

### Humor in Government Campaigns

Michael was tasked with researching various public safety and advertising campaigns that used humor in order to better convey their message, under direct guidance from professor Maurice Schweitzer.

To find examples, Michael combed through online searches to first narrow the scope of the task, finding many examples of advertisements and public safety campaigns. However, the most interesting campaigns actually took place in Australia, notably the 2012 Dumb Ways to Die safety PSAs.

The ad featured a series of dancing cartoon characters that would die from increasingly morbid ways, all animated with an ironic upbeat tune in the background. The goal of the ads were to make dying “uncool”, targeting the young teenagers and adults responsible for the majority of incidents.

These ads came at a peak for Australian commuter injuries and fatalities, and the comical hit song that was created became a viral sensation seemingly overnight. The impacts on the general public were immense, with decreases of up to 40% in total reported accidental injuries and deaths in Victoria the following year.



Figure 1. Dumb Ways to Die Poster.

### Humor in Advertising

Various companies have historically used humor to attract audiences with their campaigns. Ben and Jerry’s, long held as America’s home ice cream brand, has spent millions historically on various efforts to troll the federal government. One such example was sending a gigantic baked Alaskan dessert to Congress to protest Alaskan Oil drilling, a campaign that garnered national attention for its ludicrous yet simple messaging.



Figure 2. Protestors eat the ice cream at Congress, 2005

### Contact

Michael Chen  
PennCURF  
chenmc@wharton.upenn.edu  
215-200-4319

### Humor in Management

Michael was tasked with investigating various management styles in successful businesses to see whether humor had an effect on employee retention and overall profitability. One specific company worth highlighting is Southwest Airlines, who managed to carve out a niche in a competitive American airline industry and find its footing despite having a late start.

They accomplished this via their humorous approach to an otherwise serious status quo. Their CEO, Herb Kelleher, dressed up in various costumes and encouraged pilots and stewardesses to add their own touches to routine tasks, like the safety briefing.

Various traditions were also started for upper management, where senior VPs would talk about the time they hid in an overhead compartment as a tradition, or had to do some ritual at some point in their careers. This fun attitude has been credited with distinguishing Southwest from the rest of the American airlines.

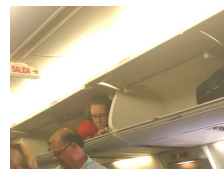


Figure 3. Flight Attendant hides in Southwest Airlines bin.

### Handbook of Social Psychology

In the upcoming *Handbook of Social Psychology, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed.*, Wharton professor Dr. Gus Cooney and Dartmouth professor Thalia Wheatley were asked to write a chapter on communication. Their final manuscript, written over the course of a year, runs 100 pages with 3 sections focusing on turn-taking, intersubjectivity, and goal-pursuing, respectively. The chapter draws on literature ranging from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to present-day in order to portray a comprehensive foundation of modern psychological research on communication. Evelyn was tasked with revising in-text citations and creating works cited for the first section and training other RAs to complete the other sections. Sources were found using a combination of GPT-4, Google Scholar, CrossRef, and a variety of references pages from already-published literature.

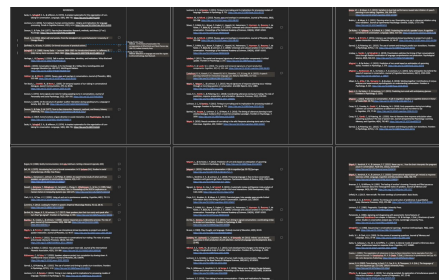


Figure 4. 6 of the 16 pages of references completed.

### Humor in Professional Settings/Dating

Evelyn was tasked with brainstorming methodologies and materials to study the effect of humor in professional settings and dating, with the assistance and guidance of Wharton professor Maurice Schweitzer and lead Schweitzer Lab RA Fiona Miller.

To study humor and dating, Evelyn’s proposed study was creating multiple fake online dating profiles with a range of attractiveness pre-determined by a preliminary and independent survey, including various types of humorous/non-humorous “biographies” with each profile, and measuring “match” or “like” rates on dating sites like Tinder, Bumble, or Hinge.

To study humor in professional settings, Evelyn proposed a cold-emailing strategy, whereby researchers would act as finance majors cold-emailing investment banking analysts for coffee chats and STEM majors cold-emailing professors for quick chats about potential lab research opportunities. Evelyn created mock resumes, cold email formats, and email lists that will be modified and used for the study once approved by the Penn IRB.

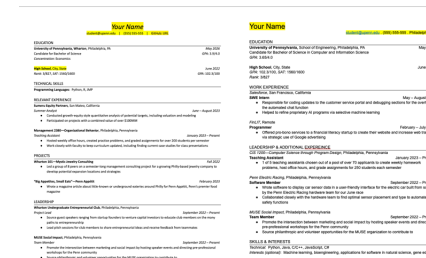


Figure 5. Sample resumes created for cold-emailing professionals.

### Gossip/Advice Study

Evelyn was tasked with coding 8,000 Enron emails for instances of advice or gossip. For each email, she determined how many instances of advice and/or gossip were present and include quotes containing each instance in individual columns. This data was then fed into a machine learning system that then automated coding hundreds of thousands of other Enron emails.

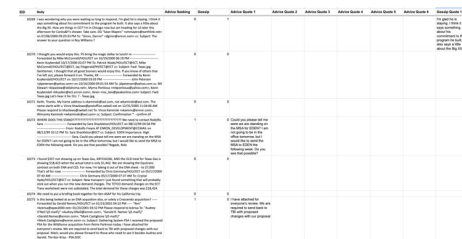


Figure 6. 6 of the 8,000 emails coded for advice and gossip.

### Contact

Evelyn Huang  
PennCURF  
https://www.linkedin.com/in/evelynhuang1/  
eh1@wharton.upenn.edu  
210-621-7324