

9 *Tips*

for Using Humor
in Benefits
Communication

an eBook from **alex**[®]

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Benefits Communication

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Considering Humor

We here at Team ALEX find ourselves asking some pretty serious questions about what's funny.

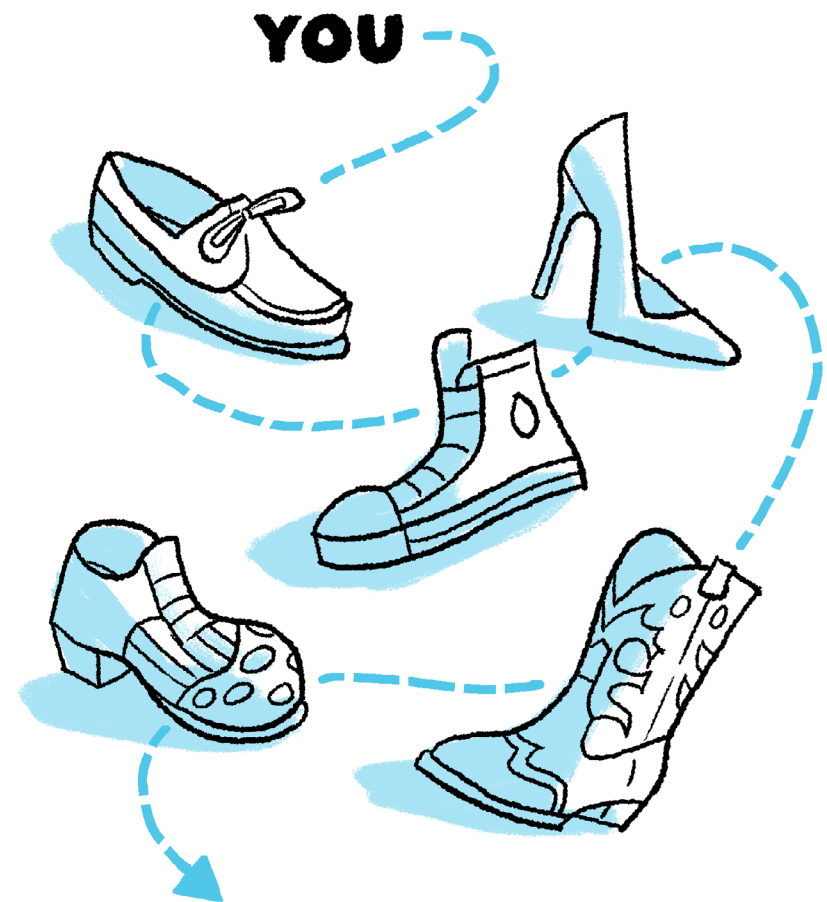
Questions like: What sort of humor is appropriate for talking to employees about their benefits? What should be avoided? Does the context matter? Do the same rules apply across every kind of communication? Does Carrot Top do the benefits fair circuit, and, if so, what's his hourly rate?

Anyway, since we know that lovely HR people like yourselves are constantly on the lookout for new ways to engage your employees, we thought we'd pass on a few humor tips you might find handy.

1. Size Up Your Audience

Spend a minute putting yourself in the shoes of your intended audience — every single time you create something new.

Sounds simple, but it takes real mental and emotional energy to do it. Ask yourself: How are most people, in this moment in time, likely to respond to this subject matter? What do they care about most? What probably annoys them the most? Thinking through your audience's likely frame of mind will help you better gauge what's fair game to make a little light of (and what's not).



2. Understand Why You're Using Humor

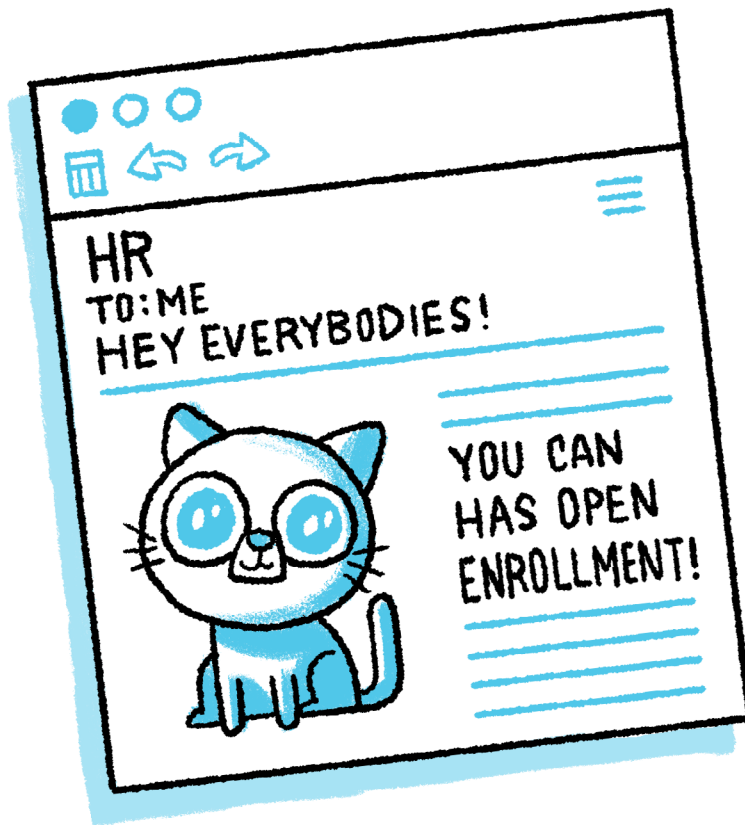


Humor, used strategically, can do much more than just make your employees smile.

