

What Do You Meme by That?

The Effective Use of Humor by Brands on Social Media

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POWER UP!



What Do You Meme By That?

The Effective Use of Humor in Social Media

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Why So Serious?

- 91% of consumers want a brand to be funny
- 95% of business fear using humor



Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?

- Fear of offending & “cancel culture”



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- Fear of offending & “cancel culture”
- Subjectivity and difficulty of execution



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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?

 daily dot

Trending Tech Politics Culture Memes Labor Hacks About ▾

SOCIETY

Meme-based Kia ad campaign gets facepalm from Cheezburger users

Cheezburger—the company behind LOLCats—lent its meme-based branding to Kia for an ad campaign, but Cheezburger fans don't find it very “funneh.”



Fidel Martinez

Updated on May 21 2025 7:28 pm CDT


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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?

- Fear of offending & “cancel culture”
- Subjectivity and difficulty of execution
- Maintaining brand image & professionalism



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- Distraction from core messaging



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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?

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- Subjectivity and difficulty of execution
- Maintaining brand image & professionalism
- Distraction from core messaging
- Lack of tools & expertise



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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?



DiGiorno Pizza 
@DiGiornoPizza

#WhyIStayed You had pizza.

9/8/14, 11:11 PM



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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?



DiGiorno Pizza 

@DiGiornoPizza

 Follow

A million apologies. Did not read what the hashtag was about before posting.

11:15 PM - 8 Sep 2014

236 RETWEETS 274 FAVORITES



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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?

- Fear of offending & “cancel culture”
- Subjectivity and difficulty of execution
- Maintaining brand image & professionalism
- Distraction from core messaging
- Lack of tools & expertise
- “Silence, brand!” phenomenon



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Why Are Brands Afraid To Be Funny?



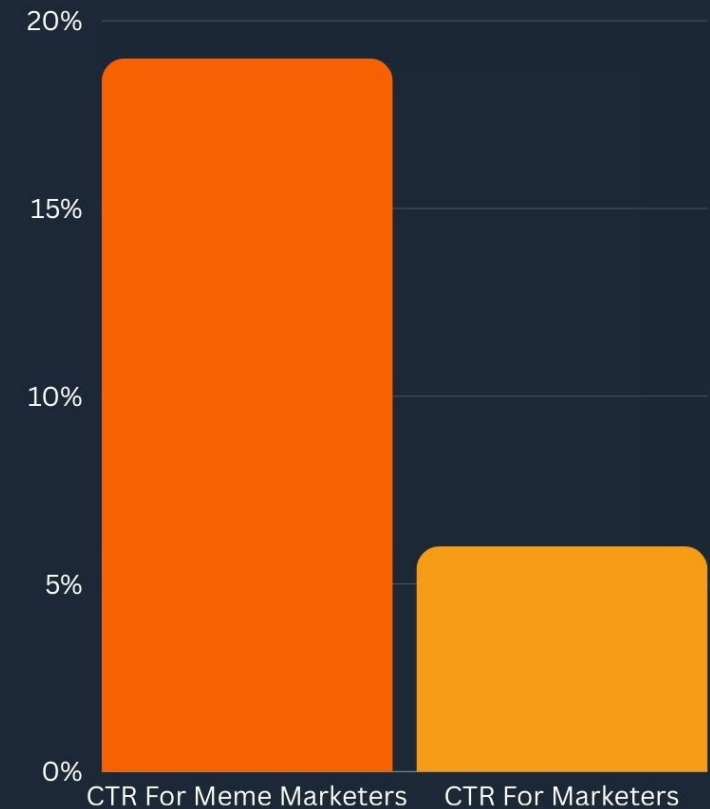
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But Humor Works!

- Humor fosters emotional connections.
- Makes brands appear more approachable and human.
- Leads to increased likes, comments, and shares.
- Breaks through noise - humor captures attention, helping content stand out.
- Can lead to clicks/conversions.



Click-through rates for Meme Marketing vs. Marketing



The Impact of Humor

- **Increased Engagement**

Up to a 35% boost in likes, comments, and shares compared to neutral posts. (Sprout)

- **Lasting Impression**

71% of consumers enjoy brands that use humor, and 45% said funny content makes them more likely to remember the brand. (Sprout)



The Impact of Humor

- **Enhanced Brand Perception**

72% prefer humorous brands over serious ones.

