

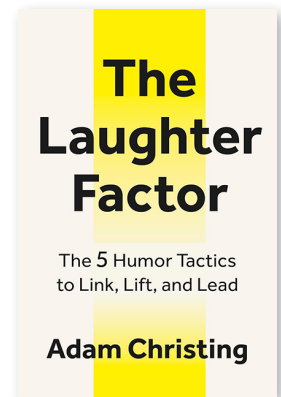


Executive Book Summaries[®]

The Laughter Factor

The 5 Humor Tactics to Link, Lift, and Lead

by **Adam Christing**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Do you struggle to form meaningful connections in today's high-pressure workplace? Meetings feel flat, communication is guarded, and leaders often find it hard to inspire genuine engagement. Whether you're managing a team, selling an idea, or trying to build stronger relationships, a lack of connection can quietly limit influence, creativity, and trust—leaving people feeling unseen, unheard, and disengaged.

The Laughter Factor: The 5 Humor Tactics to Link, Lift, and Lead offers a practical way forward by showing how humor can function as a strategic communication tool. It introduces five research-backed tactics that help readers create authentic connections, energize conversations, and lead with warmth. Readers also learn to identify their personal “laugh language,” overcome the fear of not being funny, and use positive humor to boost morale, deepen influence, and make everyday interactions more meaningful and memorable.

Drawing on his background working with Fortune 500 companies and organizations of all sizes, Adam Christing blends real-world humor with leadership insights. An accomplished comedian, keynote speaker, and entertainer with more than 25 years of experience, he offers a practical guide to using laughter to link people together, lift performance, and lead with confidence.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

- Find out how to use humor to build trust and strengthen professional relationships
- Discover practical tactics to communicate with more confidence and authenticity in any setting
- Gain tools to increase engagement, creativity, and team morale
- Identify your personal “laugh language” to connect more naturally with others

Introduction

An involuntary reaction that starts just after birth and stays with us until we enjoy our last laugh, laughter is the universal sound of bliss. It ripples through comedy clubs, board meetings, sales gatherings, and video meetings. Funny fuels our social media and sparks viral videos.

We hunger for humor. We pay for it, seek it out, and judge others by how well they can make us laugh. “He has a great sense of humor,” or “She brings so much fun to our team.” You get it. Laughter is lit. But what if you don’t think you’re funny at all?

Truth is, the issue is this: *You* don’t think you’re funny. But you are. You *do* have a sense of humor. But maybe up until now your sense of your own humor style has just gone unrecognized or underdeveloped.

Laughter may seem random, but now you’ll discover how to trigger it on demand—whenever, wherever, and with anyone. You’ll learn five ways of being funny, and one or more of them will fit you. Get ready to increase your self-mirth.

Do you manage people? Laughter can bring them together. Are you in sales? Funny is money. If you’re a leader in your company or field, you know that leaders bring people together. And many people are discovering that laughter is a powerful way of creating and forging those links.

What Is the Laughter Factor?

Laughter is magic. But don’t worry, you don’t have to be a professional comedian to find your way of being funny. After all, humor is human. These ideas will help you harness your sense of humor and leverage the laughter factor in your life.

So, what exactly is the laughter factor? It’s the ability to:

- walk into a room and know you can lift the mood
- give a presentation and feel confident people will enjoy it
- take painful situations and make them feel playful
- make a point that sticks because you’ve made it memorable

In short, it’s the ability to use funny as fuel to take you much further in your personal and professional relationships.

This won’t turn you into a comedian, but it will give you the strategies that make people smile, laugh, and lighten up. To experience the laughter factor, you simply need to:

- commit to using your unique “laugh language”
- choose from the humor tactics outlined here
- find your favorite ways to be funny and start using them immediately

Embracing the laughter factor transforms both you and the situations you encounter. Humor boosts creativity and resilience, strengthens relationships, and becomes your go-to ally in navigating life’s challenges.

While you can’t control everything life throws your way, you can choose to respond with a smile, and that makes all the difference. Humor unlocks possibilities and deepens connections wherever you go.