Many studies in education and behavioral science have shown that when information is delivered with a dash of humor, people are more engaged, better able to understand complex information, and able to retain more information longer.

So keep that in mind when you're thinking of deploying a dose of funny. Done right, it can educate as well as entertain.

3. *Avoid Straight-up Silliness*



In the context of benefits, humor that draws attention to itself is more annoying than funny.

Sure, you could do something wacky like send an “enrollment has started” email with the subject line “Hey Everybodies! You Can Has Open Enrollment!” with a picture of the I Can Has Cheeseburger cat inside. And people would open the email and snort. But keep in mind that if you get really off-the-wall, you risk appearing tone deaf to the fact that choosing a benefits plan involves some serious decisions. And this insensitivity could make some folks less receptive to requests you make of them in the future.

4. Avoid Sarcasm

Why? Because sarcasm is sometimes completely lost on people—and that kind of mix-up can lead to real problems.

Using sarcasm in your HR communications just isn't worth the risk. You may think the intention behind your funny joke is clear, but if even a few people miss the joke and get offended, it's not worth it. Plus, sarcasm involves saying the opposite of what you mean—and you probably don't want those sentiments to appear in writing, where someone could take it out of context.



5. *Keep Your Humor PG-rated*

Do yourself a favor: steer clear of potentially controversial subject matter

Swear words? Social-issue humor you think will make you seem edgy? Yeah, don't go there. One misplaced word can make you lose your credibility with an entire part of your workforce.

Know those kids' movies that are both kid- and parent-friendly? That's the tone you're going for.



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ZONE**



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Sincerely yours,
Jane Smith
Jellyvision Benefits

6. *Know the Place for Funny*

Use humor as a tool to get and keep people's attention, but don't let it get in the way of your message.

The best place to throw in a little levity, say, in an email, is in the beginning, when you're setting things up, or the ending, when you're transitioning to a conclusion.

The meaty, important stuff? The who, what, where, why? Better to just be straightforward. Would you want someone cracking jokes when you ask them for directions? Probably not.

7. *Don't Make Fun of People*

Channel your inner Ellen Degeneres, not your inner Ricky Gervais.

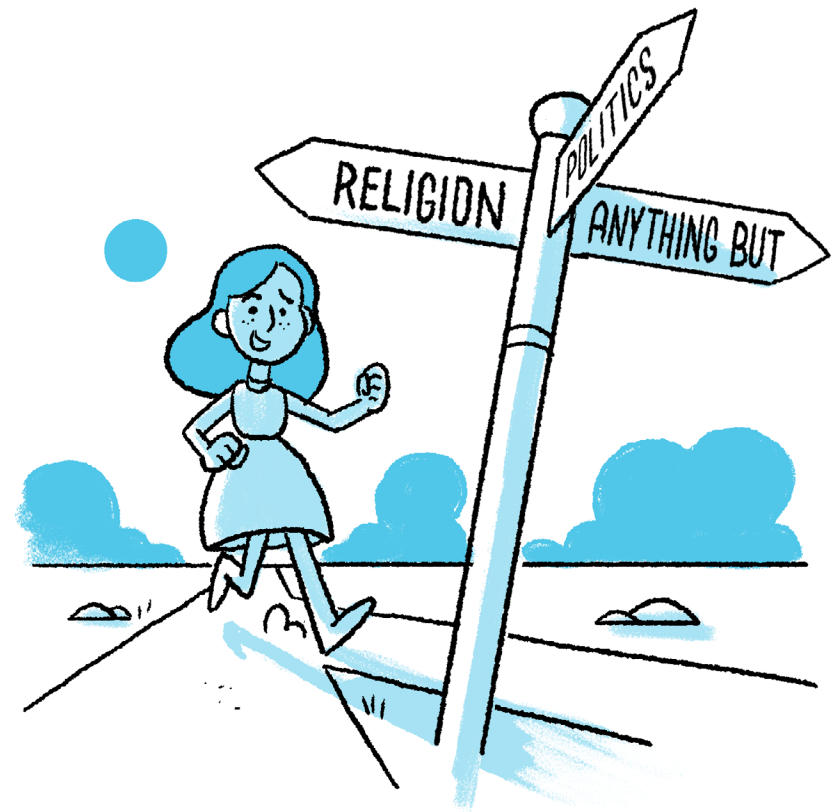
It's fun to laugh together with other people about stuff you all think is dumb. But it's probably not the best idea to get too snarky in your employee benefits messaging. Better to aim for a more inclusive sort of humor that acknowledges that everybody's in the same boat. (And if you do decide to make fun of someone, make sure it's yourself.)