- **Shareability**

People are more likely to share and remember content that makes them laugh, expanding organic reach.



Humor Done Right



Wendy's: The Queen of Roasts

- Known for witty, playful banter with competitors and customers.
- Kristin Tormey, shaped the brand's distinctive social media voice.
- Snark level varies across platforms to resonate with specific audiences while maintaining a consistent core identity.



Wendy's 
@Wendys · [Follow](#)



When the tweets are as broken as the ice cream machine.
[x.com/McDonaldsCorp/...](https://x.com/McDonaldsCorp/)

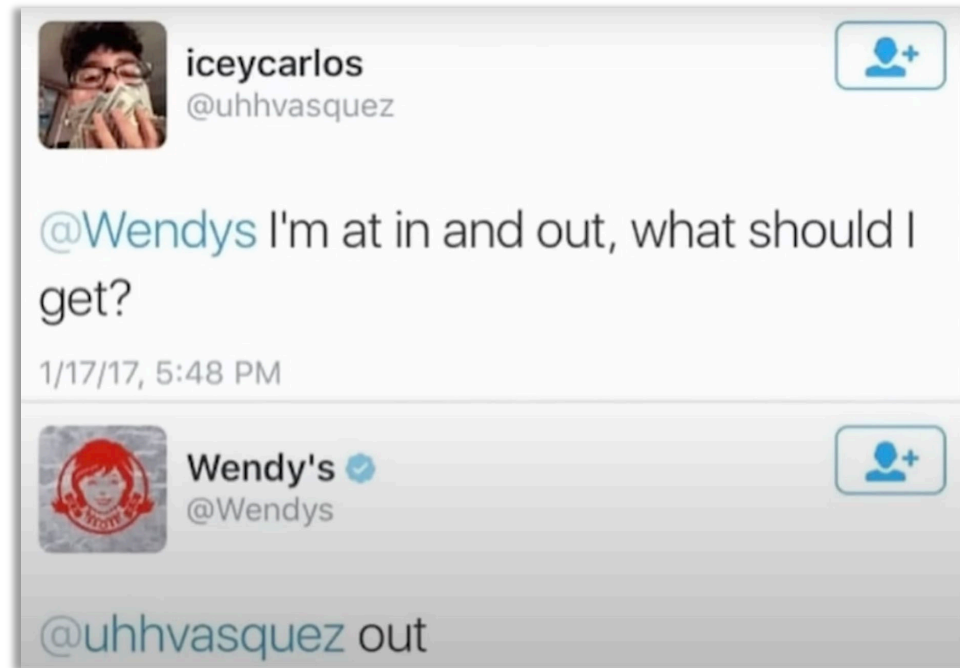


McDonald's Corporation  @McDonaldsCorp

Black Friday **** Need copy and link****



Wendy's: The Queen of Roasts



National Park Service: Educational Humor

- Known for humorous yet informative messages to effectively communicate safety tips and park information.
- Matt Turner had worked for NPS for 13 years before taking over their social media, giving him a solid background to build from.
- The content often features witty advisories, such as “Do not pet the fluffy cows,” to educate the public on safety and park policies.



