# **FROST INSIGHTS**

## Joy and fun at work

'In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and - SNAP - the job's a game!'

- MARY POPPINS

#### What's in this Insight

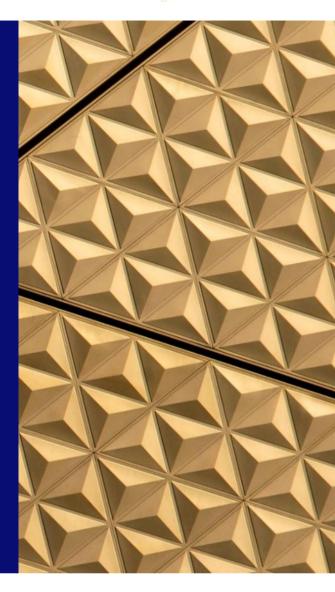
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Mary Poppins, an infernal optimist if there ever was one. Do you agree with her? Can you see at least an 'element of fun' in your job? Given how much time we spend working, hopefully some of it is a fun experience. But before we delve into fun and humour, let's start with joy and how that differs from fun. For the purposes of this Insight, that is a big enough task, without going down the philosophical rabbit hole on the meaning of happiness and whether and to what extent we should actively seek to be happy in our work or private lives.<sup>1</sup>



#### Joy vs fun

Here is a good question everyone should ask themselves occasionally: 'Does my work bring me enough joy and fun?' Ask yourself, right now, how much joy and fun does your current work bring you?

Notice that I used the word 'enough' in my question. Hey, I am an ex-tax lawyer, so I am not so naive to think or suggest that work will always be a barrel full of laughs and a joyful, fun experience. But at the other end of the spectrum, do you really want to spend a huge proportion of your life on grim work that is totally joyless



and lacking in any fun? There is a question of balance, which is an individual thing. How much work-related joy and fun is 'enough' for you? It is a question worth asking.

Readers may be unsurprised to know that recent research shows that psychologists, philosophers, and other learned people still can't agree on a simple, single definition of 'joy'.<sup>2</sup> Social psychologist Rebecca Newton says that joy is an emotional response and outlook that's vital to our wellbeing, cognitive functioning, *and* our performance at work.<sup>3</sup>

In an entertaining and short videoclip<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Miroslav Volf from Yale University differentiates between joy and fun. Volf talks about 'genuine and deep joy' as being something good that is happening *to us*. It is affective appreciation of something that we truly consider to be good. Joy always has what philosophers call an 'intentional object'. Fun on the other hand can be more of a 'thin pleasure', laid on as a coating. It is a type of a very surface pleasure, where we are pulled to forget what's going on

<sup>1.</sup> This of course is a very deep rabbit that has been debated by philosophers, scholars, and others for thousands of years. Here are just three modern day views. At one end of the spectrum, the current Dalai Lama says the purpose of life is to be happy, and that the key to happiness is peace of mind. He also says that the ultimate source of happiness is a mental feeling of joy, and not a wealth of material goods: <a href="https://www.dalailama.com/messages/transcripts-and-interviews/the-purpose-of-life-is-to-be-happy">https://www.dalailama.com/messages/transcripts-and-interviews/the-purpose-of-life-is-to-be-happy</a>. In a midway position, Penny Locaso says most of us are led to believe that happiness is a final destination – one that can be reached if we make the right choices, learn from our mistakes, and keep pushing forward. To her, that it is flawed thinking. "Happiness" is not a destination but a state of mind, and you don't need to be in it every moment of every day. Not only is that impossible, but it's also unhealthy. Life is complex and uncertain. Ups and downs are normal: <a href="https://hbr.org/2021/01/what-you-were-taught-about-happiness-isnt-true">https://hbr.org/2021/01/what-you-were-taught-about-happiness-isnt-true</a>. At the other end of the spectrum, Susan Peppercorn has written an article with the slightly depressing title of, *Why You Should Stop Trying to Be Happy at Work*: <a href="https://hbr.org/2019/07/why-you-should-stop-trying-to-be-happy-at-work">https://hbr.org/2019/07/why-you-should-stop-trying-to-be-happy-at-work</a>. To her, an alternative solution is to make *meaning* your vocational goal, not *happiness.* 

<sup>2.</sup> Johnson, MK. (2020) Joy: a review of the literature and suggestions for future directions, *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 15:1, 5-24.

<sup>3.</sup> Newton, R. (2021) Rediscover Joy at Work, *Harvard Business Review*, <u>https://hbr.org/2021/09/rediscover-joy-at-work</u>.

