

# Humor in the Workplace

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## Know your audience, know your context

- Can your audience take a joke? Is your boss amenable to the occasional light-hearted moment?
- You might tell a dirty joke to your best friend at the bar, but would you tell it at work? No. No you wouldn't ... please, dear God, no.
- You and I are not Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert. You don't know the ideology or depth of political passion of your audience.
- Ask yourself what the point or underlying message of your joke is. Are you using humor to say something that you wouldn't say to someone without the joke attached?
- If you're not sure how a joke will be received, it's best not to tell it. When in doubt, leave it out. You have an internal filter. Use it.

## Stuff to keep in mind

- Make it a Ritual
- Opt for Positive, Not Negative
- Recognize the Value of a Smile
- Retain Your Professionalism
- Understand Your Audience
- Help Others
- Mix Original with Produced
- Use Cultural Touchstones

## Stuff others have done

- Create a humor bulletin board
- Gag Gifts and Fun Awards
- Have cartoon caption contests
- Aren't they adorable
- Scavenger Hunt
- Hula Hoop contest
- Paper football tournament
- Paper airplane contest
- Have a Pirate Day
- Cubicle decoration contest
- Create a Mad Lib
- Make a Top 10 list

## Practical Jokes

- Is it worth it?

## Bombing

- It's gonna happen. Acknowledge it. Move on.

## Stuff not to do

- Anything seen on "The Office"
- Do you know someone well enough to joke with them about something – their scar, their weight – or would mention of it be hurtful?

- Don't joke about topics that are controversial or painful to someone else, like death, physical disabilities, sexual harassment or race. Just don't do it.
- An attempt at bad humor is not an acceptable excuse for unacceptable behavior. Racist, sexist, ageist, and other forms of discriminating acts won't be tolerated because you attempted to cloak them in bad humor.
- Sarcasm is not a license to belittle someone. Saying "I was just joking" doesn't cut it.

### **Recommended Reading**

Anything by Dave Barry

*Calvin and Hobbes*

*The Far Side*

### **Recommended viewing**

*Mary Tyler Moore Show*: Chuckles The Clown Is Dead

*Fawlty Towers*: The Germans

*Duck Soup*, The Marx Brothers

*Monty Python and the Holy Grail*

*The Simpsons*: Lisa Gets Braces

### **Actual Useful Articles and Studies**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/04/12/8-tips-for-using-workplace-humor/>

<http://stress.about.com/od/workplacestress/a/officehumor.htm>

<http://www.humorthatworks.com/how-to/10-tips-for-using-humor-in-the-workplace/>

[http://www.laughterremedy.com/articles/workplace\\_articles.html#anchor4](http://www.laughterremedy.com/articles/workplace_articles.html#anchor4)

[http://www.pennbehavioralhealth.org/documents/humor\\_in\\_the\\_workplace.pdf](http://www.pennbehavioralhealth.org/documents/humor_in_the_workplace.pdf)