

# From the heart of ancient Polynesia

## A lesson for busy Americans—work and have fun too

A number of years ago, a United States Peace Corps volunteer, teaching English on one of the tiny, remote Tongan islands in Polynesia, learned a valuable lesson that you too might benefit from.

His class was giving him fits—giggling and playing as usual, and, as far as he could see, refusing to do any serious work. He asked them to “*stop the nonsense.*” Threatening punishment, he ordered them to “*get down to business.*” He pleaded with them to “*be responsible for once.*”

Finally, in utter frustration, he turned his back on the class, walked to the door and stared out at the sea. “*You’re so difficult to understand,*” he mumbled to himself.

“*No. Easy to understand,*” came the unexpected response from one of the students. “*We work and have fun too.*”

Do you work and have fun too? Or are you so busy working hard that enjoyment just doesn’t seem possible?

Well, enjoyment is possible, and it usually doesn’t require any extra time! Rather, it’s an attitude—a way of thinking about yourself and your work.

Today, many of us are so concerned with speed—efficiency, effectiveness, schedules, deadlines, and requirements—that enjoying our work has become a very low priority. In contrast, Tongans believe it is most important to enjoy their work and to share that pleasure with each



other. To them, the beauty of almost any job lies not in the tangible results, but rather in smiling, laughing, and singing *while* they work.

Doing your work well and on time is very important, but so is deriving pleasure from that work. When you consciously enjoy what you are doing, your work itself improves. Your associates are affected by your good “vibrations” and work becomes more pleasurable for them too.

So, from the heart of ancient Polynesia comes a valuable lesson for busy Americans: work and have fun too!

**Here’s what you can do:** *Remain aware of what it is you enjoy about your work and your surroundings. Display your pleasure so others can benefit from it too. Make someone laugh today. Look for the humor in situations to break the tension. Don’t take yourself too seriously — laugh at yourself more. If you don’t think you have anything to laugh about, get out your high school graduation picture!*



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# Read me! Read me!

## Sharp, effective writing—for fun and profit

Enticing your readers with written words is fun. It's also profitable—emotionally and financially. Well-written letters help you build better relationships with your friends and family. Clear, accurate memos and reports can boost your career. Sharp, effective writing attracts attention like a neon sign on a desolate country road at night. It says, "Read me! Read me!" So don't just sharpen your pencil. Sharpen up your writing too.

The following 118 word U.S. Senate excerpt was actually written. And you paid for it!

*"What we ought to do now, obviously, is suspend all activity until we can hold a plebiscite to select a plan that will appoint a commission authorized to hire a new team of experts to re-study the feasibility of compiling an index of all the committees that have, in the past, inventoried and catalogued the various studies aimed at finding out what happened to all the policies that were scrapped when the new policies were decided on by somebody else. Once that problem is out of the way, I think we could go full steam ahead with some preliminary plans for a new study, financed with Federal funds, to find out why nothing can be done right now."*

A Federal directive to regulate the price of cabbage actually contains 26,911 words! Did you happen to read it? Probably not. Most people wouldn't read it even if it were printed on the front page of their daily newspaper!

But have you heard of the Gettysburg Address? Sure! You can probably recite the opening phrase: "Fourscore and seven years ago..." And the reason you remember it so well is that it contained a mere 266 very well-chosen words! Abraham Lincoln made every word count, and in doing so, showed how meaningful a message can be when it is presented simply and precisely.

Communicating efficiently was a way of life for Lincoln. He often expressed dismay at others who made no effort to speak or write with brevity and clarity.

On one occasion, Lincoln requested a committee report on a new gun. After several months the report was submitted, and Lincoln was overwhelmed by its length. After leafing through it, he tossed it on his desk and said, "Why can't a committee of this kind occasionally exhibit a grain of common sense? If I send a man to buy a horse for

me, I expect him to tell me his fine points, not how many hairs there are in his tail!"

How about **your** communication skills? Would Lincoln be dismayed by the way you speak and write?

### Here's what you can do:

1. *Read more. Writing is book-talk, and you learn book-talk by reading.*
2. *Think before you write. Simplify the relationships between ideas before you attempt to express them.*
3. *Write the most important thing first. Don't back in with, "I'm writing to tell you about..." Just tell it!*
4. *If you are blocked, write anything at all that comes to mind. Later you can organize and edit ruthlessly.*
5. *Avoid passives. Use active verbs. Don't write, "It is not known." Write, "I don't know!"*
6. *Refer to people directly. "You," "I," or "we" make your writing warmer and more genuine.*
7. *Use "first-degree" words. "Use" is first degree. "Employ" and "utilize" are second-degree.*
8. *Avoid jargon and cliches. Make your writing sparkle with personality. Use your own words.*
9. *Read your writing aloud. Awkward or long-winded sentences will jump off the page at you when you read them aloud.*
10. *Keep your sentences short and varied. If you average more than 25 words per sentence, your reader will desert you. That's been proven scientifically. If you write a long sentence, make the next one short. Like this.*
11. *Re-read your memos and eliminate any unnecessary words. Be vigilant! Watch for meaningless, redundant phrases.*  
*"...a good variety..." (there must be bad ones, too?)*  
*"...circulate around..." (where else?)*  
*"...advance warning..."*  
*(as opposed to warning after the fact?)*  
*"...starts over again..." (have you ever started under again?)*  
*"...mandatory requirements..."*  
*(there are optional requirements?)*  
*"...my own personal feelings..."*  
*(this guy has impersonal feelings, too?)*  
*"...at this point in time..." (how about now?)*

# Record spaghetti harvest

## Fifty years ago and still holds the record!

Richard Dimbleby was the respected host of a British news show. One morning he broadcast a segment about a bumper spaghetti harvest in southern Switzerland. His audience heard the details of the spaghetti crop as they watched a rural Swiss family pulling pasta off spaghetti trees and placing it into baskets. He informed his audience that the warm weather was a factor but it was mostly due to the disappearance of the spaghetti weevil, the tiny creature that had devastated past crops, especially in Italy.