Raise Your RIZZ with Humor

Comedy isn’t just for stand-ups; it’s your secret charisma booster. Here’s an acronym to raise your RIZZ with the laughter factor:

- **Relatable.** Humor helps people see you as human, not just part of a to-do list. In-person meeting? Laughter breaks the ice.
- **Interactive.** Smiles are contagious, but you have to go first. Laughing with—not at—people makes you feel more connected. It’s hard not to like someone who makes you laugh. And it’s even harder not to love someone who laughs with you.
- **Zany.** A dash of unexpected humor boosts positive energy online and offline. Making a presentation? Toss in a surprising one-liner, like “This graph is so colorful, it doubles as my vision board.”
- **Zest.** Come ready to play. You don’t have to be an entertainer to crank up your enthusiasm. It’s infectious.

Humor makes you more magnetic. When people link you with laughter, it catapults your charisma.

Tactic 1: Surprise

Almost as much as they love to laugh, people love to be surprised. Surprise is a fantastic tactic for bringing the laughter factor to any setting. The best comedians have surprising “hooks.” Often, these hooks come from their point of view that surprises people.

Surprise in humor works just like a sudden, unexpected move in chess. It changes the game and sets you up for a big win. And the other person doesn’t feel defeated; you’ve actually made them feel happy.

A joke is a logical sentence taken to its illogical conclusion. Laughs come when we make a pattern and then break that pattern. The great thing about this tactic of surprise? You can use it even if you are not a natural joke-teller.

Bringing Joy by Surprise

I tell our team to make our clients SAD, which is our term for “surprise and delight.” If you like to send unexpected gifts to friends, family, and colleagues, surprise may be your humor tactic, even if you are an introvert. The secret to surprise laughter is how you *make people feel about themselves* and what they receive from you.

Surprising people in a way that’s all about them isn’t just thoughtful; it’s like pulling the rug out from under their expectations (in the best way). You’ll leave them smiling, laughing, and maybe even wondering if you hacked their algorithm. That’s why this tactic is the first one you should try when applying the laughter factor. Catching someone off guard with a thoughtful gift, joke, or note creates a moment they’ll remember long after the wrapping paper’s gone.

Dos for surprising gifts:

- Make it quirky, fun, or instantly smile-worthy.
- Do it for them. A great gift makes their day, not yours.
- Send it when they can enjoy it, not when they’re juggling chaos.
- Make it special. Even Amazon gifts feel amazing when you purchase the optional gift wrap and personal note.

Don’ts for surprising gifts:

- No self-promotion.
- No confusion.
- No clichés.

In the end, it’s not just about the item; it’s about creating joy. So, surprise someone today and watch the smile spread across their face.

Smiling isn’t just a nice gesture. It’s a surprising leadership advantage. Most smiles are triggered by another smile, so the more you share them, the more likely they are to be reciprocated. They’re like little boomerangs of bliss, except they never fly back and smack you on the forehead.

What Are You Doing to SAD Your People?

Whether the unexpected is something you send, do, or say, cultivating the humor tactic of surprise works best when it’s intentional. We are wired to laugh when we have unexpected experiences. But springing surprises takes planning.

If you enjoy the humor tactic of surprise, you can learn to use it on purpose. Here are some ways to spring surprises at work:

- throw a tax-relief party
- change your voicemail
- plan an office potluck party
- make Mondays mysterious
- do a desk decor swap

Use good judgment, of course. One surprise you don’t want to hear is, “HR would like to speak with you now.” But do unleash the power of positive humor where you work and live.

Use surprise as your tactic to imprint your brand of fun on people’s hearts and minds. After all, it sparks an immediate link to laughter. Look for opportunities to weave it into what you are already doing.

Tactic 2: Poke

Poking is a powerful humor technique. You’ll discover how to make fun of yourself and kid people in a way that makes them laugh and like you more. The approach focuses on delivering jabs and jokes that land as playful rather than risky. It also explores how to poke fun without jeopardizing your friendships, your job, or your sanity.

Here’s something you must know, right off the bat: Humor always has a clear target. Nearly every joke lands on somebody, but the best laughs nearly always come from taking aim at yourself.

Here’s another secret: Humor is criticism cloaked in fun.

