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## Comics as a Learning Tool in Organizations and Companies

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### Abstract

Comics generally reveal information through drawing and illustrations about situations and/or characters in society in a humorous and entertaining way. Today's comics encompass different topics. It includes a wide range of content, beyond entertainment and games designed for a specific population like children or adolescents. This type of genre is written in many parts of the world and is a universal genre. This article will attempt to present the advantage of utilizing this genre in work systems. Comics offers an interesting interaction between employee/employer. This genre can be used as a tool for transferring feedback, or as a tool for an employee's personal feedback about himself, in a manner that is less threatening, more entertaining and even humorous.

Comics, as a method, are an attractive learning tool. The ability to integrate entertainment, fun and humor with effective content and messages is an enormous advantage for more efficient learning. It is a tool for telling stories through pictures and, therefore, can be used for the general public. Despite the fact that it generally has a written message as well, the picture is this tool's characteristic motto and is understandable in all languages. Its effectiveness in the work systems is mainly due to its ability to provide guidance and instruction in an attractive manner.

**Keywords:** Comics, Employee, Organizations, Humor, Learning, Method.

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## **Introduction**

Comics generally reveal information through drawings and illustrations about situations and/or characters in society in a humorous and entertaining way. It touches upon social-cultural situations or the desires and wants that exist in the world. Comics are a catchy and amusing form of media with a message that is usually correct and sharp. It should be noted that specifically because this media form is humorous, it is liable to attract many readers and, therefore, comics' big advantage is its suitability to learning in work systems for both employees and managers. According to the Merriam Webster definition of comics, they are "a series of cartoon drawings that tell a story or part of a story".

Comics' encompass different topics. It includes a wide range of content, beyond entertainment and games designed for a specific population like children or adolescents, such as: product safety, greed of different corporations, corruption and even terrorist incidents, such as September 11 (Grayson, 2001; Martin, 2001; Spencer, 1860). This genre is written today in many parts of the world and is a universal literary genre.

There is no doubt that comics, which contain drawings and illustrations, are a good tool for expression and provide a written language for transmitting not only content and text, but also facial expressions, body language, perceptions of culture and folklore. Its rich collection of topics testifies to the fact that comics, as a method, are an attractive learning tool. The ability to integrate entertainment, fun and most of the time humor with effective content and messages is an enormous advantage for more efficient learning (Gerde & Foster, 2007; Grayson, 2001; Kher, 1996; Ziv, 1984). It is a tool for telling stories through pictures and, therefore, can be used for the general public. Despite the fact that it generally has a written message, the picture is main medium in which the story is told and is understandable in all languages.

## **Comics as a Form of Media Concerning Society, Ethics and Social Justice**

Comics serve as a tool to stir up controversy and debate surrounding different topics, such as discrimination, personal responsibility, ecological preservation, safety,

leadership, etc. A review of these topics through the use of comics can interest and attract those who create them and those who read them. In this manner, comics expose employees not only to a range of issues but rather to the attributes of different characters. The goal of this exposure to heterogeneous topics and characters is to introduce problems regarding socioeconomic and generational gaps, as well as those between different social groups.

This genre, the basis of which is exposure to issues such as socioeconomic and cultural heterogeneity, is generally entertaining, eye-catching and liable to serve managers in work systems by providing them with social and cultural accessibility to their employees.

Berger and Pratt (1988) note that this teaching method is included in different universities in the United States. There are academic institutions in which a business student is obligated to develop a comic book of his own about a socioeconomic problem and also note its solution through comics. Students were found to have developed such comic books in the framework of their academic studies on topics such as leadership, discrimination, personal responsibility, problems at work and in society, etc.

This kind of media sometimes clarifies ethical problems and dilemmas, and it is especially important to raise these issues among employees through a method that can raise their awareness. It was also found that the discussion that follows exposure to comics could help to promote moral judgment on the part of organizational members. Indeed, Kohlberg and Turiel (1971) already proposed this method of debate and discussion as one that can be raised in the presence of a social group while also instigating discussion about ethical dilemmas.

