

webfluenz™

What gets measured, gets managed

CASE STUDY



HOW TO USE HUMOUR TO MAKE YOUR CONTENT GO VIRAL

3 key aspects to ensure your content gets shared and drives
engagement with customers

Humour is one of the best emotional connects that brands can make with their audiences. But utilizing humour appropriately is the key to engage with consumers, and help establish a brand / sponsor's personality (much like an individual's sense of humour helps to define their personal image).

In this case study, we focus on the element of humour and how it can work, both favorably and adversely, in making content go viral. Humour that successfully creates **emotional connect** can **more effectively encourage sharing** and, as a result, make the sharers “advocates” of your content.



When the humour falls flat or invokes a strong **negative emotion** the viral impact could be very severe.

This potential severity has led some to propose [against the use of humour](#) in aiming to create viral content, suggesting instead the use of other emotional triggers to promote sharing.

With everyone trying to tickle the funny bone, the need to make your branded content **break through the clutter** and engage your audience becomes even more imperative. We deem **3 aspects to be absolutely critical when creating funny content** that one hopes gets shared organically by making a positive connection with consumers. These are:

1. Understand your target audience



2. Place the humour in a relevant and appropriate context



3. Keep it simple and direct



UNDERSTAND YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE

W

Humour is very subjective and personal. Needless to say, what some people find *funny*, others might term as *silly*, *slapstick*, *ridiculous* or just plain *offensive*! Humour can help attract the attention of a large audience, but to encourage them to share requires the content to connect on a much more personal level. After all, favourably promoting your content is a direct endorsement of and advocacy for the humour in it.

With this in mind, understanding your target audience and ensuring that the **humour resonates with them** and **promotes sharing**, is a key step in formulating viral content.

The examples provided below highlight some successes and failures of “humourous”, viral content that either connected with the audience or didn’t.



JobsInTown.de Life’s Too Short

jobsintown.de

An apt example of well-targeted viral content is German online recruitment company, **Jobsintown.de’s ‘Life’s Too Short’ ad campaign**. The simple concept showcased unsatisfactory job situations in an attempt to help viewers (stuck in unwanted jobs) relate to it.

The ads went viral both via offline W-O-M and the internet, and still gets cited as one of the most creative advertising campaigns.

Awareness of the recruitment company spiked with visits to the **Jobsintown.de** website [increasing by 25% from the previous year](#), post launch of the campaign in 2005.



Click on image to view the ad

The ads depicted workers inside different types of machines (ATMs, coffee vending machines, instant photo booths, etc) doing the hard and boring work that we expect these machines to be performing, with a simple script – “Life’s too short for the wrong job!”.



Dana Leavy-Detrick
@DanaLeavy

Follow

German job search site, jobsintown.de, hit it out of the ballpark with “Life’s Too Short for the Wrong Job” campaign: is.gd/zQUqbg

Why it worked

- **Simple message**, cleverly rendered via unrealistic, but funny visuals
- Established a direct **connect with the audience** – the visuals resonated among those dissatisfied with their current jobs, likely encouraging them to look for change
- **Strategic Ad placement** aided in improved targeting – full size posters were pasted on the side of actual machines and high traffic areas like subway stations to capture the attention of office-going commuters
- **Effective tie-in** of the brand and concept, so viewers knew that **Jobsintown.de** was there to provide them with a solution



Dollar Shave Club

Our Blades Are F***ing Great



One of the most cited examples of a successful viral video from 2012 is [Dollar Shave Club's video](#) (promoting their quality razor blades for a dollar a month.)

[Research](#) shows that men go to great lengths to keep down the cost of shaving, while not wanting to compromise on the quality of the blades. The video's proposition delivered just that, great blades – and cheaper, but delivered in way that was funny and memorable.

The video racked up **4.5million views in the first three months** after its launch, with nearly 11 million YouTube views at the time this case study was published. And without much other support in way of an advertising budget, the brand received **12,000 sign ups within the first 48 hours** post launch of the video.



