

Humor How-to

It's so important to have fun within your leadership gig! Yet, it's also important to know where to draw the line between appropriate and inappropriate humor. When used poorly, humor can ostracize others, make you look bad, and potentially do harm. When used well, though, it can add that much-needed sense of fun into your organization and motivate you all! Here's how you can tell the difference...

Appropriate Times & Ways to Use Humor:

- In pre-existing relationships
- When used respectfully and not to degrade an individual or group
- To engage an audience

Inappropriate Times and Ways to Use Humor:

- During crisis situations where the meaning could be misunderstood
- When it may be hurtful toward an individual or group
- When it detracts from the message you're trying to convey

Confronting Inappropriate Humor

There will be times when someone's attempt to be funny comes across hurtful or offensive instead. You can handle this by:

- Confronting the individual directly in a timely manner (within 24 hours) without talking about the incident with your peers first (you can talk it

... that "inside joke telling" can really make people feel left out. Just because it's comfortable for you and the few people who might be in on the joke, it won't have meaning to everyone. After all, one of the objectives of your position is to *include* people, not exclude them!

When Using Humor...

- ✓ don't disrupt the flow of your presentation with jokes
- ✓ steer clear of offensive jokes and comments
- ✓ don't laugh at people—laugh *with* them
- ✓ keep the humor in check—don't go overboard with the "funny stuff"
- ✓ try not to try so hard
- ✓ address offensive humor appropriately

through with your advisor, though). Go directly to the source. Don't turn the situation into a source of gossip.

- Confronting with dignity and respect. How would you like to be told something difficult to hear?
- Receiving the information openly and attempting to understand their perspective if someone confronts you about your actions. Listen fully to all concerns before trying to rebut their statements.

More times than not, someone says something without thinking about the consequences, rather than intentionally trying to do harm. Keep this in mind when addressing instances of inappropriate humor so it can become a conversation rather than an attack.

Quips and Quotes

"Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away and a sunny spirit takes their place."

~ Mark Twain

"USA Today has come out with a new survey: Apparently three out of four people make up 75 percent of the population."

~ David Letterman

"A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done."

~ Dwight D. Eisenhower

"Humor is a universal language."

~ Joel Goodman