



Humour Works

“Pat commits the cardinal management sin of spreading joy and making people smile. If her practices become widely adopted, going to work will become fun, and people will enjoy the experience. Ultimately she is a dangerous subversive to dullness, mediocrity and boredom. Why can’t we have more like her?”

John Bishop – Business Speaker and Commentator, NZ

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Humour Works

By The Joyologist Pat Armitstead

This publication has been sponsored by New Zealand Window Shades who were the Supreme Winners of the Inaugural 2006 Humour in Business Awards New Zealand founded and directed by the Joyologist and sponsored by the Business to Business Newspaper.



Back Row, Left to right: Lance Mitchell, Managing Director, John Corrigan, Operations Manager, John Wilson, Financial and Systems Controller, Jeff Parker, Marketing Director
Front Row: Bernie Hanrahan, Sales Director, Barrie Mitchell, Executive Chairman



This book is dedicated to my son Ben

Without your support, generosity
love and understanding
I may not have survived

You are my legacy



The Joyologist in 2001 with Stan and Glad Rafferty at the first laughter workshop conducted by her in New Zealand. The couple participated in the 90 day pilot program conducted at the Anne Maree Rest Home in Blockhouse Bay, which was subsequently accredited as New Zealand's first Laughter Facility. Residents went on to achieve a world record, laughing continuously for one hour on World Laughter Day in 2002.

A second pilot program was conducted here, with staff and residents participants in a program designed to create a high trust environment, where people performed to optimum and were rewarded for having fun, doing what it was that they loved.

Foreword

Pat's columns in Business to Business newspaper have lightened my load in many ways in the past three years. OK, they conveniently fill space - which is an editor's chief responsibility. When Pat "the Joyologist" approached me and offered to write comment on using humour in the workplace; I was not only relieved on a practical level, but keen as mustard on the topic. I love laughing more than almost anything, so the idea certainly tickled my fancy.

In my experience work and fun aren't natural bedfellows. I can think of words like satisfaction, meaningfulness and stimulation...but fun has not played a big role day to day in my jobs. Mind you I am a serious kinda gal. So I was keen to learn how to inject some humour into the essential task of making money. I figured our readers would be keen too. Even if the concept just made them smile, that would be success!

Reading Pat's columns relaxes me and makes me feel warm and optimistic. They mentally draw me out of m' wee office and into the never-never to focus on what the hell I'm really doing, what my personal priorities are. They guide readers to create a very desirable and achievable state in a workplace full of strangers: a state of consideration, trust and co-operation...resulting in fun and high productivity. There's nurturing and caring in them words of hers, as well as practical application to the workplace. Words don't always convey these things well, but Pat has a way.

Last year she took another step in promoting the use of humour to lift the bottom line: she instigated New Zealand's inaugural Humour in Business Awards. Business to Business was proud and most happy to sponsor the event, which was fun in itself. Pat's other writings in this book are further demonstrations of her trusting, positive and fun nature...which is going to contribute to positive change in the world just as she predicts.

Mary MacKinven

Editor, Business to Business, September, 2006

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The Reading chair

Decoupage with the New Zealand Herald and upholstered in red by two of the residents at the Anne Maree Rest Home the chair is testimony to the creativity tapped into during the 2 pilot programs. The body painting is the work of the author.

The beginning of the Joy Journey

“We swing between grief and joy most of our lives as we respond to and deal with the life events that ultimately shape us.

The trigger for hope as we move through those times that test us is laughter . ”

Pat Armitstead

I have been aware for many years of the cumulative grief and depression experienced by individuals and how that can detract from lifestyle, especially in aged care. The initial stimulus for becoming a Joyologist came from a series of personal losses. I lost my businesstwice in 2 yearsand my partner of 20 years and among other things had ten car accidents. None my fault...honest!! I experienced a period of depression and rather than take anti-depressants, sought another answer. I attended a grieving seminar put on by Starship Childrens Hospital in Auckland. The speaker was a doctor who had worked for some years with Dr Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, and was here in New Zealand to support grieving parents to develop their own grief support networks.

On that night I sat next to a man whose grief touched me very deeply. I felt his pain as if it were my own - his grief was a physically palpable thing and I approached him at the end of the session and asked him about his loss. He was the father of a 14 year old boy who had died as the result of a fall in the Auckland IMAX cinema and the family were still locked in that early grief and anguish. On the same night I received an email from a magician, Peter Salerno, in South Australia who invited me to establish laughter clubs in New Zealand. I rang him and subsequently laughed for a good half hour. During that conversation I knew I had to “marry the two”, joy and grief, with laughter being the trigger to move people out of grief , even if only for a moment and provide hope . It was on this night that the Joyologist was born!

As a result of that encounter over five years ago, residents at the Anne Maree Rest Home in Blockhouse Bay, Auckland were exclusive participants in the pilot of the most extensive client centered Activities Program believed to have been delivered in New Zealand! The program created the **Worlds First Joyology Department** and

boasted activities and experiences so diverse and impactful that residents were tapping into creative reserves they did not realize they had. This includes the NZ Herald Reading Chair pictured, the result of one of the first art classes conducted!

Sheryl Samuels, Director of the Anne Maree Rest home says “ *This has been such an important addition to the residents day! It has opened up the reality of humour and fun. The energy is so much lighter and residents now engage in humour much more often .of their own volition. “*

Sheryl also refers to clients with anxiety states and depression, stating that by focusing on creating basic good humour the mood has lifted and some have come off anti-depressants. One resident who used to have at least one anxiety attack a day now no longer experiences anywhere near the same number of episodes. Sheryl says residents and staff are both more enthused ...and perhaps best of all.... the residents truly have a reason to get out of bed ! For 12 weeks residents and staff participated in a pilot program, which featured a daily 20-minute series of mechanical laughter exercises. This series was developed by Dr Madan Kataria who has been instrumental in forming over 3000 laughter clubs around the world. (www.laughteryoga.org). On the conclusion of this program it was noted that mood had been lifted and sustained by the residents themselves. While initially mechanically oriented, 12 weeks of being good humoured and creating/using humour brought about positive state changes and lasting effects. The mechanical trigger is no longer a focus.

I was concerned that with the passage of time the degree of impact might diminish if a maintenance program was not in place. The initial Yogic Laughter was pivotal but I felt it was not the entire answer. Around the laughter exercises I developed a program based on creating a high trust environment for residents and staff. When people work in this high trust environment, doing what they love, and are recognized and feel appreciated they will bloom.

Stephen Tyndall got it right. The sign on Takapuna Warehouse Head Office main entrance says “*Through these doors walk some of New Zealands finest people !*”. From the moment people walk through the door the encounter is positive. When you

boost peoples morale they will be more creative, more responsive, and more attentive. I get my inspiration from the old masters of the art world. Michelangelo for leadership....Da Vinci for creativity and Picasso for innovation... “Michelangelo was a terrible delegator...a quality we value highly in the business world today, yet in spite of his inability to delegate he managed to perform incredible feats!”

These multi talented artists invented – challenged – inspired. Other parts of the program looked at and identified personality types, the use of the intelligences espoused by Harvard Universities Howard Gardener and Gordon Dryden and Dr Jeannette Vos in “the Learning Revolution”.

The entire program now caters to each intelligence and the senses of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. Working on the premise that much joy comes from within, expressing of natural gifts and talents was a major consideration. To this day residents and staff use laughter and good humour to de-stress and relieve any “distress”. Sheryl Samuels in fact can’t leave at night without doing Japanese laughter with the residentsits their favourite !

The experience of these two pilot programs was the foundation of the work I do today. As they healed so did I. When we are in service to others and doing what we love we create lasting change and become much more productive.

My vision is to inspire others to identify and live into their life purpose and direction with humour and joy. I believe I will achieve this by being the world’s best model of good humour, joy and creativity! I am motivated by love, freedom and spiritual intimacy.

The World Health Organization says that by 2020 depression will be world health burden number two. Currently it is number four. My business vision is that by then we will be having an intimacy revolution.

