



Dear HR, It's OK to Laugh: Using Humor to Strengthen Workplace Relationships

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CUPA-HR Webinar

Presenters



Ashley Dugger, DBA, SHRM-CP
Program Chair – Human Resource
Management
Western Governors University



Sean Wall-Carty, PhD
Instructor – College of Business,
Western Governors University

Objectives

- HR can often be viewed as the “enforcers” of an organization – learn how to change this perspective!
- Explore how to connect with your teammates, employees, and others at work using humor to build rapport and trust
- Review lessons learned and key takeaways from recent publications on the topic of humor at work



Poll Question

When you think back on your absolute most favorite job ever, what made it fun/memorable?

- Coworkers/work best friend
- Org Culture
- Professional and personal growth
- Other (tell us what that other is!)

Humor makes us...human!

- Recent published work by Jennifer Aaker and Naomi Bagdonas “Humor, Seriously: Why Humor is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life”
- Making connections can be more effective with humor
- Humor and storytelling – the best match since PB&J
- What is humor **not**?

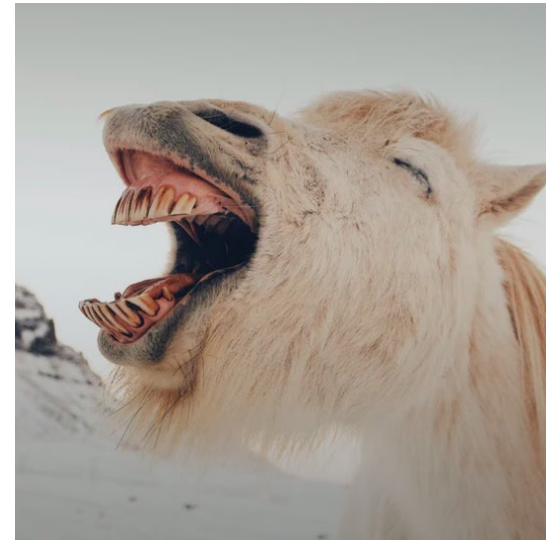


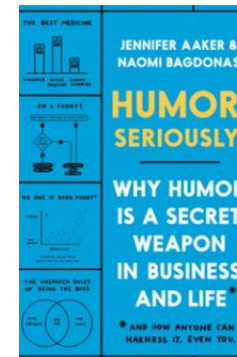
Image: Dan Cook, Unsplash

How do we balance humor with the seriousness of our profession?

- Many HR professionals believe they have to be serious all the time to do their jobs well
- HR = “enforcers” to some
- Wait – HR wants to laugh, too?

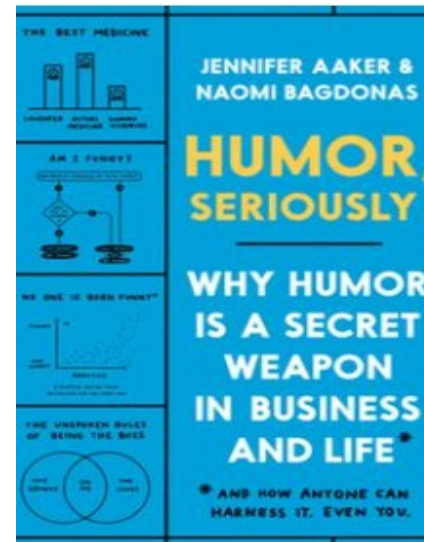
What's a humor audit? I want one!

- Humor is a muscle, exercise it often!
- Don't fall over the humor "cliff"
- What are some common misconceptions around humor in the workplace?
 - We're HR – we are the most serious of the most seriously serious people in the room
 - What if...I fail?
 - I must be a comedian ----->
 - Maybe you're born with it...maybe not



We all have different styles

- Like communication, sense of urgency, etc – we all have different humor styles
 - Magnet
 - Stand-up
 - Sweetheart
 - Sniper (that sounds intense)



