Humor in the Workplace: A Communication Tool. An Annotated Bibliography.


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Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

Annotated Bibliographies; Communication Research; Communication Skills; Groups; *Humor; Intergroup Relations; *Interpersonal Communication; *Organizational Climate; Organizational Communication; Rapport; Social Behavior; Social Cognition

Management Practices; Message Transmission; Small Group Communication

The 47 references, dating mostly from 1976 to 1990, in this annotated bibliography provide information about the effect of humor in written and spoken messages and its role in interpersonal relationships, especially within the context of small groups and organizational environments. The materials in the bibliography are cited according to academic sources, popular and trade sources, and books. (KEH)
HUMOR IN THE WORKPLACE: A COMMUNICATION TOOL
An Annotated Bibliography

by

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Academic Sources


Cantor, J. (1981, Winter). Modifying the children's eating habits through television advertisements: Effects of humorous appeals in a field setting. Journal of Broadcasting, 25, 37-47. The study examines the persuasiveness of humorous vs. nonhumorous televised messages. Results suggest that in the absence of an immediate counter-advertisement, a serious ad for good nutrition is more effective than a humorous one.

Cantor, J. and Venus, P. (1980, Winter). The effect of humor on recall of radio advertisement. Journal of Broadcasting, 24, 13-22. The effects of humor use in the memorability and persuasiveness of radio advertisement were tested. Humor was found to call attention to advertisement while also promoting poor recall of the ads.

Chang, M-J and Gruner, C.R. (1981, Summer). Audience reaction to self-disparaging humor. The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 46, 419-428. The use and effects of self-disparaging humor while speaking are addressed. Results of the study indicate that speakers perceived as having both high status and ethos can use self-disparaging humor to appear witty and entertaining, while not impairing their credibility.


Duncan, W.J. (1984, November). Perceived humor and social network patterns in a sample of task-oriented groups: A reexamination of prior research. Human Relations, 37, 885-907. This study examined relationships between humor networks and interpersonal relationships within task-oriented groups. The network of joking behaviors within work groups was found to be a part of the larger social context of groups.

Duncan, W.J. (1982). Humor in management: Prospects for administrative practice and research. Academy of Management Review, 2, 135-142. The author reviews existing research on humor appreciation, group cohesiveness, power and status, and potential links between "group dynamic variables and human performance. A list of guidelines for management in matching humor with the situation is given, and some priorities are suggested for research.*

Duncan, W.J. (1985, November). The superiority of humor at work: Joking relationships as indicators of formal and informal status patterns in small, task-oriented groups. Small Group Behavior, 16, 556-564. Duncan discusses how humor may relate to status patterns in diverse task-oriented groups. His findings indicate that professional norms within any certain group can decidedly affect joking patterns.

* PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY W. WORK TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Duncan, W.J. and Feisal, J.P. (1989, Spring). No laughing matter: Patterns of humor in the workplace. *Organizational Dynamics, 17*, 18-30. Joking is addressed as serious business from a management standpoint. The authors' study shows that managers who pay attention to the employees' joking relationships can learn much about what is really happening in the workplace and how joking may affect performance.

Gorham, J. and Christophel, D.M. (1990, January). The relationship of teachers' use of humor in the classroom to immediacy and student learning. *Communication Education, 39*, 46-62. Results of this study suggest that teachers' use of humor in the classroom is related to learning and that the most desirable learning outcomes are associated with the quality as much as the quantity of humor used in conjunction with other immediacy behaviors.

IABC Communication World. (1988, April). The world's most humorous business illustrator, 23-28. Represented are artists who have illustrated for major business publications and are found exceptional for their ability to make persons laugh (smile). The artists have been found to provoke laughter through use of irony, satire, parody, whimsy, surprise, and a sense of the sublime and absurd.

Iapcse, M. (1988, April). Not just for laughs. *IABC Communication World, 28*-31. Iapcse provides an outline for how humor can be a cost-effective means of influencing people. Humor functions to (1) put people at ease, (2) disarm hostile audiences, (3) ease approaches to sensitive subjects, (4) form connections with audiences, (5) make the understanding of facts and figures easier, and (6) make a function fun.

Journal of Communication. (1976, Summer). Laughing matter? A symposium of studies on humor as communication, 28, 102-204. Humor is addressed as the communication tool of social function. The studies included indicate that humor "can help manage conflict, integrate novelty, and cope with—or administer—abuse and hurt."

Leap, T.L. and Smeltzer, L.R. (1984, November/December). Racial remarks in the workplace: Humor or harassment? *Harvard Business Review, 62*, 74-75 & 78. Leap and Smeltzer examine the controversy surrounding the question of what constitutes humor as opposed to harassment. He concludes that written company policy can go far in preventing harassment and, can keep humor in the right perspective so as to be a healthy environmental factor.

