

PM WORLD TODAY – STUDENT PAPER – DECEMBER 2009

Humour as a competence element for project managers

By Guðmundur Gauti Guðmundsson

Editor's note: This paper was presented as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Project Management (MPM) at the Faculty of Industrial and Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science, University of Iceland – May 2009.

The human race has one really effective weapon, and that is laughter.

-- Mark Twain

Abstract – For project managers, work can be hard. They have to make sure their team is performing at the highest possible level, that projects are completed on time, on budget and within scope. They need to be friendly and yet, keep their professional distance. Through it all they need to maintain their own spirit as well as their teams. How does humour fit into all this? Can humour raise the spirit of the project manager and the spirit of the project team? Can it increase the chances of project success and help the project manager to face his daily challenges? This paper discusses the meaning of humour is and how it may belong in the International Project Management Associations Eye of Competence. A survey on humour in project management was conducted in order to evaluate the importance of humour in the view of project managers, corporate managers and students in the master degree program of project management at the University of Iceland as well as other experienced project participants, familiar with the theories of project management and practices. The results will show that humour can be an important competence factor for project managers and can help them to achieve project goals.

Index Terms— Project Management, Humour, International Project Management Association, Eye of Competence.

1. INTRODUCTION

HUMOUR may be a powerful tool in the project manager's arsenal. Humour is the ability to have a healthy and positive outlook on life and must not be taken light-hearted. In light of the current economic recession spreading around the world, the workplace has become a more serious place that is increasingly preoccupied with negative news reports from various countries and societies. Therefore, it is even more important than ever to maintain a positive atmosphere at the workplace and enable people to have some fun at their job.

In this regard the project managers' influence can be important and as project management theories evolve, more and more focus is being brought on the researching the effects of human relations management in project management.

Projects, like people and project teams, vary in nature. Project managers need to be aware of their team members' feelings and the fact that everyone responds differently to the experiences they encounter. Humour can brighten the day and help project teams to keep their spirits up and their momentum going. Every project manager must contain some important behavioural characteristics according to the International Project Management Association (IPMA, 2006). This paper will focus on the behavioural competences of the IPMA competence baseline. Its other two main elements, contextual and technical competence will also be briefly discussed.

The behavioural components of the IPMA Eye of Competence (ICB) was reviewed and described. In order to estimate if humour should have its own place in the behavioural part of the competence baseline, a survey was conducted. The purpose was to find out if the participants believe that humour should be an integral part of the project manager's competence. The outcome of this survey is aimed at determining whether humour is a competence factor for project managers that is worthy of being added to the IPMA competence baseline.

2. HUMOUR IS WHAT HUMOUR DOES

Is humour of value as one of the behavioural elements set forth by the ICB? Whether it is to spark creativity, enable negotiation, motivate team members or to help when leadership skills are needed, humour may be an important tool for the project manager. At its best humour can make team members forget their troubles outside the workplace and focus on the work at hand.

2.1 Humour by definition

What is humour? It is difficult to find a concrete definition of humour. It's not being the clown who tells jokes like his life depended on it. Humour is having a healthy and positive outlook on life.

"Humour in business is not about clowning. It is about demonstrating that you are a warm, responsive, intelligent and considerate person"

(Lukey, 2008).

Staying positive may well increase happiness. By staying positive we can spread inspiring attitude to our fellow team members. If they are happy their performance may rise. Done right, humorous remarks can help, minding the importance of correct timing and context.

"Humour is a two-edged sword. It can be used to ease the punitive side effects of confrontation and thus facilitate interaction, but it can also be used to obstruct attempts to deepen the level of the interaction or broach sensitive topics"

(Egan, 1976).

For the project manager, humour is about creating the correct working atmosphere to inspire people to perform at the highest level, with the best results possible. Organizations are getting more aware that stress can eliminate the chances of success. Some organizations are offering

different kinds of recreational activities at work to eliminate stress, often with high costs (Jones, 2008). It is undoubtedly important for organizations to deal with the stress that can be present in the work environment but equally important to examine the costs. By encouraging employees to stay positive and laugh at work, companies can increase the chances of stress staying outside the workplace and diminish the affect stress can have on peoples lives.

