

Humor Definition

humor -- “a comic, absurd, or incongruous quality causing amusement.”

humor that works -- “a way of working that is different, effective, and fun.”

Why Humor Matters

Humans have “emotions” and “feelings;” they get “sick” and “tired;” and they have to do things like “eat” and “sleep.” *And the current way of working isn’t working:*

83% of Americans feel stressed at work.¹

55% of Americans are unsatisfied with their job.²

47% of Americans struggle to stay happy.³

This leads to 70% of employees being disengaged costing US companies up to **\$500 billion** in lost productivity every year.⁴

So why humor? People who use humor at work are more productive,⁵ less stressed,⁶ and happier.⁷

The Humor MAP

MEDIUM:	How will the humor be delivered? In an email, meeting or presentation?
AUDIENCE:	Who is the audience? What do they know? What do they expect / need?
PURPOSE:	What will the humor accomplish? (See below.)

6 Reasons to Use Humor as a Project Manager

#1. To Improve Communication

Humor makes people want to read and hear what you say which helps cut through all of the noise and gets people to pay attention to your message.⁸

#2. To Build Relationships

Humor has been shown to build group cohesiveness, reduce status differentials, diffuse conflict, and aid in team and trust building among groups.⁹

#3. To Enhance Problem Solving

Humor causes the release of serotonin in your brain, which improves focus, objectivity, and overall brainpower, all vital to enhancing creativity.¹⁰

#4. To Increase Productivity

Humor improves employee productivity by reducing employee absenteeism, increasing company loyalty, and preventing short- and long-term burnout.⁵

#5. To Boost Health

Humor burns calories, decreases sensitivity to pain, and may reduce the risk of heart disease, all contributors to long-term health.⁶

#6. To Strengthen Leadership

Humor reduces hostility, relieves tension, and improves morale, increasing a leaders ability to handle stressful situations and appear in control.¹¹

Appropriate Humor

Reasons Humor Becomes Inappropriate

1. *Inappropriate Subject* – Humor that references subjects such as sex or drugs.
2. *Inappropriate Target* – Humor that targets an individual or group in a negative way.
3. *Inappropriate Time* – Humor during somber moments such as announcing lay-offs.

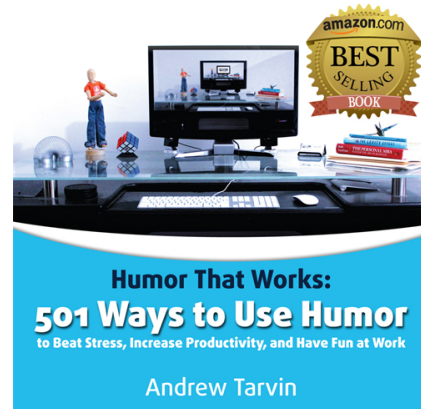
Just remember the *New York Times Rule*: Would you be okay with whatever you do showing up on the front page of the NY Times for your friends, family, boss, co-workers, and dog to see?

Examples of Humor at Work

Examples of Humor in the Workplace from...

1. Send someone a hand-written thank you note.
2. Poke fun at yourself.
3. Smile.
4. Start a lunch bunch.
5. Develop team nicknames.
6. Open with interesting questions.
7. Do something physical while talking.
8. Add humor to the end of emails.
9. Create mnemonics for key details.
10. Warm up with some comedy.
11. Imagine “what would X do?”
12. Think like an improviser (Yes And!).
13. Have standing only meetings.
14. Gamify your processes.
15. Strategically disengage.

501 Ways Book / App



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andrew@humorthatworks.com

| 646-543-7398

¹ *Stressed Out at Work?*, Susan Adams. Forbes.

² *The Science of Workplace Happiness*, US News.

³ *US Happiness: Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index*.

⁴ *State of the American Workplace*. Gallup.

⁵ *All Work and No Play Isn't Even Good for Work*. D Abramis. Psychology Today.

⁶ *Laughter is Good for Your Heart*. B Crawford. University of Maryland Med Center.

⁷ *Humor Therapy: Relieving Chronic Pain and Enhancing Happiness* by M Tse. Journal of Aging Research.

⁸ *Let the Good Times Roll Building a Fun Culture* by D Stauffer. Harvard Management Update.

⁹ *Humor in the Workplace: A Communication Challenge*. RA Vartabedian. Speech Comm Assoc.

¹⁰ *Humor Ups Performance and Creativity at Work*. R McMaster, PhD. Brain Based Biz.

¹¹ *Laughing All the Way to the Bank*. F Sala. Harvard Business Review.