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## **Humor in the Workplace:** **More Important Now Than Ever**

by Andy Masters

Since the recession, companies have downsized and are running trim. Never before have managers and employees been asked to wear so many hats, and do more with less. The time to make the workplace fun again has never been more important.

People are tired of being stressed. People want to be happy, laugh, and enjoy their jobs again.

The benefits to utilizing humor within our workplace are many.

We want our employees to look forward to coming to work each day. We want our employees to be happy when they interact with customers, and each other. Happy employees are motivated, and are more willing to work as a team.

A corporate culture filled with stress leads to illness, burnout, and personnel conflicts—which can easily translate into poor quality and disappointing service levels.

Professionally, people will enjoy speaking with you if you can carry a light-hearted conversation. People are more willing to go to lunch with you if you are entertaining company, rather than counting down the minutes until the check comes. People will want to hire you, buy from you, and work for you if they like you.

Lastly, laughter scientifically helps the human body create endorphins, which relieve pain and induce euphoria. Both can come in handy during a stressful work period. Therefore, everyone should make a *focused attempt* at incorporating more humor in the workplace, and in their lives outside of the workplace.

### **Here Are 4 Recommendations for Incorporating Humor in the Workplace Today:**

#### ***1. Create a Work Environment Which Fosters Fun and Humor***

When applicable and appropriate, allow an environment where employees are encouraged to have fun together as a team. Host themed events, holiday parties, or “*Fun Fridays*”. Create a “*Fun Committee*” which can organize creative and interactive team-building activities, such as an “*ACME Manufacturing’s Got Talent*” lunch series. Hold a funny pumpkin-carving contest, an “*Ugly Sweater Day*,” or honor tongue-in-cheek monthly awards such as “*Most Likely to Drink the Most Coffee by 9:00 a.m.*”

Just be sure themes and activities are appropriate within HR guidelines, as opposed to the majority of Michael Scott’s brainstorms on the hit TV series “*The Office*”. On that note, it is OK to explore the world of practical jokes--just use very good judgment that the recipient will be a very good sport!

Try occasional self-deprecating humor (*but don’t overdo it so everyone loses total respect for you*). If you are forced to announce an unpopular policy change, lighten the tension by hanging a dartboard with your picture in the employee break room afterwards.

Morale can be much higher when employees *look forward* to coming to work, if they know today might hold fun and laughter, not just stress and problems.

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## 2. *The Internet Is Your Friend*

Create a habit of sending humorous gems to your staff every Monday morning. It's a nice morale boost to start the week. You can easily locate funny jokes, cartoons, blogs, and pictures relating to your industry through using Google and Google Images.

Simply search under keywords such as "*business humor*," "*accounting jokes*," or "*funny advertising*", and you can stockpile months of material at your fingertips. This same search can also be used for YouTube video clips, which has seemingly captured every funny moment in the history of mankind. Such visual enhancers can also be strategically sprinkled into weekly staff meetings or even client presentations.

Sound like time-consuming research?

Take advantage of the "*Google Alerts*" tool to flag such keywords, allowing you to receive email notifications when new cartoons, articles, or videos are posted on such phrases. Let the Internet do the work for you, and you can be credited with igniting a fresh, fun work environment people will enjoy being a part of.

## 3. *Keep Your Eyes Open*

Keep an eye out for comical scenes from movies or TV, which might have some direct or even indirect relevance to your industry.

Did you see something hysterical on Jay Leno's "*Headlines*" segment, but didn't have your TIVO running? Simply visit [www.nbc.com](http://www.nbc.com) the next morning, where you can retrieve and share any such headlines from previous episodes.

Stop by the toy store and buy a recordable talking doll, playfully imitating the boss or an office jokester. Stop by the dollar store, and pick up several denominations of children's play money. Flash this cash during your next staff meeting or business lunch, with lines such as:

*"Great job this year, Steve. Here's your Christmas bonus!"*

*"Alright everybody, lunch is on me!"*

*"There's more where THAT came from."*

*"Sorry, I must have left it in the laundry."*

*"What, are you saying my money's not good here, pal?"*

Opportunities for humor present themselves throughout each day. Be prepared to capitalize at any time, as you just might present such humor at the exact moment a stressed-out employee needs it the most.

## 4. *Give Presentations? "Make them laugh or your DEAD"*

If your position involves any type of presentations, such as sales, training, or even updates at the weekly staff meeting, remember this rule of thumb: "*Make them laugh or you're DEAD.*"

People will pay more attention, learn more, like you more, and purchase more from you if they laugh. If you don't, the text messages will be flying each time you turn back towards the screen. Most importantly, though, your points will be missed.

\*\*\*\*\***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**\*\*\*\*\*

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**Zig Ziglar, one of the most successful motivational speakers in history, knew the power of incorporating humor in his presentations. Throughout his career, Zig would strategically place some type of wit, joke, or funny example every seven minutes during his presentation, no matter the audience or topic. As he determined through research, attention span begins to dip as time between jokes lingered. People pay attention because they don't want to miss the next joke!**

*“What if the nature of my job or presentation is serious?”*

**This means it is ESPECIALLY important for you to include humor. If you work in finance or insurance, people are dreading hearing from you, even if it's just a 5-minute overview during the weekly staff meeting.**

**Southwest Airlines has long made a name for itself not only with low fares, but also with funny commercials and colorful flight attendants. And, what could be more serious than safety instructions for those about ready to take off? One flight attendant described the restrooms as “*spacious and luxurious powder rooms,*” and final instructions included the comment “*this is a long flight, so if you're travelling with children this evening.....we're sorry.*”**

**Even funeral home directors like to laugh. Goodness, they need humor in their lives more than any of us, don't they? If you are ever presenting for this group, add a comment such as: “*Fortunately for your business, the death rate is still hovering at about 100%.*”**

**You'll knock 'em dead.**

### **Keep the Laughs Coming**

**Perhaps most importantly, you'll be surprised how much *you* will look forward to going to work when you have something funny to share with others. Creating a habit of incorporating humor in the workplace will provide *you* with a fresh outlook on *your* job, and that will become contagious with others.**

***About the Author:* Andy Masters is an international Author/Speaker and business humorist who has written 4 books, including “*Kiss Your Customer: 77 Reasons Why Sales & Service Are Just Like Dating & Relationships*”. Andy is a member of the National Speakers Association (NSA) and the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH). Visit [www.andy-masters.com](http://www.andy-masters.com) or email [andy@andy-masters.com](mailto:andy@andy-masters.com) for book information and schedule availability.**

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