Around the world, the existence of various businesses is being threatened by an unprecedented economic recession. Unemployment is on the rise, families are loosing parts or all of their income, all which may increase strain and pressure on individual family members. Therefore it may be more important than ever for people and organizations to consciously incorporate humour into their lives, both professional and private lives.

2.2 *The IPMA Eye Of Competence*

The IPMA's introduction of the ICB reads:

”The IPMA Competence Baseline (ICB) is a standard that is invaluable to practitioners and stakeholders. It contains basic terms, practices, methods and tools for professional project management, as well as specialist knowledge and experience“

(IPMA, 2006).

The ICB consists of forty-six different elements that lists the competence of the certified project manager. These elements are divided into three main subject categories which together make up *The Eye Of Competence*.

”The Eye of Competence represents the integration of all the elements of project management as seen through the eyes of the project manager when evaluating a specific situation. They also represent clarity and vision“

(IPMA, 2006, VII).

In the relaxation element of the behavioural part in the ICB, humour is addressed as a topic. According to the ICB, humour and story telling should be applied to the benefit of the project. By applying humour at the appropriate moments the project manager can enlighten the team spirit and possibly increase the chances of project success. As depicted in Figure 1 the main subjects or elements of the Eye of competence are contextual, technical and behavioural competences (IPMA, 2006).



Figure 1. IPMA's Eye of Competence

The technical competences describe what the project manager needs to be aware of when a project is being prepared or started. Competences for managing the execution of projects and closing of projects are also described in this section of the ICB (IPMA, 2006). The technical competence category contains twenty elements dealing with the project management issues during project work, listing the classic project management competencies. Some of the topics addressed are project management success, teamwork, scope & deliverables, start-up and close-out. Resources included in the technical competence are amongst others; people, devices, infrastructure, finance, knowledge and documents (IPMA, 2006).

The contextual competences contain eleven elements that deal with the interaction of the project team within the context of the project. The contextual competences are in fact divided into two parts. The first part focuses on promotion of project-, program- and/or portfolio management in an organization. The issues touched upon in this category are project-, program- and portfolio orientation and permanent organisation. The second part focuses on what different support units in organisations need to know about projects and what project teams need to know about the different support units for a project. Issues discussed in this context are personnel management, finance, legal issues, health and environmental issues and business related issues (IPMA, 2006).

2.3 The Behavioural Competence

The behavioural competence consists of fifteen elements for dealing with the personal relationships between the group members in a project, program or portfolio (IPMA, 2006). These behavioural elements will be the main emphasis discussed in this paper. When going through the different elements we might argue that humour can be incorporated into a number of the fifteen elements that make up the behavioural competence category.

Leadership is one of the behavioural elements. One of the topics addressed for this element is motivation. Leadership is the art of getting people to work toward a vision and achieve a common goal. Leaders inspire and motivate.

Humour can be used to motivate people. Motivating the team members can be a difficult job. To maintain and increase productivity people need to stay enthusiastic and have fun while working. By staying positive and make jokes people can reduce stress and keep the morale high (MelanieF, 2008). If this is the effect of humour it can create positive work environment which could keep team members to stay positive and motivated. One of the great leaders of our times, general Dwight D. Eisenhower once said:

”A sense of humour is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done”

(The Quotations Page, 2005).

By having a humorous and positive outlook on the work at hand we can increase the chance of successful teamwork which in turn increases the chance of project success.

Another important behavioural element is engagement and motivation. The ICB states that the engagement with individuals involved in a project will result in a good working atmosphere (IPMA, 2006). The project manager must engage himself in the project work and make sure he is part of the team. He needs to keep the goal of the project visible at all times to the team members enabling them to see the purpose of their work and increase the chances of engagement by project team members. One of the topics addressed for this element is team building.

