



According to University of Maryland Professor Robert Povine's research on laughter, the higher up on a group's hierarchy, the less we laugh.

In other words, **leaders don't laugh much.**

**But we should** and here's why...

Povine's research reveals that laughter is not about humor. It's about social bonding. **We bond when we laugh together.**

Studies show that when we bond, we strengthen the trust in our relationships.

**And nothing happens in leadership without trust.**

So why don't bosses laugh more?

- Fear of perception (*does being funny undermine my intelligence?*)
- Too focused on the bottom line
- Other leaders aren't laughing (*is it acceptable?*)
- Sense of humor has atrophied (*laughter is associated with play and adults don't play as much*)
- Technology strangles laughter (*more time on email and collaboration tools, means less time with people*)

So how can we intentionally incorporate laughter into our leadership?

- Look for humorous situations and ironic moments
- Tell a go-to joke and ask others for their go-to jokes
- Share funny stories and invite others to do the same
- Self-deprecate (*this underscore our humanity*)
- Point out the insanity or inanity of situations
- Introduce improv games and team-building activities

**Fortunately laughter is contagious...** we actually smile and laugh at the sound of laughter (which explains the success of the Tickle Me Elmo doll!)

*(As you exercise your funny bone, one enormous caution about inappropriate laughter. If you laugh at others (who are not laughing at themselves), mock certain groups, or giggle from nerves, you will contaminate trust.)*

**Laughter is an expression of joy.** And when we intentionally make joy a part of our job as leaders, people look forward to working with us... no matter how grueling or stressful work may be.

*Ann Tardy*



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