

THE

ABC OF

HUMOR



IN

BUSINESS

A TALK BOOK BY  
CHENDIL KUMAR



**This Talk Book  
is based on a  
talk delivered by  
Chendil Kumar  
at  
TEDx**

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**ABC**  
**OF**  
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**IN**  
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**CHENDIL KUMAR**



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# **WHY IS HUMOR SO NECESSARY?**

## **We learn best in moments of enjoyment.**

I was doing some research on the word school. It originates from the Greek word Skol, which means leisure.

It's a pity that schools don't resemble a play school anymore, but they are more rigorous, into a prison mode.

The fact is, unless you're able to enjoy yourself, you will not be able to learn anything.

## **Why is humor so necessary for life?**

It is necessary because Life is becoming so stressful, recession, people losing jobs.

I met a couple of friends both married to each other and I asked them, what did you have for breakfast today? They said:

***"Oh, the usual argument!!!"***



# **HUMOR IN BUSINESS**

I slightly hesitate to talk about humor in business circles because I thought that would be frivolous.

Many people told me that humor dilutes the message.

It is best reserved for dinner parties, or maybe in a standard comic session.

I was surprised, shocked and startled.

Pleasantly of course!

When I read a book called "*The levity effect*" by Scott Christopher. He has done some amazing research on humans in business and it is not a cock and bull story.

People have been promoted by using humor.

The point I'm trying to make is:

***"Humor is no more funny business.  
It's a lot of serious business."***



# THE “ABC” OF HUMOR

**How do we develop this  
humor quotient?**

**What is it?**

I'll give you a simple ABC to remember.

**A** stands for **Accuracy**.

**B** stands for **Brevity**.

**C** stands for **Clarity**.



**A  
FOR  
ACCURACY**

Whenever you're cracking a joke or using humor in your business presentations, make sure you have words that are precise.

### ***Accurate like a snake bite***

I did my engineering back home in India, in a university town called Manipal. I had a friend called Narayan Das. Let's call him Das for short.

Once at 2 AM, a snake bit him.

We rushed him to the hospital. The emergency ward was desolate, just a duty doctor and the nurse were languishing around.

Das goes and tells the doctor: "*A snake bit me*". The doctor asks: "*Which snake bit you?*".

Das pulled out the snake from his pocket and said: "*This snake bit me*".

The doctor ran to one side, the nurse ran the other, and the doctor had to be treated for multiple disorders.

Now, I simply can't figure out what the fuss was all about!

I thought Das gave a precise, accurate answer.

***"Which snake bit you?"***

***"This snake bit me"***

I urge you not to be as diabolic as my friend, but I hope you get the drift.

**Be very accurate in your humor.**

**Be  
Precisssssse!**





**B  
FOR  
BREVITY**

Whenever humor is applied in a short manner using short sentences, it has a much better effect.

Imagine somebody trying to tell you a joke with a long-winded message. It doesn't get you anywhere.

In a philosophy exam paper. The only question asked for 100 marks was why!

**"W.H.Y" - why?**

And the most interesting answer was:

***“Why not?”***

I think we can still debate for hours together on this exchange.

In fact, the briefest message that I've seen in my life is in a Wildlife Park; where on a notice board was written:

***“Trespassers will be eaten”.***



I don't think you can find a briefer message than this.

I would like to recall the story of Rosa Parks.

Rosa Parks was an Afro-American woman sitting on a bus in Alabama. She refused to get up when a white person entered, fully knowing that she'd be punished.

This was reported in the papers and that sowed the seeds for the civil uprising in the US. People like Dr. Martin Luther King picked it up and of course, it culminated in Obama becoming the president.

Dr. Martin Luther King paid an eloquent tribute to Rosa Parks in just one sentence. He said:

***“She sat, so we could stand”***

I thought that was brilliant!

The entire story in just one sentence.

The communication of humor and the use of short sentences has a dramatic effect.



**C**  
**FOR**  
**CLARITY**

## **The most important thing is clarity in humor.**

Many times, the humor gets dissipated, or it gets truncated.

This happens because I don't understand your language.

I think something, I say something else and you understand something totally different.



## **The MASTER and the DONKEY**

I put up a lot of skits for my college functions. In an annual day function, we put a skit called the "*Master and the Donkey*".

It was a very simple skit.

I used to be the master and there used to be one more person as the donkey.

The scene used to start like this :

### **SCENE ONE**

The donkey says,

*"Water, master, water"*.

I say,

*"Patience, donkey. Patience"*.

## SCENE TWO

*“Water, master, water”.*  
*“Patience, donkey. Patience”.*

## SCENE THREE

*“Water, master, water”.*  
*“Patience, donkey. Patience”.*

## SCENE FOUR

*“Water, master, water”*  
*“Patience, donkey, patience”.*

## SCENE SIX

*“Water, master, water”*  
*“Patience, donkey, patience”.*

Wondering what happened to SCENE 5?