“Humour is a powerful tool in building more cohesive groups. And this is important, because cohesive groups work together better in pursuing common goals—especially in situations where there are expectations for high performance“

(McGhee, 1999).

Humour ties the team together and can create the togetherness and closeness needed for the team to work together effectively. McGhee (1999) shows that by using humour, managers are more likely to become an integral part of the cohesive group. He also states that humour minimizes sociological status differences and helps to brake down barriers between the team members (McGhee, 1999).

Professor Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe at the Victoria University in Australia found that feelings of solidarity were fostered when workers contributed to office humour. People considered themselves to be part of the team. They also found that the atmosphere in general in these workplaces tended to be happier (in Lukey, 2008, p.1).

The self-control element describes what causes the project manager to become stressed. Stress can interfere with our work. We can feel angry or depressed and even afraid that we will not meet the project requirements or deadlines. On most projects, stress can be felt when deadlines are getting closer or if communication is lacking. By using humour we can possibly relieve the stress. It can make us feel good, physically and mentally, and in general possibly more relaxed (Sultanoff, 1993).

As depicted earlier humour can be a two-edged sword. It may help us to relief stress and pressure due to deadlines but it can also affect us in the the opposite way and perhaps even increase stress. If so, it may put the project at increased risk of not meeting deadlines or perhaps leaving team members unhappy. A study by the consulting company *Customer Care Solutions* in Australia found that 81% of people believed a fun work environment would make them more productive. Same survey found that 55% asked said they would accept less pay to have more fun at work. A large majority of respondents (93%) said that laughing on the job helped them to reduce work-related stress (Lukey, 2008).

Assertiveness addressess the issue of the project manager stating his views persuasively and authoratively and that he avoids being led or manipulated by others when it comes to decisions that put the project at risk (IPMA, 2006). Amongst topics addressed in this element are self-belief and self-control. The project manager has to believe in himself and have faith in his abilitites to be able to perform at the highest possible level. Self-belief and self-esteem are closely related. If one believes in him- or herself, self-esteem can grow higher and confidence may rise. Having a good sense of humour and a healthy and positive outlook on life may help to create better self-esteem. When a team member tells a funny tale and people enjoy it, confidence can rise because the storyteller may feel good about himself and others may feel good around him. Humour can put us in a positive mood, it can lower anxiety, depression and mood disturbances. We may feel more satisfied with our social interactions if we can laugh with other people (Martin, 2007).

By being more relaxed we feel better and we may laugh more. By feeling good we are likely to be more satisfied with ourselves which could raise our self-esteem. One of the adequate behaviours of the assertive project manager is to have „an open and positive attitude“ (IPMA, 2006). Keeping an eye on the lighter side of life and the project may ensure that the attitude of all team members is open and positive. A survey conducted in the mid 80´s determined that 84% of vice-presidents and staff directors felt that employees with a sense of humour are more effective on the job than people with little sense of humour (McGhee, 2005).

Within the relaxation element in the ICB, humour is addressed as a topic. Relaxation is that to be able to feel good in the surroundings and situation one is currently in. By keeping up good spirits the project manager can increase the chances of having a good working atmosphere. By using humour as a pro-active tool the project manager can support the project team to stay focused on the task at hand.

Of course, the project manager needs to choose his moments with care since sometimes it is not appropriate to give humourous remarks or tell a story. By the appropriate use of humour the project manager should however be able to increase the chances of the team feeling energized and calm.

“Humour can create laughter and „like intense exercise, laughter increases brain levels of serotonin and endorphins that can calm and relax the mind. In that more relaxed state people are more productive“

(Lukey, 2008).

An important element in the ICB Behavioural competence list is creativity. To be creative is to be able to think outside the box and come up with new ideas. It can be important for all teams to be creative. Being creative may increase the chances of positive results and can enhance performance. With the economic recession spreading all over the world it is very important for companies to come up with new innovative ways to survive. Creative thinking could therefore be more important now than before. Having creative employess may increase chances of project success. Humour can make people feel good, it may take their mind off problems and it can make them feel relaxed. By eliminating pressure the necessary conditions for team members to be creative can be created. Using humour is a good way to relief pressure and can enhance creative thinking (McGhee, 2005).