I am a champion for intimate communion (as well as humour) and see it :-

- Transforming individuals to reveal inner spirit
- Transforming global pessimism to optimism
- Witnessing the joy of transformation and change

I entreat you to join me by adding good humour to all your encounters. Achieving and maintaining my current positive mental state has challenged me many times. I would like to acknowledge the transformation I underwent while working with Sally Anderson www.sallyanderson.co.nz for six months as my coach. I learned to recognize and got present to the cost of old behavior patterns and to LIVE NOW, as her programs espouse. I also identified the legacy I am living and leaving.... as I live into the role of Joyologist and contribute positively to others well being.

I am yours in good humour

**Pat Armitstead
Joyologist**

Chaper 1 Homo-sapiens is not homo-economicus...

The "bottom line economy" is shifting to a satisfaction economy...

*" Just returned from around the world to find your lovely words and effort and love your wandering contract with the worlds happy people...look forward to playing with you in Russia again" Patch Adams, **Gesundheit, West Virginia, USA**, Author **Gesundheit, and House Calls***

In his book "Authentic Happiness" Martin Seligman discusses signature strengths. He differentiates between strengths and talents by saying strengths are things such as integrity, valour, originality and kindness and talents are things like facial beauty, ability to sprint, or perfect pitch. Strengths are moral traits while talents are non moral.

He goes on to say that talents can be built upon but only marginally, whereas strengths can be built even when there is only a very frail foundation. He says you are either born with a talent or not. Strengths on the other hand can be acquired. Talents are automatic while strengths are voluntary.

He lists six strengths as being unique across cultures, these being wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. Interested readers can go to www.authentichappiness.org and take his VIA Strengths survey. I found it interesting that this model fitted well to my notion of what it means to be good humoured, which is to be appropriately responsive and in the moment.

I looked at wisdom and knowledge(*a phenomena highly valued in today's society*) which houses a cluster of virtues. These are :-

a/ curiosity and interest in the world, b/ love of learning,
c/ judgment and critical thinking, d/ ingenuity and originality,
e/ social, personal and emotional intelligence, f/perspective,
g/ courage, h/ perseverance and diligence, i/ integrity and honesty
j/ kindness and generosity, k/loving and loved and there are more.

To identify your own signature strengths (*and you usually have five top strengths*) and then develop these leads to an increased sense of ownership and authenticity, feelings of excitement when in action, a rapid learning curve, continuous learning, a yearning to find new applications, renewed sense of purpose, a sense of invigoration rather than exhaustion, more joy, zeal and enthusiasm !

His formulation of a good life is to use your signature strengths every day in the main realms of your life to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness. He links them to work satisfaction in the following way: in stark findings about life satisfaction more money adds little to subjective well-being. The old adage “money cannot buy happiness” continues to ring true. We are seeing already a swing from a money or “bottom line” economy to a satisfaction economy. In fact he refers to a study by Leaf Van Bowden at the University of British Columbia where it was revealed “ homo-sapiens is not homo- economicus...”

In order to maximize work satisfaction he counters you need to use your signature strengths every day. When you link this with new passion and commitment you almost have a calling, a term reserved in the past for people like priests, nurses and doctors. Any job can become a calling and any calling can become a job and be meaningful. If you employ people choose those with similar signature strengths to yourself. You will find a meshing and alignment that may have previously been missing. It's a win.-win situation and as each becomes aware of the others strengths positive emotions are engendered. This leads to improved productivity, lower staff turnover and increased loyalty. And all from simply being positive ! **It bought a big smile to my face!**

Announcing an engagement

It's interesting where words and phrases can take us.

"I was once told that a fundamental element of success is to get around people who have something of value to share with you. Pat is a wonderful example of this in my life. The message of joy, humour and optimism she shares is an inspiration in an age where many are quick to criticize or complain. Her writing is insightful and exudes the passion she has for making the workplace a more joyous, and profitable, place. This book is a welcome addition to my library and one I am delighted to endorse."Chris Dodds, Passionate Living Ltd, Author - Silver Linings on the Long White Cloud

I regret I am not newly betrothed, however I do have engaging moments! What do I mean by that? Well I am increasingly heartened by what I experience in my encounters in business and life. We are experiencing a new wave of connection that is going to herald the way we do business from here on ! This new and positive way is contributing to both individual and team productivity as the following demonstrates.

A productive workplace is created when we can engage with others in such a way that we support people to improve enthusiasm and morale, boost their individual performance and optimise their attitude. This degree of connection or engagement contributes to improved personal work satisfaction, creates a sense of belonging, and renewed confidence around engaging with others. This is across the board and includes peers, managers and clients alike.

The degree to which we can achieve this is based on our capacity to remain good humoured in the face of the life events that shape our experience. I spoke recently with Chris Heilbronn, the CEO of Kensington Swan and was heartened by his management and leadership style. When I enquired how he spent his day he said it was spent with his people and supporting them to manage their problems. Absolutely comfortable in his own skin, his open communication style is immediately engaging

and, I would counter, has supported the implementation of their new vision for their relationships with each other and with their clients.

Engaging at a deeper level and securing a new degree of intimacy is the foundation of their approach. In this culture they connect in a meaningful way, uniting products, services and now client intimacy, to build successful relationships in life and at work. As they come to know each other, the level of respect and mutual trust grows. In that environment people are comfortable to laugh at themselves, be authentic, and as a result perform to optimum. .

At the recent Microsoft Business Expo in Auckland the Dept of Labour cited in its documents successes achieved by Goodtime Food in Napier. Their CEO Phil Pollett said “ you invest in your people, get them talking to you and you also invest in the infrastructure to make their ideas happen in a reasonable time. The result is a winning team.”

Patch Adams, US MD says in his book Gesundheit “ People crave laughter as if it were an essential amino acid...the bottom line when you ask people about what they love about life is the fun that they have.. with great insight we call the funny person the life of the party!” Perhaps there is a message there for humour ..in particular good humour, to bring energy and life back to business?

Humour is the most important HR function

There's a myth about mirth in business

“Humour is a fundamentally creative process—bringing otherwise unconnected elements together in surprising new ways. Pat Armistead takes it a step further by joining humour with business. Her style is idiosyncratic but accessible. She laughs with, rather than at and has a view of the world that defies the cynical and often jaded nature of people in business.” David MacGregor – Creativity and Innovation consultant, co-founder of Idealog magazine, NZ

Yes, there is a myth about mirth in business! It goes something like this. You can't be funny and be taken seriously; or you are in business to make money not have fun. I am sure you recognize those two lines, however humour in business is not about clowning. It is about demonstrating that you are a warm, responsive, intelligent and considerate person. In the world of comedy, humour means creating maximum laughs per minute as a measure of success. In business it is about creating a positive receptive and cheerful mood with successful communication the end product. The paradox is that low morale and decreased productivity can affect your bottom line

Humour can expand your perceptions on how things really are, and boost creativity. When this happens you boost productivity. You boost it by creating an environment that accepts humour as a tool to engender positivity, and with practice it can be used in attack or defense. When applied with discretion it becomes a powerful ally, balancing empathy and aggression, and embarrassment and vulnerability. People can learn to capitalize on the humour they have within them to foster relationships with colleagues and with clients. People remember and feel good about enjoyable encounters, especially at the customer interface.

As an executive or business leader, you can use the cognitive properties of humour to lift morale, enhance decision-making and improve problem solving. Humour patterns can be identified and developed to the point of being automatic. De Bono says humour is a more significant process than reason and helps us switch from one way of thinking to another. This is of particular value today in New Zealand with industrial

laws and the notion of stress at work. Laughter releases endorphins and leaves you with a heightened sense of well being which can last up to two hours. People who are stressed/depressed have problems concentrating even for short periods of time. And World Health Organization statistics tell me that depression is currently world health burden number 4 and by 2020 will be number 2. 1:4 New Zealanders are prescribed anti-depressants in any one 6 month period.

We can support people with depression by being good humoured. Mental acuity can be heightened with the practiced application of good humour. I recently did a ten week Improvisation Acting Course. I learned to be in the moment, to trust my intuition and to have fun with my own humour. My first engagement following that course, and for which there was no prior briefing, earned me \$5000 in one day on a TV game show. I attribute that success to my capacity to remain good humoured and therefore confident, even though under intense pressure. I trusted first thought and did not panic and I won.

