

# Don't Be So Serious: Tips for Using Humour in Dental Marketing

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by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing

Is your dental practice's blog following waning, your social media engagement rate low, or your website content lacklustre? What is missing? The answer could be a good laugh! Research has proven humour to be an effective marketing technique. However, yours is a unique industry, and dental problems are no laughing matter. Does humour have a place in dental marketing? The short answer is yes, with a few precautions and possible exceptions.

## Why some dental practices avoid humorous marketing

Every dental practice has its own unique personality, which should be reflected in its online presence. No marketing tactic – including humour – is suitable for every practice. However, give it some serious (pun intended) thought before discounting the idea.

If you do not include the occasional lighthearted blog post or social media joke, ask yourself why.

There are three common reasons dentists avoid humour in marketing:

1. *It does not come naturally.* We tend to use a more formal communication style when writing or speaking on camera versus having a casual conversation. You might spontaneously crack a joke in the office, but it would never enter your mind while creating a social post. Additionally, not everyone is a comedian. Maybe you wouldn't make a joke at all.

Either way, you (or your content creator) might not be avoiding humour deliberately. If it fits your brand, you can outsource content to incorporate humour without having to create it.

2. *It feels unprofessional.* You strive to present an image of professionalism, knowledgeability, and trustworthiness. It is easy to confuse that concept with being "all business." In reality, you can be highly professional and casual – even funny – simultaneously. Again, consider the example of joking around in the office. Of course, you would not say something offensive, inappropriate, or unprofessional to a patient. And, when engaging in casual conversation, you realize that tasteful humour is none of those things.

Yet, when creating and reviewing content, you might feel the need to be serious and formal. It is important to remember that social media users like content and interactions that flow like casual conversations. Take an informal tone, relax, and make a joke – talk to your audience like you would speak to a friendly patient in your office.

3. *Your practice maintains a carefully cultivated uber-serious* This is the only good reason to totally avoid the use of humour. Once more, we will go back to the example of making an appropriate, tasteful, lighthearted joke to a patient. Did the thought make you gasp? If humour has absolutely no place in your practice, then it likely has no place in your marketing.

## Why is funny important?

Maybe you've decided that a few laughs might not be harmful to your marketing. The next question is, what would it accomplish? More than you might expect.

Your content should provide value to the audience. That is what distinguishes content marketing from promotional materials. Typically, this means educating, informing, showing appreciation, entertaining with interactive content, or even creating contests with prizes. Never underestimate the *value of humour*.

We've all heard that laughter is good medicine, an adage that is backed up by research. However, it is not just the physical act of laughing that impacts a person, but also the neurological effects of humour itself. Several studies have examined what exactly happens in the brain when something strikes a person funny. They found that the humour response triggers the brain's reward circuit. This is the same neurological system that is activated by enjoying a good meal, sex, or other pleasurable, gratifying activity.

If your audience finds your jokes funny, you have provided significant value. Furthermore, your content provided a rewarding experience, so the reader is likely to return. Regular readers become fans who become advocates of your brand.

## **Pitfalls to avoid**

Using humour as a marketing tactic can be fantastically successful. It can also go wrong. Very wrong. Be sure that you avoid these marketing mistakes:

- **Offensive or otherwise controversial topics** – In the world of professional comedy, controversy is often embraced. This is not professional comedy. It is a dental practice, and all the standard rules of public relations apply.
- **Political jokes** – No matter how popular your opinion is, some people will disagree. Unless you are prepared to forfeit those people and their families as patients, keep politics out of it.
- **Random topics** – Your social feed should be cohesive and applicable to your audience and niche. That does not mean you are restricted to the topic of dentistry. However, there needs to be some reason it is relevant. For example, a pediatric dentist might post memes about the adventures of parenthood. A dentist in Los Angeles might share a joke about traffic jams. On the other hand, something about a very specific hobby is probably only relevant to a small portion of your audience.
- **All jokes** – Yes, you can be professional and still have funny moments. But you cannot be taken seriously if you never or rarely take a serious tone. Humour is great to spice your dental marketing recipe, but it should not be the main ingredient.

## **Final thoughts – laughing off fear**

Humour is a good marketing tactic in many industries, and dentistry is no exception. In fact, it offers a unique benefit – laughter is an excellent antidote to fear. Adding a little humour to your branding strategy can help combat the all-too-common problem of dental phobia.

**About the Author:**

Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by clicking <https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.

