HUMOR GAUGE REPORT: 
YOU CAN'T SLAP A CLOWN NOSE ON A BAD ATTITUDE 

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INTRODUCTION

Happiness and humor are supportive of a well-functioning business. Fortunately, the science of how to bring laughter and enjoyment into an organization is being refined.

In the past, the answer to what makes people happy, what makes working environments fun, has often been approached in a simplistic, one-size-fits-all fashion.

Not every employee wants to wear a clown nose or odd headgear, or chant "ha, ha, ho, ho." Not all workplace members want to attend a standup comic routine on company time. Humor cannot be applied like a band-aid on low morale or dropping productivity.

Humor, happiness, and joy are very personal matters. Many find their greatest sources of enjoyment and funniness away from work. Yet now we are seeing clowns and comedians and silly props being introduced into our work life.

Is that inappropriate? No! A Loosen Up, Lighten Up (LULU) shot in the arm of a business will always have very positive effects on the health, bottom line, and resilience of an organization. But the vaccine against gloominess and boredom and drama-zone attitudes must fit the particular organization and its particular employees.

OF COURSE HAPPINESS IS A GOOD IDEA, BUT . . .

Raising the happiness level of an organization or of an employee is very individual. Taking a one-size-fits-all approach can have very detrimental effects.

If you are going to raise the humor quotient, the number of laughs, the broadness of smiles, in your workplace, you MUST tailor your program to your workplace. What lightens up a law firm may be very different from what brings some laughs and a more positive attitude to a hospital's nurses; or a group of electricians; or an assemblage of accountants, salespeople, call center personnel, or realtors.

Several questions, if answered thoughtfully, will ensure that the humor your organization incorporates will be appropriate for your particular situation. Answering these questions also prevents your bringing in humor that is counter-productive because it's not right for your workplace.

Note: Associations must also answer a similar set of questions to be certain of the
effectiveness of humor at their meeting or conference. Please contact us at information@allen-nichols.com regarding those questions.

Two important questions to gauge the most useful humor for a company are:

1) What is the purpose for incorporating humor?

2) Should content/information be included with humor and, if so, what is the best mix of humor and content for the program?

This report gives you an overview of how to answer those two questions for your organization. Additional questions are also provided below.

PURPOSE

Typically when we work with organizations that want to bring some humor into their workplace, we find that the fundamental concern they wish to address is that of morale.

Either they want to raise the level of morale or they want to sustain the existing level of morale.

We have broken morale into four components, and we help companies discover the component(s) most important to their current situation. They identify one or more they want to affect by bringing in a dose of humor.

The four critical and interrelated components of morale we have defined are:

Prevailing, established, widespread mood, humor, atmosphere and spirit (SPIRIT)

   In the face of challenges, difficulties, obstacles and problems (ABILITY TO TACKLE CHALLENGES)

   Resulting in willing, enthusiastic, ready, reliable, goal-oriented responsible performance (TOP PERFORMANCE)

   Based on faith and confidence in, and support of, the project, the job, the company, the leadership (CONFIDENCE)

A humor program can positively affect each of the four components but each component requires a different kind of program. One-size-fits-all programs seldom achieve an organization’s goals.

The same program is not suitable for all situations. Here are just a few examples of different situations that call for different kinds of humor programs. An organization with the goal of:

   1  Supporting, sustaining and even improving the already-prevailing good spirit
2 Defusing anxiety and fear about an issue so its people are better able to face challenges

3 Showing appreciation to its hard-working employees

4 Giving employees practical methods for lightening up their daily work life

Once purpose is determined, the appropriate humor program can be chosen. Taking a good look at the four components of morale makes that determination much easier.

**MIX OF HUMOR AND CONTENT**

We have created a quadrant to help organizations look at the choices they have for a humor program. It is designed with four squares to help them clearly make their humor program decision.

The four boxes or squares show program choices for high content/low humor, low content/low humor, high humor/high content, and high humor/low content. Here is a quick version of that humor/content quadrant with a few examples of the various types of programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Content</th>
<th>Low Humor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Comic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Speaker</td>
<td>Bowling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen &amp; Nichols</td>
<td>Hawaiian shirt day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productions</td>
<td>Content-rich entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content-rich entertainment</td>
<td>Funny video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic</td>
<td>Clown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiin shirt day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High HUMOR</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to specifically mention perhaps the most common kind of humor programs. Many programs are now available on the topic of humor in the workplace. These programs can actually fall into any of the quadrants. Some are high content and low humor; an example would be a lecture on the physiological benefits of laughter. Others are low content and high humor; they usually have lots of fun activities but demonstrate little about the value of the exercises or how to use them after the program.

A humor in the workplace program with both high humor and high content is extremely humorous and it presents the benefits of humor and how to incorporate humor into the day-to-day life of an employee.
Of course, the purpose of the humor program helps to determine which quadrant or quadrants will achieve the result. As examples, a company wishing to defuse a prickly or sensitive situation or show loosen up, lighten up methods to employees will require more content than a company wanting to present pure entertainment at a company party.

OTHERHELPFULQUESTIONS

A few other related concerns we have found important for organizations in making the quadrant choices are:

1) The degree of customization necessary to make the program effective
2) The particular senses of humor of the employees in a given workplace
3) Past humor programs and how they were received
4) From which budget the program fee comes
5) The setting or location of the humor program
6) The length of the humor program
7) The time of day of the humor program
8) Other organizational concerns occurring at the same time as the program
9) Other measures previously used to achieve the purpose
10) The company personality or culture

SUMMARY

With these two critical questions -- PURPOSE and MIX OF HUMOR AND CONTENT -- you have the basics we have learned from several years of helping organizations to determine the best humor programs for their specific workplace. Answering these questions will help you choose the best program for you.

OUR PROGRAMS

We know our Allen&Nichols Productions humor programs fit well in many settings, but certainly not all. If we are not your best choice, we have a list of resources we would be very happy to recommend to you once you decide what would suit your needs. Please contact us for assistance in determining the best humor program for you. information@allen-nichols.com