

FUNsulting, etc. Times

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Welcome to another edition of FUNsulting, etc. Times. This issue deals with humor as a tool in management and leadership. In addition, I have included an article called "Managing The FUN-damentals of Leadership". Please feel free to copy these materials and use them in any way that is helpful. Also visit our website at www.funsulting.com for program information and new products including audio taped programs and FUN toys for your home or office. Have a FUN new year!

- Ron Culberson, Director of Everything, FUNsulting, etc.

Humor In Practice – Being a “Managing Leader”

The workplace has certainly changed in the past few years. With the supersonic speed of information technology and the thriving job market, employees today are smarter, more marketable and they want more than just a job. As a manager or leader, you must give employees more than just a paycheck because if you don't, they can easily go somewhere else. A 1999 Gallop Poll reported that only 50% of the employees surveyed enjoyed their job well enough that they would not leave. Similarly, a survey in *Fast Company* showed that only 32% of the people surveyed found their jobs meaningful. So what can the managing leader do to keep good employees? One tactic is to make the work more fun.

Many managers feel that they must be serious to earn respect from staff. Don't be misled by that statement because seriousness does not necessarily lead to respect. A manager must first be good at his/her job to earn respect. And if he/she is good first, then he/she can relax and have some FUN. If a manager is having FUN, it is much more likely that staff will have FUN. If employees are having FUN, it is much more likely that they will find enjoyment in their work which leads to greater productivity, creativity and staff retention.

Consider the following as ways to convey to staff that you value FUN in the workplace.

1. Smile at people in your organization even if you do not feel like it. Research has shown that both the sender and the receiver of smiles experience a positive physical and emotional reaction.
2. Allow staff to “goof off” now and then. FUN down time will rejuvenate people so that they won't work themselves into burnout.
3. Be able to take a joke. As a managing leader, you must have thick skin when staff pokes FUN at your mannerisms or your visible “flaws”. By allowing staff to joke with you, you are supporting an atmosphere in which people don't take themselves too seriously.
4. Include FUN and humor in all routine activities such as emails, memos, meetings, awards, presentations, interviews, etc. The more you include FUN, the more likely your staff will too.
5. Teach staff about the value of humor. Humor is more than just a good time. It has been proven to be beneficial in many ways. Showing this value encourages the use of humor.
6. Do NOT allow disparaging or offensive humor. To create a FUN and productive work environment, staff must understand the boundaries of appropriate humor.

7. Finally, if you feel this is not your forte, invite input from the humor “experts” in your organization. Tap into the strengths of others and you will be seen as a great leader. Management and leadership are very challenging. It is hard work to do it well. However, if you do it well *and* have FUN at it, you will be amazed at what staff will do for you and the organization.

Humor Resources

For more information on humor and management, check out these resources:

The Light Touch: How to Use Humor For Business Success. by Malcolm Kushner (Simon & Schuster).

Managing To Have Fun by Matt Weinstein (Simon & Schuster).

Nuts! Southwest Airlines' Crazy Recipe for Business and Personal Success by Kevin and Jackie Freiberg (Bard Press).

301 Ways To Have Fun At Work by Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes (Berrett Koehler).

Humor In Real Life

Back in 1994, I was a senior manager in a large hospice organization. The CEO had planned a senior management retreat so that we could begin our strategic planning for the next year. Prior to the retreat, our group had developed ground rules that would govern our behavior during the retreat so that we would not interrupt, criticize or belittle one another during the challenging discussions that were likely to occur.

Typically, when someone breaks a ground rule, the person must be confronted and the offense must be discussed. This is sometimes an uncomfortable situation and so we often avoid the conflict rather than confront the offender (especially if the offender is the CEO!).

Our CEO was wiser than he realized though. He came to the retreat equipped with a Nerf® pistol as a “tool” to enforce the ground rules. The retreat was a wonderful success as each of us got a turn at being the “enforcer.” It made the retreat fun and it took the sting out of the unavoidable confrontations.

- RC

Just Humor

The definition of a boss is someone who is always early when you come in late and who always stays late when you leave early. - Anon

It's lonely at the top. It's lonely at the bottom too. But remember, the top pays more. -George Vaughn, Piedmont Community College.

Humor In The News

According to a 1999 study of employees across the country, *Fortune Magazine* reported that Southwest Airlines is the 2nd best place to work in America. Southwest is known for its integration of FUN and humor in the hectic world of air travel.

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Ron Culberson's mission is to help individuals and organizations balance serious issues with a light touch. He has provided entertaining, informative and FUN programs to over 25,000 people in more than 400 associations, government agencies, non-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies. Ron can be reached at (703) 742-8812 or through his website at www.funsulting.com.