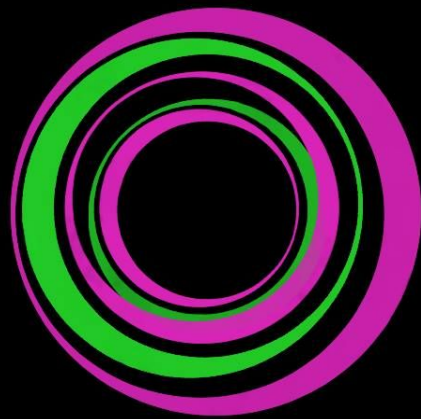


Have Your Way With Words



Humour Formulas

How I Write Funny

Jon Buchan

CHARM
OFFENSIVE.

Introduction

- This session runs through my process for writing copy and some of the common devices I use when writing.
- The key is all in the structure.
- The setup is as important as the punchline.
- You get a sense for the rhythm with practice.

The Writing Process

My simple writing routine

The process

- First draft
- Meditate / go for a walk / don't write
- Write down ideas
- Review copy. Find humour opportunities
- Meditate / go for a walk / don't write
- Edit again

First draft

- If you have an idea for what you want to write, start writing.
- If you don't, start writing anyway. Anything.
- Don't edit typos. Don't edit anything. STOP!
- Keep writing.
- Keep writing.
- Keep writing.
- ... You get the picture.

Do 'nothing'

- Step away from the keyboard
- Go for a walk. Meditate. Have a bath. Go do 'nothing'.
- Ideas may come to you. Note them down.

Review draft

- Add any ideas you have to the end of your draft.
- Review your copy and see where you can change the structure of your sentences to add humour.
- Can you add a triple? Or a reverse? Or a funny word? Or something else?
- Open thesaurus.com. Can you improve your word choice?

Making Funny

How I make otherwise boring copy entertaining

Cold email example

- My friend is a musician and wanted to book a gig at a venue in London.
- He told me about his band. They're unusual!
- I told him to create a fake poster and I'd work on the copy.

Greetings {venue name/or manager's first name},

I wanted to introduce my band in a way that showed we were interesting, witty and the perfect fit for {establishment}. Alas, I created this poster instead:

EUROPEAN TOUR 2017

SNAKE PIT, SWINDON 15 JULY

SPUD'S BALLROOM, PARIS 26 JULY

RUSTY'S, BENIDORM 7 AUG

GRANDMA LAND, ICELAND 12 AUG

BEST BOY FAIR, CRETE 18 AUG

"I really like what they do with the butter"
-Trip advisor 2016

"I was offended to my very core"
-Daily Mail

Rather predictably, I'm emailing you because I want to perform at {venueName}. If you agree to at least humour me, I'll treat you to a Bronson Cocktail*. Don't worry, there's no butter in it. I'll even tell you some random trivia about my band's hometown that will be borderline fascinating.

Let me get the details over using the wonder of bullet points:

- We are an intense synth punk band from Bedfordshire. (Think "Sleaford Mods" but less good and MORE shit! Sounds *tantalising* eh?!)
- We've just come back from playing shows in the West Coast of Australia. We were not deported. We came back of our own accord. I promise.
- I'm biased, but I do believe you should check out this live video of us: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaK1CzBEa2o&t=80s>. Recorded live that is.
We're not still playing.

I really love {venueName}. If you could make this happen, it would make my minute, week and century. We would put on a great performance and we would do our utmost best to put bums in seats.

If nothing else, we've already made most of the poster for you. We can amend this to your needs. Just as long as one of those needs isn't removing our band from it.

I await your baffled response with great interest.

Have an absolutely splendid day,

Sir Henrique.

*Feel free to have a shot of Jagermeister or whatever you like instead.

Promo post example

- I wanted to promote my free guide on humour writing.
- I needed an amusing title.
- I needed to the post itself to be distinct and amusing and to persuade people to check the guide out.
- All you need is a few simple tricks to add levity to an otherwise boring post.

Understatement

✓ How To Be Somewhat Funny - Free Mini Guide

Do you want to learn how to write funnier copy?