<sup>4.</sup> This two-minute clip is worth viewing: Difference Between Joy & Fun, Dr. Miroslav Volf, Yale University: <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JPUjPF7deg.</u>



underneath. But whatever is going on underneath remains, and our relation to it stays the same. Fun simply takes you out of it for the moment, not that there is anything bad or wrong about this. Joy is very different. Joy is a rejoicing over something; enjoying and properly appreciating something that is in fact there - underneath the surface. Hopefully your work delivers you some joy *and* some fun.

#### Joy to the post-COVID-19 world and workplace

In her 2021 Harvard Business Review article, *Rediscovering Joy at Work*<sup>5</sup>, Newton listed four root causes for a COVID-19 induced sense of reduced joyfulness. First, many of us became burned out from years of sustained stress and sadness. Pretty much everyone had suffered losses and grief. Secondly, many people struggled with feeling inauthentic when they felt they needed to show up as if everything was OK, when it really wasn't. Thirdly, we hadn't always been able to play to our strengths. Rather, we just had to plough through and get things done as best we could. Finally, research indicated that perceived social isolation may have contributed to poorer cognitive performance and executive functioning, including reduced cognitive flexibility and our ability to deal with novelty and difficult situations.

And here are Newton's suggestions for getting some joy back at work, which are likely to remain relevant long after COVID-19 slides into the past:

• **Build strengths into your day**: what energises you and what are you good at? How can you get more of that in your workday?

<sup>5.</sup> Newton, R. (2021) Rediscover Joy at Work, *Harvard Business Review*, <u>https://hbr.org/2021/09/rediscover-joy-at-work</u>.



- Focus on your professional growth: how much of your time and energy do you devote to your own personal development? What skills can you enhance or learn?
- Share with a trusted colleague: who can you share your ups and downs with, in your working environment? Do you know the hopes and aspirations of those you work with?
- **Rebuild relationships through work**: what can you do to build or improve your workplace relationships?

Just before the onset of COVID-19, management consulting firm A.T. Kearney conducted a survey which asked respondents to nominate how much joy they experienced at work. They found a positive correlation between the amount of joy and the extent to which these seven statements resonated with respondents:

- I understand my role and the role of others on the team.
- There are strong bonds within the team.
- My talents are utilised effectively.
- My role is critical to the success of the team.
- I understand how my role contributes to business success.
- Shared success is celebrated within the team.
- Colleagues acknowledge others' contributions to team success.<sup>6</sup>

Notice how often the word team appears in the above statements. If you are not feeling especially joyful in your job at present, reflect on the above statements. Which ones resonate with you? What can you do to improve the situation for yourself and/or others you work with, especially those within your most immediate team?

<sup>6.</sup> Liu, A. (2019) Making Joy a Priority at Work, *Harvard Business Review*, <u>https://hbr.org/2019/07/making-joy-a-priority-at-work</u>.



#### The power of humour

Although it is or should be obvious that humour (one component of fun) at work is a good thing, happily there is a growing evidence base to back up the proposition. Jennifer Aaker and Naomi Bagdonas from Stanford University have done plenty of research on humour and fun in the workplace, including writing a book on the subject: *Humour, Seriously: Why Humour is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life.*<sup>7</sup> Like many authors of business books, they also wrote a snappy Harvard Business Review (**HBR**) article which distils their key messages. I am something of an HBR junkie, and this is one of my all-time favourite passages:

A lot of humor's power is chemical. When we laugh, our brains produce less cortisol (inducing calm and reducing stress) and release more endorphins (which give us something like a runner's high) and oxytocin (often called the "love" hormone). It's like meditating, exercising, and having sex at the same time. Plus, it's HR-approved.<sup>1</sup>

#### How good is that!

But the power of humour is not limited to the impact on ourselves. Emotions, good and not so good, are contagious. With the speed of a virulent COVID-19 variant, we spread our joyful and other emotions with those around us, and pick up their emotions through behaviour, smiles, frowns, and other facial reactions as well as physiological reactions.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7.</sup> Aaker, J and Bagdonas, N (2020) *Humour, Seriously: Why Humour is a Secret Weapon in Business and Life*, Currency.

<sup>8.</sup> Herrando, C and Constantinides E. (2021) Emotional Contagion: A Brief Overview and Future Directions, *Front. Psychol.*, *16 July 2021*.



Are you adding or detracting to the fun and joy that your colleagues are experiencing in your workplace? What are they doing to you?

