

Creativity is within reach

Just find out what everyone else is doing—and don't do it!

A client of ours, John Westman, had been looking for a creative way to deliver a message of love to his wife on her 35th birthday—he'd heard about the idea of a sign behind a small airplane, or spelling it out in a wheat field, or hiring a group of singers to deliver the greeting.

He wanted it to be unique, and he came up with an even more creative way—roses. Roses? Yes, roses. Typically a dozen, but how about 35 roses? Now that's thinking big! But it was the creative way John did it that gave those 35 roses such impact.

She was to pick him up from a Southwest Airlines flight at Love Field in Dallas on his return from a business trip to Phoenix.

In the boarding lounge at Sky Harbor Airport in Phoenix, John began asking his fellow passengers — complete strangers — to help him. John was not only creative, he was *prepared* with a great plan.

He explained that he had bought 35 beautiful red roses and wanted 34 people to each give his wife, Jan, a rose, and wish her a happy birthday.

He explained to his helpers how he'd be at the door of the jet as they deplaned, and would give them each a rose as they left, so no one had to hold it during the flight.

He showed them a photo of Jan so that the first few passengers off the plane could correctly identify her, and of course, once she had two or three roses, the rest would know exactly who she was. Sure enough, 34 passengers agreed to help, and the Southwest Airlines flight attendant, after hearing about his plan, made frequent



announcements during the flight, which added even further to the excitement and anticipation!

When they landed at Love Field, Jan was waiting in the boarding area (this was prior to 9-11) for what she expected to be just another warm welcome hug from John and then to head home. But John stood at the exit door on the jetway where she couldn't see him, giving out the roses. As she looked for him to deplane a stranger approached her and said, "Jan?"

"Yes," she smiled, and he handed her a rose and said "Happy Birthday!"

Shocked and speechless, she stared at him and then the next passenger approached her followed by the third, fourth, fifth and sixth, each saying "Happy Birthday, Jan" and giving her a rose.

Soon people in the boarding area began clapping with each rose, and by the 20th rose, Jan was crying tears of joy.

Finally after everyone had deplaned came John, followed by the Southwest Captain and the flight attendant. And to the delight of a cheering crowd of strangers, John Westman gave Jan the 35th rose, and a big hug and kiss.

Do you think Jan Westman ever will forget her 35th birthday at Love Field?

Now that's practical creativity—and one loving husband! Thank you, John, for sharing your application of how you "*found out what everyone else was doing — and didn't do it!*"



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Attention: All Personnel

Excessive absences — a humorous approach to a serious subject

With all the controversy over America's recent health care reform, here's the creative way one company decided to deal with it. Wouldn't it be fun to work for a company like this? Here's what their memo said.

Due to the excessive number of absences, the following rules and procedures will be put into effect immediately:

1. *Sickness.* We will no longer accept your doctor's statement as proof you are sick, as we believe that if you are able to go to the doctor, you are able to come to work.

2. *Leave of Absence for Operation.* We are no longer allowing operations, as we believe that as long as you are an employee here, you will need all of whatever you have and you should not consider having anything removed. We hired you as you are and to have anything removed would certainly make you less than we bargained for.

3. *Accidents.* First aid in most instances will be treated during normal breaks; however, application of splints, hemorrhage control and artificial respiration may be done at other times, work load permitting.

4. *Death. (Other than your own.)* This is no excuse. There is nothing you can do for them, and there is always someone else with a lesser position that can tend to the arrangements. However, if the funeral can be held in the late afternoon, we will be glad to let you off one hour early, provided that your share of the work is done ahead of time so as to keep the job going in your absence.

5. *Death (Your Own).* This will be accepted as an excuse, but 2 weeks notice is required, as we feel it is your duty to teach someone else your job.



6. It has also come to our attention that employees dying on the job are failing to fall down. This practice must stop, as it becomes impossible to distinguish between death and the natural movement of the staff. Any employee found dead in an upright position will be dropped from the payroll.

7. Also, entirely too much time is being spent in the restroom. In the future, we will follow the practice of going in alphabetical order. For instance, those whose names begin with "A" will go from 8:00 to 8:15; "B" will go from 8:15 to 8:30 and so on. If you are unable to go at your appointed time, it will be necessary to wait until the next day when your turn comes up again.

The management.

Here's what you can do:

Be on the lookout for humorous ways to deal with a difficult situation, whether at work, at home or at play.

Charlie Plumb's laugh

You can survive with humor

People often ask, "Joel, isn't a sense of humor a special gift that only some people have?" I don't think so. You can cultivate a great sense of humor if you want to. It's really a matter of *deciding*.

The dictionary defines humor as "the ability to see the funny or amusing side of things." But I like to stretch that a bit farther and say that humor is the ability *to laugh at things you can't change*. That definition of the word humor was given to me by a man named Charlie Plumb. A number of years ago Charlie and I had lunch together, and he told me about some of his experiences as a United States Air Force pilot during the Vietnam War. He learned the meaning and value of humor after he was shot down over enemy territory, parachuted to the ground and was soon captured by the Viet Cong.

After six months of severe torture, he felt he couldn't take it any longer. Life seemed utterly unbearable, and Charlie prayed to die. Then, after another beating, he was trucked to a different prison and thrown into a tiger cage, where he slowly regained consciousness. As he told me, it took hours just to open his swollen eyes and focus his vision. But finally, when he could see, he noticed a circle carved in the stone wall just outside of his cage. Beneath the circle were some words. He strained to make out their meaning, and what he finally read changed his life.

There, carved into the wall of what must have seemed like the pit of hell, were these words: *Smile, you're on candid camera!*



Charlie said he laughed. He laughed for hours. His despair was lifted, because where there is laughter, there is hope. Charlie realized that another American in that same tiger cage had retained his sense of humor and had laughed at a situation he couldn't change.

That one hearty laugh helped Charlie survive 2,103 days... nearly six years of captivity. He survived, just as you can survive almost any ordeal that you might have to face — with the help of humor!

Here's what you can do: *Actually begin to take notice of how many times a day you DO laugh, and how many times a day you're able to make someone else laugh. By simply becoming more aware of it, you'll automatically begin finding more things to laugh about.*

Before you come to the breakfast table in the morning, pause and ask yourself, "What funny thing could I do or say this morning to make someone laugh?" Your sense of humor is a lot like a muscle—it must be exercised in order to develop. The more you USE it, the more powerful it becomes.

Before long, you'll notice that your co-workers and customers are actually conditioned to your positive humor, and will probably light up and smile as soon as they see you, before you've even said or done anything funny. They'll look forward to seeing you, because they'll know they can count on you to brighten their day!



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