Incongruence

"yeah ok i guess" I hear you SCREAM!

Inference

Triple

I've pieced together this suspiciously generous little guide to help you weaponise disarming copy to elicit smirks, smiles, and haha-emojis.

It contains:

✓ 12 easy to use joke formulas to add humour to your copy.

✓ 5 writing exercises to help you find your funny and practice while nobody is watching (unless you're into that kinda thing, you kinkster!)

✓ An analysis of the hilarious viral ad for Dollar Shave Club, some viral Facebook posts and my own attempts at satire.

Absurd Inference

Funny Word

Playful Assumption

✓ Other dastardly things that I can't easily summarise in one line. I'll let your mind work overtime thinking about what delectable treats I may or may not have in store for you...

You can find a link in the comments below.

Ambiguous (Wordplay)

Get it and you'll never have to worry about people laughing at your attempts at funny copy again.

Edited cliché

Please use irresponsibly.

Cheers,

Jon

PR campaign example

- I needed to get PR coverage for my client.
- I had full creative reign to do anything I want.
- I knew I could create something 'extreme' to get attention.
- I created an over the top, brutally honest job advert. This uses understatement, exaggeration, specificity and incongruence.

Full job advert

UNI GRADUATES - YOUR DREAM*JOB IS HERE! LOOK NO FURTHER!

YOU: Desperate. Demoralised. Potential drinking problem or full-blown alcoholic, we are an equal opportunity employer.

ME: At the end of my tether. Need sidekick/hench(wo)man to do admin tasks I've been putting off since the coalition was in power.

Benefits

- Flexible working hours. We start at 11am. Morning people need not apply.
- Access to our selection of booze from our "drinking globe" which currently includes an intimidatingly large bottle of Bucksfast.
- Pick your own job title! You can become our "Junior Vice President of Sales". The only catch is douchey titles such as "Head of Innovation" are prohibited. I'm doing this for your own good.
- HUGE autonomy! You can do almost anything to help make me more money. No micromanagement here.
- You will learn a vast array of brand new and exciting ways to incorporate profanity into day to day business conversations.
- This job will enable you to quit your job in retail/hospitality and brag to your pals about your new found superiority and the fact that you can now wear a cheap suit with dodgy plastic heeled shoes.
- When you decide to move on to another role, I will provide a gushing and over the top reference that puts most modern fiction to shame.

The ideal candidate

- Has a "flexible" view of what constitutes "healthy drinking habits".
- Despises authority in all of its guises. This will include me.
- You despise meditation, yoga, self-help, healthy eating and other tosh.
- Has deep contempt for the corporate world and all it represents.
- Wants to live the Monaco lifestyle on a Wetherspoons budget.
- Knows the customer isn't always right - but is able put on a convincing phoney obsequious tone on command.
- Has a thick-skin akin to an ageing, battle-tired rhinoceros.
- Can put on a convincing Jordan Belfort impression, minus the fraud.

BASE PAY: 25k plus performance related bonuses. I make more money - you make more money.

I am not going to be your mentor. You shouldn't look up to anyone. Nobody has this shit figured out.

To apply, send an email to info@skylineoffices.co.uk with an most honest opening gambit that will make either disturb me to my core or make me laugh maniacally.

YOU WILL MOST LIKELY NOT REGRET IT!

Stay vigilant,

Max

*Your definition of "DREAM JOB" may be different to mine.

Cold email to PR Directors

- I needed to get the attention of PR and communications directors.
- I know these contacts would recognise the press release format, so I created a self referential parody press release. A press release about the very press release I was sending them.
- I used the structure of a press release, and added in various humour formulas.

Triple - Absurdity

Words in their mouth

Figurative/Literal

Funny word

Words in their mouth

Edited cliché

Immediate retraction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Charm Offensive CEO Reaches Out To Director of Communications of Sony Music UK.

London, England – January 16, 2017 - In an unexpected move, Jon Buchan, CEO, Charm Offensive is believed to have sent a completely unsolicited letter to Indy Vee, Director of Communications, Sony Music UK. It is understood that Mr Buchan is offering advice, support and a "priceless" gift - a sticker containing an amusing picture of a dog wearing a top hat and a monocle.