Negotiations can be tough. People often get emotionally involved which can make negotiating more difficult and agreements difficult to reach. Humour can break down barriers and even the most opposite of people can laugh together and help the negotiation process. Using humour has to be well calculated, wrong timing or inappropriate remarks can create distance and damage the chances of success. A good strategy is to tell a humourous story about yourself. This shows that you don't take yourself too seriously and gives the perception that you are easy to work with which can make the negotiating process run smoother.

”Once the group has laughed at an interaction to reduce the tension, it is still quite possible to pursue the sensitive topic“

(Egan, 1976).

Starting off with a humourous story can help to ease the tension when starting the negotiating process. ICB's conflict and crisis element talks about handling conflicts and crisis that can arise between individuals or parties involved in a project (IPMA, 2006).

When a conflict arises it is important for the project manager to stay centered. The conflict or crisis may affect the outcome of the project so it is important for the project manager to remain in charge of the discussions to make sure the project goals are not in risk of being challenged. The project manager must stay positive while these issues are being solved. Using humour in the same way as in negotiations can help with the process of solving issues and making sure all parties are satisfied. Having a sense of humour in conflict, crisis and negotiating situations requires the ability to respond to others in the moment, being sensitive to others' experiences while recognizing a group's larger sense of hope and danger, frustration and possibility (Forester, 2004). This reflects well on the skills the project manager may need to bring to the table when facing difficult situations.

Ethics is also an important element in the behavioural part of the ICB. Ethics embrace the morally accepted behaviour of every individual (IPMA, 2006). While using humour as a working tool it is important for the project manager to be aware of the differences between people. Whether the difference is gender, race, culture or sexual preference the project manager must be aware of the situation and make sure that humour doesn't backfire. Using humour incorrectly can minimize the chances of the desired result leading the project team members to lose faith in their project manager as well as escalating issues within the organization leaving the project manager in a difficult situation.

3. THE HUMOUROUS SURVEY

In order to find out whether humour is perceived as an important tool in the project managers' arsenal, a survey was conducted. The participants of the survey are project managers, software programmers and testers, corporate managers and other individuals that are well acquainted with project management theories and practises. Seventy out of 84 participants were members of the master course in project management at the *University of Iceland*. The participants were asked a series of questions related to the discussions in this paper on the elements of the behavioural competence of the ICB. The number of questions was kept to a minimum to maximise the responses received.

The survey was sent out to 84 individuals out of whom 47 responded giving a 56% answer rate. A total of 28% of the participants are project managers whereas 11% belong to corporate management. The remaining 61% constituted of programmers, quality assurance consultants and experienced project team participants.

The majority of the questions asked relate to competences linked to humour previously discussed in this paper. The aim was to find out if the participants share the views that are expressed in the paper- that humour can be used in the various parts of the behavioural competence of the ICB and can be considered as an element in the behavioural competence of IPMA's Eye of Competence.

3.1 Methods

A total of 15 questions were asked in the survey (Appendix I). Thirteen were closed questions and two open-ended. In the final question participants were allowed to express their views on the survey in general. Participants' answers were categorized according to their professional status into three categories: project managers, corporate managers and students in the master degree program of project management at the *University of Iceland*. The experienced project participants were also categorized with the master student category.

Question one asked about gender while question two required participants to state their job description. In question three participants were asked to define humour. When asked about important characteristics of project managers (question 4), the results show that the project managers in the survey are of the opinion that humour is not at the top of the list when it comes to the most important attributes of project managers. In fact, humour came in last as an important characteristic. As seen in Figure 2 the most important characteristic according to the responses, is being relaxed. Participants were asked to rate the different attributes on a scale from one to ten. *Being relaxed* turned out to be the most valued characteristic, followed by, *being creative* and *having a good overview* which came in third.