Click on image to view the ad

The video shows the CEO, Michael Dubin, encouraging sign ups while making wise cracks and highlighting difficulties of current razor shopping.

Why it worked

- Used a significant **emotional trigger** in its bold statement of cost saving with quality, delivered with irreverent humour
- Clearly stated very simple propositions that the brand knew would **connect with their male target audience** i.e. 1) buy our low-cost, high-quality razors, 2) eliminate the need to remember to buy razor blades every month!
- A **strong call to action** – the ad encouraged people to “join the club”



European Commission

Science Is A Girl's Thing



An effort by the European Commission to promote scientific studies & careers among young women took a nose dive when the “teaser” video, designed to go viral and increase awareness of the campaign, was found to be offensive and gender discriminatory.

The video outraged many and was condemned as **being sexist and reinforcing stereotypes** – the exact opposite of what the commission had intended to do. And while it did go viral, it **wasn't the type of reaction the EU had hoped to achieve**.

Moreover, the video received negative press across influential publications like the [Huffingtonpost.com](#), [The Telegraph](#), etc. At the time of writing the video was “liked” by 1690 people and “disliked” by 12,098 people on YouTube.



Click on image to view the ad

The video was intended to be humorous in showing how women, wearing designer gear with interest in makeup, can also juggle life with beakers and conduct experiments.

Why it did not work

- **Ineffective targeting** – while the aim was to increase interest in science among young women, both men and women, saw the video as sexist
- **No clear message** – although the EU was probably trying to communicate that a girl who is interested in science can have equal interest in being trendy, that message didn't ring through clearly, as the only messaging other than the stereotypical imagery was the tagline “Science, It's a girl thing”

PLACE THE HUMOUR IN A RELEVANT/APPROPRIATE CONTEXT



Kenneth Cole

Spring Collection And Cairo Riots



A tweet by the American fashion design brand, Kenneth Cole, resulted in social media frenzy as the reference made to Cairo backfired on the brand for being politically ignorant and insensitive.

While Kenneth Cole himself apologized publicly on behalf of his eponymous fashion label, acknowledging that their attempt to **leverage the media attention on the protests in Egypt to promote their Spring collection** was in poor taste,

social media was unforgiving and the tweet went viral in a matter of hours. In addition, the tweet still gains negative / sarcastic brand references and is cited by several articles as a [social media catastrophe](#).

Why it did not work

- **Inappropriate Context** – the tweet was insensitive in its use of humour to gain attention. And while many claim that this was a planned tactic to gain controversial attention (much like some of the brand’s other statements), in the end, it resulted in negative brand perceptions
- **Poor timing** – while it can be argued that there is never a “right” time for creating content such as this, the fact that the tweet went out during the most heated period of the protests and tried to piggyback with a hashtag being used as an expression of political sensibilities, just added to the “this time he has gone too far” sentiment on social media



The tweet, aimed at piggybacking on the trending hashtag - #Cairo – during the protests in Egypt to evict President Mubarak, insinuated that “uproar” was a result of news breaking about the brand’s new spring line.



PLACE THE HUMOUR IN A RELEVANT/APPROPRIATE CONTEXT



Oreo Super Bowl Dunk In The Dark



Oreo's timely super bowl tweet during the blackout stating "You can still dunk in the dark" has gone down as a legend in social media advertising.

The brand leveraged the opportunity to connect with disgruntled super bowl viewers over their inability to watch the game by quickly tweeting a simple visual (half an Oreo biscuit highlighted on a dark

background) with an equally simple and clear message. At the time of this publication, the tweet had nearly 16k RTs and 6k+ favorites.