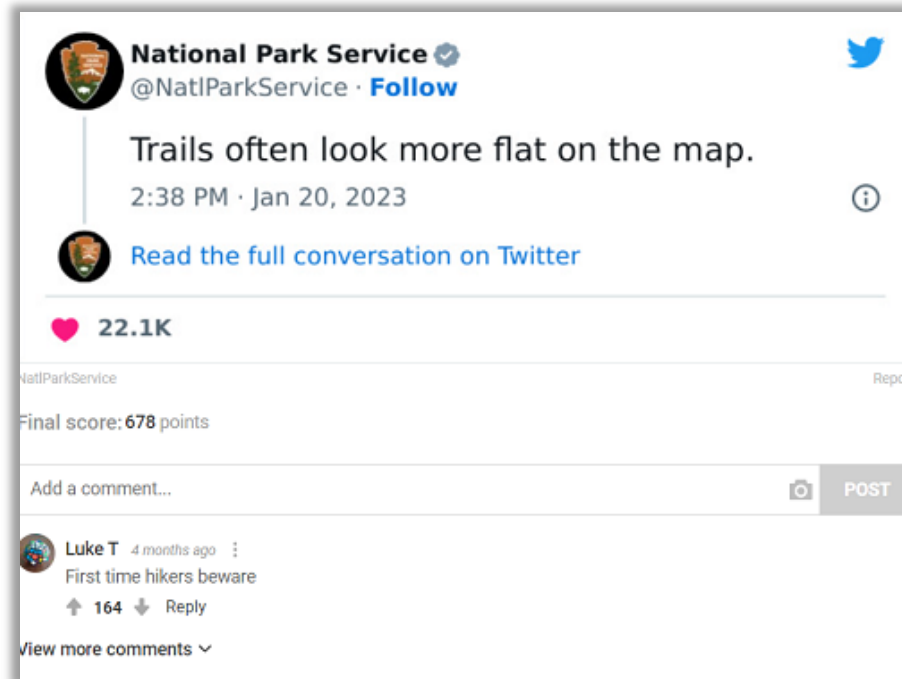
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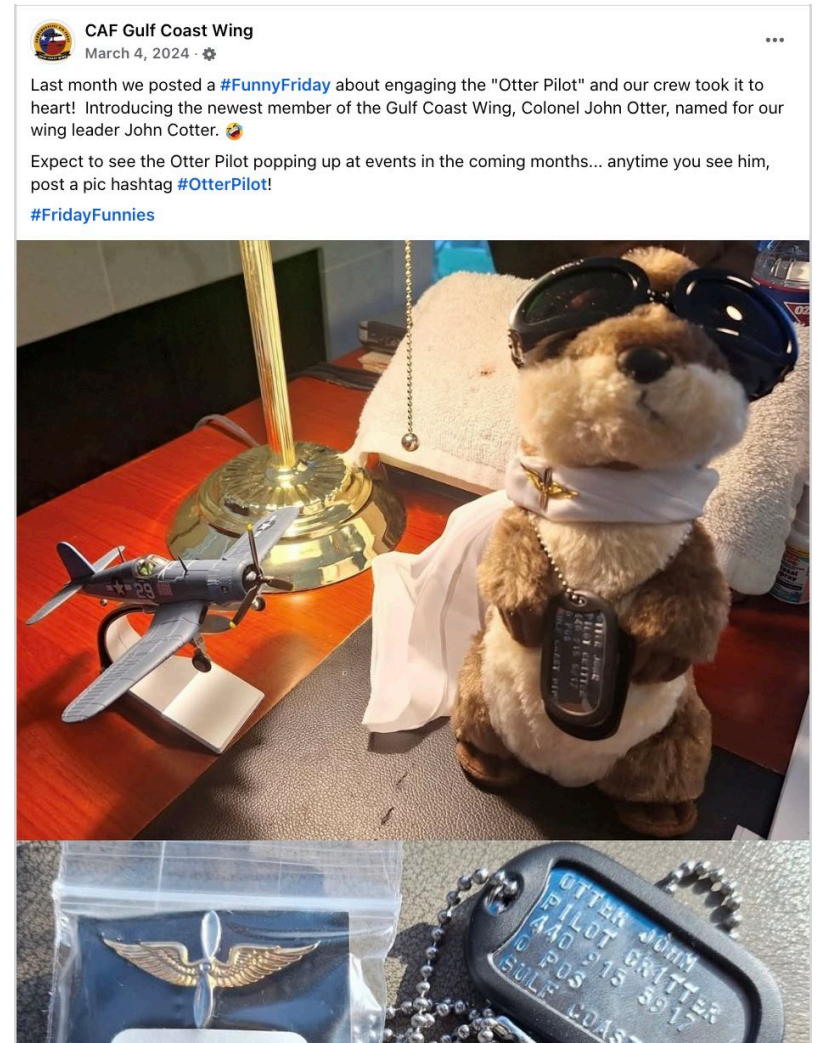
National Park Service 
@NatlParkService

Hike in groups. Bears like to have options.

