

How to inject humour into your brand



By [Catherine Milward-Bridges](#)

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Do your customers and staff struggle to find the 'funny bone' in your biz? Is humour a taboo in your business culture? Determined to gain some insights from the proverbial horse's mouth, I interviewed local comedian [Tracy Klass](#) on this topic.



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While we're not all comedians, everybody has a relative propensity to humour - it just needs to be accessed.

By regularly tapping into humour - showing that you're interested in more than just the bottom line - you connect more easily with staff and customers. While humour is hardly an option when you're staring down the barrel of bankruptcy, it certainly has its place in business culture.

Any business needs a healthy balance of pragmatism and creativity, and the latter is becoming more integral in progressive, innovative businesses. A sense of humour is key to unlocking and nurturing that creativity.

Benefits of humour in business

Klass highlights these benefits of humour in business:

1. Increases productivity and promotes employee retention

Humour has been shown to connect colleagues, laying the foundation for good rapport that leads to increased productivity. Staff are less likely to quit a job where they get along with peers.

2. It's an effective 'tool' for bridging cultural differences

Broaching a universal topic like relationships or children, and then sharing a humorous anecdote about it, can make for common ground when talking across cultures. Over time, this could improve business relations, especially when dealing with foreigners.

3. Potential brand enhancer and customer magnet

Businesses like Nando's and Red Bull have used humour - notwithstanding the odd faux pas - to cement their brand. If used appropriately, humour can extend your brand into markets that would otherwise have been inaccessible.

4. The experts say 'aye'

According to a Robert Half International survey, 91% of executives believe a sense of humour is a catalyst for career

advancement; while 84% feel that people with a good sense of humour tend to show more competence.

Asked to identify the impediments to the use of humour in business, she underscored:

- A prohibitive business culture
- Taking yourself too seriously as a business owner/boss (ironically, you then get taken less seriously)
- Fear of being offensive
- Apprehensiveness about your humour 'falling flat'
- Uncertainty about how to safely encourage the use of more humour in your business

Surefire 4-step plan

Klass' surefire 4-step plan is:

1. Learn to laugh at yourself, to get comfortable with the use of humour, in general
2. Be yourself - people don't appreciate corniness
3. Encourage the appropriate use of humour in your business by using it yourself, and responding positively when others do
4. Relax, don't try too hard; it will only make for untold tension

"I take my comedy very seriously - really. What keeps me going is drawing on these wise words that a good friend shared after my most disastrous show: 'Don't let a good one go to your head, and a bad one go to your heart'," says Klass.

When last did you have a laugh with your staff/customers/suppliers? Why not inject some humour into your brand?

ABOUT CATHERINE MILWARD-BRIDGES

Catherine Milward-Bridges is a passionate communication specialist and founder of simplyput.co.za. Catherine guides her clients in taking their engagement efforts from good to great; and helps them optimise social media with strategic know-how.

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