Linnaeus, S. (1985, November). Jokers wild: The importance of humor in the maintenance of organizational culture. *Sociological Review, 33*, 741-767. The author argues that humor is manifest within organizations in one of two major "joke forms": standardized/canned or situational/spontaneous. In his analysis he demonstrates that humor is complex and even contradictory in its relationship to organizational cultures, but due to the many functions it performs, it is an essential part of organizational life. The success of humor as a functional device, Linnaeus argues, is dependent upon its relation to the cultural and/or symbolic environment of the organization.

Malone, P.B., III. (1980). Humor: A double-edged tool for today's managers. *Academy of Management Review, 5*, 357-360. Malone examines the new trend in contemporary management initiatives such as participative management, open communication, etc. In light of the new interests in organizational development, the authors suggest the potential in using humor to facilitate contemporary initiatives, thereby contributing to management's ability to get things done.


Munn, W.C. and Gruner, C.R. (1981, Summer). "Sick" jokes, speaker sex, and informative speech. *The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 46*, 411-416. Results of this study found that the inclusion of "sick" jokes in a speech generally resulted in negative evaluation from the audience.


Stocking, S.H., Sapolsky, B.S. and Zillman, D. (1977, Fall). Sex discrimination in prime time humor. *Journal of Broadcasting, 21*, 447-457. The study seeks to establish whether or not females are the butt of comedy more frequently than males in prime-time programming. Results suggest that they are not.


Taylor, P.M. (1974, Summer). An experimental study of humor and ethos. *The Southern States Speech Communication Journal, 39*, 369-368. The suggestion that use of humor increases a speaker's ethos is addressed. Results of the study suggest that humor usage may actually decrease speaker ethos.

Thomas, V. (1988, April). Humor to relieve work pressures. *JABC Communication World, 27*. Humor as a tool of management is discussed. The author gives precedence to the idea that humor is neither good nor bad; it only becomes one or the other through its utilization.

Wagle, J.S. (1985). Using humor in the industrial selling process. *Industrial Marketing Management, 221*-226. This study suggests that humor "can enhance the sales presentation and favorably influence the overall buyer/seller relationship, provided the salesperson has adequate knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of humor." The authors note that humor should only be an addition to current sales and management skills, rather than their substitute.

**Popular and Trade Sources**


Hughes, C. (1985, September). On being systematically outrageous. *Supervisory Management, 30*, 2-5. Hughes presents the theory that one can change employees' negative attitudes and reinforce positive
behaviors and perception through being "systematically outrageous."


Kichell III, W. (1983, December 12). Office hours: Executives ought to be funnier. Fortune, 205 & 206. Kichell discusses the merits of humor in the workplace. He outlines purposes for its planned use: (1) to defuse tense situations, (2) to create rapport, (3) to underscore power differences, (4) to make messages more agreeable, and (5) to maintain control.

Krohe, J., Jr. (1987, February). Take my boss-please. Across the Board, 31-35. Krohe discusses humor as its presence is felt in any organization. Of special interest is the author's examination of the social and/or organizational connotations and power associated with the use of humor.


Lasden, M. (Ed.). (1985, April 23). Laughter gives you an edge. Computer Decisions, 70-76 & 80+. Humor used wisely and in atmospheres of trust can foster a healthy environment. This is to be valued in the world of management information systems and data processing.

Nation's Business. (1985, November). Getting down to funny business, 23, 44-48. Humor is addressed as a serious business communication tool, important in providing both information and entertainment.


USA Today. (1987, April). The value of humor, 5-6. The value of humor in the workplace is discussed. Ideas from Peter Desberg, professor of graduate education studies at California State University, are presented.

Wilde, L (1988, July). Beat stress: Stress humor. Association Management, 130. Wilde encourages the use of humor in the workplace to relieve stress. Three steps in the use process are given: (1) read something funny, (2) laugh at yourself, and (3) develop your humor file.

Witty, S. (1993, August). The laugh-makers: New studies spotlight the growth of the human funny bone. Psychology Today, 17, 22-29. Witty discusses what and who a comedian is and also the potential of humor to influence persons in a positive manner. Underscored is the need for researchers to take humor seriously and give it, and its potential to influence people, close study.

Zurier, S. (1988, February). For salesmen only: Humor can be your best sales tool. Industrial Distribution, 77, 51. Zurier presents humor as integral to the selling process: it facilitates successful or unsuccessful relationships between salesman and customer, which, in turn, determines the sale.

Books