National Park Service: Educational Humor



Gulf Coast Wing: Delightfully Quirky



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Gulf Coast Wing: Delightfully Quirky



Gulf Coast Wing: Delightfully Quirky



CAF Gulf Coast Wing

December 25, 2024 · 🌐

John Otter is starring in his own Christmas special this year, but you have to help us come up with the plot. What do you think? 🤔

Merry Christmas from our family to yours!



👍❤️🤔 You, Jarrod Crandell, Ed Coleman and 126 others

10 comments 2 shares

😂 Haha

💬 Comment

🔗 Share



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Context Matters – When Humor Backfires

- Most self-inflicted social media crises come from inappropriate attempts at humor.
- Know your audience, know the situation, “read the room.”
- Ask someone you trust about potentially sensitive topics.
- Avoid controversial topics.



How to Vet a Joke BEFORE You Post

- **Peer review** – ask others what they think, especially if the joke has to do with a particular audience and you can access members of that audience
- **Run it by HR/Legal** –you may have to advocate for humor because they will want to say no
- **Soft launch/test** on Stories or smaller stakes channels.



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Finding Your Brand's Sense of Humor

- Know your audience.
- Align humor with brand values.
- Develop your unique tone... Are you quirky, irreverent, silly?
- Be consistent (but not necessarily identical) across platforms.
- A/B test, gather feedback.



Wait, is Victoria's Secret that she has a stealth bomber?!



Using Memes

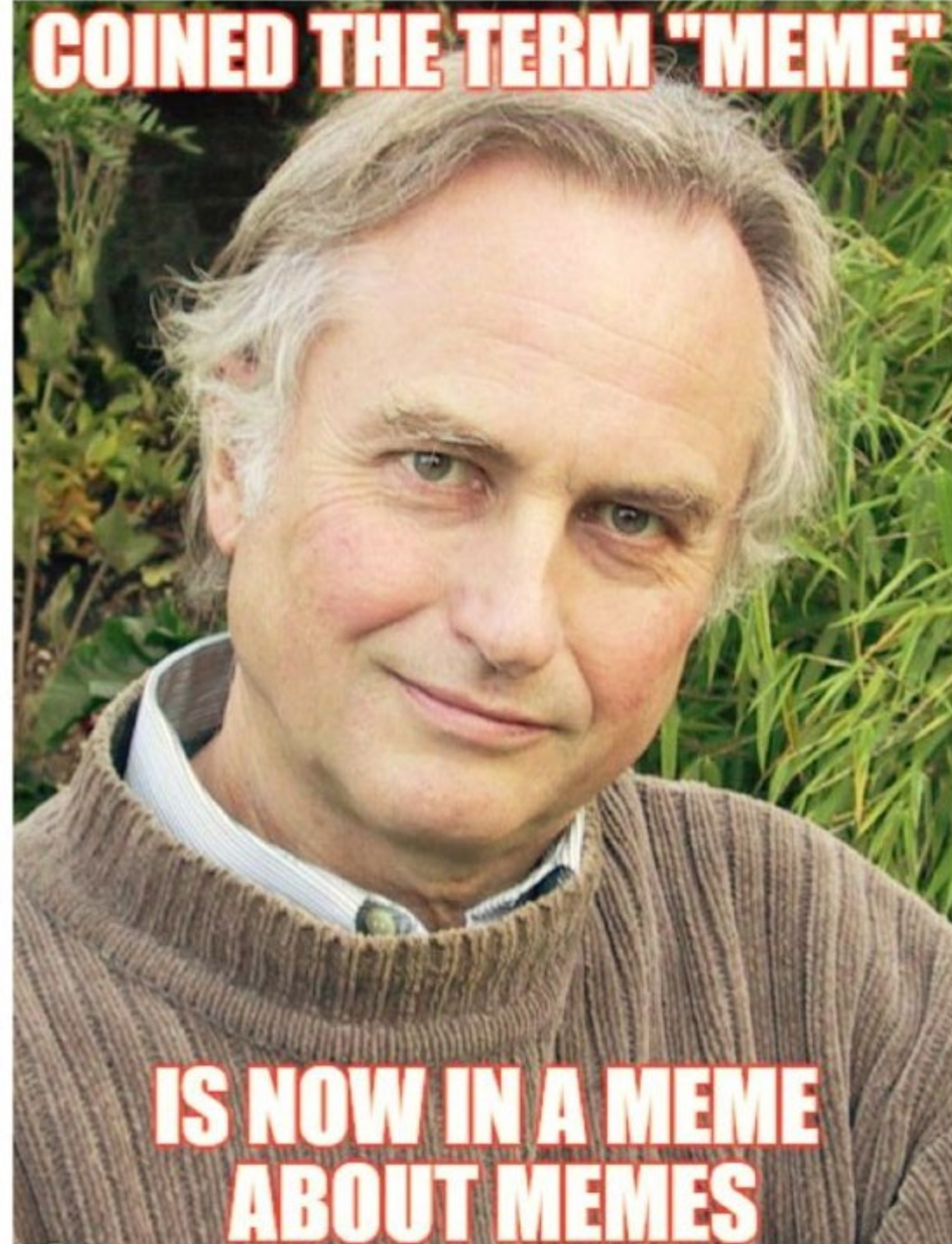
- Great filler content.
- Demonstrates sense of humor.
- Can playfully engage audience.
- Know your audience and know your memes!