Humour is the single most effective human resource, acting as a safety valve and allowing us to inform, educate, enhance personalities and entertain. As a result we boost morale and productivity and therefore profits. Maybe you can start your days with humour like a colleague? She dressed like a hare for an Easter function, and has since taken the photo, enlarged it and placed it in the foyer with a sign that says, in *almost traditional* Maori welcome“Hare am I’... There are no doubts about the humour that lies within that business!

There's an advantage in every disadvantage

An oxymoron or a truism?

"I owe you a hug for being so brave to do what you have done ...lesser persons would crumble! I love what you have done in Russia and wish I could do the same. Maria Elsyeva's plea left me screaming to the world ...let our children be free of the shackles of domination. "Irene Daley, Aboriginal Artist NSW, Australia

I sat in front of the advertising genius of Siimon Reynolds once and heard him say "*there's advantage in every disadvantage*". He went on to refer to Avis who had for some time evidently been trailing second in the market for hire cars. They improved their advantage by taking that lesser status and making it a selling point. One of their ads pointed out very clearly "*Come to our counter. The queues are shorter!*"

These days in business it is not just advertising that gets your products on to the shelves or into the wider market. Douglas Myers, in his book "*What I've learned in business*" says "*Even when your product is on top, the number one best seller, you have to be producing the next one!*". These days you need to hit the ground running every morning to stay on top of and manage change. The art of improvisation can help you with managing that change by creating a new habit of trusting first thought. In that space people become sharper and more innovative and creative.

There's a saying – if necessity is the mother of invention, then improvisation is the father ! Already here we have a trend. Notice the words being used and the way they are flowing. When we place words in sentences they don't normally get to be in, we create light humour. I am crafting a presentation at the moment called "I flirt therefore I sell" and went looking for unusual meanings for flirting. I found what I wanted in the "encyclopedia of manacopaedia!" As you would expect right?

Then you can take humour into events where its not normally exhibited. Like the board room. I once bought 5 managers their very own Reserved sign with their name on for their work desk They were presented in the boardroom at a monthly meeting. They were impressed of course and one asked..."Well, we all have one, where is

yours then?" I acted as if I had forgotten and got mine out. It was twice the size of theirs and said "Eccentric" where theirs had written reserved!

In the Joyology Department we are working all the time to craft Joyevents to contribute towards altered and enhanced Joystates, because we know people will then be more productive. From the gift of acknowledgment comes good humour. To be good humoured is to be appropriately responsive. In this positive state we engender more trust and therefore pave the way to enhanced individual and team productivity.

I recently was part of a team building exercise on Waiheke Island, working with a collective of people including Auckland's Central City Circus, a group of talented circus performers. During this venture, we had over 50 people learn in less than 6 hours how to do juggling, uni-cycling, clowning, stilt walking and then put on a circus to a live audience whom they had invited in that time frame. They delivered a 1 hour circus show to 150 people who laughed solidly at the antics. And it was all improvised based on what they learned in 6 hours. They were interrupted during their lunch break and told they were running way to the circus...and voila!

My amusing and bemusing writing colleague Bill Potter from the Duit Group says "laugh as you learn and giggle as you grow" – 3 cheers Bill!

Formulas for good humour

The square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the square of the other two sides...yeah right!

“Wow, what a refreshing positive person Pat the Joyologist is, we need more laughter and fun in our lives. Keep on bringing the changes - you make my day!”

Richard Gee , Geewiz , Interactive Author, Marketing Strategy, Consultant , Seminars & workshops, Conference speaker NZ

‘You don’t have to play sport to be an Australian, but you do have to have a sense of humour’ says author Pete Crofts in his book *How to use Humour in Business and Life*. As an Australian I know they have many “winning ways” and I believe this is strongly linked to their good humoured view of the world. Is there a formula they use to aid their success ? Four of the so called “formulas for good humour” include exaggeration, understatement, saying the opposite, and unexpected punch lines. Across the ditch in Australia they use them a lot and engage others in lighthearted play and create a sense of camaraderie and goodwill.

In exaggeration, as the name implies, the requirement is that you just need to think BIG! The more outlandish and far fetched the better. Mike Hutcherson in his book “The Number one best seller” says you cant underestimate the loneliness and isolation caused to men by the dominance of female beauty products in the bathroom!

Understatement is the opposite of the exaggerated comment, and downplays the situation. It is reflected beautifully in the following from Percy H Whiting, Author :-
“Due to increased competition and a keen desire to remain in business we are asking that somewhere between starting time and quitting time and without infringing too much on the time devoted to lunch period, coffee breaks, rest period, storytelling, and ticket selling each employee endeavour to find some time he can set aside to be henceforth known as the work break!”

Reversal is saying the opposite of what is really intended. You end up with things like turning success into failure; or as Andy Dunn wrote in his praise of this book “ I want to thank you from the heart of my bottom!”. Big things become small; fast things become slow. An example? Well ... in the Australian film industry years ago it was common to describe a smallish item as being about the size of a bees , and something a bit larger was referred to as bigger than a gnats nasty!

Unexpected punchlines are delighters as they end with a surprise element. A couple of sentences create the general scenario and then the finale is an incongruous thought or line like the following from Mike Hutcheson, former MD of Saatchi and Saatchi in Auckland, in his phrase “*“Someone once said - humour leads you up the garden path then yanks you off into the bushes. That speaks for the two things I really like about Pat Armitstead and her writing. Firstly her irrepressible enthusiasm, secondly her ability to find good in everything and her fundamental common sense in finding fun in everything. That’s three things, I know, but that’s humour for you”*

When we start to understand humour , we can use it in business with ease. Since the advent of television business has had more of a focus on infotainment and entertainment. This all adds to the notion of engendering high impact and memorability in the eyes of your customer.

Catch people doing something right
You can't lift your bottom line if your people are down.

"Pat is one of the most positive, energetic people I have ever met. "Laughter" has been widely accepted as having a positive effect on health and Pat's approach is always focused on the particular environment in which she is speaking/training/entertaining. From the corporate office to the rest home, she can add enormous value to quality of the environment. It's high time we focused on proactive prevention of health problems and stress. " **Robyn Stent, former Health and Disability Commissioner, New Zealand**

As an author on the way to completing another book, "Once Were Worriers", I had a chuckle when I saw the term Giggliography in a classroom education text called "The Laughing Classroom", written by Diane Loomans and Karen Kolberg. In my most recent long term training project participants achieved 100% outcomes, and I attribute that success to the timely and highly personalized application of good humour. At the outset the attendance was 35%.

That's not good ! I decided that rather than discipline those who did not come we would write with accolades to those who came. I wrote over 1000 personalized letters commending people for their progress. I added to the mix the clever use of props, theatrics, compliments and humour. In that environment, a high degree of trust was generated in a short space of time.

In that high trust environment individuals stepped out of their comfort zones and dared to explore beyond their norm. Humour that buoyed spirits and inspired was mixed with stories of the human spirit and its capacity to overcome personal tragedy. As individuals hooked into the paradox of life's message they began to ride the swings of mood and emotion recognizing their own patterns. As "second chance learners" they got leverage and they got it in ninety days! (takes 90 days to change a habit!)

Once that ‘aha’ occurred for them they started to experience some flow. Success breeds success and they began to delight in the incremental changes and the opportunities that came when they stepped out of their comfort zones. It only takes one person to believe in us and we are moved to achieve more.

I presented recently a Flirto-phobia seminar (one does what one can!) and was delighted to see again the effect of words and how they can change our state. To be shy and full of doubt in seeking personal relationships is quite different to being categorized as suffering from Flirto-phobia for which of course there is a cure! Yes you guessed it !

Feel the fear and do it anyway.

People suffering with depression used to take Prozac. Other drugs are now used more commonly however my prescription is for the regular use of ANTIZAC (a term to which I cannot lay claim, it was donated by an associate) . ANTIZAC contains ingredients that seek to Amuse, Nthuse, generate Trust, Inspire, inject Zeal, improve Attitude, and foster Creativity!

