

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



993 Being a Funny Leader – Part 1

On a scale of one to 10, how funny would you say your boss is? Is being a leader with a ripe sense of humor a good thing? Have you ever worked for a boss who had the gift of humor, and have you worked for any who were totally clueless about it? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll dig into the issue of managers and being funny, next, on The Extra Point.

Abraham Lincoln was giving a speech when he was interrupted. "You're two-faced!" yelled a heckler from the crowd. Lincoln responded, "if I had two faces, do you really think that I'd choose to wear this one?"

A fellow named Casey Stengel managed the New York Yankees to seven World Series wins in 12 years, and once said: "The key to being a good manager is keeping the people who hate me away from those who are still undecided." Yankees players always said they loved playing for Stengel.

Harvard Business School has done studies on how workers feel about leaders who keep their organization loose with their sense of humor.

The research indicates leaders who can use humor to their advantage are perceived as 27% more admired and more motivating than leaders who can't.

In my career, I've encountered a few bosses who had the ability to tell a joke. It's a bit of an art form, and some did it pretty well. I also had a few managers who thought they were comedic geniuses, and it was painful to be there when they were trying to be funny.

I've also been a part of organizations where the leader was somewhat clumsy, tripped over words, and was often unintentionally funny.

Humor has worked its way into qualifications for leadership positions. A survey of over 700

CEOs revealed that 98% of them prefer job applicants with a sense of humor, and 84% think that somebody with a sense of humor does better work. So why don't more managers use humor as a part of their communication style?

1. They spent the early days of their working life toiling for someone who was super serious. In fact, they might have spread the opinion that people who used jokes and similar antics in the workplace weren't really "career minded," and were unlikely to get very far.

2. Maybe they made an effort to use humor, and ended up receiving what is known as the "courtesy laugh." This is when a joke falls flat or falls apart, and the listener realizes they have to give some kind of reaction — and it comes out sounding a bit phony.

"Oh boss, you're so funny, hahaha, uhh, haha, uhh."

The listener is embarrassed and unsure if they did the right thing. The boss is embarrassed and realizes they got the laugh only because they're the boss. They vow, "I'm never going to do that again."

These are two primary reasons that so many leaders steer clear of humor. The question is, how can we turn this situation around, and make fun a positive tool for the boss? We'll get into that tomorrow.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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