

Is it Happy Holidays or Merry Christmas?

Yesterday, a friend posted this on Facebook:



I could not disagree more. This seems to be part of a growing (and conservative) movement, which claims saying Happy Holidays is taking the Christmas out of Christmas. In my opinion, this is a completely intolerant and ignorant view and understanding of the reality of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic world. Christmas is celebrated by Christians, but not by Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Zen-Taoists and others.

Wishing happy holidays or season's greetings is a way of acknowledging the various holidays taking place at the end of the year: Christmas, New Year's, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa.

When you wish someone a Merry Christmas, you are saying you wish him or her a happy day of celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

One is inclusive, and one is exclusive. One assumes a belief and one doesn't.

As a communicator, you have to be careful not to make members of your audience feel excluded. Clearly, whether you wish

Happy Holidays or Merry Christmas depends on who your target audience is. A church, for example, has a target audience of Christian worshipers and supporters. For a church to wish its audience Merry Christmas would be completely appropriate. For a non-religious institution (like the government or your business) to wish its audience Merry Christmas, would be exclusionary.

With business communications, there's the additional desire to steer clear of hot topics like religion and politics. Merry Christmas is a religious statement. Happy Holidays is not.

What do you think? Do you wish people Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas or something else?