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What is a Meme?

- Meme =
unit of cultural information
spread by imitation.
- The term was coined in 1976
by British evolutionary
biologist Richard Dawkins.
- From the Greek *mimema*,
meaning “imitated”



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What is a Meme?

In digital marketing...

- Humorous content that is copied and spread rapidly by internet users, often with slight variations.
- Typically convey a cultural idea, trend, or behavior in a funny or relatable way.



Social Media Marketing Expectation vs. Reality



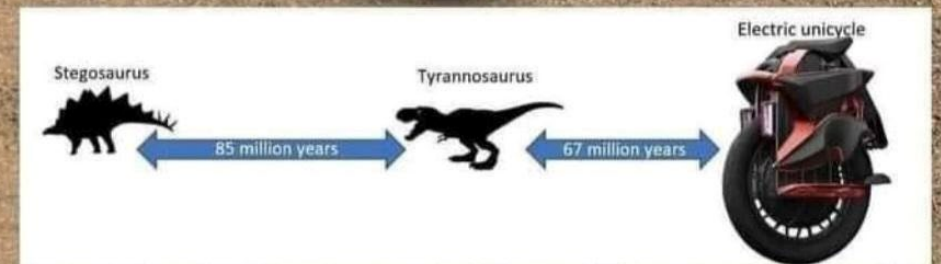
Find a Similar Meme-ing

See a good meme that made you laugh, but it doesn't really apply to your audience?



