



USING HUMOR TO ACHIEVE BETTER RESULTS  
AT WORK. AT HOME. IN LIFE.

# Humor That Works:

## Why You Should Use Humor and How to Get Started

ALPHA VERSION

by Andrew J Tarvin

DISCLAIMER: This book is currently in ALPHA, meaning it is not completely polished, edited or tested for bugs. The content is still valid and the humor still humorous, but you may find grammatical errors, incorrect punctuation^ and incomplete .

If you notice any glaring errors or have recommendations on how it can be improved, please submit a request online at [www.humorthatworks.com/book](http://www.humorthatworks.com/book) or via email at [alpha@humorthatworks.com](mailto:alpha@humorthatworks.com).

### Table of Contents

Welcome to Humor That Works.....	1
Humor Defined - Understanding What Humor Really Is .....	3
The Benefits of Humor – Why YOU Should Use Humor .....	6
How To Humor – Learning Ways to Use Humor .....	23
Getting Started – What to Do Next .....	34
Conclusion .....	36

## Welcome to Humor That Works

“Quote.” –Anon.

Welcome to Humor That Works, I’m your host and MC, Andrew Tarvin. You’re about to embark on a wonderful journey to discover how humor can drastically improve your work, home and life.

Before we get started, there are three things you should know.

First, you should know a little about me, because in order for you to really understand me, you need to know me and where all of this comes from.



photo by Ian Stroud

Second, you should know a little about what this book does and does not cover. Let’s be clear on expectations upfront so as not to cause any confusion later. I wouldn’t want you to be upset when you found out this was a business book if you were expecting a fictional story about an office worker named Humor.

Third, you should know that knowing is half the battle. The other half is that you actually have to do something. When this is all read and done, you’ll have to take some action. But don’t worry, we’ve got you covered there as well.

### About the Humorist

The most important thing to know about me is that I am not a comedian (although I do perform stand-up comedy). First and foremost, I am an engineer.

I graduated with a degree in Computer Science & Engineering (the sexiest of all Engineering programs) from *The Ohio State University*. In high school I started a wireless networking consulting company, and scored in the 97th percentile in Math on the SATs. I now work as an International IT Project Manager at a Fortune 25 Company —the norm for a Type-A personality engineer like me.

I don’t bring that up to boast (yay, look at who’s a dork!). I bring that up because when people hear (or read) “humor in the workplace,” they often think it means being a comedian or a clown, or naturally charismatic or extroverted.

That’s not true.

I’m an introvert—my Meyers-Briggs personality is INTJ. I’m not the life of the party or the “funniest guy in the room.” I’m not constantly making jokes or cracking up the entire boardroom.

Because I’m not a comedian. I’m an engineer. I find what works, I do it and then I teach other people.

It turns out humor works in business. It works with your managers, your direct reports, your peers and certainly with yourself. It improves communication, strengthens relationships, enhances problem-solving, increases productivity and is, of course, fun.

## About the Book

This book is about teaching you the value of using humor in the workplace. It includes a number of studies, research papers, examples, personal anecdotes, and theories all geared towards helping you succeed in business.

It's meant to make you a better businessperson, not a stand-up comedian. We'll be covering the definition of humor, the benefits you gain from using it, tips on how to humor and how you can find out more—all from the context of using it in the workplace.

We won't be diving into stand-up comedy techniques or talking about the absurdities in the corporate world ripe for hilarious comedy. Both are valid terrains to discover, but not the focus of this book.

At the end of the 12,000+ words, this is a business book, not a humor book.

That being said... it is a business book about humor, so humor will be had. There are humorous stories, examples of wordplay and definitely more than a few cheesy jokes—they're there intentionally to make a point or to make you smile at their terribleness.

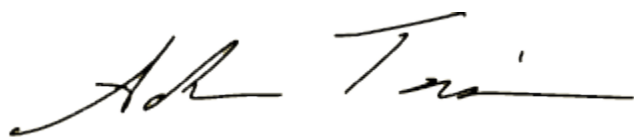
Structurally, the book is divided into six parts. Congratulations! You're in the first one right now—the introduction. Up next is the definition of humor, just to make sure we're all on the same page when we use the term. After that is why you should use humor. It includes ten reasons you should start using humor today (backed by science and stuff).

If you already know you want to use humor (or attended a recent humor keynote I gave), you can skip to the fourth section—how to get started using humor. There you'll learn what you need to know to use humor effectively. Finally we end on available resources and the stunning conclusion.

## One Last Thing...

Have fun. It's a book about humor. If you haven't laughed and learned by the end of this thing, there's something wrong with either you or me. Either way, I'll feel bad, so if you didn't learn something new or LOL a single time through the whole thing, send me a message at [sham@humorthatworks.com](mailto:sham@humorthatworks.com) and I'll give you a refund.

Thanks, and happy reading.



Andrew Tarvin, Chief Humorist

[Humor That Works](http://HumorThatWorks.com)

## Humor Defined - Understanding What Humor Really Is

*"All lions are cats, but not all cats are lions." – Grade School Lesson*

Before we get into the more intimate details of humor, it's important to understand what exactly we mean by the word *humor*.

You hear the word a lot: sense of humor, office humor, Good Humor Man. What does it really mean? Before reading on, see if you can think of the definition. Got a guess?

No seriously, think of something, I'll wait...

Got it? Let's see how close you were. The dictionary definition of the word humor is (drumroll please):

*a comic, absurd, or incongruous quality causing amusement<sup>1</sup>.*

Were you close? The first time I looked it up, I was close, but also a little confused—the definition doesn't mention anything about laughter or jokes, so how can it be humor? I mean, if you're saying something is humorous, that means it's laugh-out-loud funny, right?

### Humor vs. Comedy vs. Jokes

To better understand what humor is, let's look at two other words most people relate to humor: comedy and jokes. Comedy is defined as:

*any comic or humorous incident or series of incidents<sup>2</sup>.*

A joke is:

- 1. something said or done to provoke laughter or cause amusement<sup>3</sup>.*
- 2. Drew Tarvin's golf game<sup>4</sup>.*

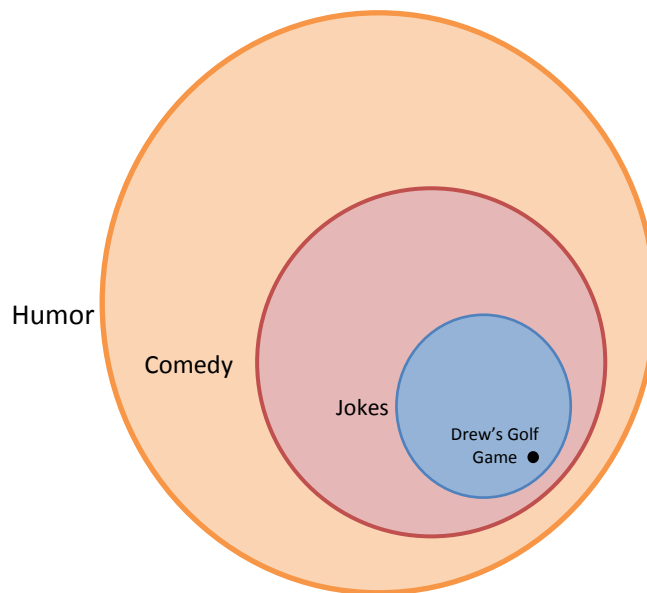
Do you remember grade school when you first learned logic problems, e.g. that all lions are cats, but not all cats are lions?



Images: from SXC

That's what the relationship of humor, comedy and jokes is like: all jokes are comedy, and all comedy is humor, but not all humor is comedy nor is it jokes.

To demonstrate, here's a diagram in honor of my buddy Venn:



### So then... What is Humor?

We know that humor can be comedy and jokes, but it can be so much more. As the definition states, humor is anything that causes amusement. Jokes are humorous, but so is a smile.

The key is that it's anything amusing—anything that “helps pass time pleasantly,” or “entertains or diverts in an enjoyable or cheerful manner.”<sup>5</sup>

But what does that include? What classifies something as humorous?

As it turns out, no one really knows for sure. Psychologists, philosophers, and linguists have theories and ideas, but none are universally accepted. Experts can't even agree on how to classify the act of classifying humor.

Some classify humor by the **what**: what is causing the humor? Is it surprise? Familiarity? Sentence structure? Others classify it by the **why**: why is humor being used? Is to enhance the image of self or to put-down others?

Given the nature of humor, it's no surprise there are three prevalent theories on humor: incongruity, superiority and relief.<sup>6</sup> Each theory has a different focus and suggests a different purpose for why we use humor.

With all of the complexities associated with understanding what causes humor, learning what classifies something as humorous is harder than learning to be humorous.

## Our Intents and Purposes

Luckily for us, we don't have to know how to classify humor—we'll let the scientist, doctors and theorists figure that out.