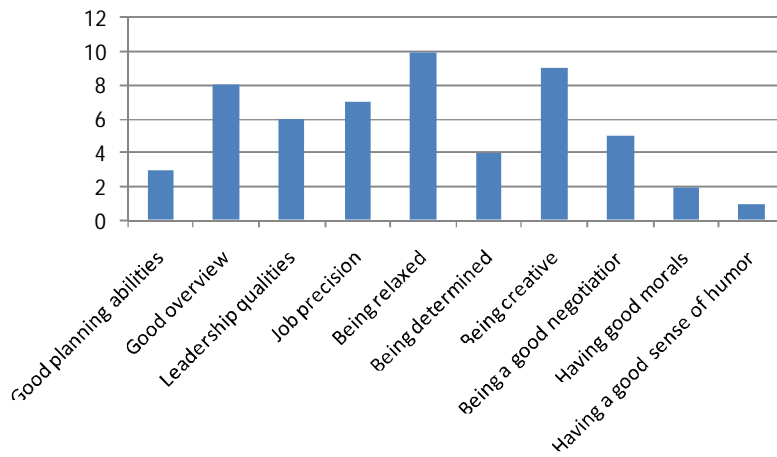


Figure 2 Important Characteristics

As depicted in Figure 3, a total of 78% thought that humour is important when it comes to project management.

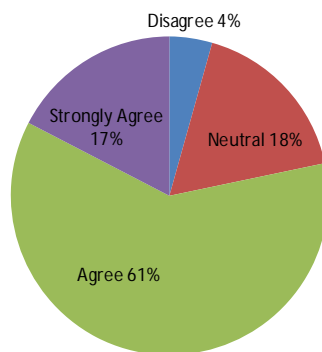


Figure 3 Humour as an Important Characteristic for project managers.

Concerning the work atmosphere, most of the participants in the survey or 98%, feel that humour can improve the working atmosphere in projects (*Figure 4*).

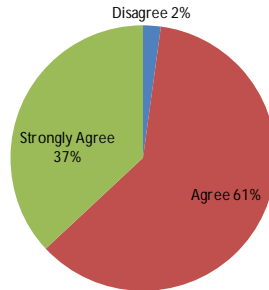


Figure 4. Humour to Improve the Work Atmosphere

There is hardly any difference between the answers given by project managers and other participants in the survey when it comes to work atmosphere. Question six asked if humour might increase the chances of project success. The greater part of the participants, a total of 67%, agreed that humour can increase chances of project success.

Discussing strain and making the project team feel better, a vast majority, or 92%, agrees that humour can help in that regard.

Project creativity is important in all projects. Team members want to be creative while reaching their goal and humour can be of help. *Figure 5* shows that 54% of the survey participants agree with the statement.

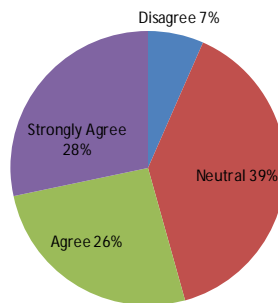


Figure 5. Humour to increase project creativity

Negotiation is an interesting part of the project managers' competence. The results show that the participants neither agree nor disagree with this statement. *Figure 6* displays the views that most participants have a neutral standing towards the statement.

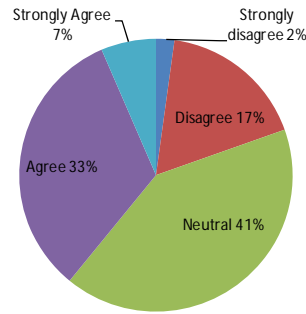


Figure 6. Humour in negotiation

When looking at the results for conflict management (Figure 7), 52% of the survey participants agree with the statement.

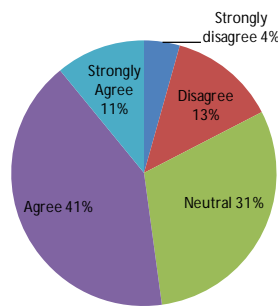


Figure 7. Humour in conflict management

When asked if humour is important when it comes to motivating a project team there is no difference in the opinion between project managers and the other participants. Figure 8 displays that most survey participants (83%) agree with the statement that humour can be used to motivate project teams.