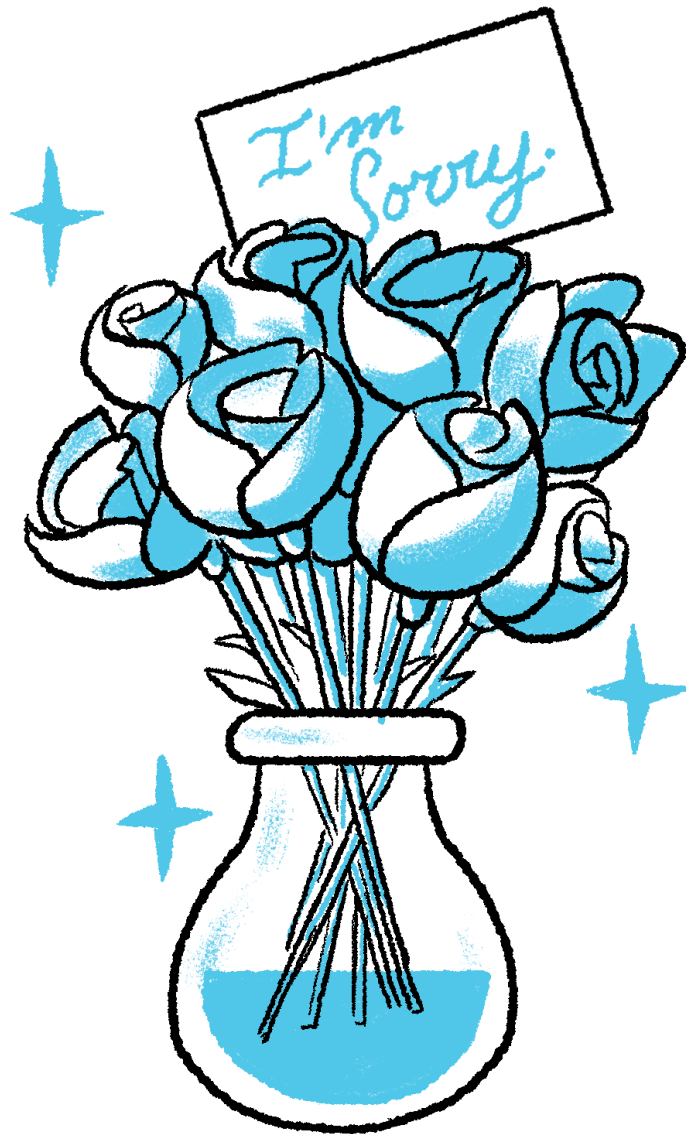


8. *Don't Touch Religion or Politics*

Your employees' belief systems should never be the punchline to a joke.

At companies in some parts of the country, a vast majority of employees share the same religious and political beliefs (or lack thereof). Almost everyone's Christian and conservative. Almost everyone's agnostic and progressive. And so on. But even if this is the case and you feel almost 100% sure that none of your peers would take offense at a little jab at "the other guys," resist the urge. You're only asking for trouble.





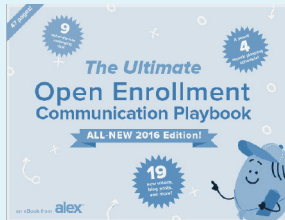
9. Play Apologies Straight

If something fairly serious goes wrong, err on the side of sincerity and straightforwardness.

Did you accidentally include last year's enrollment period dates in this year's benefits guides? Were there some serious technical problems with the benefits orientation webinar you invited people to? If so, resist the urge to jokingly say, "I'm such an idiot!" or joke your way back into people's good graces. Better to play it straight. Apologize, express concern about any inconvenience, and leave it at that.

More ALEX eBooks

We hope the tips presented in this eBook have been helpful, and we encourage you to learn even more about communication trends, tips, and best practices by [contacting us directly](#), [reviewing our blog](#), or downloading the free eBooks and surveys below:



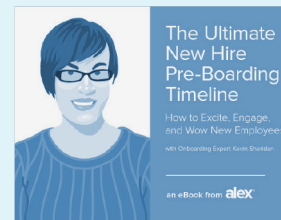
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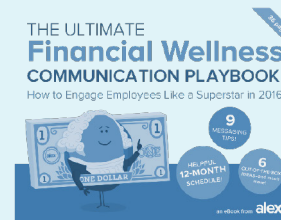
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About ALEX

ALEX — the best SaaS benefits communication platform in the universe — saves HR leaders time and money by guiding employees through difficult health insurance, retirement savings, and wellness decisions. Hundreds of companies, including 72 of the Fortune 500® and more than a quarter of Barron's list of the "World's

Most Respected Companies based in the US," trust ALEX to transform confusing jargon, legalese, and gobbledegook into useful information and helpful advice for more than 5 million grateful end-user employees. To learn more about ALEX, please visit meetalex.com.

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