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## Humor becomes part of CPA firm's identity



[Jim Kendall](#)

It's more often a knowing smile than a knee slapping, laugh-out-loud response, but the fact that humor exists on a CPA firm's website is worth exploring. Humor can be tough.

"Oh, dear God! We need more reasons to laugh," exclaims business strategist Pat Palmer, president of [Marketplace Partners](#) LLC in Rolling Meadows. "But wow! Talk about different reactions. You just never know how humor will go."

The CPA firm is [Leif Jensen and Associates](#) in Elk Grove Village; the accounting and consulting services it provides to small businesses and individuals are no laughing matter. Year-end reviews, for example, typically are conducted on the client business' site, in part so Leif Jensen, president and CEO, can better understand the client's operation.

The humor begins on the firm's home page. Two examples: "I made my money the old fashioned way. I was very nice to a wealthy relative right before he died." Malcolm Forbes.

"October ... is one of the particularly dangerous months to invest in stocks. Other dangerous months are July, January, September, April, November, May, March, June, December, August and February." Mark Twain.

"It's my personality," says Jensen. "I put on the suit when I'm dealing with the IRS, but otherwise I try to make my clients comfortable."

A website video meant to illustrate "A Day in the Life of a CPA Firm Employee" shows only fingers flying over keyboards -- until the closing segment, which states, "It takes a special breed of person to withstand the pressure and excitement of working in my CPA firm" and finishes with the firm's contact information.

In October, the regular "Useless Information" section in the firm's newsletter noted that "Brainwaves can be used to power an electric train." However, the issue also included an article on how proposed federal regulations could force small businesses to ramp up their IT spending.

A late October blog -- written, like the newsletter, in a conversational manner -- discussed parent college payments and taxes.

Attempts to infuse the owner's personality into a business can be tricky. Does Jensen's approach work?

"The feedback is fairly positive," Jensen says. "People definitely read the newsletter." The blog? "It keeps me at the top of the Google search list."

If humor works for Jensen, might the same approach work for your business? "If we were to sit down and discuss the best ways to differentiate a business, probably none of us would spend time and money on humor," Palmer says. Yet with a caution that humor may wear off on "the second, third or fourth visit," she offers some encouragement. "If the approach is important to you and opens doors, have at it."

One heads up: If you call the Jensen firm and are placed on hold, the squeaks and squawks you'll hear in your handset aren't an indication that your phone is out of whack. The on-hold "music" is R2-D2, the Star Wars droid.

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