Dorothy Parker was one of the towering wits of the 20th century. She was known for writing critical jabs that were sharp and funny. Parker put the punch in punch lines. She shows us the key to poke power. Choose your target, then knock it down with a quick jab.

But as a leader, it's even better to criticize yourself in an endearing way.

Poke Positive

Poking isn't just about making fun; it's about creating laughs that resonate with those around you. Humor works best when it comes from a place of affection, not at someone's expense. When you truly like people, your jokes land softer, funnier, and without the sting that turns humor into hurt.

It's my golden rule of positive humor: Don't laugh *at* others. Laugh *with* them. Build people up with your humor, and you'll see that the biggest laughs come from authentic, genuine connections.

Whether you are lightly roasting those around you or making fun of yourself, here's a tool you can use: you can poke with provocative questions.

Do you realize how powerful questions are? Humor is a hook, and questions reel people right in. Master humorists and storytellers ask lots of questions. Your questions can be funny, and they can help you make a point.

Work humor thrives on the shared experience of "employment annoyance." Whether it's the boss who thinks 24/7 availability is part of the job description or the office printer that jams right when the report is due, there are plenty of things to poke fun at.

Here's what to avoid: making fun of the value people create, their work ethic, or their pay. When it comes to sensitive topics, forget about it. Unless you're an insider (see tactic 3), it's best to keep your comments in the safe zone. No one wants to be the person who turned a special event into a big bummer.

So the next time work gets on your nerves, come up with a little poke joke. Then share it with your colleagues; it just might help everybody get through the day.

Connect Before You Crack

Positive humor isn't just about making people laugh; it's also about making them feel connected. When you tap into shared experiences, people feel more than entertained; they feel drawn closer together.

It's the difference between teasing someone from a distance and gently ribbing a friend who knows it's all in good fun. The latter is where the real connection happens.

So the next time you're about to poke fun at someone, remember to bond with them first.

Humor Me

Humor thrives on defeat; that is, the acceptance of defeat. Some of the funniest things you will ever hear are in places like recovery groups. People overcoming addictions and other hard times learn to laugh at themselves and share their humorous perspective with others.

Authenticity is more than a trend on social media; it's here to stay. Make light of your struggles and how hard you are trying to get over them. It makes you more approachable, vulnerable, and relatable.

Take Yourself Down a Peg

I like the term "self-effacing humor." Some call it self-deprecating, but that sounds like a digestive problem. Whatever you choose to call it, you can take yourself down a peg on purpose. The most winsome humor happens when you poke fun at your own failures and foibles. And yes, you *can* laugh at yourself.

When you make fun of yourself, you actually enhance the way others see, hear, and experience you. It can dissolve tension and make you instantly more likable. It shows others that you don't take yourself too seriously, and that's a quality people admire; plus, it gives them permission to loosen up around you.

How to do it right:

- Know your audience.
- Keep it light.
- Aim for sweetness, not sting.

What to avoid:

- Don't hit below the belt.
- Don't gang up.
- Don't confuse the setting.

Tactic 3: In-Jokes

With this humor tactic, it's all about being *in* on the joke. Too often, life can feel like a never-ending group project with people you didn't choose. That's where humor steps in. Laughter isn't just a reaction; it's a connection hack. A shared laugh says, "We're in this together." It's the ultimate team-builder and way cheaper than a ropes course.

Humans are naturally tribal. Inside jokes signal who is a member. Being on the outside of a group's inside humor

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makes you feel invisible, like you are missing the key to a secret world. But once you are inside, co-creating and cracking those in-jokes, it's like having a “fast pass” to feeling connected and vital to your family, friends, team, and clients.

The Four-Step Sequence of In-Jokes

1. Relationships

In-jokes bloom from relationships. Whether your group meets virtually or in person, it's all about knowing—and surviving—each other. Common experiences are the fertilizer for funny.

Humor based on shared language and memories unites us. Inside jokes wire and then rewire our hearts . . . together. Feel what others are feeling, and the funny follows. When you indulge in shared humor, you rediscover the connections that bind you to other people; those moments of delight that whisper in your ear: *You're part of the family.*

That's when the real magic begins. This type of humor then becomes contagious within your group. Relationships are what make in-jokes irresistible because the people we enjoy the most are the ones we laugh the hardest with.