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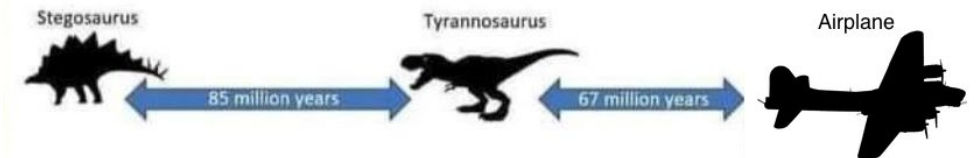
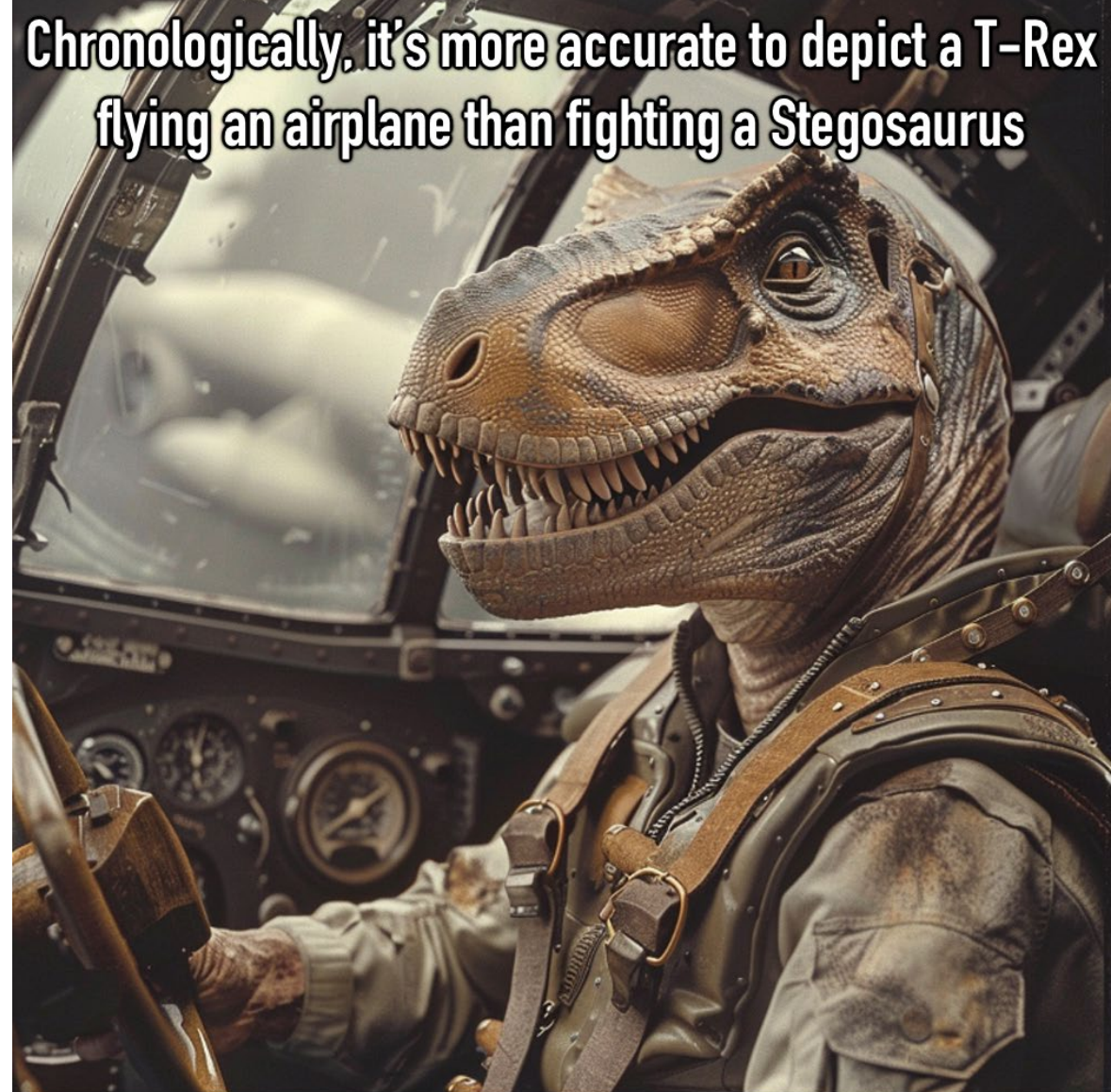
Chronologically it is more accurate to depict a T-Rex on a unicycle than to depict one fighting a Stegosaurus.



Find a Similar Meme-ing

See a good meme that made you laugh, but it doesn't really apply to your audience?

Could it, with a little help?