Thousands of calls flooded Dimbleby's switchboard. Confused? Don't be! It was April 1<sup>st</sup>—April Fools Day 1957. Yes, exactly fifty years ago Dimbleby's show hit the air and gained worldwide attention. Today, according to the Museum of Hoaxes, this rates as the most effective April Fools joke of all time, even after fifty years.

Bringing humor into your life can help you in so many ways—not the least of which is that you'll laugh. When you laugh great things happen inside of you. That positive response, according to Dr. Perry Buffington, can last 45 minutes after each laugh.

Here are a few of the other all time best April Fool's jokes put on by some normally serious business people.

The BBC announced that because Pluto will be behind Jupiter at 9:47 am it would cause a loss of gravity on earth, and if you jumped at that exact

moment, you'd float around the room! Thousands called in to the BBC saying "It worked."

Burger King's full page ad described a "Left Handed Whopper" specifically designed for America's 32 million left-handed citizens. Then thousands came in to Burger King restaurants saying, "I'm right handed—could I get a Right Handed Whopper?"

"Alabama Changes the Numerical Value of Pi" said the headline. Yes, it claimed, the Alabama State Legislature has voted to change the mathematical constant pi from 3.14 to a simpler Biblical value of just plain 3. Calls of protest flooded the state Capital!

Or how about this one—claiming that the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia has been renamed the "The Taco Liberty Bell." The hoax said that Taco Bell had paid millions for the name change, and hundreds of outraged citizens protested in the National Historic Park in Philadelphia, where the bell is housed, to express their anger. April Fool!

OK, these are some pretty big April Fools jokes that impacted millions of people. Why not impact just one or two of your friends and do something silly this month—just thinking about doing something humorous will cause you to lighten up! William James, one of America's greatest thinkers, said "We don't laugh because we're happy, we're happy because we laugh." And that's no April Fools joke!

# A smile

## It costs nothing, yet creates so much—so give it away!

It enriches those who receive, without impoverishing those who give.

It happens in a flash and the memory of it sometimes lasts forever.

No one is so wealthy he can get along without it, and no one is so poor that he will not be enriched by its benefits.

It creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business, and is the countersign of friends.

It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and nature's best antidote for trouble.

**Here's what you can do:** *If, in the hurry and rush of the day, you meet someone too weary to give you a smile, leave one of yours. Nobody needs a smile so desperately as the person who thinks he has none left to give. Your supply is unlimited, unlimited, unlimited, unlimited, unlim*



# Thanks, for nothing

## A reminder: don't forget your customers!

A gentleman was driving through the Arizona desert when he saw another fellow at the side of the highway, his thumb in the air and a gas can at his feet. It was 110 degrees outside. "That poor guy's gonna melt!" thought the driver, so he pulled over.

"Thank you, thank you," panted the hitchhiker. "I've been out here all day. But I don't want to spill this gas in your car. The can doesn't have a lid."

"No problem," said the driver. He just opened the trunk, wedged the gas can in, slammed it shut, and they took off.

As they drove, the hitchhiker recounted his miserable experience. "It's been six hours since I ran out of gas. It took four hours to get back to the last station. It was another two hours before you came along, and I sure appreciate your stopping. Boy, I'm glad that's over!"

The driver felt like a genuine saint.

"Oh, there's my car," said the hitchhiker, so they stopped and exchanged pleasantries.

With a little salute and a big self-satisfied smile, the driver zoomed off down the highway.

That evening when the driver reached his destination and opened his car trunk, he was struck dumb by the sight of the gas can, still wedged in behind the luggage!

**Here's what you can do:** *Forget yourself and focus on your customer's needs and situation. Remember that at the heart of it all, you are there to serve your customers. Check for gas tanks in your trunk!*



# You arx a kxy pxrson

## Your attitudx toward yoursxlf affxcts vxvryonx— rxmxbxr, you'rx a wlnnxr

This kxyboard works quitx wxll xcxpt for onx of thx kxys. It is trux thxrx arx 41 kxys that function wxll xnough,—but just onx kxy not working makxs thx diffxrxncx.

Somxtimxs it sxxms our organization is somxwhat likx this typxwritxr; not all thx pxoplx arx working proprly. You may say to yoursxlf, "Wxll, I am only onx pxrson. I won't makx or brxak a program." But it doxs makx a diffxrxncx bxcaus any program, to bx xffctivx, nxxds thx activx participation of vxvry pxrson.

So thx nxxt timx you think you arx only onx pxrson and your xfforts arx not nxxdxd, rxmxbxr this kxyboard and say to yoursxlf, "I am a kxy pxrson in our organization and I am nxxdxd vxry much."

**Here's what you can do:** *The key to being a winner is often found in the "little things." Keep a shoebox full of mementos, awards or items of recognition you've received. Include photographs and newspaper clippings. Pull it out occasionally and remind yourself that you rxally arx a kxy pxrson!*



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