These are all home grown ingredients and as one in four New Zealanders can be experiencing depression or other mental illness at any one time, now is a good time to stock up your “mirth aid kit “. Include laughter as a daily requirement. All it takes is a smile and a gesture of goodwill to make some-ones day.

Why are lawyers so unhappy?

Pessimism, low decision latitude and their role in a win-lose enterprise.

Pat Armitstead is New Zealand's answer to Patch Adams”**Dr Ric Coleman , North Shore Auckland, NZ**

That's the question Martin Seligman asks on page 177 of his book *Authentic Happiness*. He cites a poll that declared 52% of lawyers described themselves as unsatisfied, and the problem was not related to financial gain. He discussed their disenchantment with their profession and their greater risk of suffering depression than the rest of the population.

Positive psychology attributes 3 causes for this. Pessimism, low decision latitude and their role in a win-lose enterprise. However it's not all gloomy! There is an antidote and it lies in learning flexible optimism. Choosing an optimistic state in personal circumstances that deflects the lawyers character trait of prudence – or pessimism - serves them well outside work. In work he advocates the identification of each individuals signature strengths and the exploitation of same.

By creating time each week to actively use these strengths in pursuit of company goals people become more energetic and hence more productive. By doing this it creates a win-win experience, not normally experienced by the lawyer. With this higher productivity comes lower turnover, and higher loyalty and individual buy in to the company.

In creating opportunities to use our greater strengths we create more flow. If we view our work as a calling and contributing to the greater good we experiences more episodes of flow. He says “*flow occurs when challenges you face perfectly mesh with your abilities to meet them.*” He also says flow does not just come to great people in great jobs, rather it can come to the rest of us as well. We can access it as well when “*we recraft our more mundane work to enjoy it more frequently.*”

To experience more flow he says the following- identify your signature strengths, choose the work that lets you use them every day, re-organise your work so you use your strengths more often, and if you employ people, select people whose strengths are a good fit for the work they will do. As a manager or leader be flexible with the way work can be processed and you pave the way for more flow.

Many business owners are seeing that money these days is not the sole motivating factor for productivity. A satisfaction economy is coming and employees are looking for personal satisfaction. Help your colleagues and associates reframe their relationship with work and its rewards and you will reap the benefit in commitment, productivity and loyalty!

“Some folks have a PhD in pessimism!

Thank goodness for learned optimism !

What a delight you are! You are a woman of fun, creativity and energy.” LaVonn Steiner, Author Lessons from my father – Chicken soup for the soul, USA

Tom Hopkins, US speaker and perhaps the worlds best sales trainer says you can learn to laugh even if you have a Ph D in pessimism! What needs to happen is the replacement of the strong silent type for a few sense of humour types ! Understanding the different forms and types of humour helped Digital Equipment Co in Colarado boost productivity by 15% and halved the number of sick days over a 12 month period. You too can experience the same sorts of benefits in your business.

Humour comes to us in many forms. Satire, irony, sarcasm, wit, parody, farce, surrealism and play. Satire exposes, mocks, sends up and attacks the pompous, hypocritical and immoral. It also exposes negative habits. He painful realities of life are combined with pleasurable experiences. Irony on the other hand is a remark that is the exact opposite to what you are thinking ! Sarcasm, the lowest form of wit “so they say”, is based on ridicule and vindictiveness and quickly builds communication barriers.

Wit is perhaps the most admired and sought after form. Based on intellect it is a brilliant cognitive association between an idea and an attitude, or a situation and a person. People with a natural wit have very high intelligence. Those with a practiced wit have normal intelligence and have consciously trained their humour mind. Parody is another name for spoof, and impersonates and mocks well known writings such as plays and books. The actor John Cleese has perfected this art form in the many training videos he created, which provide a wonderful example of laughing as you learn.

The essence of farce is simple. A ridiculous idea is taken as being true, then acted on logically. It includes slapstick and burlesque. Embarrassing moments and bureaucratic bungling are the food of farce. When you combine outrageous exaggeration, impossible contradictions and zany assumptions you end up with

surrealism. The most improbable are brought together, creating verbal fantasies and brilliant mental images.

Finally and perhaps the most delightful is the notion of play. To be playful and serious at the same time, that is have serious fun, defines the ideal mental state. Play removes uncertainties, allows for errors, cuts through embarrassment, criticism and rejection and opens up the scope for risk taking and creativity. Maybe you could start sending Amusing Memos periodically, combining these mechanisms with understatement.? Or create Glad mail and commit to sending 3 pieces at least on a daily basis.

Isn't it interesting that we will leave the workplace and often pay large sums of money to be amused and entertained "after work" as a means of de-stressing and relaxation. Many amusing and memorable moments can be created at work with minimal budget and set the scene for increased productivity as a result. President Eisenhower said "A sense of humour is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people and getting things done". Practice being a creator, participant and benefactor of fun in the workplace. You will be less stressed, and enjoy the relationships and the rewards that humour brings.

I am neither an optimist nor a pessimist.

I am a possibilist."

"Humour can be used in a myriad of ways, to facilitate learning, to build relationships with people, to delight, to resolve conflict and mistrust, to heal, to lower stress and improve one's outlook on life to name but a few. Pat is very passionate about spreading the good word that is humour and more importantly she practises what she preaches. We need more people like Pat, actively promoting the wonders of happiness and laughter. I hope you enjoy reading this book cover to cover and do so with a big smile on your face." **Wade Jackson - Founder of The Improv Bandits and the Covert Theatre New Zealand**

So says Max Lerner. If you agree with our learned friend Max Lerner then you can adopt a mindset that says "I can make it happen...or nothing is impossible". We are often held back by our state of mind. Fear and anxiety keep us in a constant state of planning and preparation and what we need to do is engage the "forward" button and go with what we have. I have discovered I have always been far more prepared than I thought and when I added my generosity and shared with people I met, things started to happen.

As I gave referrals so I started getting referrals back. The law of reciprocity was in full swing. Aim to give away one referral a day to current and future prospects. And remember a lead is not a referral. A lead is information about someone who may need your services. A referral is an introduction to a key decision maker. Your networks will expand.

It helps to think abundantly. There is a lot of business out there. Unlimited opportunities exist. Brad Cooper from FAI Home Security says "Want to make an omelette? Gotta crack a few eggs!". What he means is opportunity does not come knocking on your door. You need to put yourself out there and networking and being active speeds this process up.

If your business takes you overseas or you travel a lot nationally start a travel file as suggested by Robyn Henderson in her Networking Magic book. Write a summary of places you recommend, must see attractions, functions you attended, contacts you made and maybe some do's and don'ts you learned. You can share this report then with colleagues or a person in your network when they travel to the same destination. Another source of good business relationship development is local and national awards for business. You could nominate your staff, your clients or your associates. Acknowledging and promoting others is extremely satisfying for the recipient and engenders much goodwill.

And as you proceed through your day take time to ask at least one person "how can I help you today?" One business I visited recently in Masterton asked me the question "How can I help you prosper?" Yes, he will linger in my memory as a positive encounter and I will happily make a referral back when I can.

I flirt...therefore I sell !

Well, that's what we say at the Dept of Humour Resources

"Humour in the workplace ... hah ... that's a laugh!

For some reason humour has always been regarded as a distraction in the workplace. Thank goodness for the Joyologist finally forcing companies and individuals to re-evaluate their thinking in this matter! We all know instinctively that humour makes us feel better and is extremely important in assisting our bodies immune system. I want to thank Pat from the heart of my bottom for doing this important work." Andy Dunn, Andy Dunn Graphics, Orewa, NZ

Decartes was not a flirt. If he had been he would have written " I flirt..therefore I date". Instead he wrote " I think, therefore I am ". At the Department of Humour Resources we say " I flirt ... therefore I sell!" In sales you need to be bringing all your personal and business assets to the fore. As a small to medium enterprise **you** are the business! They don't make a big deal of it but even policeman flirt in their encounters with the public. If they didn't nobody would like them !

Flirting really is just an outgrowth of being friendly. All people need increased self esteem, to feel sought after and to have relief from social isolation. At the point of sale a flirtaceous manner can meet all 3 needs and open the way to an ongoing sales relationship. To be prepared for this you need to have a twinkle in your eye, a sparkle in your dialogue, be ready to give compliments, remember faces and names.