Ms Vee had been finalising "an extremely innovative campaign" when the news broke.

"I'm not sure exactly what is going on at this point," said Ms Vee. "Until today, I'd never even heard of Mr Buchan or his brilliant agency."

In recent months, Mr Buchan has "been shouting from the rooftops that his agency's "Content Stunt" offering is a valuable addition to the toolkit of any modern PR or marketing professional." At press time, he had safely returned to his desk, deciding it would be a better use of this time to write directly to potential clients.

Ms Vee has not yet decided whether to take the baffling but kind hearted approach seriously.

"I'm a little suspicious this whole affair is just a stunt to drum up business for Mr Buchan's agency."

At the time of reading, it is unknown whether Ms Vee will respond to Mr Buchan or just throw this piece of paper in the trash before getting on with actual work.

About

Charm Offensive is a daring agency filled with creative individuals far more talented than Mr Buchan. Our capacity to build spectacular, interactive, animated and sentient* content could be a useful weapon to add to your arsenal.

*We have not as yet been able to develop content capable of thoughts and feelings.

Contact

Jon Buchan
Charm Offensive
3rd Floor
207 Regent Street
London
W1B 3HH
www.charm-offensive.co.uk
[@jonbuchan](https://twitter.com/jonbuchan)

###

Sales letter example

- I had to write a sales letter that proved I could write funny.
- I created an over the top, 'anti-hype' sales letter that replaced 'hype' with brutal honesty.
- I wrote it over a period of a few days, adding more humour and editing the existing copy to deliver more funny lines.
- The next few slides look at a few parts of the sales letter and reveals the humour formulas and devices used.

WARNING: This page is deceptively honest, containing a complete lack of the usual elements any competent marketer would include to cajole you into **TAKING ACTION NOW.**

Well, I may be a marketer, but I'll be damned if anyone calls me a competent one!

I've been involved in the world of digital business for 18 years. In that time, people have often told me I'm not doing the things "the right way", and for exactly the same amount of time, I've been taking no notice.

Welcome to what is allegedly the sales letter for my disarming copywriting course, **Have Your Way With Words.**

I've been putting off writing this damned thing.

I think it's because I'm afraid it's not gonna work.

My plan is to write a landing page devoid of hype. I want to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and a few jokes because I have a problem. I can't resist. I have a sickness!

And if this honest page doesn't work, I'm going to be faced with the reality, that you, the customer, deep down, isn't sold on honest sales letters.

You want hype.

You want me to say something like:

Imagine if you could write copy so disarming, entertaining and captivating, that people will respond to your cold emails, share your delectable content, and have strangers and strange friends alike come up to you in the street and ask:

“Oh my gosh, Cornelius, When did you become such an incredible writer?! Is there some kind of online course or something you took? You can really tell the difference! Money well spent!”*

*For best results, change "Cornelius" to your own name when picturing the above scenario.

I can't do it.

I can't write hypey copy.

I'd rather beat my skin wafer thin with a meat tenderiser... and I'm absolutely terrified you're going to force me into it.

So here we are. I'm violating pretty much every possible rule for writing sales letters with reckless abandon, hoping you'll summon the courage to join me on this rebellious journey. And by "join me on this rebellious journey", I mean "hand me your hard earned money as soon as possible without hesitation."

Strategic Satire - Got an opinion? Want to prove that other people on the Internet are wrong? This session will show you how to use satire to put those wrong people in their place in the smartest, smuggest, and most satisfying way possible.

Cold Pitching That Doesn't Absolutely Suck - Learn how to write to important strangers and have them respond with "Oh my god, I loved your email! We should be business friends. How do we work together?" instead of "NEVER EVER EMAIL ME AGAIN, YOU FILTHY MISCREANT!"

Palatable Social Media Ads - Want to advertise on Facebook (or another social network)? Don't want to become another one of those obnoxious douchebags that interrupt your newsfeed with their trite nonsense? This session is for you.

