

Columns

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Darling, It's Your Auntie Meme!

Amanda Thomsen

What if I told you there was a way of bonding with co-workers, sharing information with the public and staying relevant that's free, cheap AND easy? It's out there! Try making memes. I do it and I'm addicted—not only are they FUN to make, but the results are really remarkable.

What's a meme? Well, it's usually a photo with words over it, short and sweet, with the potential of going viral. Usually it's a funny photo with not funny words or a not funny photo with funny words. I can tell you first-hand it doesn't have to be THAT funny to get something out of it. I get at least 100 hits a week on the many-years-old memes that I've posted on my site. Most are just medium funny and they've been shared at least a thousand times on Pinterest and Facebook. If I make a new one and post it on Facebook today, it averages 7K views. They take me four minutes to make.

The "Hey Girl" meme is a funny, idealized feminist Ryan Gosling who knows the hearts of women and sympathizes with things like yarn hoards, Michael's receipts and half-finished crafts left around the house. He was perfect for gardening. Want to know how I make them? Well, I use a photo of Ryan Gosling (and there are plenty of photos of him in the Creative Commons that I can use without getting sued). I choose one of those and, from my phone, use the Over app to write whatever I am thinking on top of the photo and it's just ... funny. Since I do it from my phone I can do it from anywhere, whenever inspiration hits. There is also a healthy selection of meme generator websites that are super easy-peasy. I've had great results using Picasa, too.

Memes are a natural for social media. Short and to the point, memorable and free, they are a terrific way to reach out to a few generations at once. I know that most of my memes' "likes" come from people who don't even realize this Ryan Gosling "Hey Girl" meme is a "thing." I didn't start it, but they like it as much as people who are in on the joke. That makes me feel good. I'm cutting edge AND totally inclusive!

What can you use memes for? Around the office: register notes, time clock memos, refrigerator nagging, store meeting notifiers, bathroom manners reminders, GOOD JOB CONGRATULATIONS, weekly sales goals and adding a bit of fun to the schedule.

Boromir meme: "One does not simply punch in 7 minutes late"

Ryan Gosling meme: "Hey girl, don't flush that"

Success kid meme: "Beating LY? NAILED IT!"

Hipster meme: "I liked Hellebores before they were cool"

For the public: For Facebook, your website, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, in flyers (watch your funny flyer end up stuck to the fridge!), bathroom manners reminders, coupons and adding a bit of fun to your already stellar reputation.

Condescending Wonka meme: "Oh, you don't shop at Garden Center X? You must have an adequate garden"

The Most Fascinating Man meme: "I don't always shop at Garden Center X, but when I do, I get the best possible customer service imaginable"

Grumpy Cat meme: "The weather is terrible. Let's go to the Garden Center"

Another great one that can be changed around a little for the office or your customers is the "What my friends think I do, what my family thinks I do, what my customers think I do, what my boss thinks I do, what I think I do and what I actually do" meme. Sharing your reality in a funny way only rarely backfires, right? **GP**

Amanda Thomsen is now a regular columnist in Green Profit magazine. You can find her funky, punky blog planted at KissMyAster.co and you can follow her on Facebook and Twitter @KissMyAster.