***“Patience, Donkey, Patience!”***

This skit got a tremendous response. Very recently, a friend of mine connected on Facebook and said:

*“My name is Nischal Rao. I was the son of your professor. I was in school when you did this skit and let me tell you something.... Your skits were amazing. This “patience, donkey, patience” had a lasting impact on me so much so, that after that event.....*

*.....whenever I see a donkey I think of you.”*

Now, frankly, that was supposed to be a compliment.

If I had misunderstood, the humor would have been truncated.

There is so much difference between what you say and what the audience understands!

*“Hee hee, haw haw”*





# **THE ULTIMATE WRONG MESSAGE**

There was a Co-education college. Once, a parent entered the college and he was aghast to find boys and girls sitting closely and necking each other.

The parent was upset and complained to the principal.

*“How can you allow boys and girls to be so close and neck like this?”*

The next evening a communication went up on the college notice board.

*“The principal and the vice-principal have decided to stop necking from tomorrow.”*

Now, you can understand the different kinds of messages that this will generate.

**When you are attempting humor, be very careful about the clarity part.**

## **The more specific your humor, the more terrific it is!**

Boman Irani, a very famous actor from India, came to Dubai for an event. In the opening lines of his speech to the audience, he managed to establish a really good connection with the Dubai audience. His lines were:

*"Hey, it's wonderful. Coming to Dubai. In fact, I've been running around the place and I like the way you guys have priorities. You have a media city and internet city and the knowledge village".*

The whole audience erupted!

It was at the Palladium; the hall was full. He managed to understand the local sensitivity and then made the joke which was very humorous.

**More specific your humor is, more intense should be the audience analysis**

Audience analysis is very important. You need to understand who your audience is!

Preparing for a speech or presentation without the audience in mind is like you're writing a love letter

*“To whomsoever, it may concern”.*

Very difficult.

***To wit, to who?!***





There is something called the “*build up and burst effect*”. Build up a story and then give it a burst.

Three friends were talking.

The first guy says,

*"Last night, I had a fight with my wife, and she threw me out of the bed".*

The second friend says,

*"I had a fight with my wife, and she threw me out of the house".*

The third friend says,

*"I too had a fight with my wife, but she came to me crawling on her hands and knees".*

The other two friends are really shocked in admiration and say,

*"Hey, how did that happen?"*

*Well, she crawled up to me and said:*

*"How long are you going to hide under the bed, come out you coward!"*

\*\*\*

**The point is, if you're able to build up a story and then burst, it has a dramatic effect.**

Employ the power of three but one needs to be cautious here, the burst better be good!

After all the build up, if you give a dull message, then everything will go for a toss.

***Make Jokes.  
Not War.***





**THE  
SECOND-BEST  
THING YOU CAN  
DO WITH YOUR  
LIPS!**

**Smile** is the second-best thing you can do with your lips!

I have given you briefly the “ABC”, and also some simple techniques on being humorous.

Many people ask me, *"What do I have to do with this?"*

I take inspiration from a remarkable poem, a poem by Emily Dickinson.

*"If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not have lived in vain".*

What I feel is if one among you after reading this book comes and tells me:

*"Look here, you made me forget my worries for five minutes or minutes, five seconds";*

I don't think this book has been in vain.

Remember, there's so much seriousness in this life, and everybody takes themselves seriously and not the work seriously.

Let me remind you laughter is the shortest distance between two people.

**Don't you also forget,  
the smile is the  
second-best thing  
you can do with  
your lips?**

**Right?**

## **About Chendil Kumar**

For over 20 years, CK has been a much sought-after speaker in diverse forums like leadership summits of Fortune 100 companies, five TEDx forums in India and Dubai and international and national conferences of service organizations like Rotary and Lions.

Speaking on “*Influence without Authority*” and “*Change - Do We Have a Choice*” to corporate audiences, CK makes a compelling case for Change-readiness and the importance of personal pillar in influencing skills.

Contemporary examples, best practices across industries and anecdotes make his talks gripping and relatable. His unique skill lies in using humor without diluting or trivializing the content.

CK enjoys talking about humor and has presented a paper on humor in Business at the American Association of Therapeutic Humor (AATH) in Chicago in 2011.

He has spoken in multiple forums on the importance of Humor in enhancing productivity and improving relationships.

He has conducted several humor workshops in India, UAE, Malaysia and USA titled '*STAND UP, SPEAK UP and SHUT UP*' by making the participants attempt humor on stage with constructive feedback.

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**Chendil Kumar** is a  
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