Why it worked

- **Perfect timing** in engaging viewers with a reference to the blackout in a humorous manner. In addition, the quick execution also ensured that the brand captured viewer eyeballs at a time when they were looking to be entertained and needed a distraction from the plight the blackout had left them in
- **Simple message**, cleverly rendered through very basic visual and copy. With no direct call to action to buy the brand, the tweet used the soft sell approach to persuade viewers to consume the brand without the message being too intrusive



David Bardell
@Davidbardell

Follow

Genius marketing! Oreo scores massive brand ad on Superbowl night, for FREE by creating an ad in ten mins @miltonbayer bit.ly/11Hp7Wd



Jay Ferris
@ferrisweb

Follow

The best Super Bowl ad wasnt on tv. RT @Oreo: Power out? No problem. pic.twitter.com/GNVEucKR

KEEP IT SIMPLE AND DIRECT

W

Make it simple and clean. The **more complex your message or content is, the more effort is required by the audience to interpret**, thus negating the impact of the humorous element in the content. At the same time, simplicity needs to be combined with effective communication of intended message.

By allowing the humour to be contained within the parameters of a focused, and in some cases, single message framework, you aid your potential “sharers” in quickly understanding the message and encourage them to waste no time in sharing it.



Melbourne's Metro Rail Dumb Ways To Die



A smart public service message from Melbourne's Metro Rail to promote rail safety featured “[a variety of cute characters killing themselves in increasingly idiotic ways](#)”, set to an extremely memorable tune, ending with the message that killing yourself by not being careful around trains is one of the “dumbest ways to die”.

In addition to winning several awards (including [5 Grand Prix Lions at Cannes](#)), within two weeks the video had generated at least \$50 million worth of global media value and more than 700 media stories. According to Metro Trains, [the campaign contributed to a more than 30% reduction in "near-miss" accidents in 2013 as compared to 2011](#). Moreover, it is cited as the “[most shared PSA in history](#)”

and has become an iTunes hit and even a Sm artpone game. [According to McCann](#), the agency behind the ad, “the aim of this campaign was to engage an audience that really doesn't want to hear any kind of safety message”. The agency recognized straight away that this audience wants to be entertained – not lectured about rail safety.

Why it worked

- **Message Execution** – the PSA took a message that the audience was already very familiar with (i.e. be safe around trains) but likely didn't pay much attention, and turned it into a message that you just couldn't ignore given the format of its delivery – light-hearted, yet very direct
- **Creative elements** – in this piece of content, not only was there humour in the message and the situations presented, but also in the animations and especially in the catchy tune that accompanied the video. All of it came together to create a hilarious effect that was reinforced, rather than distract, from the core message



Click on image to view the ad



Le Trèfle

Emma



French toilet paper manufacturer, Le Trèfle, released a TV commercial that pokes fun at our dependence on technology, while clearly making a point about how technology can't replace everything.

Within its first week post launch, the video garnered more than **one million views on YouTube**, increasing to nearly six million views over the next 4 months. The commercial shows a smug husband lightly reprimanding his wife for using paper for daily activities when he can easily

complete the task on his tablet / iPad. The ad ends with a hilarious twist, when the wife teaches him a lesson about how there are still certain things in the world that technology can't yet replace...well, like toilet paper!



Click on image to view the ad

Why it worked

- **Clean and simple messaging** - With only a single word script – “Emma” – the ad delivers a clear message, delivered in a very humorous manner
- **Relevant context** – The premise of the ad is one that almost all can relate to, and possibly, empathize with, making the humour in it more widely appealing



VeggieJen
@VeggieJen



Check out this hilarious French ad for Le Trefle. Not everything can be improved with technology. bit.ly/14DUJSY #Emma #LeTrefle

IN SUMMARY

The inclusion of humour in advertising helps attract attention and gain reach, and in some cases, create a positive emotional connect. But to make it truly effective as a viral catalyst and harness the engagement value that humour can add, there are some principles, like the ones stated above, that should not be forgotten.

With viral content having the potential to be both rewarding and destructive depending on audience reactions, care needs to be taken in ensuring that humour in branded content is well-targeted, within an appropriate context and simply explains & renders its objectives.

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