In other words, problems of social justice, ethics and other problems are raised through this form of media in which the hero is usually faced with a number of alternatives to choose from, some of which are critical. Often, the hero encounters a situation in which he must make a decision, with an emphasis on the reasons, considerations and conclusions that form the basis of his decision. Often times these

considerations make the difference between a personal and egotistical choice and one that benefits everyone.

My proposal is also used in comics as a means of raising issues that are crucial in an organization, cannot be ignored and require guidance from above, such as staying healthy, preventing sexual harassment, preventing different illnesses and diseases, and passing along information about the damage caused by drug and cigarette use. These issues are an important basis for transmitting messages to all employees – both young and old – in organizations and companies. The motto is using an amusing tool to convey information and enrich employees in different fields.

Comics can be used to convey and clarify experiences and issues to an employee, such as uncertainty, temptation and choice. Emotional whirlwinds can be highlighted and clarified via illustration or text. It should be noted that the fact that comics also contains a written language enables the transmission of messages about drawing conclusions and learning the right lessons in an entertaining and humorous way. This guarantees that the message will reach employees and as much of the general public as possible, as comics are a method that many people enjoy and find interesting.

### **Advantages of Using Comics**

It is known that exposure to comics can help people cope with different situations, even stressful ones (Lefcourt et al., 1995; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986; Lehman, Burke, Martin, Sultan, & Czech, 2001; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; Nezu et al, 1988). It is common knowledge that humor causes a decrease in stress levels and comics is a form of media that can serve as a coping tool. Studies do note that humor leads to a decrease in stress levels (Lefcourt et al., 1995; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986; Lehman et al. 2001; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; Martin, Puhlik- Doris, Larsen, Gray, & Weir, 2003).

Therefore, this form of media can be used in the work system as it can alleviate stress when difficult information needs to be transmitted. And it is not in vain that some airlines use comics for safety instructions for seat belts on airplanes since this form of illustrated media is entertaining and is meant to decrease stress. It is clear that there is a much wider potential for using comics, such as in hospitals and

medical clinics. Embarrassing topics, such as warnings about the prevention of sexual harassment, will grab the attention of readers more quickly if presented through something entertaining, like comics.

It can be concluded, therefore, that comics are designed to be used strategically when there is a problem that needs to be dealt with or in situations that are fundamentally emotionally difficult. The connection between comics and humor helps one to process and digest difficult issues, and enables one to cope with them. The very fact that comics expose the individual to an illustration in which facial expressions can also be discerned enables exposure to emotions. This, coupled with a certain verbal expression or saying – no matter how short – presents a challenge for the comics writer to see in this media form an efficient method of influencing the employee in a certain direction.

Comics also include written language. In other words, it's humor or amusing way is transmitted via the act of reading and so it should be used in situations in which a person has to read certain instructions, including safety instructions related to security and caution at work, or instructions intended to guide the employee in a certain manner, and so they need to interest the employee.

The advantage of this media form is its amusing nature and its humor can make sometimes people laugh, and it is known that laughter helps a person's immune system and defends the organism by releasing chemicals that the body needs against infection (Lefcourt et al., 1995 ; Lehman et al., 2001; Martin, 2001; Martin, 2007; Martin & Dobbin, 1988; Ziv, 1984).

In other words, those who are drawn to reading comics are liable to be enriched by the amusing drawing or saying and to be in better control of their moods, and to use such humor to alleviate stress and anxiety (Kuiper & Martin, 1993; Lefcourt & Martin, 1986; Lefcourt et al., 1995; Lehman et al., 2001; Martin & Lefcourt, 1983; Nezu, Nezu, & Blissett, 1988). Therefore, comics can be used in work systems to alleviate stress when there is an interest in transmitting difficult information.

### **Advantages of Using Comics in Organization and Companies**

Comics can be used as a tool and method for managers to interact with their employees in order to give them instructions and feedback in a positive and constructive atmosphere. For example, comics can be used as a way to integrate the transmission of feedback and value in an amusing and positive way, which leads to growth and development rather than insult. Through the use of this media form, managers can moderate the negative perception and image that an employee sometimes garners from an unflattering evaluation. The fact is that comics can stabilize an employee's self-confidence in a situation in which he needs to be given unflattering remarks.