For our intents and purposes (I won't say "All intents and purposes" because other people may have valid reasons to classify differently), we're going to look at the four styles of humor proposed by some fancy psychologists<sup>7</sup>:

- **Affiliative** – Affiliative humor is intended to amuse others as a way to facilitate relationships. It is about being connected, is generally positive and rarely has a target.
- **Self-enhancing** – Self-enhancing humor is used as a way of finding amusement in life's hardships. It allows the humored to mentally overcome adversity.
- **Self-defeating** – Self-defeating humor involves saying funny things at one's own expense. It is a way of humbling oneself in front of others in order to gain approval.
- **Aggressive** – Aggressive humor disparages others as a way of manipulating them. It is about separating from the target of the humor and is almost always negative.

Of the four humor styles, only the first three have a place in the workplace (Affiliative, Self-enhancing, and on occasion, Self-defeating). Aggressive humor is part of the darker side of humor and can alienate not only the target of the humor, but also the observers. It should generally be avoided.

We'll revisit each of the styles in more detail later. For now, when humor is referenced in this book, assume it is one of the three more office-appropriate types of humor.

Now that we have a working understanding of humor, the next step is to learn why you should use it. Just remember that while humor may include cracking jokes or making the funny, it can also be any sort of surprise or exaggeration that makes people feel good. If it elicits a smile, it's humor.

## The Benefits of Humor – Why YOU Should Use Humor

You now understand what is meant by humor in the context of this book, and are at least aware of my passion and love for humor, especially in the workplace. But the question remains: why should you care? Why should you care enough to read these words and start using more humor?

I know that you don't think of humor as a *bad* thing. Most people don't.

In a study of over 700 CEOs, 98% of them preferred job candidates with a sense of humor<sup>1</sup>. 98%! Which raises the question--well two questions, actually--

- 1) If 98% of CEOs prefer job candidates who use humor, why don't more people do it?
- 2) What's wrong with the 2% of CEOs who don't prefer it?

Maybe the problem isn't that people don't think humor is a bad thing, maybe the problem is that people don't realize humor is a **GREAT** thing. Everyone knows it is fun to laugh or smile or Photoshop pictures of their managers on the faces of the cast of the *Brady Bunch*. But maybe not everyone knows the additional benefits besides just fun.

As such, here are ten reasons YOU should use humor in the workplace. Now, this is important so listen up: when I say YOU, I don't mean you collectively as readers, I mean YOU, individually as the person reading these words this very moment. Yes, you, Pat Turner.

*NOTE: This applies to everyone reading this book, even if your name isn't Pat Turner. Just imagine though, if your name was Pat Turner, how excited / creeped out you would be right now.*

By the end of the chapter, you (Pat!) will realize there are no excuses for not using humor and, if you work for the 2% of CEOs with their head up their ass...ignments, you'll be armed with the knowledge necessary to help them see the benefits a little levity can provide.

### 10 Reasons YOU Should Use Humor

Before getting to the ten reasons, a quick note: don't fall into the trap of thinking that because this is presented as a Top 10 list the ideas below aren't possibly life-changing. As Sydney Smith said, "You mustn't think me necessarily foolish because I am facetious, nor will I consider you necessarily wise because you are grave."

Here we go...

## 10. Humor Beats Stress

These are serious times. Stressful times. In fact, 80% of Americans feel stressed, with 39% saying work is the biggest contributor<sup>2</sup>.

And stress isn't a good thing for us humans. Sure, brief spurts of stress help us grow (like how working out stresses muscles to grow bigger), but chronic stress is terrible for our bodies and our minds.

Stress causes muscle tension in the body, increases blood pressure and decreases immunity. Emotionally, stress can cause anxiety, depression, sadness and burnout.<sup>3</sup>

However, if stress is the villain, then humor is the superhero.

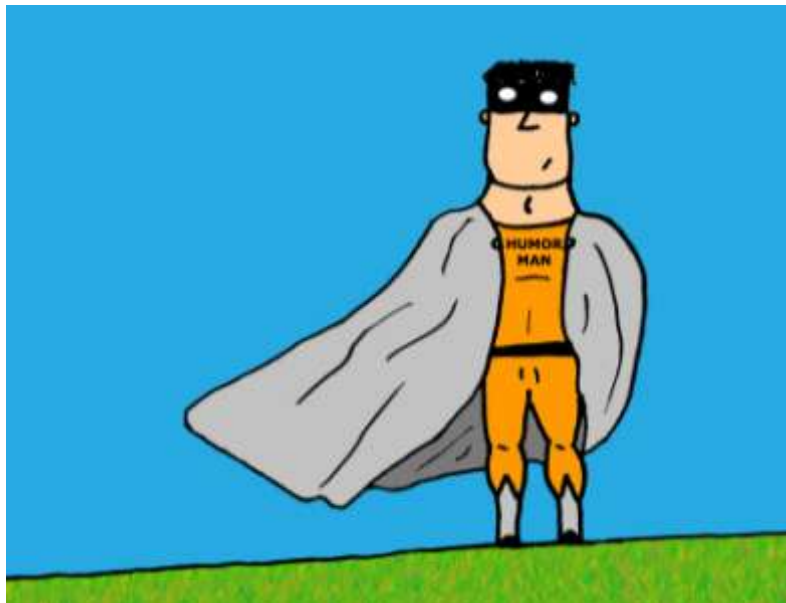


Illustration by Ben Smith

Humor relaxes muscles, decreases blood pressure and improves our immune system<sup>4</sup>. It can also increase happiness, productivity and improve relationships (but more on those benefits later).

In fact, the muscle relaxation that comes with laughing can last for up to 45 minutes after the laughter has subsided<sup>4</sup>. That's almost like getting a massage just by laughing. If you do that once an hour, you'll be more relaxed all day.

So, to help you guys combat stress right now, on the next page is one of the funniest pictures I've seen... And I've seen a lot of funny things. In fact, I have an entire website dedicated to collecting the best humor from around the web, you can visit it at: [www.humorsoffice.com](http://www.humorsoffice.com).

On the site you'll find videos, pictures and texts—all safe for work. So if you need a quick break to recharge, check out the site.

But this next image is one of the funniest things I've found. You ready for it?



You may have noticed there's no image here, and this text isn't particularly funny.

But research at a university in California suggests that just anticipating a humorous experience can help boost immunity and reduce stress<sup>5</sup>.

So even though there's nothing funny on this page, it still helped to reduce stress. You're welcome.

OK, that was a bit mean. Here's a fun picture that I hope will help smooth out any hard feelings.



Image from Humorsoffice.com

## 9. Humor Improves Health

There's a cliché that says "Laughter is the Best Medicine," but if you've ever been sick, I'm sure you've found that laughter doesn't magically stitch you right up (though it might leave you in stitches, and hopefully not the kind you get from laughing so hard, you fall down a flight of stairs, cutting your hand).

Though humor isn't actual medicine, it can improve your health in a number of ways. It can combat stress (see above), reduce the risk of heart disease (see below) and burn calories (see to the right).

Results from a recent study showed that people who had heart problems were 40% less likely to laugh in a variety of situations compared to people of the same age without heart disease<sup>6</sup>. Considering heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States (25% of all deaths, or ~600,000 people per year<sup>7</sup>), this is worth further exploration.

While this doesn't prove there a direct link between humor and heart health, it does suggest a correlation between humor and the heart. Given that laughter can improve bloodflow to the heart by 22%, which can help reduce blood-clot formation, cholesterol deposition and inflammation, it's feasible that humor is good for the heart<sup>8</sup>.

With regard to burning calories, humor is surprisingly effective and perhaps the most fun way to do it (as seen in the sidebar).

Laughing 100 times can burn as many calories as 10-minutes on a stationary bicycle<sup>9</sup>, and 10-15 minutes of laughter a day can help shed up to 4 pounds per year<sup>10</sup>.

So, if you want the ultimate workout next time you're on the bike at the gym, just start laughing maniacally. Not only will you be burning more calories, you'll also be left alone.

### Laughter Burns as Many Calories As...

10-15 minutes of laughter can burn as many calories as:

- 5 minutes of High Impact Aerobics
- 5 minutes of Boxing / Sparring
- 15 Minutes of Cleaning
- 10 Minutes of Dancing
- 15 Minutes of Milking a Cow
- 20 Minutes of Ice Fishing
- 5 Minutes of Jogging
- 20 Minutes of Playing the Cello
- 10 Minutes of Yoga
- 15 Minutes of Walking

Source: Based on calories burned from laughter<sup>1</sup> versus calories burned from other activities<sup>2</sup>.

1 <http://health.dailynewscentral.com/content/view/000969/63/>  
2 <http://www.nutristrategy.com/activitylist4.htm>

## 8. Humor Increases Productivity

Humor has a snowball effect on productivity in the workplace. Not only can it help with the productivity of individuals when it's used organizationally, it can drastically improve an entire company. Humor in the workplace has been shown to reduce absenteeism, increase company loyalty, prevent burnout and increase productivity<sup>11</sup>.

