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## Joking aside?

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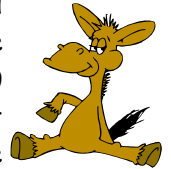
### Go on, be a devil, tell us a joke

Jokes are a good place to start when implementing Humour in the Workplace. They are a great way to enhance your communication tool box and build rapport in relationships.

But joking often runs the risk of offending someone, so it's best to have a strategy. Sad, yes, to have a strategy for sharing jokes - but necessary if jokes are to be allowed and encouraged.

As a general rule, jokes in the workplace should not be superfluous or gratuitous. Save those jokes for the pub. Workplace jokes are most beneficial when they make a point. Often like a court jester to a king, much can be said through humour.

For example, a financial consultant uses a joke to introduce how accounting disasters might occur: "Old MacDonald had a farm and on this farm he had a donkey; but the donkey died. The farmer had invested in buying the donkey, how would he ever get his money back, let alone turn a profit. He decided to sell the donkey. How could he sell a dead donkey? He decided to raffle it. He sold 500 tickets at £2 a pop. That's a £1000 for a dead donkey that would have sold for £250 alive. It wasn't until the prize was drawn that anyone discovered the donkey was dead. There was only one complaint - from the guy who won. So Old McDonald gave him back his two quid. E I E I O!"



This is a classic punch line joke that quickly makes a point, brings laughter and opens the listeners ear hearing more of the explanation.

One key to telling jokes is delivery. Often it is not what you say, it's how you say it. One important element to delivery is timing. Mastering timing has to do with the speed of delivery and the use of pauses. To "play the pause" is to stop speaking in order to create focus and suspense. It gives the delivery rhythm and can subconsciously signal to the listener that the laughter point is coming.

Another method of introducing humour is to share a funny story. Stories allow audiences to laugh, chuckle, and smile throughout the telling. The humour is not reliant on people "getting it". There is opportunity to shape the story depending on the reactions of the listeners.

Often it is fear of foolishness that stops many a potential Humourist. So great is this fear that we use the expression, "I was so embarrassed I thought I would die." We equate being laughed at with death. Overcoming this can be simple: laugh at yourself first. With a deft touch you can poke a little fun at yourself. That way, anyone else who laughs is laughing with you.



Recently at a business awards dinner, I shared the speaking platform with a Managing Director of a large company. Her use of humour was exemplary. She warmed up the audience with a story of her youthful misadventure at an event similar to the one we were now attending. In her story, the venue was under construction and she fell headlong into a deep ditch. She had us laughing as she regaled us with her attempts to get out, her head barely reaching ground level, her party dress ruined and hiked up. Finally she was pulled out and she finished her story by declaring "In life, as in business - What goes down will always come up".

Her nobody's perfect approach served to humanize her expertise and her moral to the story became the teaching point of her speech.

The strategic use of jokes and funny stories in the workplace will improve communication and relationships. A good joke teller will practice, and joke telling is a practice that is good.



*Laugh on  
Kate*