2. Remember

Inside jokes thrive on shared memories and unique experiences. Remember those moments that brought laughter and camaraderie. These memories become fuel for in-jokes, whether it's a workplace mishap, a hilarious incident during a presentation, or a memorable group outing. The ability to recall these moments bonds you together and makes the humor authentic and relatable.

3. Relive

Funny feels good. The essence of inside jokes lies in reliving the merry moments. Share these anecdotes during group gatherings, business meetings, or casual conversations. By reliving these experiences, you get some great laughs, and you strengthen the emotional connection within your group.

4. Repeat

Repetition is key to embedding in-jokes into your friend and work groups. When you continually recall these remarkable stories and memories, something special happens. The nostalgia somehow feels brand-new. It's weird, but it works.

With each retelling, those jokes become the “fun fabric” of your group's identity.

The essence of in-jokes is that we bond over things we have in common. Creating this “club” vibe makes us feel close and creates comedy moments too.

In-jokes thrive on connection, turning *me* into *we*, and sparking laughter that sticks people together. A shared laugh at work turns coworkers into co-conspirators.

Microfamous

Branding expert Matt Johnson coined a term about the power of becoming a trusted voice inside a very small group: microfamous. Johnson wrote an entire book about the opportunities within these niche networks.

Within a small, devoted circle, we feel like rock stars. The outside world might not know what we are singing or laughing about, but within our group, we are the insiders. That's what makes being in a small, connected group so special: you're part of something unique.

This sense of exclusivity and shared experience strengthens the bonds within the group, making every inside joke and shared laugh even more meaningful. It feels good to be in the know, to share those winks and nods that make you feel like you're part of something special.

Your Presence Is Requested

We hear it all the time: Be present. But you can double that: Be present, and feel their presence, too.

This is at the heart of the laughter factor. So how do you stir up this fun, even if you're not cracking jokes nonstop? The answer is one word: participation.

Use humor like a welcome mat. Mention names, give people something to do, and make them feel part of the action.

Laughter feels amazing when we're not just spectators but participants. Humor is about drawing people in, making them feel like they're part of what's happening, not just watching it.

Remember, the goal is not to be the funniest person in the room; it's to make others feel part of something special.

Tactic 4: Wordplay

If you enjoy wordplay and don't mind some people wanting to throw things at you, you'll love this humor tactic.

Use your sense of humor to make people laugh, not cry. They say talk is cheap, but it's really not if it costs you your job or a meaningful relationship.

Words pack a punch, but you can serve them up like punch and cookies. The right words can light up—or at least lighten up—a room.

Clever words can even turn a dull conversation around. And here's the best part: playing with words can make you more winsome, if you don't overdo it. The goal isn't to monopolize with wordplay.

So, what are words worth? More than you may think. Playful language sparks laughter, strengthens connections, and brings people together. Whether you're turning routines into mini-adventures, building friendships, or making work communications pop, wordplay is a tool worth using.

Be Remark-able

What makes a line memorable?

- **It's short and to the point.** A great remark is brief. The best ones are sparked by what's happening in the room.
- **It's stressed for emphasis.** A great line should be delivered with crisp conviction—even if it sounds like you're saying it off the top of your head.
- **It's startling.** The reaction you want is, "How did she come up with that?" A great line should feel spontaneous and well-timed (even if you've used it before in another setting).
- **It's repeatable.** The best remarks are the ones people can't help but repeat. They resonate so well that they spread like bad news at a church social.

Create a cheat sheet of your favorite laugh lines. Drop these lines into conversations at work and at home. Spice up your emails, texts, and social media posts. You'll start to see (and hear) what resonates. Don't guess; test.

Look for the right situations to sprinkle in these smile-makers. When the moment is right, let your funny fly. But when is the right moment? One of the key comedy rules of the laughter factor is: *Timing is everything*. Don't force humor into moments that don't call for it.

Zingers

Zingers add impact to whatever you are saying. Imagine you are hosting a group meeting and saying hello to new members: "Welcome to our team. We put the fun in dysfunctional." These short attention-grabbers make you sound witty.