In one study of more than 2,500 employees, 81 percent said they believe a fun working environment would make them more productive. Even more surprising is that 55 percent said they would take less pay to have more fun at work."<sup>12</sup>

But what if you're not in charge and there's no corporate culture of humor? Luckily, humor can increase your own personal effectiveness as well, irrespective of whether or not it's encouraged by your entire organization.

Humor is particularly effective on repetitive tasks (whether it's data entry, factory line work or email processing)--humor can increase the length of time you're willing to do a task without detracting from your ability to concentrate<sup>12</sup>.

While studies back these claims up, I learned this through personal experience during the summer between my senior year of high school and my first year of college...

*It was a late Sunday evening, approaching the midnight hour. I was at a friend's house, doing what we high schoolers often did—playing pool and drinking Mountain Dew. I was about to sink the 8-ball for yet another victory when my cellular telephone rang... DO LA LOO LOO, DA LA LOO LOO, DA LOO LOO DOO.*

*The caller ID on my NOKIA phone came up as MOM. I answered immediately, unaware of the time and fearing I had missed my 12:30am curfew. I prepared a number of excuses in my head—there was traffic on I-275, I was picking up her favorite candy or I had to stop to save a nursery of babies from a fire...*

*Before I had to launch into such a story, my Mom spoke:*

*“Hey Drewby. What are your plans for tomorrow?”*

*A trick question, I presumed. She knew I only worked part-time at Meijer and Monday was my day off.*

*“I don't know, maybe clean the house.”*

*Clearly a lie, but I thought it might make her happy.*

*“Can you come into work tomorrow?”*

*While technically a question, her paralanguage said it wasn't—she wasn't asking, she was telling me I was going in to work tomorrow. She was the HR Director at a small shower-door manufacturing company and it turns out they were desperately in need of someone to fill a recently vacated role.*

*I thought about my options. While I certainly didn't want to work the next day, I knew my mom wouldn't ask if she didn't really need the help. Assuming I'd be fixing computers in the office like I had done before, I said yes.*

*"Great, you'll need to be in the factory by 6:30am. You can wear jeans, a t-shirt, and boots."*

*Confusion set in. The office doesn't open until 8am, and it's business attire... why would I wear... And be in the... Then it hit me like an "Incorrect Password" error message... I wasn't working in the office.*

*No, the next day, and for the entire rest of that summer, I worked from 6:30am to 3:30pm in the factory, pulling 50 lbs shower doors off of racks and putting them on pallets to be shipped to customers.*

*The work was exhausting and repetitive. By the end of the first day I knew the job, it was just a matter of doing it 40-50 times a day. That's when I realized I had to find a way to keep my mind busy—otherwise I feared I would actually die from boredom (or a falling shower door).*

*The options were limited. We weren't allowed to listen to music on headphones (safety precaution considering all of the hullabaloo going on in the factory), and there wasn't much time for conversation.*

*Instead I was left to my own mind and a small notebook I kept in my pocket. Given the circumstances, I decided to fill my mental time on the job working on my next career: Hip Hop Superstar.*

*For that summer, I spent 40-hours a week pulling shower doors and trying to come up with rap songs, such as this one, called H2O.*

*Hydrogen plus hydrogen, and oxygen too  
Bond them together with covalent glue.  
What do you get? Just a thing called water.  
If air is the son, then this the daughter.*

*You can find it everywhere, all over the earth  
But if you are lacking, you'll die of thirst.  
It can be solid, liquid or vaporous gas  
Whatever you want, water is up to the task*

*Clearly, I never made it as a rapper.*

While the rap career never really panned out, writing those rap songs kept me sane throughout that summer and helped me to stay productive. They also showed me that regardless of the circumstances, I could find a way to add some humor to any task I was doing, because even if I couldn't control my environment, I could control my thoughts and my perspective.

## 7. Humor Develops Creativity

Humor and creativity go together like two Ps in a ppod (I've never understood that saying). But nevertheless, it's true. And nearly any profession can benefit from more creativity (albeit not all of the time--I don't want my dentist getting creative during a regular teeth cleaning).

I discovered this through experience, but psychologists figured it out... however psychologists figure stuff out. Research suggests that humor and creativity go together. In both, you're tying things together in a new way, seeing new connections<sup>13</sup>. In fact, humor is highly correlated with both creativity and intelligence<sup>14</sup>.

The link between humor and creativity isn't new—studies dating back to the 1950s have documented their close relationship. What is new is understanding why, and some suggest it's physiologically linked. A dose of humor releases the chemical serotonin in your brain, which improves focus, increases objectivity and improves overall brainpower<sup>15</sup>.

The chemical can be powerful. Studies have shown that simply watching comedy films can improve creative problem solving skills. In one study, students were split into groups. One of the groups watched a humorous film, one watched a neutral film and one watched no film at all. They were then asked to complete a task that involved using problem-solving skills.

The number of subjects who watched the humor film and successfully completed the task was 55% more than the neutral film group and 62% more than the group that watched no film at all<sup>16</sup>.

Curious about the task? It's known as The Candle Problem, created by Karl Duncker in 1945<sup>17</sup>.

Imagine you're one of the subjects. You enter a room with a table pushed against the back wall. On the table is a candle, a box of tacks and a book of matches.

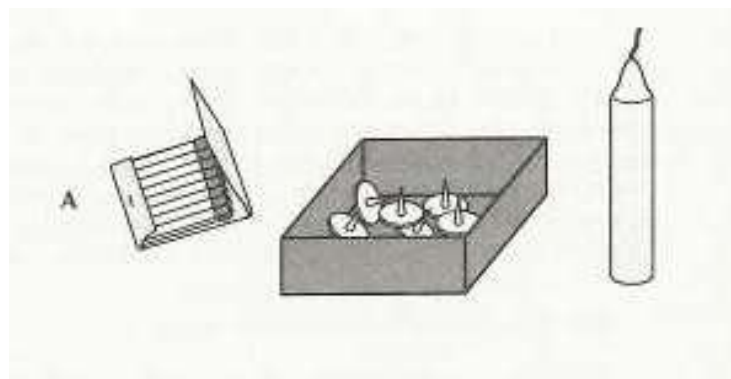


Image from Wikipedia.org

Above the table is a corkboard. Your instructions are to affix the candle to the corkboard in such a way that it will burn without dripping wax onto the table or floor beneath it. You have 10 minutes to complete the problem.

Do you think you have the answer? Go to the next page to check.

The solution is to remove the tacks from the box, tack the box to the corkboard, and set the candle in the box.

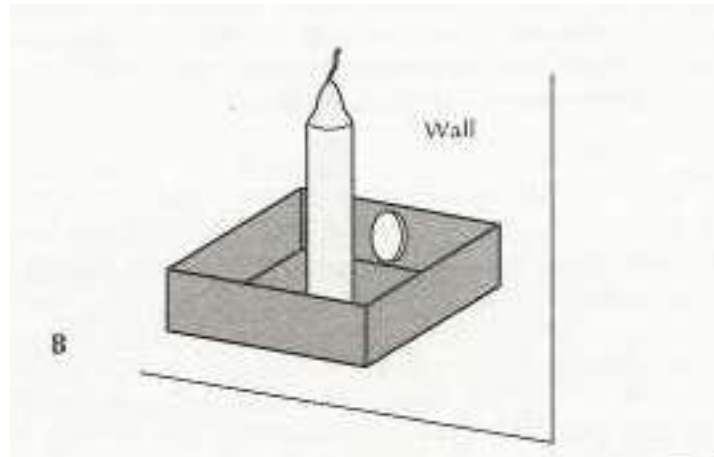


Image from Wikipedia.org

How'd you do? If you were successful, perhaps it's because of the hilarious nature of this book (and your natural intelligence and charm of course).

If you didn't, maybe it's time to visit [www.humorsoffice.com](http://www.humorsoffice.com) for a few laughs.

## 6. Humor Expands Learning

Humor is great for learning—it can make learning more effective and enjoyable.

As an instructor, humor can facilitate learning in the students—74% of college students surveyed indicated that they appreciated instructors’ use of humor in the classroom as long as it was used constructively. In addition, when asked if the use of such humor assisted in learning, 80% of respondents indicated that humor “often” to “always” aided in learning.<sup>18</sup>

Educational shows for children employ humor to great effect in order to help kids learn. Shows and programs like *Sesame Street*, *Dora the Explorer* and *Schoolhouse Rock* all teach in ways that are fun and memorable. I still remember learning the purpose of conjunctions from the classic *Schoolhouse Rock* song, “Conjunction Junction” (as the first line of the song tells you, they hook up words and phrases and clauses)<sup>19</sup>.

