

HUMOUR

SPARKS CREATIVITY

by Sheena

Humour allows us to relax and think about situations from different perspectives. And, as it happens, creativity requires exactly that. Therefore, it stands to reason that humour and creativity should go hand in hand. Humour should be encouraged in the workplace to foster a playful, creative atmosphere.

There are further links between humour and creativity:

- Both imply taking time out from usual activities.
- Both have the ability to energise through getting a happy activity going.
- Both imply playing around with ideas.
- Through both you can look at a situation in an unusual way.
- Both can lead you to make strange connections.
- We are more spontaneous when we are looking for creative ideas and when we are dealing with something funny.
- Both can create a positive atmosphere, where you look for an outcome rather than at the problem.
- There is some risk involved in both.
- We try to understand the essence of the situation in both.
- Most of the time we need to dig deeper to discover hidden meanings.
- Both can change our perceptions of things.
- The outcome is often unexpected.
- Both are playful.

“I think the next best thing to solving a problem is finding some humour in it,” says Frank A Clark. Today’s competitive marketplace insists that you take a new approach to problem solving and product development. You must be able to see problems from different perspectives or be able to come up with new products.

Think about MP3s. These did not exist a few years ago. It took someone to think, what if we could make music completely digital, for them to be developed.

Companies able to foster creativity are the ones that will stay ahead of the competition.

“At the height of laughter, the universe is flung into a kaleidoscope of new possibilities,” believes Jean Houston. Foster humour, and thus creativity, in the workplace by following these steps:

1. Live by the rule that it is okay to have fun in the workplace. Employees should feel comfortable to joke and play at work.
2. The physical environment should have elements of fun. These could be posters, gadgets and fun colours on the walls. Also, do



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things like distribute funny pencils, stickers or sweets on occasion to foster a sense of play.

3. Consider having humour days where people can dress up or wear funny hats, badges or ties.
4. Create a specific location for humour sessions. Call it the laugh room, fun room or giggle chamber. Spice up the room with anything funny. Use it for your creativity sessions where way-out, weird ideas can be brainstormed.
5. Encourage people to send funny thoughts of the week to the rest of the team by rotating the responsibility to various staff members.
6. Use humour as a strategic way to break the cycle of stress. Consider hiring trainers who are humorous and stand-up comedians for awards evenings or end of year functions.
7. Create a cartoon wall in your office.

As Bob Ross puts it, “A leader without a sense of humour is apt to be like the grass mower at the cemetery. He has lots of people under him, but nobody is paying him any attention.” Argus Poster says, “The time to laugh is when you don’t have time to laugh.”

There are some instances when you can use humour to turn a situation around. If you are stuck for an idea or a solution to a problem, try one of these exercises:

Turn it upside down

Change your focus from positive to negative. For example, if you want to sell more of your products then ask how you can sell fewer. Answers could be along the lines of:

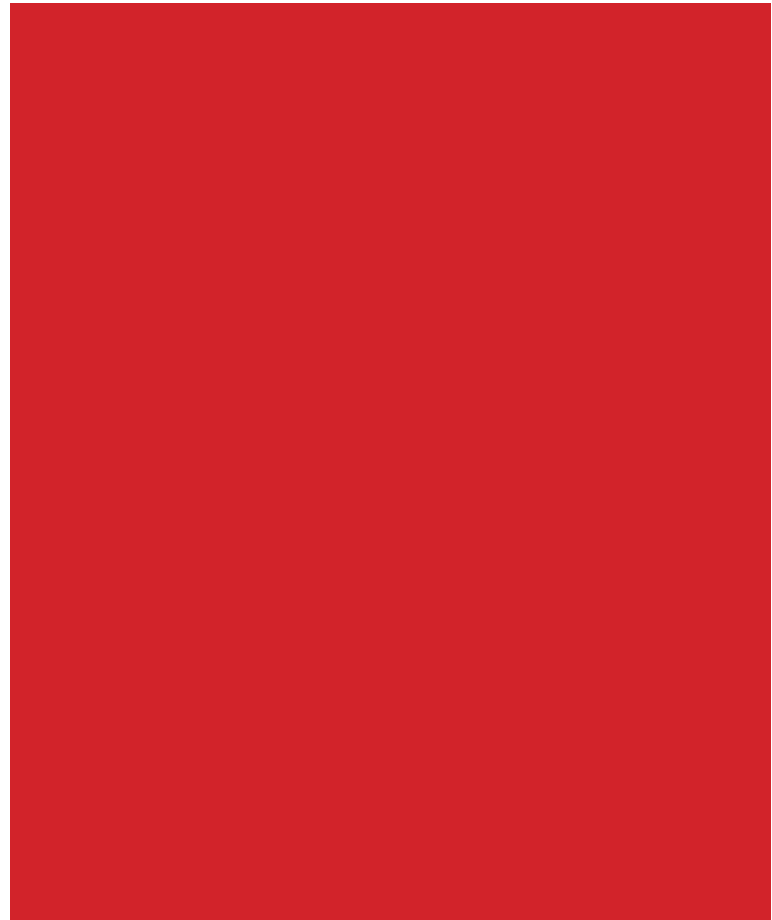
- Make the product really expensive.
- Offer clients gifts if they do not buy.

Approach the exercise in a light-hearted way and you will be amazed how your thinking changes.

Ask a comedian

Stuck with a problem you do not know how to solve? Well, get the funny people in to help you by imagining how your favourite comedian would solve the problem. For example, what would Jerry Seinfeld or Jim Carrey do to sell more of your product?

“Humour is contagious. Laughter is infectious. Both are good for your health,” comments William Fry, a doctor who researches the psychology of laughter. When




you feel things are going wrong and you have nothing available to help combat the onslaught then try to find the humour in the situation to help you overcome limitations.

Laughter can help you fight stress because it increases your heart rate, improves blood circulation, improves breathing and releases endorphins. Endorphins are a mood elevator that can help to combat infections caused by stress, improve your immune system and relieve chronic body pain.

According to Gilbert Seldes, “Comedy is the last refuge of the non-conformist mind.” Foster humour in your own life by doing the following:

1. Buy and listen to comedy audio CDs.
2. Look for humour everywhere for an entire day in signs, things people do, different interpretations and definitions of things.
3. Make a list of the funniest people you know and deliberately spend time with them.

“I believe that play is the beginning of creativity. I believe that laughter is the only cure for grief and fear. I believe that humour is the bond that can unite us all,” says Ellie Marek.

The information for this article was taken from the book *Creativity Uncovered*, written by Kobus Neethling and Raché Rutherford and published by Neethling Brain Instruments. 

For more information please call Dr Kobus Neethling on 012 460 7822 or visit kninstitute.com