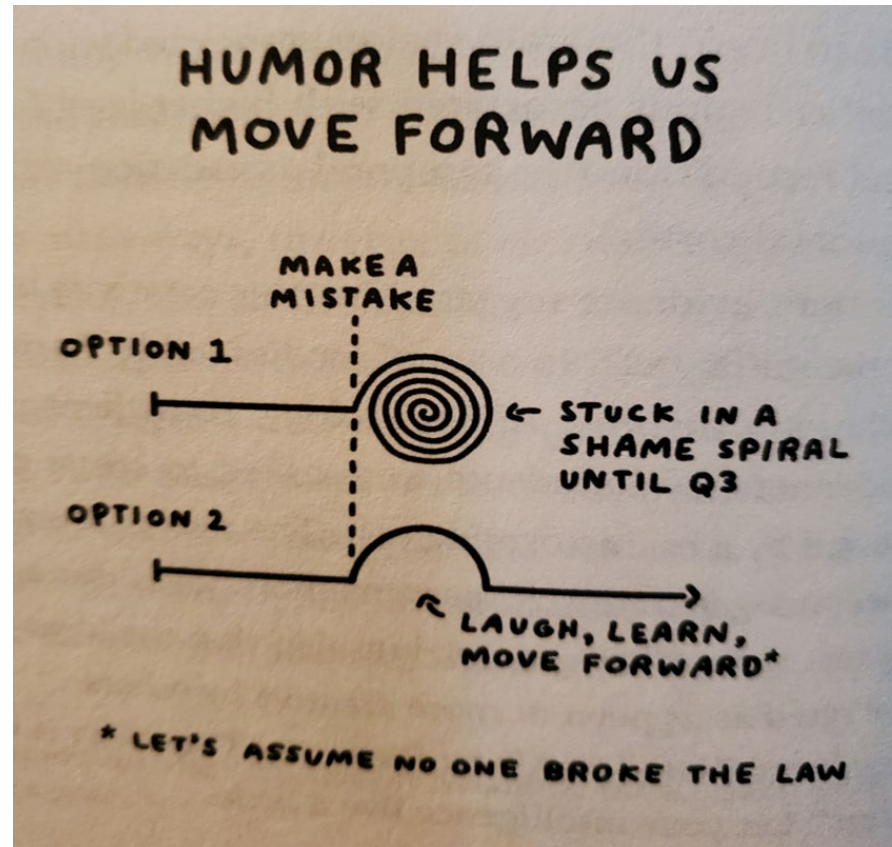
"Humor, Seriously: Why Humor Is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life...",
Aaker and Bagdonas, 2021

Humor impacts us physically and mentally

- Humor doesn't just make us laugh
 - Physical benefits
 - Emotional well being
 - Resiliency
 - Less turnover

Humor and resilience – like PB&J!

Image from
“Humor Seriously:
Why Humor Is a
Secret Weapon in
Business and
Life...” by Aaker
and Bagdonas,
2021



"Humor, Seriously: Why Humor Is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life...",
Aaker and Bagdonas, 2021

What humor **is** and what it is **not**



Image from: Pexels by Andrea Piacquadio (Free to use)

Special delivery – funny stories!

What do you take away from people's signature stories?

- Differences
- Emotions
- Opinions
- Pain
- Delight

Does humor conceal emotions?

- Is the joke at someone's expense, to tear down and divide rather than build up and unite?
- Is the genuine goal to share a laugh and bring levity or is there a separate agenda, i.e. putting someone in their place?
- Are you insulting or demeaning yourself vs being self-deprecating?
- Have you been advised previously that your jokes are ill-mannered, badly timed, or inappropriate?
- Do others still take you seriously and depend on you?

Put humor into practice – small steps!



Try something small to adjust your communication/leadership styles. In the chat, tell us one line you would add to your professional bio to bring some light and laughter!

Continuously build a culture that supports levity

- Set the tone from the top leadership down that it is ok to bring some laughter to work
- “Yes, and...” principles
- Who are the employees that will help inspire others to bring humor and levity to work?
- Who might be more of a barrier to this type of culture?
- Small steps forward – add a funny line to your out of office message, your voice mail, your bio, or pop a picture of a puppy in a presentation (everyone loves puppies)

Poll Question

How do you feel when a coworker uses (appropriate) humor when communicating?

- Relieved – someone needs to break the ice!
- I'll take anything to make me laugh these days
- Why would we want to laugh?
- Encourages me to also bring the funny!



Remember the grey areas

TREAT THE GREY AREAS LIKE “LAVA FLOOR” – AVOID IF YOU ARE NOT 100% CERTAIN THEY ARE SAFE!

If (when?) humor fails

- Be aware when humor fails (and it will)
- Diagnose what went wrong
- Figure out how to make it right (*and allow others the chance to make it right when they experience a humor fail)
 - Give yourself, and others, grace and a chance to do better!

Humor gets us through the tough days

- When has humor kept you:
 - From letting a bad day overwhelm you?
 - From throwing in the towel and quitting?
 - From escalating a tense situation?

Takeaways | Calls to Action

- ✓ Humor can help HR professionals build trust
- ✓ Humor can also help us build resiliency and a positive mindset
- ✓ Start small – step by step (not the show from the 90s)
- ✓ Encourage those around you, from the top down, to build a culture of levity

We love emails! (and pictures of pets)

Dr. Ashley W. Dugger

ashley.dugger@wgu.edu

Dr. Sean Wall-Carty

sean.wallcarty@wgu.edu

Have a Question?



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