Flirtaceousness is of course good for you ! It is non sexist, .non discriminating and non fattening. And all you need to do is become the bearer of good news. Greet people with energy. Listen well. Develop the skill to conduct fast, scintillating conversations. Become renowned for giving sincere flattery. Practice becoming amusing, and being good to be with. Develop spontaneity. Improvisation truly is an art and can be learned.

A corporate of some note recently said to me in surprise "That's a nice firm handshake!". Make yours memorable. Use direct and powerful eye contact. Ask people the questions no-one else ever asks them. Ask about their hopes, their aspirations. If you have half an hour to establish a new customer relationship, make the first five minutes your pitch.

Then in the next twenty five minutes learn all you can about the person you are with and their hopes and aspirations. As they reveal their inner thoughts a bond is formed. Use humour and creativity to make the meeting highly memorable. I once used a make up sponge, a bottle of dettol, two cotton buds and a bandaid to make a pitch. My line was." I am not here to sponge off you, but I do have the germ of an idea, it has a couple of applications and I don't want it to be a bandaid job". And I might add, I achieved what I set out to do.

In closing the sale and in follow up, a humourous, fun and flirtaceous approach makes for high memorability. Don't put your direct dial number on your business card, but do in departing say, *with panache of course* " here's my direct dial number if you need to be in touch ". Smile as you hand the card over. People like to feel special. They are buying you and the feeling they walk away with. *Smile and wink as they depart and they will be back for more !*

Learned Optimism?

Another Tui ad I hear you saying?

“Pat's vision of the world is graced with humour. In business, with friends, with passing strangers. With clarity, humour and common sense she has helped to shape the way I see the world. In this publication she has brought her thoughts and her insights together. Pat gives us easy to read gems that give encouragement, advice and share her experiences to give us a helping hand. And as ever it sparkles with humour.” Lisa Blaker, Registered Nurse , Auckland NZ

Dr Martin Seligman in his book *Learned Optimism* says we each have within us an executive who balances the counsels of daring and the counsels of doom. What he means is when optimism prompts us to chance it and pessimism bids us to take cover, there is a part of us which heeds both. The problem is of course that pessimism has a pervasive, crippling influence and he advocates we can learn to resist it. We can choose to be optimistic most of the time, but we also need to heed pessimism when it is warranted.

Seligman worked with John Creedon from metropolitan life Insurance in Manhattan. They had experienced 50% turnover every year of their salespeople. His work helped Creedon with the selection process so that he chose optimistic people who were much more likely to succeed and persevere in the sales process. They tested eagles (productive people) and turkeys(less productive people). Agents who scored in the top 10% sold 88% more insurance! The mechanisms by which they elicited this is now the basis for a successful selection process. I now use these concepts in my I flirt therefore I Sell programs.

Seligman says aptitude, motivation and optimism are the 3 key characteristics that determine success. Being good humoured in business can build relationships inside and outside the business location. Think about that. Potential al customers – How could you reach them with humor. Use this month as a marketing opportunity!

Customers & Clients – Great excuse to say hello! See what else you could do for them! Employees – Internal customer service, let them have fun.

Happy employees are more motivated and loyal. Why not? Suppliers – If they enjoy doing business with you who do you think they will serve better? Help them out.

Customer Service – These people have to deal with the public! That's TENSION!

The Boss – well, over to you... you know him or her best!

In a changing world we are faced with challenges all the time. Businesses restructure and often that is stressful. But maybe it can be fun too? I heard the other day that Hale Business systems, Mary Kay Cosmetic, Fuller brush and WR Grace company were going to merge and would then be called Hale Mary Fuller Grace! Did I say that?

Making FUN a profit factor...

'If joy is not a permanent part of your emotional kit, then you're not really living. Listen to Pat, REALLY LISTEN - out of all the dulling and destructive voices that assault our ears, Pat's voice is True Music.' **Patricia Anne Dye 'Planet Mirth - Humour as Transformational Tool', NZ**

Over the years I have seen that getting people to pay attention and then implement recommended changes or new initiatives can sometimes be a slow and frustrating process. Engaging the listening ear is almost an art these days as there are so many distractions, and I was amused to hear that Virgin Blue in Australia were injecting some fun into the usually humourless cabin announcements. "We will be dimming the cabin lights for take-off. For those of you who want to continue reading, you will notice above your head are two buttons; one with a light symbol and the other with an attendant symbol. Pressing the first one will turn on your reading light. Unfortunately, pressing the other one will not turn on the flight attendant."

Truth or fiction I loved the story!

And on a return flight everybody did as they were told following this instruction "Welcome to Brisbane. Please stay seated until the captain turns off the seat belt sign. Anyone who stands up before then will be asked to stay behind and help us clean the aircraft." As well as reinforcing Virgin Blue's image of being young, innovative and obviously cheeky, the announcements also caused the passengers to pay attention to instructions commonly ignored. It also left people with amusing stories to tell which could only be good for business !

And even the odd mistake does not have to produce loss of custom. A story of a florist, told to me recently at a xmas function, shows one way to turn around deliveries gone wrong. Evidently with the opening of a friends new franchise a colleague sent him flowers to go in the reception. They arrived complete with a card

that said “Rest in peace”. The owner was a bit put out and a complaint was registered with the florist. The florist, obviously quick witted replied “ well I really do regret the mistake; but just imagine this. Somewhere today there is a funeral and they have flowers with a note saying “congratulations on your new location!”

John Cleese said “If I can make you laugh with me, you like me better, which makes you more open to my ideas. And if I can get you to laugh at a particular point that I make, by laughing at it, you acknowledge its truth.” In this way, use of humour to reinforce your point makes you a more convincing trainer. I received an email yesterday applauding a closing keynote presentation I gave 2 years ago on the use of humour in medicine. Two years on she recalled all the content and asked for new information.

That’s called making sure you are front of mind with your customers and humour did it. It has also been shown that the two things that people are most likely to remember are a shocking statistic or a funny line. I remember hearing Siimon Reynolds, Advertising guru speak of this notion. He gave as an example an ad for a hair conditioner. The shocking statistic was that the average hair dryer generates enough electricity to bake a cake. Imagine what its doing to your hair! Sales went through the roof on that campaign

And funny closing lines? How about this one . A new retail outlet in Brisbane called the Fridge is using fun as part of its brand. Customers look down at the mat that they walk over as they enter the store and notice it says (in huge letters) ‘MAT’. They smile. They walk out with their purchase in a blue plastic bag that says ‘Brown Paper Bag’. I believe this is called the customer experience and is the thing they take away and speak of most often!

On house calls and mental hygiene

How many house calls do you make ?

"I salute you ! Your courage, integrity and honesty and above all your faith and trust in what's REAL stirs and inspires me." Bruce Rae, NZ Percussionist

Patch Adams in his book "How we can all heal the world one visit at a time " says

:- "There is a reason for the phrase comic relief. When suffering is great there is a call for relief. Whatever we are nervous about or emotional over is where jokes come from. And yet, in a hospital, where people are suffering greatly one wonders where humour is appropriate"

Patch then talks about his hospital clowning experience and advocates we should never stop, taking humour right up to the death bed. Since my tour with Patch in 2004 to Russia's orphanages, I have done at least one house call a month, going into peoples homes and bringing some cheer. My first house call was with a South African family whose mother wanted to unite with her daughters so she had a dinner once a month. Each time she arranged something special in terms of entertainment or activity. I was invited to be one of those moments and spoke of joy and the virtues, and the role of humour and healing art.

Today I did another, visiting the home of one of New Zealand's youngest Parkinsons sufferers. At 27 she is a single mum with a toddler just over 12 months old. I wrote to her, *my Glad Mail correspondence - I send 3 pieces a day* - after seeing a newspaper article and today we met. A single mum she struggles with a body that no longer works to optimum. Her joy comes from watching her child take every little moment of progress as he explores, learns and grows. A system archaic and so bound by rules it denies thinking would have her surrender her child and go into care in some facility. Her funding for "nanny support" runs out in February 2006!

