

# A Contemporary Guide to Using Humor as a Leadership Tool

During a recent staff meeting, we shared what we had for lunch. Someone had yogurt, and another had a candy bar. I volunteered that I went to Burger King and had an Impossible Whopper for lunch. My manager asked, "Do you have gas?"

I paused then we all laughed.

I said, "I feel okay, I think. . ."

Atlanta was in the middle of a gasoline shortage, and my manager wondered if I had enough gasoline to drive to Burger King. . . Not about my digestive tract status. . . Although . . .

Everyone had a good belly laugh.

Did you know that laughter is the shortest distance between two people? It can break down walls and repair broken relationships. Having a good sense of humor can take the edge off intense conversations or smooth awkward situations. Do you remember the last time you laughed so hard you cried? When's the last time you used a good sense of humor to connect with someone?

**Research shows that humor has many benefits in the workplace**, including drawing team members closer together, reducing stress, and increasing productivity.

The truth is most employees need a little cheering up. While the average four-year-old laughs about 300 times a day, they're down to three chuckles by the time they turn 40.

On the other hand, there are limits. You know you've gone too far if you make someone cry or choose Michael Scott as your role model.

What qualities do you look for in a leader? You'd probably expect them to be powerful, charismatic, and decisive. However, you might overlook the value of being funny or playful. **Influential leaders know how to use humor to their advantage.** Join their ranks by studying these tips for remaining professional while tapping into your humorous side.

### **The Benefits of Leading with Humor:**

1. **Enhance job performance.** Laughter can be profitable because it triggers brain chemicals that help you concentrate and think creatively. A study by the University of Warwick found that introducing humor into the workday increased productivity by 12%.
2. **Boost your reputation.** Other research has found that leaders who use humor are viewed as more competent and credible, and they receive higher ratings from their subordinates. Lightening up could help you stand out.
3. **Reduce stress.** Heavy workloads are one of the significant reasons job stress has increased steadily in recent decades. Having opportunities to relax makes it easier to accomplish more.
4. **Strengthen relationships.** Humor is often a social activity. You learn things about your coworkers that may not be listed on their resumes, and you create happy memories that deepen your bonds.
5. **Protect your health.** There are also many benefits for your physical and mental wellbeing. For example, humor can help relieve pain, boost your immune system, and lessen depression and anxiety.
6. **Diffuse conflict or tense situations.** Mark Twain is credited with saying, "Humor is the great thing, the saving thing after all. The minute it crops up, all our hardnesses yield, all our irritations and resentments flit away, and a sunny spirit takes their place." When you find yourself in a challenging circumstance, respond with humor, not hostility. Humor will break down walls

and positively change the atmosphere.

### **Tips for Using Humor at Work:**

1. **Stay safe.** Many standup comedians try to be controversial or mean, but you need to watch out for your job security. Be diplomatic, empathetic, and steer clear of sensitive topics like politics, religion, and stereotypes. Don't make others the butt of your joke.
2. **Pace yourself.** Surprise your colleagues with a witty remark now and then. If you joke around from sunrise to quitting time, it will be difficult for them to take you seriously when they need to.
3. **Consider your audience.** Different industries and companies have their own cultures. Please pay attention to how others react to gauge whether you're amusing or offending them.
4. **Liven-up meetings.** Zoom fatigue is a real thing. Make your presentations memorable by setting them to music or throwing in a few pop culture references.
5. **Share content.** You can send your team entertaining video clips and news stories, even on busy days. It only takes a few minutes to search for penguins and cheese rolling content.
6. **Tell stories.** Humor can be especially meaningful when you tie it into an appropriate narrative. Strengthen your connection by revealing something about your personal life. Find a case study that backs up your point.
7. **Play games.** Make office tasks more like your favorite video game by awarding points and rewards for submitting your timesheets when they're due. Keep a jigsaw puzzle in the break room for anyone to work on when they're passing through for a cup of coffee.

A good belly laugh is good for the soul. And possessing a good sense of humor is a wonderful leadership tool. It will help you connect with others. As a leader, you can make your team

laugh without getting into trouble with the HR department. You'll be making your employees happier and your organization more successful. It's just good business. Who can you make laugh today and spread a little cheer?

Want to discover more about becoming a leader others will gladly follow? Visit my website, [prestonpoore.com](http://prestonpoore.com), today!

Take care,

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