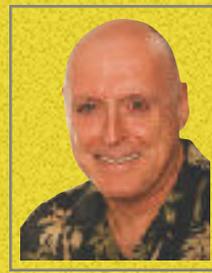


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



994 Being a Funny Leader – Part 2

Can a manager who is not known for humor, change that? Is there hope? I'm Jerry Roberts, and we'll chew over whether there really might be a "funny" fix, next, on The Extra Point.

Yesterday, we revealed a Harvard Business School study that showed leaders who can use humor to their advantage are perceived as 27% more admired, and more motivating than leaders who can't.

I've had bosses who were decent at using humor to communicate with team members, and I've had a few who were dreadful at it.

A large survey of CEOs showed that humor is a much-desired quality in job applicants. Yet, people struggle with the concept of being funny.

Maybe they tried and had a bad experience, or had managers who were "all business," teaching that people should always be seen as serious.

So, what now? Whatever got us to this point, how can we take a run at utilizing humor in the way we deal with folks in the workplace?

The first thing I would suggest is to target the low-hanging funny fruit. That would be you and me. Making fun of yourself is the easiest way to approach humor.

"Whoa," you say. "So I mock myself, I knock myself, and that's going to be funny?"

Let's say you're lost in thought while someone is talking in a staff meeting. You catch yourself, realizing you missed what was said, "Sorry Tim, I forgot these ears were for listening, not just a place to hang a mask." Maybe that gets you a giggle or two, and you add, "Can I get you to repeat that? I promise you I'm back on Planet Earth."

It's not going to win you an award at a comedy club, but it will probably play pretty well with your team.

You may know that this type of approach is known as *self-deprecating* humor. It makes us more "human" to others, and helps to build bonds. It says that our ego is not too big for us to have a little fun at our own expense.

While poking fun at people we supervise can work under certain circumstances, there are risks involved. Making yourself the target of a joke carries zero risk. If you stumble and flub what you hoped would be a funny line, so what? Move on.

Oh wait, there's nothing funny or peculiar about you, and how you do the things you do? Are you serious? Your team members know your habits, your peculiarities, and they probably tell jokes about you already. So, if you joke about yourself once in a while, it's possibly ground they've already covered, and will serve the purpose just fine.

Good comedy requires good timing. If you have a favorite comedian, study how he or she delivers a joke. You might notice that the best of them don't use unnecessary words. When it comes to being funny, they get from Point A to Point B — the punchline — as quickly and as clearly as possible.

Something else. Be yourself. Stay within your personality, and try to see the funny aspects of everyday life. The absurdities of just living will give us a lot of opportunities to joke around.

You might wonder how often you have to be funny in order to get a reputation as a funny person. The reality is not all that often.

(Con't.)

I worked for a man for two years who was mostly a numbers guy, but made fun of himself every once in a while. Everybody liked him. In those two years, he also dropped maybe three or four really funny lines about things our team had done in the course of business — and some people saw him as being a genuinely funny guy. I'm sure he would disagree with that, but in the eyes of several people, that was his image.

This final point is important. You don't have to work hard at humor. Lighten up, have fun, and let others have fun around you.

If you can move the needle ever so slightly on this, you'll find that workers will enjoy their jobs more. They'll also develop a better attitude toward the organization.

And I'm not joking.

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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