But you don’t have to rely on the teacher to use humor to aid in your own learning, you can employ it yourself to improve information recall and increase long-term retention<sup>20</sup>.

The use of mnemonics is a great way to improve learning. Mnemonics, defined as something intended to assist memory, are humor in action: creating an artificial structure in your mind that helps you remember something through absurdity or incongruity<sup>21</sup>.

Perhaps the best way to understand it is by example, so here are 5 of my favorites:

Every Good Boy Deserves Favors	The notes on the lines of a treble clef
SohCahToa	The trigonometric functions: Sine (Opposite over Hypotenuse) Cosine (Adjacent over Hypotenuse) Tangent (Opposite over Adjacent)
Spring Forward, Fall Back	Clock adjustment for Daylight Savings Time: Adjust clocks ahead in April and then behind in October.
Left = Port. Bow = Forward.	The terminology for a ship: Left and Port each have four letters; That leaves Starboard to mean right. When you bow, you lean forward; That leaves Stern to mean the back.
Cows Often Sit Down Carefully. Perhaps Their Joints Creak? Persistent Early Oiling Might Prevent Painful Rheumatism.	Order of geological time periods: Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, Permian, Triassic, Jurassic, Cretaceous, Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, Pliocene, Pleistocene, Recent



## 5. Humor Strengthens Relationships

You can't succeed in business without relationships. Whether it's your relationship with the peers you work with, the managers you work for, or the consumers you serve, the success of your business depends on your relationships.

Even if you're a freelance designer and work by yourself at home, you have a relationship with your clients (even if only electronically). If you're a farmer who takes your crops to market, you have a relationship with the buyers. If you live secluded in the woods, by yourself, surviving off only your own crops and the food you find amongst the trees... well I'm impressed you've come upon this book... and you have a relationship with yourself.

Humor helps you create, maintain and improve any and all of those relationships. How? Humor can build group cohesiveness, reduce status differentials, diffuse conflict and aid team and trust building among diverse groups<sup>22</sup>.

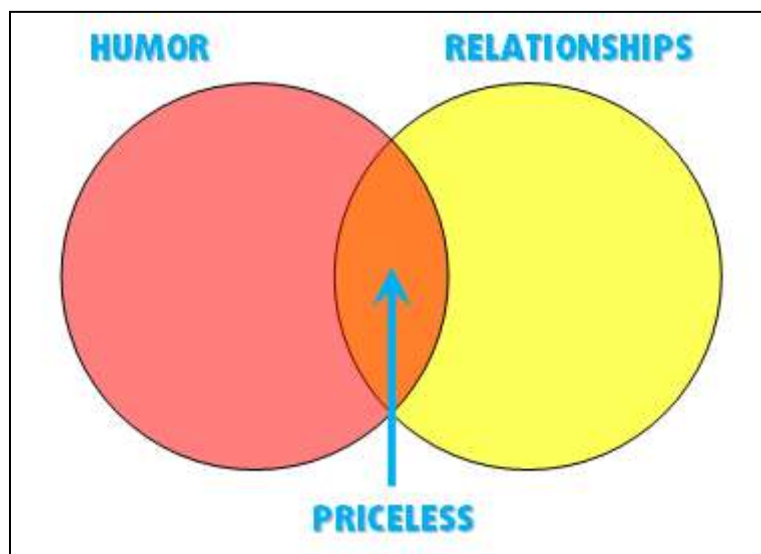


Image from Humorthatworks.com

As one psychologist described it, humor is a way for people to show support for each other, because when people laugh together, they're standing on the same side<sup>23</sup>.

The reason humor is so effective is based on what bonds us as people. When people share emotions and experiences, whether positive or negative, they become closer together<sup>24</sup>.

If people survive a hurricane together, they'll become closer based on the shared negative experience. I imagine it's for this reason that Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock get together at the end of the movie *Speed*.

The same is true for a team who wins the Little League World Series—not the getting together part, the becoming closer together part. The positive experience will create a memory of working together that will strengthen their relationships.

Humor is a positive shared experience and emotion that people can enjoy together. Those brief moments of sharing a smile, laugh or giggle bond us together, not only emotionally, but also physiologically<sup>25</sup>.

Researchers at the University College London and Imperial College London found that positive sounds such as laughter or a triumphant "woo hoo!" can trigger a response in the listener's brain. The response is automatic and helps us interact socially by priming us to smile or laugh, and thereby connecting us with the other person.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, try it out the next time you're in a meeting. After something positive happens, yell out "woo hoo!" and see what kind of response you get. People will likely reciprocate the feeling... or they'll at least laugh... or you'll at least not be bothered by those coworkers for a few days.

You can also strengthen relationships through humor by asking thought-provoking questions as part of your general introduction. Any time you have to do introductions, start with your typical "How long have you worked here?" "What's your role?" etc, and then move to one of the following humorous questions<sup>27</sup>:

1. What is one of your favorite quotations?
2. What is your favorite time of day/day of the week/month of the year?
3. If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?
4. If you were immortal for a day, what would you do?
5. Which celebrity do you get mistaken for?
6. What songs would be included on the soundtrack to your life?
7. What's the hardest thing you've ever done?
8. What was the first thing you bought with your own money?
9. At what age did you become an adult?
10. Wassssuuupppppp?

These questions are more fun and often you'll learn a lot more about the person than asking the standard questions. Plus who doesn't want to know Wassssuuupppppp?

## 4. Humor Creates Opportunities

Henry Hartman said "Success always comes when preparation meets opportunity." Preparation you can control on your own, but opportunities are harder to come by. Often you can find opportunities by changing your perspective and seeing "problems" in a different light. Other times, opportunities are presented to you. That's where humor can help.

Research has shown that more opportunities are given to managers who display a good sense of humor than to those who don't<sup>28</sup>.

But that's not a surprise when you think about it—if you had two equally qualified candidates for a big project at work, would you take the one who uses humor and is personable, or take the more reserved, strictly business one. If I can do good work and have fun, I'll take that over just getting something done every time.

As we learned before, 98% of CEOs prefer job candidates with a sense of humor, meaning those that show humor are the ones that will likely get the job.

I personally was the benefactor of having used my sense of humor when looking to relocate to New York City. I was able to get a highly sought-after role because of my use of humor in the interview (according to a later discussion with the hiring manager) and because of the support I had from a Senior VP at the company who I knew from a humorous presentation I gave when I was an intern.

Granted that's not the only reason I got the job—I had the skillset and resume to qualify for it. But so did nearly 50 other young professionals who were interested in the same role. My use of humor set me apart from the other candidates and granted me the prestigious opportunity.

It turns out, opportunity isn't just knocking, it's waiting for a knock knock joke. Here's three of my favorite:

Knock! Knock!  
Who's there?  
Little old lady.  
Little old lady who?  
I didn't know you yodeled!

Knock! Knock!  
Who's there?  
To.  
To who?  
To whom!

Knock! Knock!  
Who's there?  
Opport.  
Opport who?  
Nity!

### 3. Humor Enhances Leadership

One of the keys to being a great leader is being perceived as a great leader. You could have many of the skills required to lead successfully, but if no one honors, respects or believes in your ability, you won't have much success.

Dwight D Eisenhower said "A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done."

Eisenhower knew from his time in the military and as President of the United States that humor can help showcase your leadership qualities. He discovered through first-hand experience what the findings of one study suggested: people who use humor are viewed as being on top of things, being in charge and in control. This was true, even when the leaders didn't feel they were in control.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly it's important for you to actually be on top of things, but the use of humor can suggest to others that you are, even if you aren't quite as close to the top as you'd like to be.

The same holds true for perceived effectiveness. While we already know that humor can help you to be more effective, it also helps to improve the way you are perceived<sup>23</sup>. In a survey of 1,000 executives, 84 percent of respondents felt that workers with a sense of humor do a better job<sup>30</sup>.

It's for these reasons, whether they realized it or not, that some of history's most notable leaders praise the value of humor:

#### The Value of Humor

*"Good humor is one of the preservatives of our peace and tranquility."*  
– **Thomas Jefferson**

*"Were it not for my little jokes, I could not bear the burdens of this office."*  
– **Abraham Lincoln**

*"Laughter is America's most important export."*  
– **Walt Disney**

*"There is little success where there is little laughter."*  
– **Andrew Carnegie**

*"If I had no sense of humor, I would long ago have committed suicide."*  
– **Mahatma Gandhi**

## 2. Humor Earns Money

So far, we've covered a lot of reasons why YOU should use humor, but we may not be speaking everyone's language yet. Some people may not care about the health benefits, or the personal benefits, or the work benefits.

They may be saying "put your money where your mouth is." Well the proof is in the pudding (which happens to be delicious).

In a study of executives at one company, executives rated "outstanding" used humor more than twice as often as those rated "average."<sup>25</sup>

For some people, this might all be a little too subjective. I understand—you want some cold hard facts to match the cold hard cash.



