

USAGE OF HUMOR TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

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Abstract:

We all know that humor plays many roles in our lives. Not only is it useful to entertain and to amuse, but it can also serve to break the ice and put people at ease. It can ameliorate awkward situations and assuage tense ones. For this reason, it's viable as a consideration in communicating with diplomacy and tact. There is not a large body of research on humor, but much of it centers on humor in organizations, like the workplace.

Keywords: humor, communicate, communication, speech, audience, effectively.

Whether you are speaking at a staff meeting, seminar, or conference, using humor can help communicate information more effectively to your audience. Humor makes your audience feel relaxed and comfortable.

Humor is a handy tool to keep their attention. If you notice the audience with their eyes glazed over, try throwing out a little unexpected humor and watch their reactions. Find a common denominator with those listening to you; just show your natural and human side and they will listen more to what you have to say.

Humor can also help you approach sensitive subjects without making your listeners uncomfortable. Watch your words and phrase things carefully. Realize that you can handle sensitive issues with good taste. Be extremely careful with humor when dealing with sensitive issues to avoid offending your listeners.

If you are speaking to a not-so-friendly group, humor can defuse the tension and make them less hostile towards you and your message. Believe me; you can effectively use humor if you find yourself in front of a group of people who dislikes the topic and/or you. Let us be realistic about this. There will be instances when your



audience will not love you. There will be instances when people will show their dislike for your assigned topic.

When they enter a seminar room, they take with them some preconceived notions about you and the topic. These notions can affect their reactions. Your role as speaker is to break through these misconceived notions and win them to your side. Humor is one effective tool to break down those barriers and resistance. It is difficult for your audience to disagree when they are laughing and having fun. Spin it so they will realize that you are actually on their side and not against them.

Humor can also help you tackle a complicated topic. The more complicated your message, the more you need humor to help introduce the topic and make the audience more receptive and open. Humor sets the tone for your talk. It helps relax the audience. A relaxed setting makes learning fun and easier. It helps if you can simplify what you have to say and make it more comprehensible to your audience. Acknowledge that the topic is complicated and assure them that you will do your best to make it simple and fun to learn. You want to identify with your audience and humor is the way to do just that. It is easier for them to connect with you if they can see you are human like them. Humor makes you more approachable.

One important element about humor for any public speaker or performer is timing. Timing is everything. Too many speakers set up the joke well, tell the story, paint the picture for the audience, but then rush the ending. Always pause before the punch line.

The audience listens and sees in their mind's eye the picture you have painted for them or they wrap their minds around the idea you have presented. Then you deliver the punch line. Jack Benny used to say that, "Timing is not so much knowing when to speak, but knowing when to pause."

After you have delivered the joke, the hardest and the most nerve-wracking part comes -- waiting for the audience reaction and expecting laughter. Whatever you do, do not rush into the next item of your speech.

Comics call that "stepping on the joke". This will ruin the joke. It will destroy the impact of the joke. Although there is a long pause before the laughter, do not be tempted to laugh at your own joke. Professional comics never join in the laughter.

The great comic Bob Hope taps his microphone and say, "Is this thing on?" George Burns would puff on his cigar while waiting for the audience to respond and for the laughter to die down.



The biggest difference between professional comedians and regular public speakers is simple — the audience expects the comics to make them laugh and they can be tough if they do not get what they want. They paid to hear funny material and by golly, that is what they expect to hear.

However, no one expects the public speaker to be funny. The expectations are completely different. When the public speaker turns out to be amusing, the audience is pleasantly surprised and they normally react with appreciation.

Surprise your audience with your creative and humorous side. Follow this simple sequence of steps:

Learn to relax

Be playful

Set up your story or joke

Watch your timing

Pause for effect

Hit your audience the punch line

Stand-up comics and jesters all have their place in our world. Do not feel that you have to strive to be one of them. Just pepper your speeches with enough humor to get and keep your audience's attention.

The List of used literature

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