Thomas and I, in costume, enjoyed their company but left discontent. We live in a world in imbalance, with people who would wish to be parents unable to conceive. We have retired people who would like to be involved in community. We have a whole community of people who feel alone. What would it take to connect all these people to be support to each other? A sense of community....or as Patch calls it....communing! By engaging with people at an intimate level we experience great trust. In this mental space we begin to transform and change, becoming all that we are meant to be. This intimacy, combined with positive psychology, is the base for Mental Hygiene!

The World Health Authority says by 2020 depression will be world health burden number 2. It is my vision that by 2020 we will have an Intimacy Revolution the effect of which will be so profound it will transform Global Pessimism to Optimism!

I ask you today to make your own house calls. Be an observer of what is happening around you and respond. Take some action. And then invite others to do the same. I invite you to inspire others to identify and live into their life purpose and direction with humour and joy! Do this by being the best model of good humour, joy and creativity that you can!!

Putting a Human and Humorous Face on Corporate Identity

Begin in the land of dreams

"It was a wonderful day the day Pat Armistead was born. Who would have guessed she'd grow up to do something as silly as start the first Humour in Business Awards and become a world-famous Joylogist. Now career counsellors will be able to add another category to their lists - that is, anything to do with humour "

Linda McDermot, NZ

David Ogilvy, world famous advertising guru, said “ *The best ideas come as jokes; make your thinking as funny as possible !*” If you are thinking about re-inventing your business image, or simply creating a new business your first stop these days has to be your corporate identity. Begin in the land of dreams to create your vision and add humour as you go. As the two meld, frustrations will turn into realizations as the “aha” light comes on. Ideas that come are so way out they just has to come back and when they do, they are just what you needed. And it’s funny...no pun intended... that what seemed initially to be a bit of nonsense is indeed perfectly sensible!

The author of “Whack on the Side of the Head “ Roger Van Dech, says in order to break out of traditional thinking you need to challenge the old rules. And if you happened to make those rules yourself, he suggests they need even closer scrutiny. He says you should fall out of love with all your old rules and start being frivolous, making jokes about the problems that you face. Toyota got it right with their “ Oh what a feeling !” series.

They used tom foolery and buffoonery and created a unique identity by providing their customers with an amusing experience. And a home grown initiative “ZOODOO”, *Number one for Number Twos*” has to be the most brilliant piece of marketing with the heading “ available from the following outlets “ and pictured are rear end views of various zoo animals.

In exploring humorous components you might consider developing your own graphic trade character, or look at ways you can make your environment friendly or

entertaining. Your corporate identity does need to be constantly evolving and demonstrate you are in touch with the modern customers needs and wants. This image conveys your purpose and benefits and will attract and keep loyal customers. It is the things that make us smile and provide emotional connection that aid long term memorability.

Interestingly, at the turn of the 20th century, Sigmund Freud wrote a deadly serious book called "*Wit and its relationship to the Unconscious*". So, say and do deadly serious things, such as business development and corporate identity, in a fun way. After all they are still talking about Freud 100 years on, and maybe your customers will willingly... and smilingly, follow suit?

Restructuring, Redundancy and Serious Fun

Get into bed with your customers?

*The value of laughter is so underestimated today. Pat Armistead – the worlds supreme Joyologist has captured & embraced this dying art of laughter, joy & fun. **Paul Kirk**, Managing Director, A Stress Free Day Ltd, NZ*

What on earth has redundancy got to do with pyjamas? And more importantly, how can the notion serve your business operation ? Well, let me explain. With the advent of the industrial revolution came radical change which continues today. Business's are restructuring, and with that, the job you had 3 weeks ago...is gone ! Any of you who have been through that process will know of the shock and the isolation. Any of you who have had to orchestrate it will know how difficult it is for everybody on staff. People seem to be ill equipped and nobody knows what to say or do! Usually!

Steve Lundin in his FISH program (US Author of Fish sticks and other Fishy books) has four simple philosophies. Have fun, choose your attitude, make their day and be in the moment. I used these principles the one and only time I went through redundancy, and managed to educate, inspire , amuse and enthuse the team I worked with while it happened. I also managed my own stress levels and emerged relatively unscathed!

Within 5 minutes of being advised of my “impending doom” I wrote my report and had it back to management within 24 hrs, which is incidentally part of my guarantee. In an environment where it can take 7-10 days to generate responses, they were taken by surprise. Then of course the first meeting occurred, where you feed back the ideas you have that might reverse or slow your departure. Ever the humorist, to this solemn occasion I wore my “Little Miss Naughty” jamies.

Why?

Because my feedback message was serious, but couched in fun. The reason I was being made redundant had nothing to do with my performance. I had achieved 100 %

outcomes. It did however, have to do with “bums on seats”, and I was going because there were not enough. It is my premise that all the advertising in the world will not generate sales or bums on seats if your previous customer has not loved you!

*I argued that “Your customer cannot feel this close to you if they do not know you. You cannot satisfy their needs if you do not know them. Intimately. And you cannot do that unless you ‘get into bed with them” and see how life is for them. See what counts in their world. See what problems they need to solve. When you know how many have lost children, had car accidents, have parents/family with cancer, are depressed, have financial worries... the list goes on...and **you use what you know** to help them solve some of those problems...then the referrals will come in waves. This is the essence of being good humoured ! It is about being absolutely responsive. And when you are the sales will come .”*

If you need evidence that ” Humour Works” this is it! In order to make an impact in business you have to touch people logically and emotionally.

Get into bed with your customers ? The idea is laughable ... right? Yet when we do (figuratively speaking) we can achieve phenomenal success.

Some pursue happiness..others create it! *How to get more smileage out of your work...*

*We all have experienced the power of a good laugh or how a well placed humorous remark can lift the tension, but do we actually KNOW the power of humour? Pat's focus on humour and joyology is remarkable and does wake us up to the miracles that humour can bring about. It is amazing how Pat in her work and publications unveils the power of laughter and humour that is at our fingertips and what is more it makes those bitter pills obsolete. **Wilma Ham, Trek Education, Auckland, NZ***

You too can get more smileage out of your work and indeed your life by using the positive power of humour.

World renowned Psychologist, Dr Martin Seligman wrote Learned Helplessness “ over 20 years ago. More recently he has written Learned Optimism, which links optimism and resilience and examines how we can identify our degree of optimism or pessimism and then learn to be more optimistic. His research has proven that optimists do better at school, win more elections, and succeed more at work than pessimists. These people t would seem, lead longer and more healthy lives. They also appear to believe they were much more persuasive and appealing than others thought!

Optimism, like humour, is infectious. An American FUN company called PlayFair helps companies send thousands of “Standing Ovarions” to their staff, applauding jobs well done. They also market the idea of a “Travelling Bouquet’ of flowers. Each person gets to keep it for half an hour only and then passes it on to the person they think most deserving.

The notion of humour in business is starting to be listened to. The 7th Australian Conference on the Quality of Life this year will again address the role of humour in health and many humour conferences have been held in excess of 15 years running in Japan, Sydney and the USA. Hungary held its first Humour Conference this year. I

am addressing an Australian Humour Conference at Armidale University in October 2006!

I recently spoke at and closed a real estate conference. While I am not a comedian I did find a good real estate joke which I told. *“Marilyn, a real-estate agent, had difficulty getting a listing from a customer whose theory was that "there is no substitute for experience." After he asked her a third time how many years she had been in the business, she told him: "Sir, there is a little-known historical fact that Moses brought three tablets down from the mountain - two were the Ten Commandments and the other was my real-estate license!" She got the listing.”*

In being humourous we make ourselves vulnerable. We open ourselves up to be observed at close quarters which takes courage, especially in working relationships. However the benefits are many, not the least of which is improved mental acuity. I am reminded...*“ It must have taken great courage to find out frogs legs were edible. We sometimes have to leave our comfort zones!” Daytimer Workshop – Solutions for Success*

Definitely not yours in mediocrity, The Joyologist

The Joy of Living Rooms

Are you living or just existing?

Since I first spoke to Pat many years ago, I knew she was the Lady to set up and run Laughter clubs in NZ. You go girl, Keep Spreading The Happydemic. Peter Salerno, Author, Profesional Speaker Magician. President of the Laughter Clubs of Australasia.Laughter Therapy.