#### **Different types humour**

So, humour in the workplace and the world at large is a good thing, but humour comes in many different types and flavours. Which style of humour works best in any given situation? Yes, I know, some readers are now rolling their eyes and muttering "common-sense" to themselves.

Happily, there is some excellent and interesting recent research<sup>9</sup> on this subject. Earnest researchers in Germany surveyed more than 600 medical assistants to find out how they experience their work and what style of humour they use in their daily working lives.

The research identified eight comic styles, comprising four 'light' and four dark styles.

The light styles comprise:

- **benevolent humour** (i.e., a gentle and forgiving view on weaknesses and mistakes)
- fun (i.e., good-natured jesting)
- wit (i.e., clever and witty comments) and
- **nonsense** (i.e., liking absurd, illogical humour).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>. Raecke, J and Proyer, RT. (2024) Medical assistants' comic styles and their potential for positive functioning at work: a cross-sectional study including a subgroup analysis, *BMC Primary Care*, 25:156, <u>https://bmcprimcare.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12875-024-02363-y</u>.



The dark comic styles comprise:

- irony (i.e., saying the opposite of what is meant)
- **satire** (i.e., criticizing inadequacies with the aim to improve them)
- **sarcasm** (i.e., making critical and biting remarks and showing *Schadenfreude*) and
- cynicism (i.e., a critical, questioning view on morality and hypocrisy).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the light styles (and especially benevolent humour) were found to be well regarded in the workplace, whereas the dark style of sarcasm was not well received. Interestingly, the other dark styles were more or less neutral, or were viewed positively (e.g., satire).

Now, of course, anyone who has seen *The Germans*, episode 6, season 1 of the peerless 1970s British comedy series *Fawlty Towers*, will be wondering whether these findings are translatable across different cultures, given that what is regarded as funny in one country doesn't always generate a laugh elsewhere.

Whether the German researchers were *Fawlty Towers* fans is not clear, however they were on to this issue, saying in their report:

"... our study only refers to medical assistants working in Germany. As studies suggest that the prevalence of comic styles and their relations to demographic variables differ slightly between cultures there are restrictions regarding the generalizability of results to other countries. Nevertheless, as the general patterns (e.g., light styles having higher means than dark styles) are similar over cultures, the main results (e.g., benevolent humour more adaptive than sarcasm) probably still hold for other countries. Still, we particularly encourage cross cultural research to examine this assumption further."



#### Benefits and pitfalls of humour in the workplace

Plenty of other researchers have undertaken detailed studies to identify what is so great, and not so great, about humour at work. When humour works well, there are remarkable benefits for individuals, teams and organisations including<sup>10</sup>:

**Stress and burnout reduction**: many studies in the fields of management and physiology suggest that humour can help individuals reduce their stress levels. Studies have also shown humour may reduce burnout by helping employees deal with problematic situations, reduce tension, and regain perspective on their jobs.

**Creativity**: humour enhances openness to novel ideas by relaxing people and making them less likely to criticize errors or new ideas. This gives them the confidence to take risks, which is the base of creative thinking and promotes psychological safety, which in turn is the bedrock of great teamwork, as Google discovered in its ground-breaking and data driven Project Aristotle research.<sup>11</sup>

**Group cohesiveness**: shared laughter and humour helps in the group bonding and togetherness process, particularly when laughing in the middle of adversity. Humour is vital emotional glue that assists team members to stick together on the tough days.

**Communication**: leaders and managers can use humour to help with getting their messages across to their teams. In a world overcrowded with communication, witty messages stand out and are remembered. Occasional and appropriate use of

<sup>10.</sup> Mathew, HE and Vijayalakshmi, V. (2017) Changing Definitions of Work and Play: Importance of Workplace Humour, *Psychol Stud*, 62(1):12–20.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>. Duhigg, C. (2016) What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team, *New York Times*, 25 February 2016: <u>https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/magazine/what-google-learned-from-its-quest-to-build-the-perfect-team.html</u>.



self-deprecation can improve a leader's ability to be persuasive and influential. Humour can be a great safety valve to relieve tension.<sup>12</sup>

**Culture**: research shows that having a shared sense of fun and humour in an organisation can be a key component of successful corporate culture. In the US, 81% of employees of companies that made the 100 Best Places to Work For list described their office environments as fun. At companies that applied for inclusion, but didn't make the list, only 62% of employees did the same. This 19-point gap was one of the largest distinctions found between companies that made the list and those that didn't. The researchers said that this outcome reiterated previous research suggesting 'fun' is essential to a topflight work culture.<sup>13</sup>

