overall brainpower<sup>10</sup>.

## #6. Humor Expands Learning

Humor can make learning more effective and enjoyable. As an instructor, humor can facilitate learning in the students—80% of college students indicated that humor “often” to “always” aided in learning.<sup>11</sup>

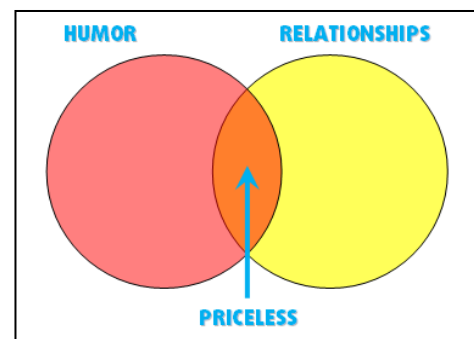
Educational shows for children employ humor to great effect in order to help kids learn. Shows and programs like *Sesame Street*, *Dora the Explorer* and *Schoolhouse Rock* all teach in ways that are fun and memorable. But you don't have to rely on the teacher to use humor to aid in your own learning, you can employ it yourself to improve information recall and increase long-term retention<sup>12</sup>.

One easy way to do this is to use mnemonics. Phrases like “Every Good Boy Deserves Favor” is an easy way to remember the lines of a treble clef scale (E G B D F).

## #5. Humor Strengthens Relationships

Humor can help you create, maintain and improve nearly any relationship. It has been shown to help build group cohesiveness, reduce status differentials, diffuse conflict and aid team and trust building among diverse groups<sup>13</sup>.

The reason humor is so effective is based on what bonds us as people. When people share emotions and experiences, whether positive or negative, they become closer together<sup>14</sup>.



Humor is a positive shared experience and emotion that people can enjoy together. Those brief moments of sharing a smile, laugh or giggle bond us together.

## #4. Humor Creates Opportunities

Research has shown that more opportunities are given to managers who display a good sense of humor than to those who don't<sup>15</sup>.

But that's not a surprise when you think about it—if you had two equally qualified candidates for a big project at work, would you take the one who uses humor and is personable, or take the more reserved, strictly business one. If I can do good work and have fun, I'll take that over just getting something done every time.

### #3. Humor Enhances Leadership

Dwight D Eisenhower said "A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done." Eisenhower knew from his time in the military and as President of the United States that humor can help showcase your leadership qualities.

Research has shown that people who use humor are viewed as being on top of things, being in charge and in control. This was true, even when the leaders didn't feel they were in control.<sup>16</sup> In a survey of 1,000 executives, 84 percent of respondents felt that workers with a sense of humor do a better job<sup>17</sup>.

*"If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide."*  
– Mahatma Gandhi

### #2. Humor Earns Money

Some people may not care about the health benefits, or the personal benefits, or the work benefits of humor. Instead they may be saying "put your money where your mouth is." Well the proof is in the pudding (which happens to be delicious).

In a study of executives at one company, executives rated "outstanding" used humor more than twice as often as those rated "average."**Error! Bookmark not defined.** In this same study, they found that the size of the executives' bonuses positively correlated with their use of humor. In essence, the more humorous the executive, the more money that executive made.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

### #1. Humor Begets Happiness

We all know that money can't buy happiness, but it turns out humor can. Which is a good thing, considering a recent poll of more than 100,000 people representing 98% of the US population found that 47% of Americans struggle to stay happy<sup>18</sup>.

How does that relate to humor? It turns out humor can increase happiness, in some cases by up to 42 percent<sup>19</sup>. According to the Harvard Grant Study, one of the largest longitudinal studies ever conducted, having followed 268 participants for more than 70 years, humor was one of the healthiest adaptations to being happy in life<sup>20</sup>.

Given the stakes (world happiness!), it's vital that you use humor. If not for yourself, than for the good of mankind (that might be a slight exaggeration).

## #o. The Missing Reason

There's one reason (intentionally) missing from this list. It's not because it's not important (it is), but because it's not why I want you to consider using humor (though it is perfectly valid). I want you to realize the value of humor without this reason, knowing that there is hard, tangible value to using humor in the workplace. However, now that we've covered those, let's talk about the missing reason:

Fun.

Humor makes things more fun, more amusing, more enjoyable. After all, there are 168 hours in a week, and you likely spend at least 40 of them at work. That's nearly 25% of your adult life—you might as well have some fun while you're at it.

So there you have it, 10 reasons (plus a hidden one) that you should use humor in the workplace. And even though no one will ever really argue *against* using humor, it's time we start arguing *for* using humor—not just for our peers, managers or customers, but for ourselves.

To learn more about using humor that works, check out [www.HumorThatWorks.com](http://www.HumorThatWorks.com) or email us at [consulting@humorthatworks.com](mailto:consulting@humorthatworks.com).

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *80% of Americans Feel Stressed* by Kate Traynor. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. 2003.

<sup>2</sup> *Stressed in America*. RA Clay, American Psychological Association, January 2011, Vol 42, No. 1

<sup>3</sup> *Ha! Laughing is Good for You!* by Amy Toffelmire. Canoe.ca, April 2009.

<sup>4</sup> *Laughter is Good for Your Heart* by Barbara Crawford. University of Maryland Medical Center. April, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> *Give Your Body a Boost* by R Morgan Griffin. WebMD. Retrieved August 27, 2011,

<sup>6</sup> *Energy Expenditure of Genuine Laughter* by Maciej Buchowski. International Journal of Obesity, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *All Work and No Play Isn't Even Good for Work* by David Abramis. Psychology Today, March, 1989, 34-38.

<sup>8</sup> *Laughing All the Way to the Bank* by Fabio Sala. Harvard Business Review, September 2003.

<sup>9</sup> *The Relationship of Humor to Intelligence, Creativity, and Intentional and Incidental Learning* by William E Hauck. The Journal of Experimental Education, Vol 40, No 4, Summer 1972

<sup>10</sup> *A Dash of Humor Ups Performance and Creativity at Work* by Robyn McMaster, PhD. Brain Based Biz, Sept 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *Is humor an appropriate teaching tool?: Perceptions of professors' teaching styles and use of humor* by Sara E Torok. College Teaching, Vol 52, No 1 Winter, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> *Humor, Analogy, and Metaphor: H.A.M. it up in Teaching* by Randy Garner. Radical Pedagogy, 2005

<sup>13</sup> *Humor in the Workplace: A Communication Challenge* by Robert A. Vartabedian and Laurel Klinger Vartabedian, presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Miami, November, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> *Let the Good Times Roll: Building a Fun Culture* by David Stauffer. Harvard Management Update, October 1999.

<sup>15</sup> *Wanted: Humor in the Workplace* by Patricia Buhler. Supervision, Vol 52, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> *Getting Serious About Workplace Humor* by Martha Craumer. Harvard Communication Letter, July 2002.

<sup>17</sup> *Making Sense of Humour in the Workplace* by Steve Bannister. Enterprise Magazine, November 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Gallup-Healthway Well-Being Index, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> *Humor Therapy: Relieving Chronic Pain and Enhancing Happiness for Older Adults* by Mimi M.Y. Tse. Journal of Aging Research. Volume 2010.

<sup>20</sup> *Aging Well* by George E Valliant. Little, Brown, Jan 2002.