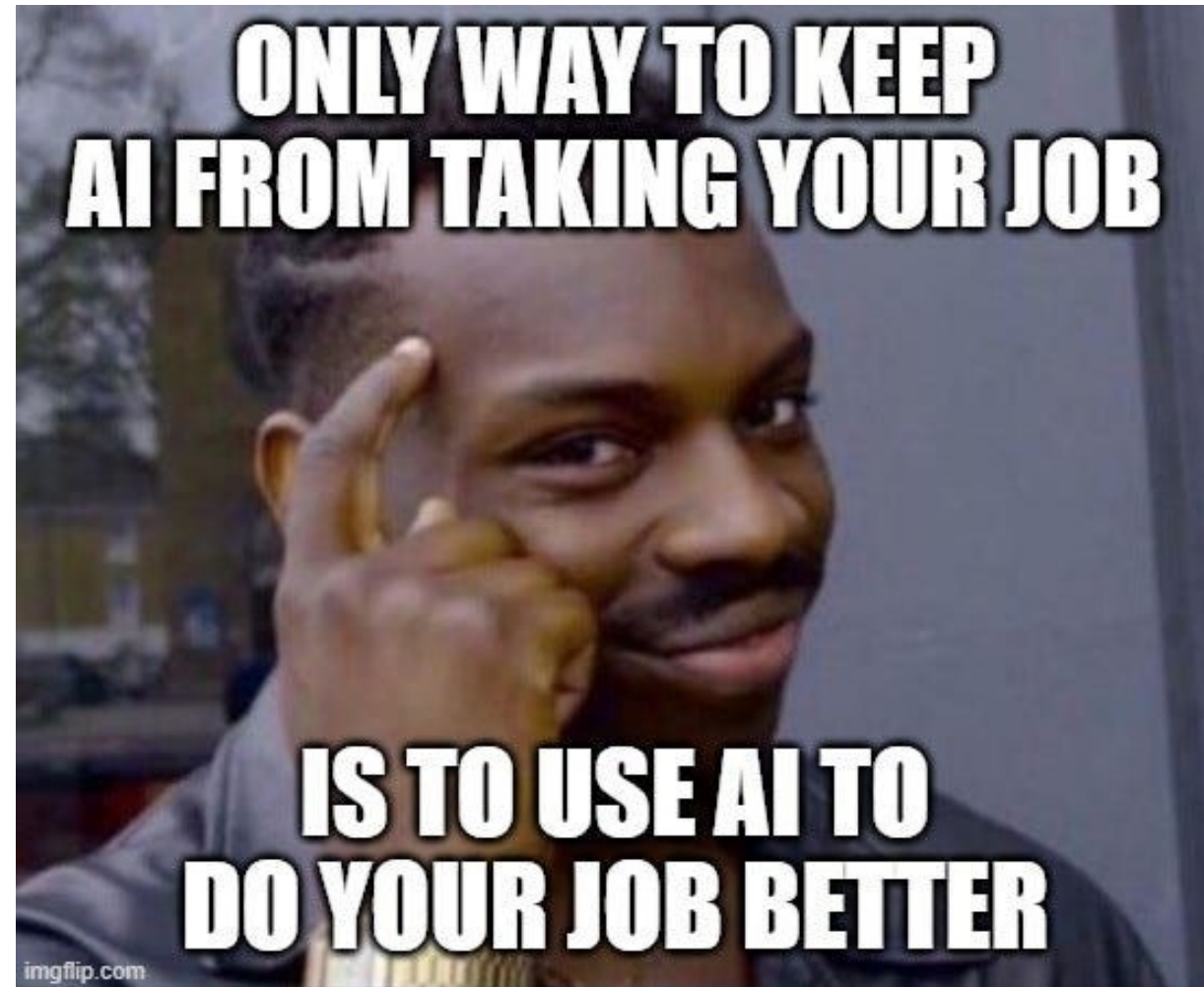


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Find a Deeper Meme-ing

Know classic memes and look for opportunities to update them.

“Know your Meme” is a good source for history and templates.



Executing a Humor Strategy

- Establish Goals: Are you trying to drive engagement, improve brand perception, etc.
- Incorporate Humor into Content Calendars: #FunnyFriday, #WackyWednesday, #Silly Saturday, or just number/week.
- Responding in Real Time: Keep sense of humor in mind when responding to comments and look for opportunities to use humor in replies and community management.

Executing a Humor Strategy

- Wholesome sense of humor in responses...



trashboat
@bellalawtonn



The boys I nanny for just asked me where I work and I didnt have the heart to tell them their parents pay me to hang out with them so now they think I work at Chili's

5:53 PM · Jun 12, 2018 from Granger, IN



♡ 491K



Chili's Grill & Bar ✓
@Chilis



Replying to @bellalawtonn

Here is that super important documentation we were talking about from very important people here at Chili's. [#ChilisLove](#)



Executing a Humor Strategy

- Clapback sense of humor in responses...



Executing a Humor Strategy

- Irreverent sense of humor in responses...



