

### ▣ Having Fun Yet?

Research reveals myriad benefits of levity in the workplace. A summary of some recent study conclusions:

- **The most effective leaders** have their employees laughing three times more often than their counterparts.
- **Employees who rate** their managers' sense of humor as "above average" rate the likelihood that they'll be on the job a year from now at almost 90%.
- **Just looking forward** to a lighthearted event reduces the hormones associated with stress.
- **People who use humor** yield greater influence over group decisions.

A few suggestions for creating a lighthearted environment:

- **Plan a retro day** where employees dress up in clothes from whatever era they choose. Give great prizes to make sure people actually do it.
- **When you reach a goal**, have executives prepare breakfast for everyone (nothing says thank-you like crispy bacon).
- **Let employees work from home** now and then. Such flexibility shows trust, which goes hand and hand with fun.
- **Arrange a trivia game**, including questions about your organization and its history.
- **Paint a break-room wall** with chalkboard paint, letting employees pass on messages or doodle to their heart's content. ▣

—adapted from *The Levity Effect*  
(John Wiley and Sons, [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com))

### ▣ Looking for More than Small Change

Nonprofits needn't be ashamed of not being businesses, or even business-like. Michael Edwards, writing in *Small Change: Why Business Won't Save the World* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, [www.berrettkoehler.com](http://www.berrettkoehler.com)), derides the concept of philanthrocapitalism—the idea that business thinking can save the world—and points out how different it is from nonprofit thinking.

Business thinking is based on making decisions with incomplete data—information often intentionally omitted—while civil society, Edwards notes, keeps the whole community in mind, trying to leave nothing out. Businesses promote existing social structures while nonprofits seek new, more sustainable ones.

Edwards concludes that concentrating wealth and decision-making among philanthrocapitalists is unhealthy for democracy. Nonprofits may have everything to gain by reasserting their difference and independence from business. ▣

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

### ▣ How to Develop Six Crucial Aptitudes

Today's leader must understand six basic concepts—design, empathy, story, play, symphony, and meaning. (For more information, see "Into the Labyrinth" on page 2.) Use the following ideas to augment these capabilities for yourself:

**1. Carry a notebook** (or camera). When you see a great design, whether it's a graphic, a room, or a building, make a note or take a picture of it. Before long, you'll understand in a deeper way how design decisions shape your everyday life.

**2. Begin an inspiration board.** Each time you see something compelling—a photo, a piece of fabric, a picture—tack it to the board. You'll discover connections that will enliven and expand your work.

**3. Check out** [www.halfbakery.com](http://www.halfbakery.com), where people have contributed all manner of innovative ideas to jumpstart your creativity.

**4. Measure your ability to empathize** with Simon Baron-Cohen's 60-question instrument ([www.tinyurl.com/taj8](http://www.tinyurl.com/taj8)) and the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test ([www.emotionalintelligencecmhs.com/MSCEIT.htm](http://www.emotionalintelligencecmhs.com/MSCEIT.htm)).

**5. Find out how well you read people's emotions**, using the BBC's 10-question "Spot the Fake Smile Test" ([www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/surveys/smiles/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/surveys/smiles/)) and the CD-ROM *Mind Reading*, which shows people demonstrating over 400 different feelings ([www.jkp.com/mindreading](http://www.jkp.com/mindreading)).

**6. Practice laughter yoga** (which combines laughter exercises and yoga breathing) at laughter clubs or in your workplace ([www.laughteryoga.org](http://www.laughteryoga.org)).

**7. Take the humor test** at [tinyurl.com/6t7ff](http://tinyurl.com/6t7ff).

**8. Learn to read faces** with Paul Ekman's CD-ROMs ([www.paulekman.com](http://www.paulekman.com)) and book *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (Times Books, [www.time.com](http://www.time.com)).

**9. Read *A Whole New Mind*** (Penguin Group, [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com)), from which all these ideas come. It's filled with many more exercises than those listed here, all mind-expanding. Also, peruse the author's Web site ([www.danpink.com](http://www.danpink.com)).

**10. Visit a labyrinth.** Moving meditation can be centering and profound. To find a labyrinth, see [www.labyrinthsociety.org](http://www.labyrinthsociety.org).