Do you know I have discovered that the essence of Malcom Gladwells book The Tipping Point is spot on! It is four years, 2 pilot programs and 300 Keynotes/workshops since I declared myself a Joyologist. This month I have six keynote presentations around the country and have conducted a Stress Humour Health workshop at Auckland University. The highlight perhaps was being "found" by the Royal Australian College of Physicians -Paediatricians and asked to present not one but two papers on the role of humour in health at their Joint Annual Scientific Enquiry in Wellington.

And what's this got to do with living rooms I hear you ask?

Well, some living rooms are so unattractive they should be "existing" rooms....my abode these last four years irrespective of location and size has always been a "*joy of living room*", full of beauty, life and happiness. I have been authentic and my space has been simple and into that space simply beautiful living has come. Patch Adams says how different would our world be if it were ruled by love and compassion rather than power and money.

I am artist in residence in Gulf Harbour, north of Auckland and in semi –reclusion recovering my wits and writing my books. Recovering my wits? Yes. For many years I was a workaholic and have experienced burnout twice. It takes many years to recover. This period is to create some space for myself and reflect and document the path that has created this joyology space.

It is also to create an art collection. In order to create our minds need to be free. Five years ago I read *The Artists Way* by Julia Cameron. She speaks of journaling and artists dates. Time for self. In there we recapture our good humoured self and come to life again. Fill the well as she says. Grace your environs with art and colour. Clear the space around where you work and you clear your mind.

Then you can lighten up and craft more things. More ideas flow. Your sense of humour expands. Humour in and humour out. Look for that which amuses you and bring it into your space. There is joy in living rooms!

What is it that makes people great?

Combining wit and business savvy

Humour awards 2006

The inaugural (2006) humour awards were fun and exciting and opening each entry was like opening Christmas presents. You didn't know what was inside and what you would get! Part of the fun was the variety of ways that companies chose to present their company and these ranged from CDs to written sheets and funny photo presentations. All the entries were worthy of winning and it was encouraging to see so many companies celebrating humour and fun in their workplaces. Winners were those that depicted some of their fun and humour activities and also managed to show how fun and laughter at work had benefits for the company, the culture and most importantly the people!

Research suggests that enjoying fun and humour at work has impacts on employee retention, satisfaction and even performance and our 2006 entrants showed this in a variety of ways. The 2007 humour awards will be bigger, brighter and even more fun and we are expecting more entries and more fun and laughter when we receive them. I know that I can't wait to open next year's goodies and enjoy 'Christmas' in May!

Keep smiling and laughing! Barbara Plester BBS, MBS (hons), Massey University, Albany campus, Humour researcher

Aussie born marketing guru Bob Pritchard said "In *Aussie* you're as good as the best thing you ever did. In the USA however you are only as great as you were that morning." Having read that I asked well ... how do New Zealanders stack up in the good or great market? And so I looked around at some figureheads who have endured and decided to ask them what they thought. I had a personal interest in looking at the characteristics that personify good humour and positivity, as well as how that might be influential on others.

I began with Georgina Beyer.- MP. She impressed me the most with her ability to combine a sense of mischief with business savvy; to be able to move from a Parliamentary Bench to CWA rooms with aplomb; to combine drama and theatrics and engage communities at an International level; and perhaps most significantly, she has mastered the use of subtlety as an art form!

The power of good communication, used to effect with humour, variety and intellect is a winning combination in business and life. As an orator and speaker Georgina

moves from the benches of Parliament to womens groups and has more recently addressed the United Nations. She implored them to engage communities and told the story of her not one, but two mayoral terms! She says she is often irreverent; always open minded; is authentic and due to her rich and varied career will never be typecast. She combines her intellect and wit to create great oratory, and uses variables in volume, humour (often unexpected) and takes people on the journey that has been her life, weaving in and acting out her many personas.

When asked how she maintained her spirits she spoke of the stiff upper lip and protocols of our English heritage and it's influence on our communication in New Zealand. She confessed she can laugh at herself by having a "good warble" in the face of what she referred to as "vein popping rubbishing", and indeed the words chosen reflect the way she has chosen to be in the face of some of life's biggest challenges. She says how we are is immediately influencing of others and looks for opportunities to create meaningful communication and help things gel.

Her background in theatre serves her well, supporting her to be quick thinking and responsive. She integrates her theatre sports skill and sense of drama into all her expression either in face to face communication or on the speaking platform. She has a natural charisma and perhaps that comes in part from her authenticity and willingness to share all aspects of her life. No holds barred. In this guise great trust is generated, and as she says so many people now "just think they know me !" She is able to generate gasps of awe and much amusement as she reveals titbits about her life, generating connections and endearing herself to others.

Her message to others on finding happiness and building a satisfying life? Give it a go ! She says in all of her roles she has been engaging communities to band together and take a stand for the values and principles they hold dear. She also says you can't please all of the people all of the time and allocates her time very carefully lest the pressures of work take over. She is comfortable in her own skin and not fazed by those who don't agree with her view and invites others to live into their own beliefs about themselves and life.

If you seek renewed confidence or would like to help your people become more confident then instill in them a sense of how unique they are and the value their contribution brings to your business. Business does well when people are productive, however it's the extra efforts that people volunteer that make a business thrive. In order to create that environment practice being good humoured and tune in to your people and help them identify their gifts and talents.

You will be greatly rewarded in bottom line results!

You cant lift your bottom line if your people are down

So make their day ...

*Pat commits the cardinal management sin of spreading joy and making people smile. If her practices become widely adopted, going to work will become fun, and people will enjoy the experience. Ultimately she is a dangerous subversive to dullness, mediocrity and boredom. Why can't we have more like her? John Bishop
–NZ business speaker and commentator*

Clint Eastwood is famous for his line: "Go ahead , make my day!"

If you "made someone else's day" every day your business would grow exponentially. And it is so easy. By being in the moment and creating some fun, you develop an environment that facilitates effective communication and generates good humour. Maintain this sort of environment and you would see improved bottom line results.

The first Humour in Business conference was convened in Australia recently following a survey that revealed a FUN workplace would make employees more productive and could even mean the boss had to pay them less.

The study by consulting company Customer Care Solutions in Sydney in 2002 found that 81 per cent of people believed a fun work environment would make them more productive while 55 per cent said they would take less pay to have more fun at work. Ninety-three per cent of respondents said that laughing on the job helped to reduce work-related stress. Current figures from the World Health Organization list depression as world health burden number four. It is predicted to soon become number two. People get beaten up enough by life; they don't need to get beaten up when they come to work. Adopt a philosophy of catching people doing something right.

The new adaptations to the Health and Safety Act this month see employers and employees having a shared responsibility for the provision of a stress free, safe work environment. When we are under pressure we can often act out of frustration and go

for the jugular. Perhaps we might go for the jocular instead! Sending glad mail (as opposed to sad mail!), posting amusing memos and developing a jester journal.

It is no great surprise that people perform to optimum when they are having fun, doing what they love, in a high trust environment that rewards and acknowledges their efforts.

Being good humoured is a state of mind. In that state we are more likely to laugh and be the trigger for others to laugh. Laughter is a great medicine. Like intense exercise, laughter increases brain levels of serotonin and endorphins that can calm and relax the mind. In that more relaxed state people are more productive.

The number-one factor that holds people back is their environment. People have real talents that they're prepared to apply to something they believe in. But if their environment is toxic, they take their talents and sense of purpose to a job across the street-and they shine.

Howard Gardner from Harvard University says we don't just have IQ, we in fact have eight or more intelligences including linguistic and musical intelligence. Find out what makes your people sing and help them enjoy their time at work. When you do they will bring a new zeal to encounters with your customers and be the source of increased revenue as a result.

“Why every business needs a Humour Resource Department”

You can't lift your bottom line if your people are down !

In 1990 the World Health Organization declared depression to be world health burden number four and predicted it would be number two by 2020. At the NZ Mental Health at Work Conference in March 2003 it was stated that in any 6 month period 25% of people in this country will have a mental illness. In both developing and developed regions, depression is women's leading cause of disease burden. Depression is referred to as the modern plaque and affects people's ability to perform across a wide section of activities of daily living. The stresses of daily living, including grief, low morale and poor self esteem affect decision making, concentration and productivity.

