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Humor on the Net

By Bob Osgoodby

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Many people who send out promotional email, or have a publication such as an online newsletter, will ask if they should include "humor". Well, there is no easy answer to this question.

Some will say that "humor" lightens things up a bit, and lets people know you have another side to your personality. They feel it is a refreshing break from the serious message you are delivering. Others say it is distracting and should never be used.

So where do you "draw the line"?

Humor can be used in two places. It can be within the body of the article or as a "stand alone" item.

Let's first examine "humor" within the body of the article. This can be the most risky. Unless you have a good sense of humor and good writing skills, you should probably avoid its use. Some of your readers will not have a sense of humor, and could easily take offense at what you say. Especially avoid sarcasm as people may think it is directed at them.

You should also avoid the use irony, where you use words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. Some will not recognize it as irony, and will think you are proposing what the words actually say. This can get you in a lot of trouble.

If you use "stand alone" humor, give it a title such as "Joke of the Day", which clearly separates it from your article. Once

again, you have to be careful. Remember, your online publication is on the "world-wide web", and will be read by people who may have far different opinions of what is funny and what is not.

Things to avoid in all humor:

Never point your humor toward a specific group. What might be funny in a "one-to-one" situation where you know the person, could be highly offensive to someone else.

Never use vulgarity – especially the seven dirty words that George Carlin used in his comedy sketch – they are anathema!

While adult jokes may indeed be humorous, they have no place in an online publication where you have no control over who sees it.

While vulgarity offends good taste or propriety, crudity, which shows a lack of tact or refinement, runs a close second. A word or phrase having a double meaning, especially when the second meaning is risqué, should also be avoided. A double entendre can actually spell double trouble.

So what kind of "humor" can you use?

This will, for the most part, be a judgement call on your part. A good criteria that could be useful, is to make believe you are talking to your local PTA, and want to tell a joke to put everyone at ease. The teachers are there as well as the parents and children of your child's classmates. If you can tell it there without embarrassing anyone, it is probably a good bet for you publication.

The best advice about the selection of humor, is that if there is any doubt in your mind at all, don't use it.

Bob publishes the free weekly "Your Business" Newsletter Visit his Web Site at <http://adv-marketing.com/business> to subscribe, and place a Free Ad for your business.

Five Ways to Sharpen Your Sense of Humor and Improve Your Relationships

By Mike Moore

Humor has long been considered one of the most effective tools to judge the quality of any

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relationship. If there is laughter present you can be sure the relationship is a healthy one. When the laughter ceases the relationship is on the down slide. If you want to have more fulfilling relationships you might want to consider sharpening your sense of humor as a great place to start.

Here are five ways to improve your sense of humor and improve your relationships in the process.

1. Begin to cultivate an atmosphere of humor and laughter in your relationships by focussing on the funny things in life and enjoying the laughter they evoke. Soon you will be seeing humor all over and enjoying it fully.

2. If you don 't laugh as much as you used to and want to correct the situation start associating with humorous, fun loving people and avoid the downers.

3. Learn to laugh at yourself. If you don't you leave the job to others. So many people are unable to laugh at themselves because of their own insecurities and fears. We are afraid to look foolish in the eyes of others and appear to be incompetent. It is important to realize that we all make mistakes and when we do a good laugh makes the mistake seem trivial and human.

4. Collect cartoons and jokes and put them on display on the fridge or the bulletin board for all to see and enjoy. Make sure to avoid racist, sexist or filthy humor. There is plenty of good clean humor to go around without resorting to these. Remember that there is a difference between dirty and earthy humor. I personally like earthy humor. I don't appreciate dirty material.

5. Use humor to neutralize conflict in your relationships. When things get tense use self deprecating humor to lighten things up. I remember one evening having an argument with my wife, Carol. In the heat of the moment she said something totally out of character. She said something hurtful. In my surprise I looked at her and said, " Carol, when you say things like that you stoop to my level." She started to laugh and so did I. It wasn't long before things were back to normal.

Remember that a sense of humor is learned, not inherited. You can sharpen your sense of humor if you really want to. When you do, you will find that your relationships become richer and more rewarding and that people find you more attractive and fun to be with. This alone makes improving your sense of humor worth the effort.

Mike Moore is an international speaker/ writer/ cartoonist on humor, motivation and human potential. Visit him at

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