

# FUNsulting, etc. Times

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Volume 4, Number 2

August 2002

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*Welcome to another edition of FUNsulting, etc. Times. This issue deals with offensive humor. Please feel free to copy this information and use it in any way that is helpful. Also visit my website at [www.funsulting.com](http://www.funsulting.com) for information about programs, services and products. **Look for new audio CD's in the next couple of months.***

*- Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, Director of Everything!, FUNsulting, etc.*

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## **Humor In Practice - With Humor, Don't Take the Offensive**

A couple of years ago, I was doing a three-hour workshop on presentation skills for a national non-profit organization. As I was introducing my approach to public speaking, I mentioned that it was my belief that an effective speaker must first *connect* with the audience. At that point, a gentleman in the back stood up and said, "That's bull-@#%!"

I was taken off guard to say the least. Honestly, I was shocked. In all of my years of speaking, no one had ever been so, uh, direct! My expertise is in humor. Not many people out there have such contempt for humor that they would attack me *during* a presentation.

To give myself time to think, I pulled out an old trick from my social work days – an ancient phrase used by wise masters throughout history to spark thought and enlightenment. I said, "What do you mean by that". Profound, eh?

The man said that to be an effective presenter, one must irritate the audience to push them to think outside the box. In other

words, he said, "You're not doing your job unless you upset people". Secretly, I thought, "Well, it worked with you!"

To make a long story short, he and I went back and forth for a few minutes until we agreed to disagree. I love that phrase. What we really meant was let's stop before someone gets hurt. So we did. I went on with my presentation and he shook his head every few minutes and the left and returned to the room about 5 times during my program. In his mind, I must have been *really* effective!

My responses to this man were typical. He was irrational. He did not represent the rest of the group. He was unreasonable. You may be thinking the same thing. In fact, my first reaction was that he was clearly wrong and I was most certainly right. But with that line of thinking, I denied the validity of his experience.

Humor can work the same way. We tell a joke or story with the intention of making someone laugh. If they are offended, we rationalize that they just don't get it or that

**(Continued on back)**

it was all in fun so they should not have been offended. I even have colleagues who feel that if you don't offend someone, you are not doing your job as a humorist. I do not agree with this position. I believe there is plenty of good non-offensive humor in the world and we don't need to resort to offensive humor...ever.

Several times during my career, I have inadvertently offended someone with humor. At first I thought they were not being reasonable, but I realized that no joke is ~~so~~ good that it's worth hurting someone.

One study showed that when joke tellers thought their offensive humor was just for fun, the "hearers" read more into the humor. In fact, they believed that a racist joke meant that the teller was racist.

I believe that we should stay away from tasteless offensive humor. Humor has so many benefits, we should use it to heal and bring people together rather than to offend and push people apart. Stay away from the humor that targets others. If you really need a target then use yourself!

*The last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.*  
- Victor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning

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### **Humor Resources**

For more information, check out these resources:

*Cracking Jokes: Studies of Sck Humor Cycles and Stereotypes*, Alan Dundes. (Ten Speed Press)

*Laffirmations*. Joel Goodman (Health Communications, Inc).

### **Humor In Real Life**

As the story goes, Don Rickles, the most famous "put down" comedian, was having dinner with a woman in a restaurant in Hollywood. Don had noticed that his friend Frank Sinatra was at a back table in the same restaurant. During dinner, Don asked Frank to stop by their table on his way out so that it would impress his date. Frank was flattered and agreed.

On his way out Frank stopped at Don's table and said, "Don, how nice to see you". Don looked up and said, "Can't you see we're eating!"

Don was the master of offensive humor. He was funny, successful and ended every performance by saying, "God bless you". But I wonder how many fans he lost because they just got irritated?

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### **Just Humor**

A hot dog walked into a bar. The bartender said, "We don't serve food here".

Why isn't the number 11 called onety-one?

Sign in podiatrist's office: Time wounds all heels.

### **Humor In The News**

A study reported in the journal *Twin Research*, indicates that a sense of humor depends on environmental influences rather than a genetic pre-disposition. (*The Humor Connection*, May/June 2002)

*A keen sense of humor helps us to overlook the unbecoming, understand the unconventional, tolerate the unpleasant, overcome the unexpected, and outlast the unbearable.* - Billy Graham, Hope for the Troubled Heart

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*Ronald P. Culberson, MSW, CSP, Director of Everything! at FUNsulting, etc., helps people and organizations find and enjoy humor to achieve a healthier perspective in life or work. He is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), the highest earned award from the National Speakers Association, and is one of less than 450 individuals worldwide who have received this designation. He has provided entertaining and informative programs to over 40,000 people in more than 500 associations, government agencies, non-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies. To find out more about programs, services and products visit his website at [www.funsulting.com](http://www.funsulting.com) or call (703) 742-8812.*