Zingers are powerful because they pop. You'll want to limit using them to moments when you want to emphasize something. Think of them like exclamation marks; use them sparingly. When overused, zingers can derail a conversation or trivialize what others are saying.

Here's how to successfully land verbal zingers:

- keep them short
- find the moment
- make it pop
- match the vibe
- refine your go-tos
- abbreviate

Rhyme Time

Remember when short, catchy rhymes used to delight you and your friends? They still can. We are all kids at heart. In today's world of information overload, rhyming phrases equal smiling faces.

Insert short rhymes into your presentations or conversations. Make your messages more memorable by adding this touch of fun to the mix.

Dad Jokes Are Apparent

In today's world, dad jokes have become the fast food of funny: they are quick and easy to tell, and they're guaranteed to get a reaction. They make us feel at ease.

These little gems are loved for their simple, clever wordplay, and the nostalgic feeling they evoke. Dad jokes make family gatherings (and corporate meetings) a lot more fun. These jokes bridge generation gaps and get everyone chuckling, or at least rolling their eyes, together.

Sarcasm Can Be a Superpower

If you're anything like me, sarcasm is one of your most tempting wordplay tactics. It's that sharp, witty way of saying the opposite of what you mean. And it *can* get lots of laughs from those around you.

Sarcasm can be hilarious, but it needs to come with a warning label. It can make you come across as superior-sounding rather than approachable. It often feels like a put-down. And honestly, it's just not everyone's cup of tea. You might end up alienating people when you want to bond with them.

Tactic 5: Amplify

People get a big kick out of exaggerated stories, giant jokes, and ridiculous rants. Even if the characters are small, the laughs turn big when you use this humor tactic.

Here's why this humor device devastates and delights us: Our brains think in pictures. When you paint big, crazy, outrageous images in people's minds, they crack up. They can't help it.

We love tall tales. In her book *Wired for Story*, UCLA professor and Showtime story consultant Lisa Cron explains how our brains are neurowired for narratives. She reveals that stories allow us to simulate intense experiences and relish them in a safe environment.

Humans swim in stories. Larger-than-life tales have a magical effect on us.

Wanna be great? Exaggerate. You will get big laughs when you make your jokes, stories, and personal situations way more outrageous.

Here are five ways to amp up the details of your story:

1. Be super specific.
2. Add more drama.
3. Relive your story—don't just tell it.
4. Repeat certain elements of your story.
5. Tie the end of your story back to the beginning.

Of course, you don't need to tell a long story to enjoy the amplifying effect. You can stress one dramatic detail, like this: My email inbox is so full, I got nominated for an episode of *Hoarders*.

Amplifying your humor means more than tossing out jokes or hitting the punch line. It may require *faction*: blending fact with fiction to make your stories larger than life, and way

funnier. With *faction*, you take everyday situations and blow them up like a balloon at a kid's birthday party: you overinflate the fact and make it “pop.”

You don't have to be a professional writer to wield *faction* like a samurai sword. It's a wonderful weapon for anyone who wants to generate bigger laughs by mixing fact with funny. Begin with something real, then pump it up until it goes off the charts.

I Feel Your Pain

Don't believe for a second that most comedians are always happy. Many of us are “wounded healers.” Some of the funniest materials come from the darkest places. The sadness, frustration, and challenges we face become fuel for humor. It's about not hiding our pain but amplifying it to make the laughter (and links) even stronger.

The more you lean into your pain, and exaggerate it, the more impactful your jokes and stories become.

Making Big Impressions

Going *big* gets big laughs. It's one thing to hear a story told straight; it's another thing to hear an embellished version. Extremes work because they heighten contrast. Overstatement can amplify the humor—and, in the opposite direction, understatement can be just as effective.

To bring your humor to life, become larger than life. Expand your ability to entertain with bold expressions, movements, and more.

- **Big faces.** Making funny faces is a gift to others. Roll your eyes, raise your eyebrows, or pretend to cry. Your face is a projector screen. Exaggerated expressions often get bigger laughs than the joke itself.
- **Big moves.** Physical comedy speaks volumes. Bold movements amplify laughs. When you think your moves feel like too much, that probably means you are just getting started.
- **Big characters.** Do you have a larger-than-life relative who steals the show at family gatherings? Channel them. Big, outrageous characters stick in people's minds long after the moment passes.