A Robert Half survey found that 91% of executives believe a sense of humour is important for career advancement, while 84% feel that people with a good sense of humour do a better job.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, a study by the Bell Leadership Institute in the US found that when employees are asked to describe the strengths and weaknesses of leaders in their organizations, 'sense of humour' and 'work ethic' were mentioned twice as often as any other phrases.<sup>15</sup>

Maybe you are thinking, I do not work in a job or a workplace that easily lends itself to humour. For example, economists, actuaries, and accountants are often and

<sup>12.</sup> Taylor, S, Simpson, J and Hardy, C. (2022) The Use of Humor in Employee-to-Employee Workplace Communication: A Systematic Review with Thematic Synthesis, *International Journal of Business Communication*.

<sup>13.</sup> Nelson, B. (2022) Why Work Should Be Fun, *Harvard Business Review*, <u>https://hbr.org/2022/05/why-work-should-be-fun</u>.

<sup>14.</sup> Is a sense of humour in the workplace good for your career?, <a href="https://www.roberthalf.com.au/blog/jobseekers/sense-humour-workplace-good-your-career">https://www.roberthalf.com.au/blog/jobseekers/sense-humour-workplace-good-your-career</a>.

<sup>15.</sup> Bell Leadership Study Finds Humor Gives Leaders the Edge, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20120320005971/en/Bell-Leadership-Study-Finds-

Humor-Gives-Leaders-the-Edge



of course unfairly tagged as humourless professionals. This baggage never stopped my good friend Chris Richardson, one of Australia's leading economists for many years. Chris was, and at the time this Insight was published still is, a prolific writer in all manner of publications, including the august *Australian Financial Review*. He had a delightful way with words and endless witty turns of phrase. My favourite article remains his analysis<sup>16</sup> of what could have otherwise been a very dry commentary on the 2016 Federal Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook, which goes by the dull acronym of PEFO. In doing so, Chris examined the previous (2013) PEFO statement and concluded that "*we didn't get a Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook*. *What got served up to the Australian public was a Pixies, Elves and Fairies Outlook*". I promise you, this seemed pretty funny at the time.

OK, not all humour, in the workplace, media or otherwise, is in fact funny or of the pleasant variety. It is often said that sarcasm is the lowest form of wit and cynicism is not much better. Apart from the study mentioned earlier as regards German medical assistants, here hasn't been a whole lot of academic research on the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate humour in the workplace.<sup>17</sup> However, most people with any modicum of emotional intelligence and commonsense can generally spot less-than-funny humour in the workplace, even ignoring weak dad jokes. It is never appropriate to laugh at someone rather than with them, or to use 'humour' to belittle, criticise, ridicule, or offend others.

You don't even need to try to be off colour. Sometimes, perhaps out of nervous energy or to try and break the ice at an event, it is very easy to say something off the cuff which we think, or hope is funny, but really is not.

<sup>16.</sup> Richardson, C. (2016) Why the 2013 PEFO was really a misleading Pixies, Elves and Fairies Outlook, *Australian Financial Review*, 26 April 2016.

<sup>17.</sup> Mathew, HE and Vijayalakshmi, V. (2017) Changing Definitions of Work and Play: Importance of Workplace Humour, *Psychol Stud*, 62(1):12–20.



Pausing and thinking for a few seconds in such a situation is an optimal strategy. Ask yourself whether what just popped into your head could possibly, on any grounds, offend anyone who might hear your intended witticism. And yes, others have suggested to me that I should also do the same thing.

### Laugh and live longer

Still not convinced about the merits of joy and humour in the workplace? Are you an actuary? Sorry, just kidding.

Folklore has long told us that laughter is the best medicine. Well, science suggests that this saying is on the money. Researchers at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore used laughter-provoking movies to gauge the positive effect of emotions on cardiovascular health. They showed that laughter is linked to the healthy function of blood vessels.<sup>18</sup> Some unfortunate participants were made to watch *Saving Private Ryan* instead. They did not get the same benefits, and indeed many had reduced blood flow. The lead researcher, Dr Michael Miller, said the magnitude of the changes was similar to the benefit with aerobic activity, but without the aches, pains and muscle tension associated with exercise. Don't get too excited.

Dr. Miller also said "we don't recommend that you laugh and not exercise, but we do recommend that you try to laugh on a regular basis. Thirty minutes of exercise three times a week, and 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis is probably good for the vascular system."