Image from Humorsoffice.com

Well in the same study as the pudding example above, the researchers also saw an interesting correlation between use of humor and pay. In addition to ratings, the study also tracked compensation for each of the executives.

Lo and behold, the size of the executives' bonuses positively correlated with their use of humor. In essence, the more humorous the executive, the more money that executive made.<sup>25</sup>

Now that's talking about some cold hard pudding. Or money. Or something.

## 1. Humor Begets Happiness

We all know that money can't buy happiness, but it turns out humor can. Which is a good thing, considering a recent poll of more than 100,000 people representing 98% of the US population found that 47% of Americans struggle to stay happy<sup>31</sup>.

One out of two! Even worse, statistically speaking 6 out of 7 dwarfs aren't Happy at all<sup>32</sup>.



Image from Humorsoffice.com

Your personal happiness is important. Not only is it considered an inalienable right by the founding fathers of the United States (along with life and liberty), it turns out it's also contagious. In fact, the happiness of a stranger is more likely to make you happy than \$5,000<sup>33</sup>.

In a study conducted at the Harvard Medical School, researchers found that if a friend of a friend of a friend is happy (who could be a stranger to who), you have a six percent chance of being happier. This was versus two percent chance caused by a \$5,000 pay raise. Furthermore, if it's a friend of a friend who is happy, the odds jump to 10 percent; if it's a direct friend, 15 percent.<sup>33</sup>

They also discovered that this works for sour moods as well. Each "unhappy connection" (where a connection is either a friend, a friend of a friend, or a friend of a friend of a friend) decreased the chance of a person being happy by seven percent.<sup>33</sup>

How does that affect you? Well in addition to underscoring the importance of surrounding yourself with people who are generally happy, it also emphasizes the impact you have on other people. When you're happy, you increase the likelihood of your friends being happy by 15 percent (and people you don't even know by six percent)!

How does this all relate to humor? It turns out humor can increase happiness, in some cases by up to 42 percent<sup>34</sup>.

And according to the Harvard Grant Study, one of the largest longitudinal studies ever conducted, having followed 268 participants for more than 70 years, humor was one of the healthiest adaptations to being happy in life<sup>35</sup>.

Given the stakes (world happiness!), it's vital that you use humor. If not for yourself, than for the good of mankind (that might be a slight exaggeration).

## The Missing Reason

There's one reason (intentionally) missing from this list. It's not because it's not important (it is), but because it's not why I want you to consider using humor (though it is perfectly valid). I want you to realize the value of humor without this reason, knowing that there is hard, tangible value to using humor in the workplace. However, now that we've covered those, let's talk about the missing reason:

Fun.

Humor makes things more fun, more amusing, more enjoyable. After all, there are 168 hours in a week, and you likely spend at least 40 of them at work. That's nearly 25% of your adult life—you might as well have some fun while you're at it.

The question goes "Do you live to work or work to live." For me, I don't like either of those options. I certainly don't live just to do work, and honestly, I don't want to just work so I can live. I'd rather live and work, where both are enjoyable.

Luckily, this isn't a bad thing. In fact, just like using humor in general, having fun is a good thing. Studies show that having fun can encourage enthusiasm, improve group cohesion, increase employee satisfaction and enhance employee creativity<sup>36</sup>.

So in honor of having fun, here is one of my favorite jokes:

An orchestra teacher was recently hit by lightning, proving after all,  
he was a good conductor.

## The Benefits of Humor

Presented above were 10 reasons (plus a missing bonus one) on why YOU should use humor. Over the course of it, we referenced more than 30 sources and studies that support using humor, and there are hundreds more just like them. If you want more, a simple Google search (or search on any of the other search engines I'm sure) will return a number of results emphasizing just how important humor is.

And even though no one will ever really argue *against* using humor, it's time we start arguing *for* using humor—not just for our peers, managers or customers, but for ourselves.

If you're ready to learn how, just mosey on over to the next chapter.

## How To Humor – Learning Ways to Use Humor

Alright, so you are sufficiently convinced that you should use more humor (or very determined to get through this book). The question is how do you do it?

Luckily, incorporating humor into the workplace isn't rocket surgery. There are a few considerations, but for the most part, if you leverage your own sense of humor and keep things positive, you'll be OK.

### Sense / Ability

What if you're not humorous? Can you still bring humor to the workplace? Of course you can.

It's important to understand the difference between **sense of humor** and the **ability to humor**. Sense of humor is the about receiving humor and ability to humor is about creating it.

If humor were food, sense of humor would be like eating it. You realize that you need to eat to live and you have your own personal preferences—your own taste buds and perception of what is good and what is bad (for example, I love Chick Fil A—it's like the Bill Cosby of food).

Continuing this extended metaphor of humor to food, ability to humor is the ability to cook. We can all "cook," but there are varying levels of skill. Some of us are master chefs who delight people with delicious meals, others are more limited, sticking mostly to pizza rolls and other frozen foods.

Using humor in the workplace is like bringing food in. You can bring food in just for yourself or you can grab something for your entire team. If you're confident in your cooking ability, you may even bring food in that you created, like a delicious warm chocolate cake you baked that is perfectly succulent and ...

Let's move on before I write my way into an insatiable craving for cake. The point is you don't have to be the creator of humor to incorporate it in the workplace. {1} Starting a cartoon board or {2} showing clips of *The Office* during a training session are simple ways to add levity without you being the humorist.

Just remember, even if you're just the one ordering food, you still want to consider other people's tastes. Not everyone likes sushi and spicy hot wings aren't always appropriate in board meetings. That's where having an understanding of different types of food comes in.

### The Four Styles of Humor

If humor is food, the four styles of humor discussed earlier are the food groups. There's a time and place for all of them, but some are better to use than others. As a reminder, the four types of humor are:

- **Affiliative** – Amusing others as a way to facilitate relationships.
- **Self-enhancing** – Finding amusement in life's hardships and staying positive.
- **Self-defeating** – Saying funny things at one's own expense.
- **Aggressive** – Disparages others as a way of manipulating them.

Let's take a look at each one in more detail.



## Affiliative Humor

Affiliative is the best type of humor to use in the workplace. It helps build and establish relationships with others and is positive—meaning there’s no real target receiving the brunt of the punchline. It is welcoming of others and helps to make the office a better place.

When thinking about affiliative humor, think about things like team-building activities, where after the activity, the group and organization is stronger. Some examples of affiliative humor include:

- {3} Starting a lunch bunch at work to get to know each other better.
- {4} Taking an improv workshop with your peers.
- {5} Doing community service as an entire organization.
- {6} Sharing a personal story with a co-worker at the water cooler.
- {7} Creating nicknames for everyone on your team.

**Watchouts:** There aren’t really any watchouts with Affiliative humor other than recognizing that not everyone is going to be on board with humor all the time. Assuming you aren’t humoring for 39 hours of the 40 hours you’re working, you should be OK.

## Self-Enhancing Humor

Self-enhancing humor is a close second to affiliative humor for its usefulness in the workplace. It is all about finding the amusement in the various challenges and struggles that exist in the office place, and can be a way of combating the stresses of the corporate world.

If you’re on a project or in a role that you hate, self-enhancing humor can make it more bearable. Alternatively, it doesn’t even have to be something you despise—self-enhancing humor is about making situations more enjoyable, even if you would never classify that situation as being terrible.

By finding your own personal ways to look at things from a different, more humorous angle, you can improve your overall enjoyment and satisfaction for whatever you do in the workplace.

And despite the fact that the word “self” is in the description, it can also be shared effectively with other people. Using self-enhancing humor can turn negative situations into positive ones by bringing the participants closer together.

Some examples of self-enhancing humor include:

- {8} Using pictures instead of words as a way to express a point in a presentation.
- {9} Listening to music while doing repetitive tasks like data entry.
- {10} Solving a Rubik’s cube while listening in on a conference call.
- {11} Starting your quarterly meeting with a song parody.
- {12} Changing your desktop background to something that makes you smile.

**Watchouts:** Similar to Affiliative humor, there aren’t too many watchouts when using Self-enhancing humor—as long as the humor doesn’t prevent you from paying attention or completing your task, it’s usually safe to use.

## Self-defeating Humor

With self-defeating humor, we're starting to get into the negative humor territory. Whereas affiliative and self-enhancing humor are target-less, self-defeating has a target and that target is you. It is about poking fun at yourself as a way to humble yourself or gain approval or acceptance.

Self-defeating humor can be very effective when you are at the top of the hierarchy—if you're the CEO, leader of a project or the one with authority, self-defeating humor can show your audience/direct reports/peers that you have a sense of humor and you don't take yourself too seriously. This can help ease tension and get people on your side.

Some examples of self-defeating humor include:

- {13} Referencing your clumsiness if you trip on your way up to a podium.
- {14} Sharing an embarrassing story with a direct report.