Buckles and Bulls
@BucklesandBulls



101-Year-Old Veteran Says Cold Coors Light Is The Secret To Long Life dlvr.it/QszQKr



2:29 PM · Dec 6, 2018



♡ 24



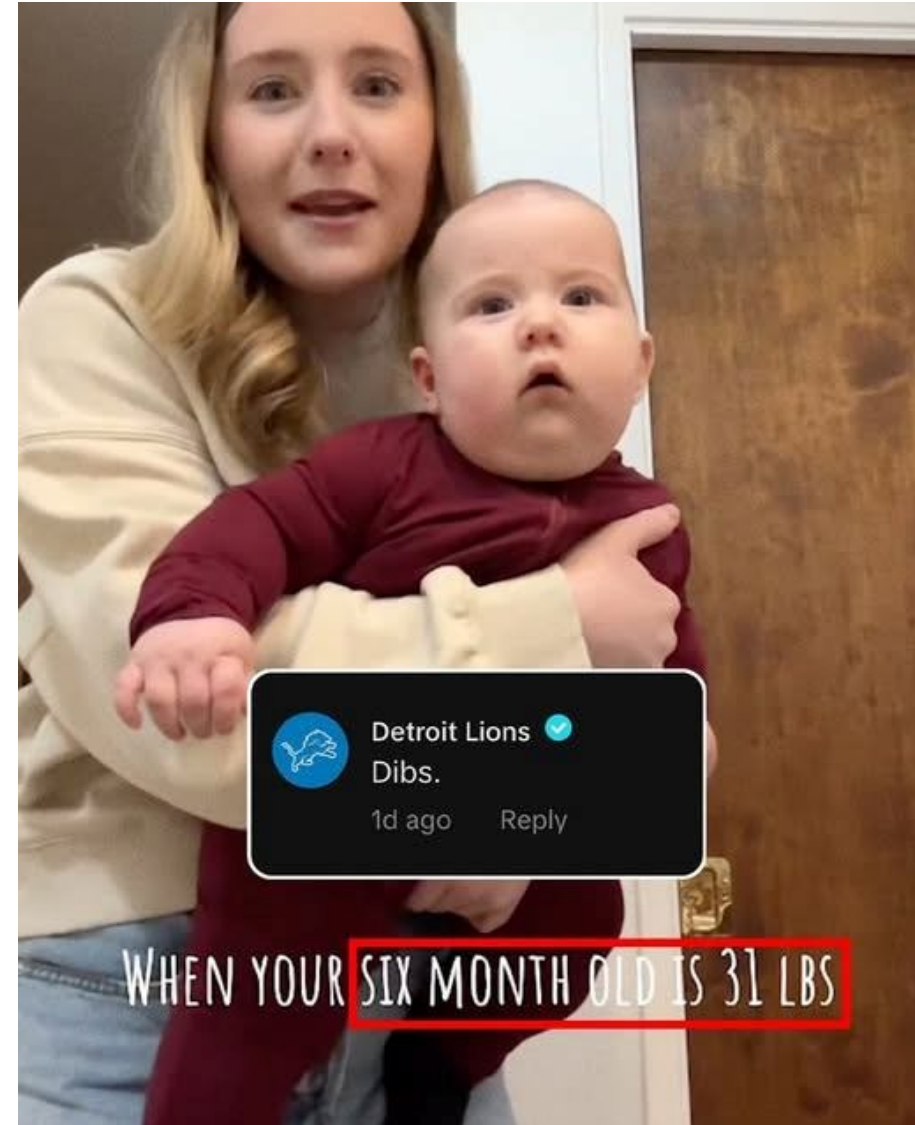
Samuel Adams Beer ●
@SamuelAdamsBeer



Everyone already knows water is good for you lmfao 🤔🤔🤔

Executing a Humor Strategy

- Look for opportunities to enter the convo!



Executing a Humor Strategy

- Don't be afraid to give the people what they want
- Know your sense of humor and brand voice
- Always proceed with caution and intention
- Screen with target groups
- Watch responses carefully and be ready to act
- Never “coast” or take it for granted



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Questions?

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COMING UP NEXT!

General Session #4 3:30pm

“Innovation by Design”

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