<sup>18.</sup> University Of Maryland Medical Center. (2005) Laughter Helps Blood Vessels Function Better, *ScienceDaily*, <u>https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/03/050310100458.htm</u>.



Dr Miller is one of the medical advisors at Laughter Yoga USA, who believe that the world would be a better place if everyone spent at least 15 minutes a day laughing.<sup>19</sup>

Laughter-centric organisations are now popping up all over the world, including Laughter Yoga Australia.<sup>20</sup> However, the origin of laughter yoga appears to be in India, where Dr Madan Kataria, the self-styled laughter guru, has been researching the benefits of laughter and organising laughter clubs since 1995. Amongst other achievements, Dr Kataria established World Laughter Day in 1998. This event is celebrated on the first Sunday in May, when laughter club members and their friends and families "*get together in important squares public parks to laugh together to send out positive vibrations of unconditional love, laughter, kindness and compassion*".<sup>21</sup> Of course, May the fourth is the annual international Star Wars Day. That way, every seven years or so, you can celebrate both important events on the same day.

#### Laughing is a complexity genius

Say that again, laughing is a *what?* Jennifer Garvey Berger and Carolyn Coughlin have written a superb, very well researched book, *Unleash Your Complexity Genius*<sup>22</sup>, which offers a set of useful practices to cope with the complexity the modern world throws at us daily. It turns out that laughing and wondering are one of the five 'complexity geniuses' we all have inside ourselves and

<sup>19.</sup> Laughter Yoga USA: <u>https://laughteryogausa.org/about-us/</u>.

<sup>20.</sup> Laughter Yoga Australia: <u>https://laughteryoga-australia.org</u>.

<sup>21.</sup> Laughter Yoga International: https://www.laughteryoga.org/world-laughter-day/.

<sup>22.</sup> Garvey Berger, J and Coughlin, C. (2023) *Unleash Your Complexity Genius*, Stanford University Press.



which we can use to hack into our own nervous system and bring our natural capacities back online.

As they say: "not only does laughter awaken your parasympathetic, complexity-friendly nervous system, but it lubricates everything you want for thinking and acting in complexity. It works on the individual nervous system level ... Laughing also seems to loosen our capacity for creativity and innovation. In study after study, doing something that makes you laugh - even a brief dad-joke kind of laugh - opens you up to new ideas, helps you be more resilient as you solve problems and creates the context for novelty."

I now have quality, evidenced-based research to offer support for my regular dad-joke attempts at humour. Sadly, I am not sure that my daughters are convinced.

#### Chief fun and happiness officers

In more recent years, many human resource types have wanted to be rebranded as 'people and culture' professionals and Chief Wellbeing Officers have also been a thing for some time now. But wait, does your organisation have a Chief Fun Officer or a Chief Happiness Officer as part of the C-suite? No? Well maybe one is on the way or maybe this is just a passing fad.

David Allen is a serious academic. He is the Distinguished Research Environment Professor, Warwick Business School, at the University of Warwick. But he is seriously into fun, as can be gleaned from the earnest sounding title of his learned peer reviewed paper: *Fun in the workplace: A review and expanded theoretical perspective*.<sup>23</sup> If even this sounds too daunting and not-so-fun, then check out David Allen's chattier commentary on The Conversation website, where he wrote

<sup>23.</sup> Michel, JW, Tews MJ, Allen DG. (2019) Fun in the workplace: A review and expanded theoretical perspective, *Human Resource Management Review*, 29(1): 98-110.



an article with the catchier title of *Why every company needs a Chief Fun Officer.*<sup>24</sup> As Allen notes, workers are likely to value fun in the workplace more highly if managers and leaders are supportive of fun, regardless of whether someone has the title of Chief Fun Officer. And as Allen also observes, when it comes to the competition for talent and building great teams with engaged workforces, organisations that provide an environment in which employees can have some fun are likely to have the last laugh.

#### **Personal reflections**

In the 1960s, I went to Our Lady of Good Counsel primary school in Forestville, Sydney which was run by a group of serious Catholic nuns from the Brigidine order. I have all sorts of memories of those years, including being made to drink rather warm milk at morning tea. I think that is why I don't like drinking plain milk to this day. But one of my strongest memories is of the marvellous, shiny, and rather large brass bell that the nuns would ring to announce the start of classes, the beginning and end of lunch hour, etc.