**Watchouts:** Self-defeating humor does have its time and place, but it can also be detrimental. Using it too much, regardless of your position, can turn it from a poking fun to looking as if you are seeking pity. It also requires a lot of confidence to use, especially if you aren't in the senior position, and if executed poorly it can be seen as insensitive. For these reasons, self-defeating humor should be used only in moderation.

## Aggressive Humor

Aggressive humor is the most negative of the four types of humor. It has someone or something else as a target and it's used to attack the credibility, beliefs or even existence of that target. Aggressive humor has a place in the world—things like satire and sarcasm can be effective means of pointing out the absurdities of some situations, and it can get people to think in a new way. It can also serve as catharsis for those in oppressive circumstances.

The problem with aggressive humor in the workplace is that while it can help people blow off steam, it does so at someone's expense. If you work for a terrible boss, it might relieve stress to do insulting impressions of him behind his back, but it doesn't improve the situation. Better to use self-enhancing humor as a way of improving your situation.

Some examples of aggressive humor include:

- None?
- I won't say that aggressive humor should never be used, but I also can't say there are any examples that spring to mind as an effective way of using it in the workplace.

**Watchouts:** Using aggressive humor in any regard is very tricky business. Before using it, strongly consider if it is worth the cost, and try to explore other types of humor that will be more effective.

## Knowing What Humor to Use

Even with an understanding of the four styles of humor, it can be tough to know when to use what style. And even tougher is know what humor you should use within that style.

Unfortunately, there is no magic recipe for creating humor that works and there's no text on Earth that will instantly turn you into a humor genius. If it was possible to do, I'd do it, make millions of dollars creating humorists and then reapply the "all-you-have-to-do-is-read-this-book" technique to music, sports, cooking, dating and the nearly impossible-to-explain world of Euchre.

But, that doesn't mean there's no hope for the humorless—you can learn how to effectively use humor in the workplace. And doing so isn't as hard as you may think—all you need to do is follow your trusty Humor MAP

## The Humor MAP

To quell any fears, I don't keep capitalizing MAP because I'm very passionate about it and keep screaming. It is, as you probably guessed, an acronym. But it's a good acronym. It's not one just for the sake of creating one, and isn't "map" just because it happened to spell a word (otherwise I would have called it PAM).

It's a good acronym because when you understand the three components that make up your MAP, it will serve as your guide. It will give you direction on where you need to go, help you avoid hazards and make you legend-ary.



Image from HumorThatWorks.com

So what is the MAP composed of? The three things you need to know when deciding what, if any, humor you should employ for maximum effectiveness in your unique situations. Specifically, your humor MAP is:

1. The **Medium** in which you deploy your humor.
2. The **Audience** to whom you present your humor.
3. The **Purpose** for why you are using humor.

When you know these three things, you'll be able to make an informed decision on how to apply humor.

## The Medium

The medium is all about the how. How is the humor going to be received by the audience? Will it be in a live presentation with a speaker, pre-recorded on a video the audience watches on a monitor or written on a sheet of paper for them to read?

Depending on the medium, different types of humor are more effective. Music can be a great use of humor when it is auditory... when it's written, not so much:

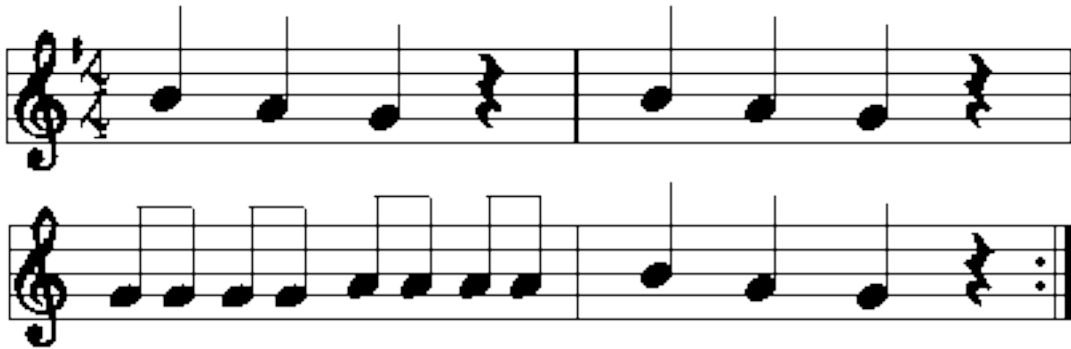


Image from MyMusicClass.com

Is the above image humorous or enjoyable to you?

Unless you're a knowledgeable musician, it probably isn't all that meaningful because visually is a terrible way for someone to receive music (though a great way to help someone play it). Even if I (try to) type it phonetically, it's still not effective:

Doh, duh, dah (beat). Doh, duh, dah (beat). Dah dah dah dah, duh duh duh duh.  
Doh, duh dah.

The best way to experience the above is to bust out your old grade-school recorder and play *Hot Cross Buns* on it. As you can see, one type of humor (e.g. music) may be perfect for one medium (aural), but terrible for others (visual).

While there are no hard and fast rules, here are some examples of what can be effective for some of the more common types of media:

In-person 1on1	Conference Call	Presentation	Email
{15} Sharing the origins of a high school nickname. {16} Starting every sentence with the last letter of the last word the other person said. {17} High-fiving at the end of a meeting. <sup>17</sup>	{18} Playing "Mary Had a Little Lamb" on the dialpad. {19} Using web tools to take interesting polls during the call. {20} Giving regional weather updates like a weather man.	{21} Entering the room to music like a pro wrestler. {22} Giving an entire presentation WITHOUT using PowerPoint. {23} Rewarding people who ask good questions with candy.	{24} Make up a bad pun related to the subject matter of the email. {25} Write the message as a poem. {26} Create a ridiculous signature that includes disclaimers regarding alien invasions.

## The Audience

The next component of the Humor MAP is the audience, which is all about the who. Who will be the recipient of your humor? What do they know, what do they expect, and what do they need?

This is vital to understand because it dictates what will and will not be humorous. Humor is an opinion and therefore only the receiver can determine if they find it humorous.

It doesn't matter how great of a math joke I make, if you don't know the subject matter, it won't be humorous to you. Which is sad for me because I love math jokes.

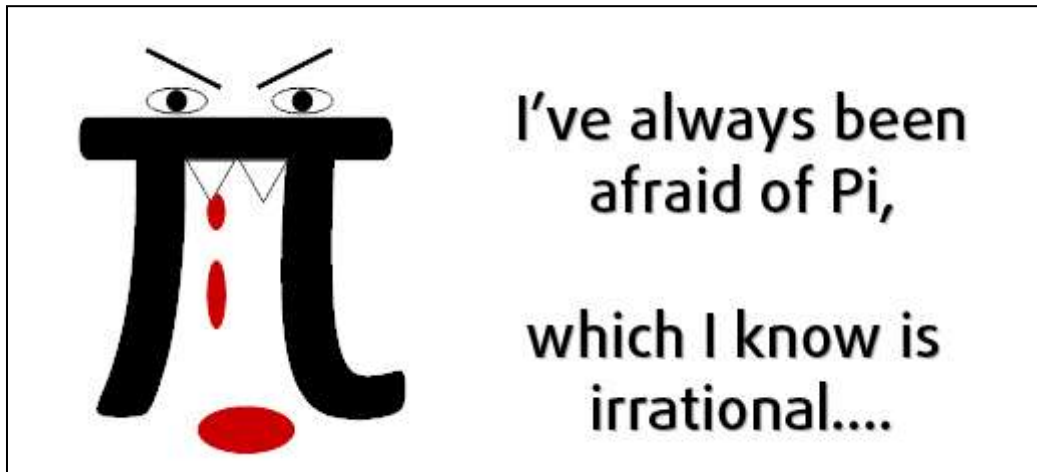


Image from Humorsoffice.com

That being said, you don't have to know everything there is to know about your audience—just some basic information that can get you in the right ballpark. Even if you knew your audience completely, there's no guarantee of what will work and what won't, but with a base understanding of them, you'll at least get started in the right direction.

To get an idea of some of the different "whos" and what can work, here are a few examples:

<b>Review with Manager</b>	<b>Meeting w/ Direct Reports</b>	<b>Training to Strangers</b>	<b>Memo To Entire Company</b>
{27} Include humorous observations in the follow-up email you send afterwards. {28} Ask for feedback to be American Idol style (mean, nice, middle). {29} Comment on something in the office.	{30} Holding the meeting in a park. {31} Reserving time on the agenda for people to praise/thank each other. {32} Share a different picture from childhood in each meeting.	{33} Get to know the audience by playing "Remain Standing If" {34} Have someone to read an extravagantly written bio of you. {35} Get "inside info" on the group to reference during training.	{36} Start it with "Greetings Fellow Humans" {37} Share interesting trivia about the company in the memo. {38} Include recent praise about the company.

