



A laugh a day

“Humour in the workforce should definitely be encouraged”

Having a good laugh at work can do wonders for a person's job satisfaction, according to Swinburne researcher Maren Rawlings.

In a recent study, the psychologist found that individuals who use, and are surrounded by, positive humour in the workplace had higher levels of job satisfaction than those who don't.

She presented her findings at the Australian Psychological Society's annual conference in Hobart in September.

During the study Rawlings surveyed 300 workers from 20 different countries about their individual use of humour in the workplace, and how they perceived the humour used by their colleagues.

“I found that the more positive the humour climate was in a workplace, the greater the job satisfaction of employees,” Rawlings said.

“In fact, personality and mood, combined with humour use, explained over 40 per cent of workers' job satisfaction.”

According to Rawlings, previous research has also found a strong correlation between a worker's job satisfaction and their level of productivity. Therefore her findings contradict a common misconception that people who enjoy themselves and make jokes in the workplace, are not as productive.

“People bemoan that there is no time for humour, and that being humorous is not appreciated,” she said.


“However there is a body of research out there that shows a strong association between job satisfaction and performance. So if humour makes people satisfied in their job, it should definitely be encouraged.”

Just as positive humour was found

to increase job satisfaction, Rawlings' research also showed that no humour or negative humour decreased levels of job satisfaction in employees.

“Workplaces where humour was used in a negative way, for example using a joke to put somebody else down, had a definite negative impact on employees' job satisfaction. Workplaces that were humour-free were also perceived as negative,” she said.

Rawlings believes it is important for employers to recognise the importance of humour in the workplace in order to keep their employees satisfied in their roles.

“If employers take measures to encourage a positive humour climate in the workplace, they are more likely to retain their staff. And with an ageing workforce it is vital for companies to keep good people.” 

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