Why am I telling you all this? Well, one day when I was the managing director of Greenwoods & Herbert Smith Freehills, the memory of the school yard bell came flooding back to me. At Greenwoods, we had a practice of having a Sydney office morning tea once a month to celebrate birthdays, make announcements and so I had a chance to ramble on about whatever happened to be on my mind. Such morning teas were held at the same time on the same day each month and were scheduled by email invitations well in advance. Nonetheless, it proved very difficult to get a bunch of workaholic tax lawyers and support staff to down tools for 15 minutes and attend these morning teas. Yes, I know what you are thinking: they would do almost anything to avoid having to listen to me drone on yet again. We tried to lure them with a pretty good spread of cakes, pastries, and even healthy stuff like fruit.

<sup>24.</sup> Why every company needs a Chief Fun Officer: <u>https://theconversation.com/why-every-company-needs-a-chief-fun-officer-128330</u>.



But still attendances were suboptimal. Enter the managing director's big brass bell. One day, I went onto eBay and found someone selling an allegedly one-of-a-kind brass bell from Fatima Convent, Parramatta, bearing the date 1896, at a very reasonable price. As a bonus, there were kookaburras etched all around the rim of the bell. Two minutes of googling established that there was in fact no Fatima Convent in Parramatta in the 1890s. Undeterred, I duly bought my knock-off, Chinese made bell and sure enough the next day the vendor was still offering a oneof-a-kind brass bell from Fatima Convent, Parramatta, bearing the date 1896, at a very reasonable price.

Well, didn't my bell shake up attendances at our monthly morning teas. Just before the appointed hour, I would wander around the office ringing my lovely new bell very loudly. People couldn't jump out of their seats quickly enough. Most (OK, not all) of my fellow directors and staff came to like, or at least tolerate, my bell and it became a fun talking point around the office. Emboldened, I took to ringing the bell at our many client functions, as a way of quickly and efficiently herding people from the drinks and canapés to sit down and listen to Greenwoods' people give always scintillating presentations on one or other recent tax development. I could also use the bell to make it clear to a speaker when their allotted time had expired.

In time, I bought another bell for our Melbourne office. This occurred after I took my Sydney bell to Melbourne, once, in my carry-on luggage. The airport security people at Sydney were fine, but for the Melbourne team it seemed to them that I had something almost as dangerous as a small thermonuclear weapon in my bag. After a trio of security officials inspected it at some length, and remarked to me somewhat gravely that my bell was equipped with a handle, it was eventually returned, but with an admonishment to never bring it back to Melbourne airport.

I had a variety of other ways of trying to inject a bit of joy and fun into the often overly serious business of tax law, but my bell and all the interesting conversations it helped spark with staff and surprised clients gives me my fondest memories.



#### Key Takeaways

- **Joy vs fun:** academic definitions don't really matter. Hopefully you know what these words mean and, more importantly, that your job gives you a good dose of each.
- Joy in the post-COVID-19 world and workplace: here are suggestions for getting some joy back at work, which are likely to remain relevant long after COVID-19 slides into the past:
  - Build strengths into your day.
  - Focus on your professional growth.
  - Share with a trusted colleague.
  - o Rebuild relationships through work.
- **The power of humour:** an excerpt from an excellent HBR article: A lot of humor's power is chemical. When we laugh, our brains produce less cortisol (inducing calm and reducing stress) and release more endorphins (which give us something like a runner's high) and oxytocin (often called the "love" hormone). It's like meditating, exercising, and having sex at the same time. Plus, it's HR-approved.
- **Different types of humour:** aim for 'light' humour, such as 'benevolent humour' (i.e., a gentle and forgiving view on weaknesses and mistakes), rather than 'dark' humour, such as sarcasm (i.e., making critical and biting remarks and showing *Schadenfreude*).
- Benefits and pitfalls of humour in the workplace: When humour works well, the benefits for individuals, teams and organisations include:
  - Stress and burnout reduction.
  - $\circ$  Creativity.
  - Group cohesiveness.
  - Communication improves.
  - Culture improves.



- Most people with any modicum of emotional intelligence and commonsense can generally spot less-than-funny humour in the workplace. It is never appropriate to laugh at someone rather than with them, or to use 'humour' to belittle, criticise, ridicule, or offend others.
- Laugh and live longer: research has shown that laughter is linked to the healthy function of blood vessels, possibly staving off heart attacks amongst other health benefits.
- Laughing is a complexity genius: Laughing loosens our capacity for creativity and innovation. Doing something that makes you laugh opens you up to new ideas, helps you be more resilient as you solve problems and creates the context for novelty.
- Chief fun and happiness officers: OK, they are not very common just yet, but some organisations do have them.

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