It should be noted that the purpose of exposure to comics in different social levels is also to teach the individual how to use this tool to his own benefit when exposed to difficult situations. The use of this constructive tool in coping with embarrassing or distressing situations is liable to help foster an improved I-Other relationship and to enhance the quality of life of the employer/employee in the interpersonal arena.

It is known that an employee's ability to build a health self-image – one that allows him to view even his unflattering difficulties and behavior in an objective light – is an important developmental condition. For instance, managers can ask their employees to present their areas that need improvement through comics as an assignment focused on self-feedback. It has been found that personal feedback is very efficient in the workplace (Wolf, 2012, 2013).

Such a task promotes, first and foremost, self-evaluation. The employee presents his achievements in an introspective manner that requires self-awareness and self-recognition. Such an approach indicates personal maturity. I think that comics also helps an individual experience himself in a less serious, less anxious, light, as the humor moderates the self-criticism. The employee also learns to laugh at himself and his embarrassing situation and, of course, to present ideas for improving his achievements or behaviors through the use of comics.

In this manner, managers can get information regarding an employee's intellectual, social and other forms of self-evaluation. The request to present 'myself' through

comics can give an employee added insight and enrich him in different areas. It can also give a manager a different perspective on things that he had never even thought to consider – sides that had never even occurred to him to be important to his employees. Therefore, it shows that an employee's sense of confidence also benefits from presenting himself through comics even before others present him. It is not in vain that the Jewish sources say that "man is closest to himself". "Close" also in the sense of self-knowledge and self-image. The fact that a person can present himself through comics is important and if such an opportunity exists in a work group it shows the group members that each and every person has the ability to present himself in a humorous way through personal examination and self-evaluation.

### **Different Types of Humor and Expressions in Comics**

The multi-dimensionality of comics, as it is expressed in diverse comics, presents a form of media through which it is possible to empower an employee, give him coping tools, guide him, and direct him in ways that are useful to his development. Nonetheless, comics are often found to be based on dark, sarcastic, cynical humor that does not ease the burden of the reader (Martin, 1998, Harris, J., 1989).

Comics can be used as a tool for noting different types of humor and different situations – those that make it possible to enjoy reading them, and those that create discomfort. Indeed, different researchers examined the different ways of presenting humor, including those that offer less comfort and relief to the individual (Martin et al, 2003). It was found, therefore, that humor – including humor expressed through comics – is not always a source of enjoyment and pleasure for the reader.

It can, therefore, be said that there is a type of humor that is beneficial to an individual's performance and is even liable to hamper his conduct. Included in this kind of humor is 'dark humor' or 'aggressive humor'. Such humor diminishes the importance of certain details while giving superiority to others. It also has a touch of hostility and so is not desirable in social systems, especially not in work systems.

Of course, both of these types of humor can be implemented through comics. Comics are the technique, a method of presenting and transmitting humor. Different

types of humor can be expressed through this method just as they can be expressed in a joke that someone tells verbally or in writing. It is clear that comics that include dark humor, for example, can serve as a tool for expressing concealed aggression, superiority and anger in a seemingly civilized manner. The argument can be made to avoid using comics in work systems because it can increase tension, hostility and difficulties in a way that is seemingly entertaining.

The mission recommended above – to raise issues in an organizational framework through the use of comics – is meant as an accompaniment to the guidance offered depending on the type of humor required. This refers to adaptive humor, which is meant to help prevent stress and to enable proper coping. Such humor enables both the writer and the reader to laugh, be entertained and to undergo a corrective experience. This is especially important because of the potential misuse of comics as a tool.

## **Conclusion**

A workplace or organization should use this genre to help it guide its employees, give feedback, and enable employees to present themselves in another light by exposing different elements of their personalities. These goals can be attained via ‘adaptive humor’ that benefits the reader and the employee, and contributes to his development.

There is no doubt that comics are a unique form of expression and their main advantage is that they draw attention. It is therefore effective to use comics to display instructions. Using comics is important in cases where stress needs to be relieved as it creates a more relaxed and positive atmosphere. Therefore it is very important in the workplace. It is a good way to provide feedback and instruction as well as dealing with sensitive and embarrassing topics. In this article it was shown how to use comics to convey a variety of messages. Its application in today's world is on a global scale and can relate to all kinds of people, cultures and ages.

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