Broadcast Emails That Don't Make You Hate Yourself - Learn how to write disarming emails that educate, entertain, and sell without having to type sentences that make you think "Ughhhhh! Where did I go wrong in my life? I'm not the person I thought I was. I should just end it all right now. "

WARNING: Do not buy this product if:

1. You're someone who says things like "Word of advice: You should be more professional" without a hint of parody.
2. **You think smiling, laughing or making feeling people feel good are vastly overrated. (See point 1.)**
3. You're foaming at the mouth with rage because I conflated point 2 with point 1.
4. **You loathe truth in marketing and advertising.**
5. You believe blandness is a quality deserving of reverence.

1-2-1 Coaching

1-2-1 sessions are one hour long. You submit your copy. I provide recommendations. We run through them on the call. You ask any questions you want.

For the top end package, you will also have access to me over email and messenger for 3 months. If you insist, I will pester you, regularly emailing you to demand you send me your attempts at disarming copy.

The size of my font will increase with each ignored email. As will the creativity of my insults. You have been warned!

Parody software advert

- I created this just for fun. It was to vent after being annoyed at a client with an overzealous 'brand police' department.
- They are the clear 'target' of the humour.
- I've taken their role, and made it into a terrifying piece of software.
- It uses the structure of an advert to lampoon the target of my humour.



Stop daring ideas before they catch on!

BRAND NEW FEATURES IN VERSION TWO

1. Add an **unlimited** number of **pointless tweaks!**
2. Ability to delay creative progress by **weeks, months or even years.**
3. Upload your own list of banned words instantly for **quick** and **comprehensive censorship.**
4. New and improved speedy social media messaging approval process - **as quick as five weeks!**
5. Print your own **brand bible wall charts** to provide **constant** reminders of **creative constraints.**

"Fortune Favours The Meek" - Protect Your Brand Today!

Check out these moderately interesting testimonials:

"I used to have to spend hours arguing my case against people with ideas and stuff. Now the process is automated and we are 100% brand bible compliant with 100% of our marketing and advertising! The results have been incredible, to say the least! Nobody says anything negative about our brand anymore! - or anything at all really. A job well done!"

- **Brenda Staleston, Junior Vice President of Middle Management, Withering Corporation Plc**

"Amazing bit of kit. Forces absolute conformity across all marketing and advertising campaigns with flawless efficiency. This cautious risk-averse approach is what entrepreneurship is all about."

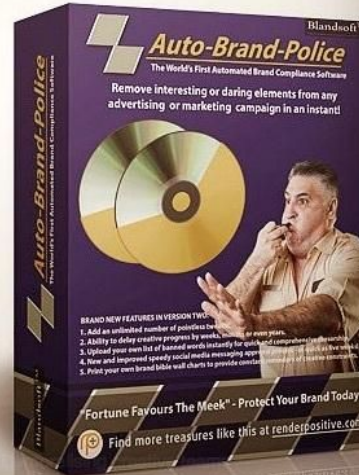
- **Irwin Boreson, Head Jobsworth, Bland Name Ltd**

"WOW. This works. Compliance issues resolved in seconds. Better than Success!!! Can I say that? It's a play on words... but it may offend someone or even more than one person. I'm sorry if I offended anyone. Sorry." - **Tony Loshope,**

Senior Brand Officer, Safety First Adventures Ltd

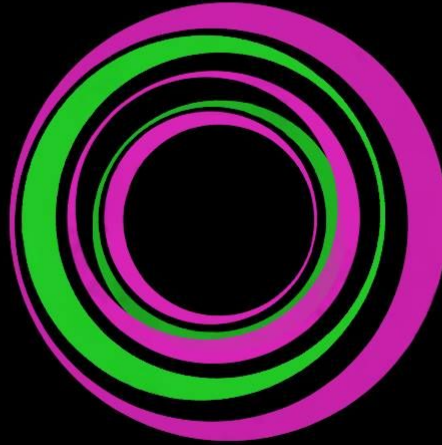
We cannot be found on any social media platforms
but visit our website at www.autobrandpolice.com

"Demoralising Creative Teams Together"



CHARM
OFFENSIVE.

Have Your Way With Words



Thank You

Jon Buchan

CHARM
OFFENSIVE.