## The Purpose

The final component of the Humor MAP is also the most important because it's about the why. Why are you using humor? Is it to increase productivity, expand learning, develop creativity? What reason (possibly one of ten plus a bonus one) do you have for using it?

Without knowing this, you're more likely to miss the mark with your humor and may turn people off with its use. Humor for the sake of humor is OK, as long as that's your purpose for using it. If you're trying to make it specific, any old humor won't do—it has to be aligned with your purpose.

When it comes to purpose, there are two things you need to know: what desired result you want and how you want humor to help. Once you know these two things, you can explore various humor options before choosing the one that will deliver both.

Let's look at some example uses of humor based on some common purposes:

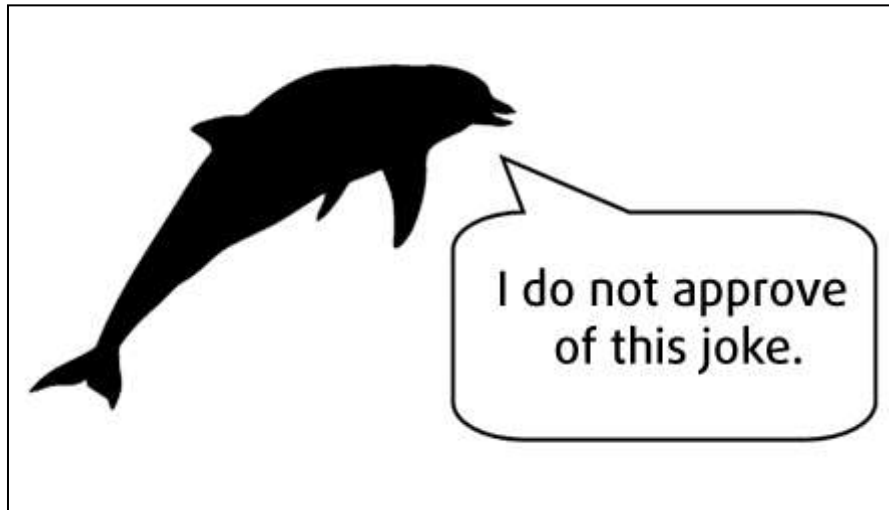


Image by Tara Hunt

<b>Recommend a Course of Action (Leadership)</b>	<b>Increase Personal Efficiency (Productivity)</b>	<b>Teach a New Idea (Learning)</b>	<b>Solve a Wicked Problem (Creativity)</b>
{39} Start with a story of how the future will look after the change. {40} Start the head-nodding by beginning with irrefutable facts (like we're all human). {41} Share precedents in another field.	{42} Apply the Pomodoro technique and take a break whenever the bell rings. {43} Use your bladder as a deadline for completing something. {44} Listen to classical music.	{45} Use an extended metaphor to explain the idea. {46} Think of a new (new) mnemonic. {47} Create 1-minute video trainings to use as follow-ups that hit on key points.	{48} Play "Yes And" to generate ideas. {49} Find a similar problem in nature and apply biomimicry. {50} Only dismiss an idea after you've identified one positive about it.

## The Humor MAP Completed

There you have it, the three components of the Humor MAP: the medium, the audience and the purpose. Once you know these three things, you can start to use humor to effectively deliver your event.

## Concerns with Using Humor

We've already talked a little bit about some of the watchouts with using humor in the workplace, but it's worth exploring a little more. For the most part, people err on the side of being overly cautious in the workplace and rarely have problems.

However, there are times and situations when humor is inappropriate. When it comes to humor, one man's treasure may be another man's trash--not everyone shares the same sense of humor. What seems hilarious to one person may be offensive to another.

There are two main concerns when it comes to using humor: how does it make the humorist look and how does it make the humored feel.

## Humorist, Clown and Bully

As a user of humor in the workplace, you want to avoid being considered a clown or a bully. Instead, you want to be seen as a person with a great sense of humor. What's the difference?

A clown consistently uses humor regardless of whether it's effective in that situation, and never shuts it off. In fact, the clown spends more time clowning than getting any actual work done. Other people see the clown as lazy or incompetent, and even if the clown makes a good point, it's often missed because no one takes him seriously any more.

A bully uses humor that is targeted at a person or group of people and makes them feel inferior while making himself (and the people who laugh) feel superior (i.e. they use only aggressive humor). It's a particularly dastardly type of bullying because it takes something as powerful as humor and uses it for nefarious purposes. Other people see this negative demeanor and it affects the bully's ability to lead effectively.

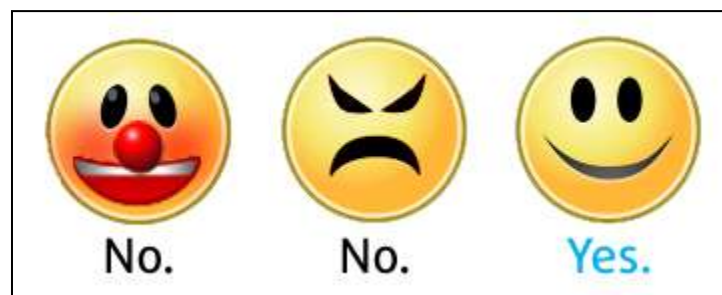


Image from Humorthatworks.com

Humoring in a positive way avoids both of these outcomes and makes you look like a genius, not a clown or bully. For the most part, using common sense is all you need, but as they say, common sense ain't always so common, so let's look at a more specific way you can avoid poor humor choices.

## What Makes Humor Inappropriate

To avoid using humor inappropriately, it's important to first understand what makes it inappropriate. Generally humor inappropriate for the workplace falls into at least one of the following categories:

*Inappropriate Time* - Some moments are meant to be serious, and trying to lighten them with humor can come across as being insensitive or cruel. For example, firing someone is not the time to try out your witty one-liner about fire trucks.

*Inappropriate Target* – When a person is being made fun of, the entire office atmosphere can quickly change from being fun and lighthearted to exclusionary and polarizing. The best humor has no target at all (i.e. affiliative or self-enhancing).

*Inappropriate Subject Matter* – Some subject matters shouldn't be discussed in the workplace, even if jokingly. While some comedians make a living using off-color humor, humor about subjects such as drugs, sex and racism should be avoided in the office.

To demonstrate, below is a table marking when humor is appropriate. OK means the time, target or subject is OK or appropriate, X means it is not.

As you might guess, the only time humor is appropriate is one all three criteria are appropriate themselves.

Time	Target	Subject	Humor is...
OK	OK	OK	Appropriate.
OK	OK	X	Inappropriate.
OK	X	OK	Inappropriate.
X	OK	OK	Inappropriate.
OK	X	X	Not cool.
X	OK	X	Not cool.
X	X	OK	Not cool.
X	X	X	Evil.

Using humor at the wrong time or too often can leave you looking like a clown. Targeting people with humor can make you look like a bully. Humor about certain subjects could make you a clown, a bully, or worst of all, a bully-clown.

## How to Avoid Humor-related Issues

Don't let the above table or warnings scare you. Avoiding inappropriate humor in the workplace isn't that difficult. Common sense would tell you there are some general times, targets and subjects that should never be joked about. If you stick to affiliative and self-enhancing humor, you'll rarely run into any problems.

Rather than try to list all of the ways humor can be inappropriate, it's easier to develop a way to confirm that your humor IS appropriate. That's where the *Humor Checklist* comes in.



## The Humor Checklist

By following this checklist, you can determine whether or not your humor instance is appropriate for your timing, target and subject matter. It's not brain science, just common sense (of humor).

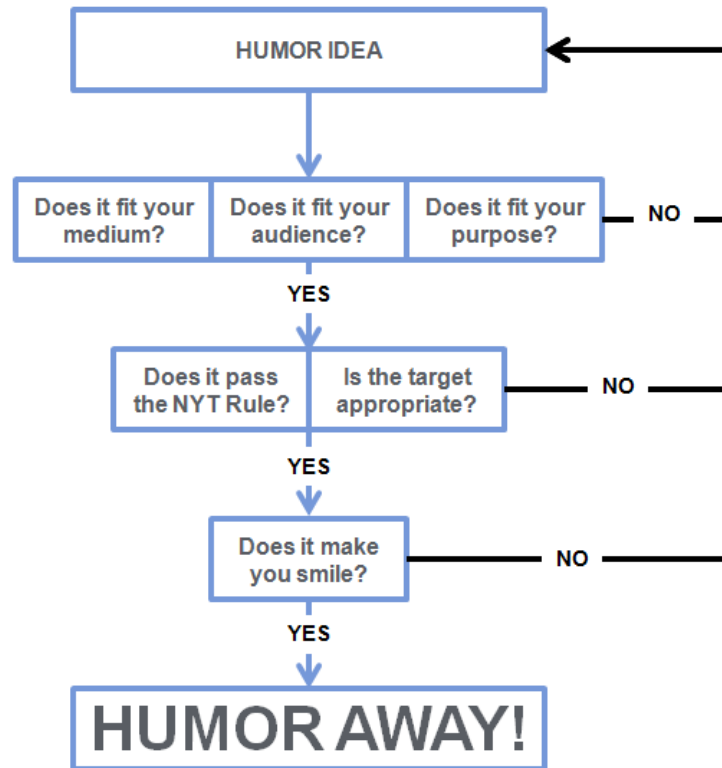


Diagram from Humorthatworks.com

We start first with aligning the humor to your Humor MAP. Ask yourself,

- Is my humor effective for my medium? My audience? My purpose?

