

Now What? Laughing is More Important Than Ever

This week in our “Now What” series, we are going to tackle the subject of humor at work.

Over the last few weeks, most of us have probably spent more time than we would like to admit checking out memes, gifs, tik toks, and other viral postings. Though you may chalk these segues up to distraction or procrastination, these momentary departures to smile, share, and laugh out loud serve an important purpose for our mental health, and, actually increases our productivity.

According to an article in Harvard Business Review*, research shows that lowering stress decreases absenteeism and enhances productivity. As a result, the encouragement of laughter at work appears to not only be good, but actually necessary—especially during tumultuous times like now. According to Alison Beard, “laughter relieves stress and boredom, boosts engagement and well-being, and spurs not only creativity and collaboration but also analytic precision and productivity.”**

So, while we can prove that humor has a place at work, the trick has been, and always will be, doing it without unwittingly crossing lines or offending. Drew Tarvin, the author of *Humor That Works: The Missing Skill for Success and Happiness at Work*, provides the following tips to capitalize on the power of humor without the pitfalls***:

- **Master the art of self-deprecating humor:** Joking about yourself lets others know that you are human and that you don't take yourself too seriously.
- **Model Ellen DeGeneres or Mr. Rogers comedy:** Aggressive humor (sarcasm, teasing, ridicule) has no place at work. Neither does humor that is racy or politically charged. Ellen and Mr. Rogers generally make us laugh with a mixture of self-enhancing (good natured attitude toward life) and self-affiliative (joking around to amuse other) humor.
- **Steer clear of “mandatory” fun:** Instead of mandatory hangouts, create a culture of fun by encouraging laughter and light-heartedness that is naturally recurring.

Now, possibly more than ever, we need to use humor as a trigger to maximize our success. As Kurt Vonnegut wrote, “Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion... I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward.”

Want to read more?

It seems like these weekly connections are evolving to become more about curating content that has grabbed our attention. As a result, like last week, please note these sources as they contain the material that has been cited and/or inspired this document.

* <https://hbr.org/2014/05/leading-with-humor>

** <https://hbr.org/2018/11/the-benefits-of-laughing-in-the-office>

*** <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/humor-laughter-workplace-office-well-being-success-benefits-tips/>

<https://www.humorthatworks.com/benefits/30-benefits-of-humor-at-work/>