- **Big accessories.** Forget clown costumes. A funny hat or oversized jacket can deliver large laughs before you even speak. Props aren't just gags; they transform the way you feel, move, and interact.

Amplifying your humor plays big to an entire group. But even as you pump up punch lines, keep this in mind: You want to connect your pain and your punch lines with what's real for you. That begins when you are honest (in a heightened and humorous way) about your own feelings. Heartfelt humor comes from genuine feelings.

Go for a Three-Peat

Good things come in threes, and so do great jokes. Why? Because three is the magic number that keeps your audience hooked and then hits them hard.

A joke builds to a funny finale when you let it unfold in a three-part sequence:

1. Set the stage.
2. Build anticipation.
3. Deliver a knockout punch.

It's a structure that maximizes rhythm and impact in your humor, making each laugh linger longer.

Leading with Laughter

As a leader, the first words out of your mouth, along with your attitude, reveal who you are. You must decide: Do I want to harness my sense of humor?

Once you commit, immediately begin to engage with your go-to humor style. Figure out which humor tactics suit you best and use them. What's *your* laugh language?

In case you missed the memo, let me remind you. Humor helps—big-time. Laughter plays a powerful role at work:

- releases endorphins, instantly lifting spirits
- builds community, making teams more cohesive
- reduces stress and de-escalates drama
- sparks creativity and fresh perspectives

And yes, it even boosts productivity—funny really *is* money.

Maybe adding the laughter factor to your group won't save you from an audit, but it *will* make you the kind of leader people actually want to follow. Bring the laughter—it's the only leadership tool that doesn't require a budget line, an

MBA, or a three-hour meeting to implement. By bringing the laughter factor to your group, you empower everybody to feel better.

Discover Your Team's Laugh Languages

Here's another vital strategy to take to heart: Laugh at other people's jokes and stories. Get to know and enjoy their humor tactics. Remember, your teammates, clients, and students are absorbed in a never-ending struggle to think well of themselves. When you laugh at their humor, they feel better about who they are.

Lead your team, staff, employees, and audience into the wonderful experience of shared delight. It pays to amuse and to be amused. A culture of fun is good for everyone.

As a leader, you can maximize the uplift factor. Here are five ways you can speak into a meeting or event program:

1. Maximize the run of show (agenda).
2. Reinforce the meeting's mission.
3. Shine light on key players.
4. Add energy.
5. Spring surprises.

Speaking into an event isn't about delivering words; it's about creating lots of liftoff—moments that elevate the experience.

More Windows, Less Lumber

Great leaders don't just offer a plan; they lift hearts. Laughter lightens the load, making your message more engaging and your audience more receptive.

So, sprinkle in lighthearted jokes or personal anecdotes that connect with your audience. You want them thinking, "Hey, this is actually enjoyable!" Tell stories to illustrate your core message in compelling ways. A funny story makes your points vivid and memorable. Remember: *Facts tell. Stories sell.* As a friend of mine, the fantastic speaker Bill Butterworth, says, "Constructing a speech is like building a house. You want more windows, less lumber."

Conclusion

When you think about your organization, team, nonprofit, classroom, church, or business, what do you want it to be? What counts most in your organization? If you believe people matter, remember that laughing matters.

Foster more fun, and you build emotional bridges. To connect with people, you've got to feel what they feel. And we all want to feel good.

Using humor strategically is a catalyst: it kickstarts ideas, builds instant camaraderie, and helps your people finish strong. It sparks engagement, turning strangers into newfound friends, and works like rubber cement for leaders—gluing groups together.

You are more persuasive when you are more playful.

So lead with laughter—because your people are silently begging to have more fun.



Adam Christing is a keynote speaker, event emcee, and comedian known for using humor to connect and inspire audiences. He began performing at fourteen, sparking a lifelong passion for laughter as a leadership tool. President of Clean Comedians, Christing has spent three decades helping organizations build community through humor. He has entertained more than a million people across forty-nine states and abroad. A Biola University graduate, he is a member of its Alumni Hall of Fame. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Success*. Christing lives in North Carolina with his wife, Barb.

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