

# HAVE YOU HEARD THE ONE ABOUT HUMOUR IN LEARNING...?

No one needs to tell the industry that invented the idea of the Subject Matter Expert that good comedy, like good learning, is best left to the professionals. So why try and be funny?

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HERE ARE OUR TOP 5 FACTS THAT MEAN **YOU SHOULD USE MORE HUMOUR** IN L&D...

## **FACT 1: YOU CAN'T LEARN ANYTHING IF YOU'RE ASLEEP**

People learn nothing when they're asleep and very little when they're bored so keep them entertained, engaged and awake! As long as the learning messages are clear and the humour is relevant then people will have a better chance of remembering, and applying, what they've learned.

*"I would rather entertain and hope that people learned something than educate people and hope they were entertained." - Walt Disney*

## **FACT 2: IT'S FUNNY TO LAUGH AT OTHER PEOPLE**

When it's used well, humour can help learners to relax and see the impact of their behaviour in a light-hearted way, without feeling embarrassed or put on the spot. By showing a scenario that portrays a character (a made up one – not Sandra in Accounts) with the same issues, individuals can drop their emotional guard and admit to themselves that they too need to change.

## **FACT 3: IT REALLY IS 'FUNNY BECAUSE IT'S TRUE'**

It's actually the truth of a situation that makes it so funny. At Video Arts our guiding principle is that the comedy has to come from the learning. Humour in learning comes most easily from showing the 'wrong way' to behave; it's usually quite funny, it provokes discussion and it lets learners draw out lessons for themselves.

*"If people don't believe you, they won't laugh." - John Lloyd, TV producer*

## **FACT 4: EMPLOYEES ARE EASILY DISTRACTED BECAU... OH LOOK A RAINBOW!**

Apparently the attention spans of our learners are decreasing. Maybe they are, or maybe they're just bored. Humour helps here in two ways: it gets a message across quickly for bite-sized learning and it helps maintain attention when you need to deliver a longer learning programme.

*"I have the attention span of a mosquito from multitasking and all the things that have affected my poor little brain." - Ian Somerhalder, Actor*

## FACT 5: HUMOUR IS DEAD SERIOUS

All joking aside, we're not just saying that humour makes learning more effective for a laugh: lots of writers and academics (who most people wouldn't consider the least bit funny) have conducted really serious studies that help us make the case.

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## HUMOUR IN LEARNING – THE SCIENCE

**Zak Stambor's book "How Laughing Leads to Learning"** uses research to make the point that humour reduces anxiety in the learner and establishes the "funny but true" rule in learning with humour.

**Mark Shatz and Frank LoSciavo's "Learning Through Laughter"** study uses A/B testing to prove that chuckling your way through a course gets better results. Students enrolled in the University of Ohio's online psychology course were randomly presented with either the classic version of the online course, or a humour-enhanced version. By monitoring course access rates and message board comments Shatz and LoSciavo identified significantly better levels of engagement when students participated in the humour-enhanced version of the course.

**Doni Tamblyn's book "Laugh and Learn: 95 Ways to Use Humor for More Effective Teaching and Training"** seeks to establish connections between recent brain research and ongoing humour research to argue that humour enhances brain function.

**Educational humour researcher Avern Ziv** argues that humour facilitates divergent thinking (the kind of thinking we use in problem solving) rather than convergent thinking (the ability to give the "correct" answer to standard questions that do not require significant creativity).