

Published in *Business Ledger*

Beware of Halloween and Other Cheesy Temptations

Halloween is an interesting day. The streets used to teem with children collecting treats from after school until well past dark. There were no thoughts of un-natural products inserted in candy (it already came with that!). Those sweet treasures would maybe last until Thanksgiving or even longer if Mom and Dad didn't have a sweet tooth.

As if anything could top this cornucopia of tooth decayers, we got to wear costumes! Yes, the chance to be someone else- a superhero, a dark sider or a hobo. Rooted in this is the fact that all of us want to be different once in a while. In fact, while the candy collection has decreased and become quite regulated, costume parties are more popular than ever. Costumes and play acting can be good way to step out of yourself, however briefly.

But is this appropriate in the workplace- more specifically for managers in the workplace? The following three true stories suggest that managers may want to think hard before considering costumes and skits as part of their style.

Ah, The Majesty of Power!

The first incident occurred where I worked. I was moving on Halloween so I was off, otherwise I would have been asked to be a part of this sorry spectacle.

Where: The branch office

Who: The Branch Manager and about 200 employees

When: Halloween morning

What: On this Halloween day all the people in the office were given permission to wear costumes.

Why: Who knows?

The Incident: The branch manager dressed as a King complete with a crown, a kingly stick and long robe. All of his direct reports dressed as his court. **He then proceeded to walk around the office waving his staff in kingly majesty while his managerial staff held his robe!**

(Never was I so glad I had to schlep furniture!)

And You Thought Jack's Ambitions were Limited to Being a Corporate Officer

Where: The company theater

Who: About 40 departmental personnel assembled to hear a corporate officer (Jack) from another department purvey his wisdom

When: 10 am

What: To promote internal branding of the company

Why: Because no one in the company could figure out what was being branded, why it needed to be branded and how branding, if there actually was such a thing at that company, would work



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The Incident: Jack gets introduced to the audience:

“Jack is here to visit with us. And I just discovered something about Jack I didn’t know- he’s a doctor.”

So Jack, one of the top officers in the corporation comes out in doctor’s scrubs holding rubber gloves. He stated he was there to show everyone how and where the company brand resided in them. Then in classic managerial fashion, **Jack made a show of putting on a glove and holding up one finger while suggesting an approach only a proctologist would love!**

The Bedroom is No Place for a Manager

Where: The company theater

Who: The EVP (Executive Vice-President) his department personnel

When: 9 am

What: To provide information to everyone in the department

Why: So they’d be aware of coming initiatives

The Incident: Prior to the EVP speaking, there was a video shown. The setting was a car. The destination was to drive to the “green” (the symbol of the company making money again). In the video, one of the managers, Alan, played an obnoxious kid in the back seat. Another manager, Ellen, played the scatterbrained driver who didn’t know where she was going. The EVP played the cop who gave them directions on how to get there.

After the video was shown, the EVP addressed his department. Commenting on the video he suggested that all of the

players in the video were typecast except him. He said that everyone knew Alan was obnoxious and Ellen was a scatterbrain but the **last person to see him in a cop’s uniform was his wife in the bedroom last night!**

What makes these situations so interesting is that these execs appeared to be unaware of the folly of their forays into the world of make believe.

But I think the real lesson may be
**- Leave the skits to Second City
and never, ever, ever dress up
at work!**

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