



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #226

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DREW TARVIN is the world's first humor engineer, teaching people how to get better results while having more fun. Combining his background as a project manager at Procter & Gamble with his experience as a stand-up comedian, he reverse-engineers the skill of humor in a way that is practical, actionable, and gets results in the workplace. Through his company, Humor That Works, Drew has worked with more than 35,000 people at over 250 organizations, including the US Navy, ESPN, Microsoft, and the FBI. He is a bestselling author; has been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*, and *Fast Company*; and his TEDx Talk has been viewed more than 5 million times.

Quotes

"If you put the likes silverware together, still spread it out but put it together, you save about 20 seconds on the unload."

"You are responsible for your own happiness."

"It's very difficult for you to be productive if you are 'dead', if you are burned out, stressed out, worn out."

"The shortest distance between two people is a smile." - Victor Borge

"Biting your cheek when you're chewing is proof that even if you've done something a lot, it doesn't mean you're always going to be perfect at it."

About Humor In The Workplace 09:08 - 10:00

"What we say is that humor is the missing skill for success and happiness at work. There are a couple of reasons why:

1. It is a skill that can be learned

2. It does increase our success. It helps us get better results, execute faster, think smarter, communicate better, connect closer and lead further. It does improve our overall work enjoyment and happiness in the workplace.

3. It is a missing skill. When you go through school, you're often learning skills to get a job. Once you're on the job, you learn the skills to do that job. But very rarely, if ever, are you ever taught how to enjoy that job."

About Humor Being Justifiable In More Than One Way 13:55 - 15:20

Here's a question that some people may say is a silly question. Would you rather do something that is fun or not fun? So, probably 99% of people are going to say fun, and it's an obvious answer. So that stands as a reason that if you make your speeches a little bit more fun, you'd think people would pay more attention. If you made your meetings more fun, would people be more willing to go? If you make your emails a little bit more fun, would people be more willing to read them? There's two extremes that I love. There's a simple behavioral thing of doing things that are more fun, and then there's research to back it up. There's 30+ benefits to using humor in the workplace, all backed by research, case studies, real-world examples, things that are peer-reviewed and things that have been double-blind tested. So whether you're influenced by [ethos, pathos, or logos](#), there is justification for humor in the workplace. It changes the experience for humans."

About Using Humor In The Workplace Effectively With Intention 17:49 - 21:39

This centers around the idea of MAP which is your medium, your audience, and your purpose.

1. Medium

How are you going to execute the humor? Is it in an email or is it, 'Hey, I'm getting ready to take my commute into work in the morning. What am I going to do during that commute?' Or 'I'm giving a presentation to 50 people. It's now live when I'm talking to a bunch of people,' or it's one-on-one in a meeting. So, medium is important because it impacts the message. The joke that you say with someone in person, maybe it's a little bit sarcastic or a playful rib to them, but if you text the same thing, they would be like, 'Why does this person hate me?' The medium impacts the message.

2. Audience

Who is receiving that humor? What do they know, need and expect? Humor is partly about doing things a little bit differently. So you still want to deliver what they need in a way they don't expect. Humor in the workplace doesn't replace the work. You still have to do the work. It's not about changing what you do in the workplace, it's changing how you do it. Another important aspect is what is your relationship to the audience? A joke that you say to a co-worker of yours that you've known for 10 years is very different than what you might say to a client that you're meeting for the very first time. This is where leaders get tripped up. 'I do banter back and forth with all of my friends.' That's great, because you feel equal. As a manager of someone else, you inherently have a little higher status. The jokes that you think are playful banter comes across as aggressively mean.

3. Purpose

Why are you using humor? Doing it because you heard you should is okay, but it's more important to say, 'I want to use humor to achieve this specific result.' When we work with an organization, we start with purpose. We ask what are some of the core challenges you are dealing with. One of the most common ones is, 'Stress is really high right now. People are asked to do more with less. Things are constantly changing and there are new initiative and stress is just at this higher point.' So our purpose here will be how to use humor to intentionally relieve some stress. Stress by itself is not a bad thing but when you don't relieve stress and you have chronic stress, that's when you see an increase in muscle tension, a decrease in the immune system and an increase in healthcare cost, etc.

About Actionable Items That Can Be Done In Meetings 24:50 - 25:60

"As you go through your day, think of one thing that you can do each hour a day that brings either a smile to your face or the face of someone else. You're going into a meeting. You know it's an hour-long meeting. What's one thing you can do in the meeting that brings a little humor into it?

1. Giving people time at the end of the meeting to do something or send something funny.
2. At Procter & Gamble, I used to start each of my meetings with a get to know you question if it was 8 or 9 people in the room. It'll help us build a relationship with each other and it'll just reset the day. People will come in super stressed and we'll start out with something simple like, 'What's the first thing you remember buying with your own money?'

3. You can do the classic two truths and a lie activity.
4. You can do an improv activity.

It's just about resetting the energy in the room. It still should be an agenda meeting but having that as an agenda item allows people to refresh and they're more engaged in the meeting because they've got the blood flowing. So in each hour of the day, what can you do? That's how you develop the habit."

Creating A Humor Journal 30:41

"If you want to become more humorous and maybe you want to eventually end up doing stand-up comedy - which is not the main goal here, the main goal is to be effective in the workplace - create a humor notebook. Create what is essentially a journal or a repository where anytime something comes up that you think is funny or anytime you watch a funny video that you really like, anytime with a crazy story happens with a client or whatever, every time you have this kind of observation - the starting point of the skill of humor is really your sense of humor and that is what you find funny and interesting. Anytime you find something interesting and you wonder why it's like that, you write it down in the humor notebook. And then when you're prepping for a meeting or something and you want to incorporate humor in this meeting but you don't know how to, rather than starting from scratch you can go to your humor notebook and look through it."

Action Item

Think about something you want to do tomorrow and put it on the calendar and say, 'This, I'm going to do.' If it feels intimidating, make it something like, 'Watch a comedy special on Netflix or Amazon Prime.' The other thing that can help is seeing other people use humor. Watch it with a little bit of a lens to see how they're creating laughter and controlling the stage. That can sometimes motivate people and gets you thinking about what your take might be on this.

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