**11. Measure the spirit in your life** with Dr. Ralph Piedmont's Spiritual Transcendence Scale ([www.evergreen.loyola.edu](http://www.evergreen.loyola.edu)) and the Index of Core Spiritual Experience ([www.spiritualityhealth.com](http://www.spiritualityhealth.com)).

**12. List changes** you'd like to make in your life and what's keeping you from realizing them. For example: "I'd like to read more, but I rarely have time to sit down with a book." Now, replace the word *but* with *and*. This small change will move you out of excuse-making mode and into problem-solving mode. It's grammar's way of saying, "Deal with this, and do something meaningful." ▣



### Why You Need Spirituality in Your Workplace – and How to Cultivate It

In *A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America*, Ian Mitroff and Elizabeth Denton report that leaders who acknowledge spiritual values and align them with organizational goals outperform those who don't. They found that most executives defined spirituality not as religion but "the basic desire to find purpose and meaning in one's life." Yet, for fear of offending their religiously diverse staff, they avoided spirituality in the workplace. Meanwhile, that's just what employees were hungering to find (see [www.spiritatwork.org](http://www.spiritatwork.org)).

Here are ways to add spirit to your workplace and satisfy people's demand for working conditions that offer meaning and a feeling of transcendence:

- **Create** an aesthetically pleasing environment that's clean, ordered, harmonious, and peaceful. For example, consider using plants, art, and the display of inspirational quotes.
- **Nurture** a culture of helping one another and valuing differences.
- **Support** subcultures such as clubs and organizational functions.
- **Offer** training (or pay for employees to attend classes) in such areas as self-improvement, stress reduction, yoga, and meditation.

• **Prepare** a code of ethics. Refer to it regularly, and integrate its precepts into your organization's culture. (See "The Ethics Audit," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 13, No. 6, [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members).)

• **Eliminate** organizational barriers. Give workers access to information and people from all departments.

• **Champion** the use of teams and high levels of positive interaction (see "Zen and the Art of Team Building," *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 20, No. 1, [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members).)

• **Encourage** everyone to take regular breaks and go outdoors, if possible, or to a spot where they can see the outside world.

• **Perform Exercises 11 and 12** in "How to Develop Six Crucial Aptitudes" (page 26). For an even more profound experience, give these exercises to your staff and board members. After everyone's had a chance to try them, open up a dialogue about spirituality at work.

• **Be sure** your actions reflect the values you espouse. □

—adapted from *Spirituality in the Workplace* (Personhood Press, [www.personhoodpress.com](http://www.personhoodpress.com))

### Boost Your Leadership Quotient

Since today's nonprofit leaders must have entrepreneurial skills, it's useful to know the work of Michael Gerber, who says it's a myth that entrepreneurs are born, not made. He believes we all have a creative center which, through learning and practice, can produce imaginative entrepreneurial work. In *E-Myth Mastery* (HarperBusiness, [www.harpercollins.com](http://www.harpercollins.com)), he offers steps to help you nurture that creative center, appreciate the inextricable connection between entrepreneurship and leadership, and guide your organization to success:

1. **Write down** everything you do each day. Label each task E for entrepreneur, M for manager, or T for technician. This step will provide clarity about how you spend your time and will further your growth more than just about anything else you can do. It will also develop your ability to discriminate. Discriminating consciously is a learned ability, one that will help you see yourself more clearly than ever before. Conscious discrimination is one of the leading indicators of whether you're a practicing leader.

2. **Set aside certain times of each day** to entrepre-

neurial, management, and technician work. This step will help you distinguish the tactical work of technicians and managers from the strategic work of leaders and entrepreneurs. You can then consciously choose to focus more on leadership and entrepreneurial tasks and delegate other duties.

3. **Pick one thing** in your organization to improve. (As you perform the first two steps, it will become obvious what's in need of change.) Now, lead the change process *not* by improving it yourself but by communicating to your staff your vision of the change you want.

