**Communication**

Memes, gifs, funny videos and even pranks are ways to win in business. For real.

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

### **1. Humor reduces stress**

Stress has a profound effect on us, not only on morale but also on physical health. Stress can bring on burnout, reduced motivation and loss of self-esteem, all negatively affecting productivity. Michael Kerr, an international business speaker and president of [Humor at Work](http://mikekerr.com/), says that humor and laughter can significantly reduce stress.

“Laughter supports peak levels of performance by changing our perception of what stresses us and helps to relax us physically. It may even improve the immune system by blocking the production of stress hormones like cortisol and dopamine.”

### **2. Humor boosts morale**

There is nothing more powerful than a fun workplace to boost optimism and employee morale. In *Tame Your Terrible Office Tyrant*, workplace expert and author, Lynn Taylor says, “Employees like to work for and with others who have a sense of humor. We all prefer to have fun at work. It should not feel like an indentured servitude environment.”

Although I’m thinking doubling my salary might have a similar effect, I do know that a good laugh can be like hitting the reset button on my mood and help me step back, take a breath and relax.

### **3. Humor makes people enjoy working with you**

We spend SO much time at work, and I’d much rather work with people I like and can have fun with. [Laura Vanderkam](http://lauravanderkam.com/), author of ***What the Most Successful People Do Before Breakfast***, agrees, “You spend huge chunks of your waking hours at work, so you don’t want it to be a death march. Humor--deftly employed--is a great way to win friends and influence people. You need to be funny, but not snarky (that’s not good for team building) and you can’t offend anyone.”

Humor is a great way to smooth over differences too. Sharing positive funny moments can create a connection between people and lighten the mood when tension happens.

**Related IOL Video Playlist**: [Leading With Humor & Heart](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxbN40aSVvl6_zzBWBSBR4jESSxJythzX)

### **4. Humor boosts creativity**

Creative thinking is important in any workplace and people with a better sense of humor tend to be more creative. “It helps people play with ideas, lower their internal critic, and see things in new ways.” says Michael Kerr.

Humor can also trigger new brain connections by stimulating the right hemisphere of the brain, which sets off creative thinking and allows us to see things from a fresh perspective. In a research experiment, [Alice M. Isen](http://www.psychologyandsociety.com/creativestory.html) found that simply watching comedy films improves creative problem solving skills.

We did something similar to this at CCB with our Sales team. It was awesome. The reps had to qualify by hitting certain metrics, once they did, they won an extended lunch. Sales management grilled steaks in the parking lot for them, turned on Tommy Boy in our training room and popped popcorn. Laughter, full bellies, memories, and production for the company.

**5. Humor builds trust**

Kerr also mentions, “You can build trust with the effective use of humor because humor often reveals the authentic person lurking under the professional mask.” He explains that numerous studies suggest that people who share a healthy, positive sense of humor tend be more likable and are viewed as being more trustworthy.

Go first. Use a little self-deprecating humor in your next meeting. Someone needs to start by creating an atmosphere of trust and 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 walls and allow people to get to know you on a personal level.

### **6. Humor improves communication**

Paul McGhee, at [laughterremedy.com](http://www.laughterremedy.com/) claims, “No matter what kind of job you have, communication will always be an important aspect of your work, whether it’s in meetings, phone conversations with clients or discussions between managers and other employees. A good sense of humor supports good communication by removing barriers between management and non-management staff, facilitating awkward communications, softening the emotional tone of communications, and more.”

**McGhee also gives two good rules for using humor in talks and meetings:**

* Be sure it’s relevant to the conversation. Irrelevant humor can be distracting and annoying.
* Use the sandwich approach: make your point, illustrate it with humor, and then remake the point again.

### **7. Humor enhances leadership**

What happens when the boss has a good sense of humor? It can help tremendously to keep things in perspective, make people feel great, and create a strong sense of team community. If you want your employees to remember something, find a funny way to explain it. It sets off endorphins in the brain and that will lock it in as a memory.

Shared laughter creates happiness within a team and happy people make things happen! Key term is *shared*, this means humor isn’t being weaponized or alienating people. Side benefit: What better way to attract new people to your team then to have the current ones smiling and laughing?
(Do you know what I like about elevator jokes? They work on so many levels.)

### **8. Humor increases productivity**

In a paper for the [Journal of Business and Psychology](http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10869-014-9396-z), an Australian [study](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/minds-business/the-energizing-effect-of-humor.html#.WNUrImZEpBw) found that when experiment subjects were given a boring job to do, then exposed to something funny, they worked twice as long as subjects who watched videos about nature or business management.

If you still aren’t convinced, go back and reread points 1-7! Being in an environment you enjoy and being happy at work will directly contribute to your productivity more than any management tool you may use. Those who laugh together, work better together.

### **Ways to lighten the mood appropriately:**

Start by being sure that you don’t cross the lines. How? Good humor should never put people down, perpetuate negative stereotypes, or veil criticism. Also, keep it clean and choose neutral topics. Appropriate timing is important too, as well as being able to laugh at yourself over your own mistakes.

And finally, think beyond jokes – we’ve filled cubicles with packing peanuts, empty water bottles and gift wrapped everything in the president’s office!

### **As Mark Twain once said:**

“Studying humor is like dissecting a frog — you may know a lot but you end up with a dead frog.” Is that his way of saying, “just go do it and stop over analyzing”?

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