The practiced application of good humour in the workplace can aid in the reversal of this modern day malady and create a fun and productive environment.

Humour in business is not about clowning. It is about demonstrating that you are a warm, responsive, intelligent and considerate person. Learning to understand humour is no different to learning to understand any other business communication tool. Humour is a creative tool that sharpens the mind, engenders positive attitudes, fosters friendships, encourages mateship, generates optimism, boosts enthusiasm, restores hope and is simply fun.

Humour takes a positive and a negative form. Using humour in introspection is the first step to overcoming the imperfect and contradictory aspects of business communication. Being able to laugh at yourself enables you to feel good about yourself. Positive humour is constructive, appropriate, relevant and strengthens relationships, whereas negative humour is inappropriate, destroys and alienates. Pete Crofts in his book “ How to use Humour in Business and life says “There are three basic types of wit or humour; sarcasm or laughing at others; nit wit or laughing at the

wrong time; clowning wit or laughing with others.” It is appropriate to aim to be amusing, not abusing.

In the world of comedy, humour is about creating maximum laughs per minute as a measure of success. In business being good humoured is about creating an open, positive, receptive and cheerful mood with successful communication the end product. The greatest challenge for every business leader is finding a way through the human capacity to create chaos, finding the good within each individual and then harnessing that to support business outcomes. By getting out of the office and managing by walking around you will get to know your people and the rewards they want from the workplace .

You can optimize this less formal communication by having fun, being responsive and in the moment. Use all these encounters to generate goodwill. If you made someone else’s day every day your business would grow exponentially. All you have to do is catch people doing something right and acknowledge it. Maintain this sort of environment and you would see improved and sustained bottom line results.

The first Humour in Business conference was convened in Australia in 2002, following a survey that revealed a FUN workplace would make employees more productive and could even mean the boss had to pay them less. The study by consulting company Customer Care Solutions in Sydney found that 81 per cent of people believed a fun work environment would make them more productive while 55 per cent said they would take less pay to have more fun at work. Ninety-three per cent of respondents said that laughing on the job helped to reduce work-related stress. The survey of 2,500 employees was released ahead of the “Humour Summit”—a conference which looked at the issue of fun in the workplace and its impact on a business’ bottom line.

Recent research done in Victoria University by Professor Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe confirms that effective workplace communication has many facets and that humour along with small talk and repetition play an important part. They found that feelings of solidarity were fostered when workers contributed to office humour. People were considered to be part of the team and these workplaces tended to be

happier . They also cited subordinates using humour to contest their superiors, and as a self-depreciation device defusing the pressure when they know they have done something stupid. (Full research results are available in their book , Holmes, Janet and Maria Stubbe 2003. *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*. Harlow Essex: Pearson Education.)

The qualities that mark people who excel in real life, who have successful personal relationships, and who are stars in the workplace have nothing to do with IQ. Daniel Goleman US Author of Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ says those qualities include self awareness, impulse control, persistence, zeal and self motivation, empathy and social deftness. These are all evident in people who are good humoured.

Combine this thinking with Howard Gardner, Professor at Harvard Business School, who expounds the theory that we have in fact eight or more intelligences including linguistic, musical, physical, analytical, practical, intra-personal and inter-personal. People with strong inter-personal intelligence who have the ability to get on with other people, and are good at getting things done with and through others. These people are more likely to be good humoured.

All of these intelligences relate to individual core competencies and learning styles in a workplace setting. When the needs of the job are a match for the needs of the person then performance outcomes and productivity stand to grow exponentially. These intelligences are easily determined and isolate strengths and passions of employees. Use them to find out what makes your people sing and then create a plan to help them enjoy their time at work. When you do they will bring a new zeal to encounters with your customers and be the source of increased revenue as a result.

The art of improvisation is a skill developed by actors that boosts creative thought and potentiates deliberate brain activity. It is not uncommon for participants in programs to quickly develop skills that allow them to perform five or six complex tasks simultaneously. It is a process that involves unlearning old habits and thinking laterally to create new solutions to problems. It's application in business is relevant as decision making abilities are markedly enhanced, saving time and money and

therefore improving productivity. Improv has a pattern that can be learned and is intentionally reliant on the deliberate creation of humour.

It is no great surprise that people perform to optimum when they are having fun, doing what they love, in a high trust environment that rewards and acknowledges their efforts. Being good humoured is a state of mind. In that state we are more likely to laugh and be the trigger for others to laugh. Laughter is a great medicine. Like intense exercise, laughter increases brain levels of serotonin and endorphins that can calm and relax the mind. In that more relaxed state people are more productive. The notion of being able to lift your bottom line by developing a high trust environment where people are rewarded for having fun and doing what they love ...is not as elusive as it seems!

People get beaten up enough by life; they don't need to get beaten up when they come to work. The new adaptations to the Health and Safety Act see employers and employees having a shared responsibility for the provision of a stress free, safe work environment. The people who walk through your doors each day are affected by life events. Positive relationships can be built using good humour and the mutual respect that ensues contributes significantly to a safe and productive workplace

New Zealand's inaugural Humour in Business Awards

Business is no laughing matter...or is it?

“Business is about only two things – fun and profit. Successful companies are able to combine these two attributes, and the Humour Awards ensures that we recognise the fun part of business” Judge 2006 NZ Inaugural Humour in Business Awards,

Tony Falkenstein, Red Eagle Corporation, Home of Just Water Ltd, Cool Water Ltd
Bartercard NZ

Pat Armitstead, Auckland Joyologist, is pleased to announce the finalists and winners for the inaugural Humour in Business Awards 2006 for New Zealand. In association with sponsor, Auckland newspaper *Business to Business*, she invited business people to submit their “winning humour and wit “entries in three different categories, vying for the best score from the jesting judges.

Entries were submitted by April 1, 2006, and the winners will be notified on the Awards night - World Laughter Day, May 7.

The winners are :-

Supreme Winner - New Zealand Window Shades

1 Sole operator – Andy Dunn

2 Up to 20 staff – IT Maniacs

3 Over 20 staff - New Zealand Window Shades

New Zealand Window Shades stood out because they had events and strategies that had purpose and while they were fun, they were not just for the sake of fun. All judges agreed it was the sense of staff inclusiveness that they connected with,

The judges (jesting jury) were Wade Jackson from the Covert Theatre, Tony Falkenstein from Just Water International and Barbara Plester, PhD Student studying humour in the workplace for her thesis.

Pat says, “This is a first for New Zealand, and to my knowledge only the 2nd such event in the world! The only other event similar was held in Canada. “These Awards herald a new way of thinking and celebrates a focus on all that is positive in work and indeed in life”. A non profit event, the Awards aim to recognize the contribution humour makes to the lives of business owners, staff and customers.

Pat says the purpose of the Awards is to encourage and discover the essence of being good humoured and how that impacts on encounters and builds relationships. It is not necessarily about the most sophisticated application of humour or the best use of jokes, though these are all part of what it means to be good humoured.

She says, “To be good humoured is to be appropriately responsive and to use the effective communication that comes from that. Entries need to demonstrate the way in

which you have either planned or inadvertently affected business outcomes as a result of a humourous event or strategy!”

Pat cites from Boston.com, “The most popular course at Harvard this semester teaches happiness. The final numbers came in this week: Positive Psychology, a class whose content resembles that of many a self-help book but is grounded in serious psychological research, has enrolled 855 students, beating even Introductory Economics”.

She says that people perform to optimum, in high trust environments, where they are rewarded for having fun doing what it is that they love. The role of humour and being good humoured cannot be overlooked, especially in the face of World Health Organization statistics which cite depression as currently world health burden number four and by 2020 they predict it will be number two.”

The Awards are a perfect prelude to the 2006 ODDFELLOWS NZ International Comedy Festival, held in Auckland from May 12th 2006.

Preparations are underway for the 2007 Humour in Business Awards and progress can be tracked on www.B2B.co.nz

For more information, email Pat Armitstead at joyologist@humour-resources.com

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