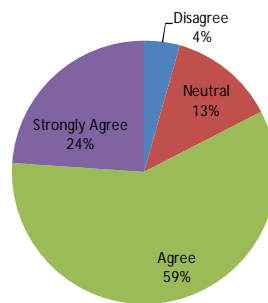


Figure 8. Can humour be used to motivate project teams?

One of the more difficult decisions regarding the survey structure was if and how to ask people to define humour. In the beginning, pre-defining humour for the participants was deemed unfeasible. After some consideration it was decided to present the definition of humour set forth in the survey: *Humour is the ability to have a healthy and positive outlook on life*. Participants were asked to define humour for themselves accordingly. The participants could also choose to define humour according to their own impression and understanding. This made it possible to see if others ideas are similar to those put forth in the authors definition. As seen in *Figure 9*, most of the participants chose to select the authors' definition- that humour is to have a healthy and positive outlook on life.



Figure 9. What is humour?

When it comes to the variance of answers between men and women that participated in the survey the results yield that the genders share a similar view on humour in project management. Both genders rate the ten characteristics in a similar way from question four, and the other questions did yield the same average, overall. This might indicate that both men and women feel that project managers need to involve humour in their daily work since they agreed to the overall statements in the survey. What this says about the genders' different taste for humour is left for thought.

4. DISCUSSIONS

The results of the survey are interesting in various aspects. The nuances between the different characteristics listed in the survey are not clear cut and do sometimes overlap.

Being relaxed was rated the most important characteristic of a project manager according to the survey. It is interesting to see the difference in opinion between project managers and the other participants. Project managers may feel the need to be relaxed, to be able to perform better and have better control of their projects. Others participants find it important that the project manager has a good overview, good control of the projects and that the project manager is creative.

When it comes to humour as an important characteristic 98% agree that the project manager must be able to see the lighter side of things to help the team to be in good spirits and therefore increase the chances of achieving the goals.

Humour can also create good working atmosphere according to 98% of the participants. This may be due to the fact the participants feel that being able to laugh during work minimizes tension and creates the necessary environment to enhance productivity. As stated earlier, the project manager can use humour to keep the work atmosphere comfortable at all times. Humour is to be applied to the benefit of the project according to the ICB and the participants in the survey seem to agree to that sentiment. The project manager can use humour to create unity, increase creativity and make people feel relaxed. In one of the responses a participant wrote that humour is “the ability to be able laugh at yourself and by doing that- contribute to a positive work environment”. By laughing and getting others to laugh the work atmosphere is less pressuring which will increase the chances of project success.

When it comes to strain and making the project team feel better project managers can use humour and lift the team spirit in order to keep people relaxed at work. A total of 92% out of all the participants agree with that sentiment. Within all projects there are stressful situations and the ability to find humour can help to overcome the stress, enabling the project team to dive into what is the most important; fulfilling the project requirements.

Only 54% agree that humour can increase project creativity. This may be because some of the participants feel that people are either creative or not, therefore it is difficult to help people to be creative or support them to open up for creative thinking. By being relaxed and feeling relieved of pressure we create the necessary conditions for the team members to be creative which is important for projects. Employees that get the chance of being creative while working on their project are happier. Humour can take peoples mind off troubling issues and thus enhance creativeness.

The participants do not take a stand on as to whether humour in negotiations is of benefit. It may be because the participants feel that humour in negotiations can have negative effect on the negotiation process. Humour must be handled carefully when it comes to negotiations and can be a two-edged sword. A clever or a humorous remark can have the opposite effect and can eliminate the chances of a successful outcome of negotiations.

According to the paper, humour can be used to motivate team members. Humour can tie the team together and create the togetherness and closeness needed for a team to work together effectively. Humour in conflict management can be used in the same way as it is used in negotiations. It is even more relevant since people are more emotionally involved when it comes to conflicts. The project manager needs to bring together two opposing sides that are both

looking for a favorable outcome. The project manager then needs to aim at a win-win situation. This means that he has to keep everybody's spirit up and convince people to look at the other participants in a positive way.

