

Laugh at Work for Success!

By Randall Munson, president of Creatively Speaking®

You've probably heard successful people joke that they "laugh all the way to the bank." But which came first? Do they laugh because they are successful or are they successful because they laugh?

I've been interviewing CEOs and CIOs of major, successful corporations. In the process I've discovered a relationship between laughing and success. Companies that encourage fun and appreciate humor tend to outperform their competition. Here are a couple examples:

- Most major airlines in the US are struggling financially. Many are teetering on the verge of bankruptcy and are taking such extreme financial measures as removing pillows from the airplanes, eliminating in-flight meals (selling meals onboard instead), and no longer providing the little paper folders to slip your boarding passes and tickets into when you check in. They are deadly serious companies - and they are nearly dying.

In contrast, Southwest Airlines continues to make money. One big distinction about Southwest is that they laugh at work. Consider the way the pre-flight "safety announcements" are made. Instead of the mumbled, monotone recitation you hear on most airlines, on Southwest you may hear "In the event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, margarine cups will descend from the ceiling. Stop screaming, grab the mask, and pull it over your face. If you have a small child traveling with you, or someone acting like a child, secure your own mask before sticking one over their mouth. If you are traveling with two or more small children, decide now which one you love more." Hearing that, passengers look at each other and laugh. Southwest has fun even with very serious things.

In case you are wondering, the FAA doesn't object to the humorous safety announcements. Southwest spokesperson Sherry Phelps told me the FAA folks say the funny ones are the only ones anyone ever listens to!

She also said Southwest employees will work their butts off because it is fun to work there.

Southwest Airlines is a success. They laugh at work.

- Outback Steakhouse, Inc. is a booming, successful restaurant chain. In 1988 the four founders planned for four restaurants, one for each of them. They wanted to run their restaurants the way they thought good restaurants should be run,

generate enough income to support a comfortable lifestyle, and have fun doing it. Their growing number of restaurants around the world has now surpassed 1,200 and still climbing.

Dusty Williams, CIO of Outback Steakhouse, told me that having fun is still essential to the success of Outback Steakhouse. In fact, one of the company's five principles is "FUN" (The others are hospitality, sharing, quality and courage).

Outback Steakhouse is a success. They laugh at work.

Is your organization a success? Do you laugh at work?

Try it because you, too, may laugh all the way to the bank!

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