4. **Look at the way** you communicated your expectations to your staff. Did you organize your words in a clear, compelling, inspirational way? Did people understand what you wanted? Did they end up fulfilling your vision of change? Will you express things differently next time? Since communication is the leader's most powerful tool, spend all the time you can on honing this capacity. It's through communication that you move people to build a world-class organization. □

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### ☐ Tell Your Own Story (Or Someone Else Will)

No one can tell your stories as well as you can. But crafting stories to get your points across takes time and thought. These suggestions will help you make the best possible use of storytelling:

- **Identify the key stories** related to your organization and its cause. Who has told them? If you didn't tell these stories, why not?

- **Use authentic language.** Avoid jargon and buzzwords—terms that relate to a specific profession—unless you're telling your story to people you're sure understand these catchphrases. In that case, using jargon may build rapport.

- **Gather metaphors** that bring your narratives to life. Metaphors—figures of speech that describe one thing in terms of another—create new possibilities and meanings. List metaphors you live by, and ask yourself what they tell about your stories. (Do you think of your life as a “journey,” for example, or a “treadmill”?) Ask others in your organization to do the same, and use the answers as the basis for discussion.

- **Read about the use of storytelling** in articles such as “What's Your Story?” (*Nonprofit World*, Vol. 25, No. 1, [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members)).

- **At board and staff meetings, ask people** what stories they think embody your organization's mission. Together, create new, inspiring stories you can tell people when they ask what your organization does.

- **Use storytelling to kick off new projects.** Sharing personal tales helps teams bond.

- **Explore the online storytelling community** at [www.storycenter.org](http://www.storycenter.org), [www.citystories.com](http://www.citystories.com), [www.storycorps.net](http://www.storycorps.net), and [www.iusedtobelieve.com](http://www.iusedtobelieve.com). ☐

—adapted from *Nonprofit Leadership* (iUniverse, [www.iuniverse.com](http://www.iuniverse.com)) and *A Whole New Mind* (Penguin Group, [www.penguin.com](http://www.penguin.com))

### ☐ The Manager's Secret Weapon – Empathy

Marco Marsan, author of *The Lion's Way* (Greenleaf Book Group, [www.greenleafbookgroup.com](http://www.greenleafbookgroup.com)) calls empathy the ultimate weapon in running an organization, for five main reasons:

1. **Higher level of response.** People are more likely to accept your advice if they feel you've listened to them and understand their point of view.

2. **Greater loyalty.** Employees gravitate to bosses who understand and sympathize with their concerns. They also work harder out of a feeling of mutual respect.

3. **Fewer challenges.** When you understand the daily issues others face, you encourage teamwork, lessen conflicts, and increase constructive communication.

4. **The evoking of passion.** Conveying compassion to your workers is the best way to engage them in your cause.

5. **Meaningful solutions.** Empathy is an excellent problem-solving tool. If you want to solve today's complex problems, you need to be able to influence other people, gain their commitment, and enlist them in finding solutions.

To improve your empathic powers, see Exercises 4 and 5 in “How to Develop Six Crucial Aptitudes” (page 26). ☐

### ☐ Working Effectively in Small Groups

Small groups offer opportunities to learn from others and increase community, fulfillment, and effectiveness, as Scott Myers and Carolyn Anderson explain in *The Fundamentals of Small Group Communication* (Sage Publications, [www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)). To take advantage of these opportunities, you need to understand the small-group communication process.

A small group reflects the genders, cultures, and learning styles represented by its members. A group's history and maturity influence how people work within a group. The book explores three models of group development and five characteristics of developed groups.

Training group members about small-group roles is important for success. The authors describe how leaders can use different listening skills as well as verbal and nonverbal communication to improve results. They also provide guidelines for handling conflict and creating a supportive environment. This is a valuable book to help people accomplish things effectively while building rewarding relationships.

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

#### When You Lead a Small Group

1. **Set high standards.** Develop a code of conduct and goals to be achieved, and hold people accountable.

2. **Use humor deftly.** People consider leaders who use self-disparaging humor better tension-releasers than those who aim humor at others or don't use humor at all.

3. **Foster a supportive communication climate.** Encourage group members to be open, receptive, and flexible.

4. **Help group members be creative** by stimulating them to consider problems from different points of view. Take full advantage of the group's diversity.

5. **Celebrate successes.** Recognize and reward the efforts group members put forth. ☐