It is important for the project manager to keep humour in a positive perspective since humour can easily turn on the project manager and have the exact opposite effect. A humorous remark or a tale about yourself works as an ice-breaker and can set up a good session with the conflicting parties but keeping in mind that it can work in the opposite way, when used incorrectly or inappropriately.

When it comes to motivation, humour may help people to feel good at work. They should look forward to coming to work and their work experience should underline what the company is all about. Most people are likely to want to have fun while working on project teams and enjoy reaching the project goals. Feeling relaxed and happy at work can motivate people to achieve great things both as individuals and as part of teams.

The issue of defining humour was an interesting part of the survey. None of the participants agreed to the statement that humour is being the class clown. It can be stated that the project manager should be careful not to be viewed as class clown or a person that tastelessly tells jokes or humorous remarks, which can damage the respect and personal views that people have on the project manager. Some of the definitions suggested by the participants were as follows:

- Being able to laugh at your own expense and contributing to a positive work environment
- Being capable of seeing the funny side of things, even the difficult ones. Makes life easier
- Humour is something where everybody can laugh and share their outlook
- Humour is the joy, funniness and lightness that develops in small or large groups
- In work situations, humour is a powerful tool to decrease tension in situations where conflicts seem to rise.
- Ability to be amused, laugh or smile at something funny. Ability to lighten the mood and see the brighter side of things even during difficult circumstances

When looking at these definitions it can be seen that the participants who provided them agree with the definition of humour presented in this paper. Humour is not to be the clown who tells endless jokes like his or hers life depended on it. *Humour is having a healthy and positive outlook on life.* Humour is seeing the funny side of things, even if things are looking difficult. Humour is the ability to lift the mood and it is the great energy that can develop in small or large groups. All of these statements underline what has been said in this paper- humour is about creating the open and necessary environment to make the project team feel good and increase the chances of project success.

The humorous survey gave the result expected. Some questions may be relatively bias towards the importance of humour, leaving it difficult to disagree with some of the statements put forth. There is also the possibility of answer bias due to the fact that a large proportion of participants work within the IT sector. The results reliability is limiting due to the small sample size. Improvements could be made by targeting a larger sample, preferably from various countries.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The idea of learning more about humour in project management sounded easy at first. The idea has taken twists and turns in the course of the last four months. At first the plan was to look at how project managers are depicted in various comical sketches. Then the paper evolved to gathering various jokes on project managers and ask them how they feel about the image created on them. After some consideration the project was narrowed down to the Eye of Competence created by IPMA. Having gone through the behavioural competences it was decided to try to find out if humour should have its own place in the behavioural competence baseline. From the surveys' results it is hard to disagree with the fact that the project manager should incorporate humour into his everyday work. Whether it is in team building exercises, negotiation situations or when displaying leadership skills humour may help the project manager in reaching the goals set for the project. The project manager needs to do everything in his power to make certain the project team feels good on the job. If he can accomplish that, chances are the team will raise their performance and exceed expectations. It can make them feel good and it could make the project manager feel good. This result underlines that is one of the goals of the project manager to make his project team feel good since that can make the organization look and feel good. Judging from the survey, it can be stated that humour could get its own place in the behavioural part of the ICB's Eye of Competence.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

It would be interesting to get a larger study sample for the humour survey and see what results that would yield. Another step forward would be to prepare the humour element as part of the behavioural competences in the Eye of Competence. An interview study involving staff from IPMA would be interesting as to study their view on the subject of humour in project management.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks to Dr. Haukur Ingi Jónasson for his ideas and support. Special thanks go to Þorvaldur Örn Arnarson and Gunnhildur Gunnarsdóttir, fellow students that helped in the idea and work process and for putting things into perspective.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Egan, G. (1976). *Interpersonal Living*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