Answering these questions will make sure your humor is both appropriate for the given situation and is an effective tool.

Specifically, knowing your MAP helps in the following ways:

*Medium* – Knowing your Medium will help you avoid having your humor misunderstood because you'll understand how it will be received.

*Audience* – Knowing your Audience will give you an idea of what subjects may be taboo or be perceived as inappropriate by the people in your audience.

*Purpose* – Knowing your Purpose will make sure your humor use has a specific purpose, and as long as that purpose isn't to clown or bully, will ensure it is appropriate.

The next two questions are related to the appropriateness of the subject matter and target (if any).

- Does the humor pass the New York Times rule?
- Does the humor have a target, and if yes, is it appropriate?

These questions will help ensure that your subject matter is appropriate.

*New York Times Rule* – This rule simply asks if you would be comfortable if what you did was printed on the front page of the New York Times? Would it land you trouble? Get you fired? Make you embarrassed? Or would it be a positive thing? If it's positive (or even neutral)—great—but if there would be any negative consequences, it's not the best type of humor to use.

*Humor Target* – Not all humor has a target, some of it is just fun. But if what you're doing is comedic, it most likely has a target which can be tricky in the work environment. If you're going to have any target, it should be yourself or someone else involved in the production so that the audience understands the target is in on the joke. Otherwise humor is being used to hurt, not build, and that's not an effective strategy for awesome organizations.

The final question you should ask yourself is perhaps the most important:

- Does the humor excite me?

The heart of the last question is: does what you are doing get you excited about the project? Are you eagerly anticipating the execution of the humor? Will it be fun for you and others?

If not, then you may want to consider doing something else; if you're putting extra effort into humorizing your event, why not enjoy it?

However, if you answer "Yes" to all of the above, and you're excited by the awesomeness you're about to impart, then you've found the right humor activity and should get cracking.

#### *Disclaimer*

Using humor in the workplace is a fantastic idea and one that can help lead you to fame and fortune (probably). Navigating the humor landscape can be tricky, but by understanding the different styles of humor, following your humor MAP, and going through the humor checklist, you can all but guarantee your humor won't land you in the hot seat or get you the cold shoulder.

Still, there are a lot of different situations that come up in the workplace, and they all have their own subtle dynamics. If you're in serious doubt, you can always check with your HR person to make sure you'd be fine if the story ended up on the front page of the New York Times.

I personally believe the philosophy that it's better to have to beg for forgiveness than ask for permission, but should that strategy end with you taking a trip to Unemployment, we shan't be held responsible.

## Getting Started – What to Do Next

The goal for this book was to share with you the reasons you should care about using humor and shed some light on how to do it appropriately.

But alas, a single book can only do so much. It's now up to you go forth and actually use this knowledge to beat stress, improve your health and the remaining eight reasons (plus a bonus one) to use humor.

For many, you've learned enough to get started. Armed with an understanding of the types of humor, your humor MAP and a checklist, you can come up with your own ways to incorporate humor into your workplace.

For others, you may want more. Here's where you can go to get it.

[www.HumorThatWorks.com](http://www.HumorThatWorks.com)

First and foremost, your best resource is the Humor That Works website. It is constantly being updated with new posts on the benefits of humor, specific instructions on how to use humor and links to other humor resources. It also has book reviews of popular books on humor, business and humor in the workplace.

Hosted on the website are a few other key resources:

**10 Tips for Using Humor in the Workplace** – Want to get started using humor right away? Here are ten quick tips on effectively using humor in the workplace.

**101 Ways to Create Humor at Work** – Need some ideas on creating humor at work? Here are 101 of them to help get you started.

**The Humor Checklist** – Got an idea for using humor but want to see if it will be effective? Complete this checklist to find out.

[www.HumorsOffice.com](http://www.HumorsOffice.com)

In addition to Humor That Works, there's also Humor's Office – where humor goes to work. The purpose of the site is to collect some of the funniest videos, images and texts from around the web and aggregate them all in one Safe-For-Work location.

If you just need a break to get recharged, you can check it out for some funny. If you are working on a specific project and want to find some humor related to it, just use the search function. If you think of something funny you want to share with others, you can submit it to the site.

[drew@humorthatworks.com](mailto:drew@humorthatworks.com)

And of course you have me, the author of this book and President & Chief Humorist of Humor That Works. I'm incredibly passionate about helping others use humor in the workplace and am always open to helping people out.

If you're looking for something a little more structured, than you may be interested in our humor consulting. We offer two types of programs:

## HUMOR PROGRAMS

Humor Programs are all about teaching you how to use humor in the workplace to meet your specific needs.

**Humor Keynote** – Learn why using humor at work will help YOU create better relationships, build better teams, be more creative, get promoted, earn more and live longer.

**Humor Bootcamp** – Receive a crash course in using humor to improve your 5 key business skills: communication, relationships, problem-solving, execution of work and strategic disengagement.

**Humor Coaching** – Learn how to incorporate humor into your work based on your personality, skills and opportunities.

## HUMOROUS PROGRAMS

Humorous Programs focus on a specific topic and are presented in a way that uses humor to effectively and memorably teach the subject matter.

**Communication** – Develop the key communication skills that will make you a more powerful, confident and effective communicator.

**Relationships** – Discover ways to be more productive by improving your professional and personal connections.

**Problem-Solving** – Find out how to assess situations, brainstorm solutions and make decisions to make you more adept at solving problems.

**Execution of Work** – Practice ways to increase productivity, improve your time management skills and enhance your personal effectiveness.

**Strategic Disengagement** – Get educated on the value of R&R&R: relaxing and recharging and recreating yourself.

If you have any questions, concerns or thoughts, feel free to email me and we can chat. I'm happy to do a free initial consultation and then we can see what makes sense from there.

Remember, the only stupid question is the one you don't ask.

## Conclusion

You are now equipped to go out into the corporate world and make it a better place through humor. This book has provided you with a background of what humor is, the reasons you should use it, the styles you can use, and the tools you need to use it effectively.

I don't pretend that this book is the be-all and end-all of humor, but it should get you started in the right direction, and you have the resources to take it even further.

At the beginning of the book, I told you about the mission and goal behind both Humor That Works and this book, about how I want other people to be able to use humor to achieve better results, at work, at home and in life.

But more than that, I want you, Pat Turner, to reap all of the benefits of using humor—to beat stress, improve health, increase productivity, develop creativity, expand learning, strengthen relationships, create opportunities, enhance leadership, be happy and of course have fun.

Hopefully this book has been helpful in your journey and has served as a roadmap to guide you in that direction. I know your journey doesn't end here--when you close this book, you are just at the beginning of sharing humor with the rest of the world. It's a good thing too; the world desperately needs it.

We may not be able to fix the world, but dag-nabbit if we can't make it a better place. All you need is a little humor.

## Sources:

Since 2007, I've been using, researching and teaching humor in the workplace. A lot of what is presented above is based on my own experience and lots of reading.

A special thanks goes to all of the groups, organizations and companies that I've had the privilege of working with. Your passion, enthusiasm and feedback have helped me shape the content you see today.

Specifically, I'd like to thank:

*Procter & Gamble* for not only hiring me out of college, but also for letting take my passion and run with it. What I learned in that company will forever shape how I do business.

*The Ohio State University* for being such an incredible institution, being where I was first introduced to humor and improvisation, and for bringing me back to share what I've learned.

*ComedySportz New York* for giving me the chance to grow as a facilitator and teach improvisation to people of all ages, from all types of backgrounds, and for a variety of purposes.

There are a number of great humor and business books that have helped me shape my thinking. These include, but are not limited, to:

*Humor Works* by John Morreall. Amherst, MA: HRD Press Inc, 1997

*The Levity Effect* by Adrian Gostick and Scott Christopher. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008

*Improv Wisdom* by Patricia Ryan Madson. New York, NY: Random House Inc, 2005

*7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R Covey. New York, NY: Free Press, 1989

*The Effective Executive* by Peter F Drucker . New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1967

*How to Win Friends & Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. New York, NY: PocketBooks, 1936

In addition, there is an ever-growing body of research, studies and papers touting the value of humor. Below are the specific sources cited in this book.

## FOOTNOTES

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### Humor Defined

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