Finding humor in project management. Jones, Z. (2008, December). Retrieved March 21, 2009, from, www.pmforum.org: <http://www.pmforum.org/library/papers/2008/PDFs/Jones-12-08.pdf>

How to use humor to motivate employees. (2008, April 4). Retrieved March 12, 2009, from, www.ehow.com:
http://www.ehow.com/how_2255065_use-humour-motivate-employees.html

Humour and mental health. Martin, R. A. (2007, July 5). Retrieved April 29, 2009, from, <http://www.reversaltheory.org/>: <http://www.reversaltheory.org/articles/RT2007Paper-MartinHumor.pdf>

ICB – IPMA Competence Baseline Version 3.0. (2006, June). Retrieved February 8, 2009, from, www.ipma.ch: http://www.ipma.ch/Documents/ICB_V._3.0.pdf

McGhee, P. (1999). *Health Healing and Amuse System: Humour As Survival Training*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

MelanieF. (2008, April 4). Retrieved March 12, 2009, from <http://www.ehow.com/>:
http://www.ehow.com/how_2255065_use-humor-motivate-employees.html

Sultanoff, S. M. (1993). *Humour Matters*. Retrieved March 12, 2009, from, <http://www.humourmatters.com>: <http://www.humourmatters.com/articles/workplac.htm>

The Quotations Page. (2005). Retrieved March 23, 2009, from, <http://www.quotationspage.com>:
<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/26753.html>

Using humor to boost creativity. McGhee, P. (2005, September 28). Retrieved March 13, 2009, from, www.laughterremedy.com: http://www.laughterremedy.com/article_pdfs/Creativity.pdf

Why every organization needs a humour resource department. Lukey, S. (2008, May 12). Retrieved May 05, 2009, from, <http://www.smartnet.co.nz/>:
<http://www.smartnet.co.nz/events/2008/round1/docs/Why-every-organisation-needs-a-Humour-Resource-Department.pdf>

Appendix I

1. What is humour?

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your job description?

- Quality Assurance (Tester)
- Project Manager
- Company Management
- Programmer
- Other

4. What do you see as an important characteristic of the project manager? (rate from 1-10, 1 being most important, use each number only once)

- Good planning abilities
- Good overview
- Leadership qualities
- Job precision
- Being relaxed
- Being determined
- Being creative
- Being a good negotiator
- Having good morals
- Having a good sense of humour

5. Do you agree/disagree that it's important for the project manager to be positive and show good spirits?

- I strongly disagree
- I disagree
- Neutral
- I agree
- I strongly agree

6. Do you agree/disagree that good humour will increase chances of project success?
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree

7. Do you agree/disagree that humour is an important characteristic for a leader?
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree

8. Do you agree/disagree that humour is important when it comes to motivating a project team?
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree

9. Do you agree/disagree that humour minimizes strain and makes the project team feel better?
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree

10. Do you agree/disagree that humour increases self-belief of project team members?
 - I strongly disagree
 - I disagree
 - Neutral
 - I agree
 - I strongly agree

11. Do you agree/disagree that humour improves the work atmosphere in the project?
 - I strongly disagree

- I disagree
- Neutral
- I agree
- I strongly agree

12. Do you agree/disagree that humour increases project creativity?

- I strongly disagree
- I disagree
- Neutral
- I agree
- I strongly agree

13. Do you agree/disagree that humour can be used in project negotiation?

- I strongly disagree
- I disagree
- Neutral
- I agree
- I strongly agree

14. Do you agree/disagree that humour can be used in conflict management in project management?

- I strongly disagree
- I disagree
- Neutral
- I agree
- I strongly agree

About the Author:



Gauti Guðmundsson

Author



Gauti Guðmundsson is a project manager at Betware, an Icelandic software and services company for online gaming. Betware's headquarters are based in Iceland with regional offices in Denmark, Spain, Poland and Canada. Gauti holds a degree in Computer Science from Reykjavik University and a master's degree in Project Management from the University of Iceland. He can be contacted at gauti@betware.com.