

# Tap the Gold Mine of Your Own Life Experiences and Add Humor to Your Presentations

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*Humor is the shortest distance between somebody's head and heart so that their spirit is stabbed alive and is willing to come to work.*

– Tom Antion

Most people who make business presentations realize the positive effect humor has on an audience. They know that humor not only creates interest but makes the speaker look human or real. Presenters struggle with using humor, not because they fail to see the value in it, but because they feel they are not really comedic by nature. To add humor to any message, one does not have to be David Letterman. In fact, at **IMPACT Communications**, we discourage joke-telling since it might offend someone in the audience. Also, jokes fall flat unless they are executed well. What we do recommend is that you tap into the gold mine of your own life experiences.

Any situation with your spouse, children, pets or car can be told in a way that adds humor to a business presentation. For example, you can talk about earning predictions for the first quarter and segue into a story about your teenager's grandiose predictions about his lawn cutting business and make a humorous business point. You can share your own home repair disaster story and connect it to the importance of asking for help before a crisis occurs and leave people laughing out loud but still very aware of the point you have made. Tom Antion in his book "Wake 'Em Up Business Presentations," says humor carries your message on wings that go straight to a person's heart.

People love getting to know you better so amusing personal stories have another benefit besides entertaining. They build bridges and make you seem

approachable. The presenter who only talks about the product leaves an audience cold. As long as your personal story has a valid business point, you will score with your audience. However, if it seems like you are entertaining just to be entertaining; your audience will question your purpose.

When you think about incorporating a humorous story into your presentation, always start by establishing the business point you want to make. That will help you to sort out irrelevant details. In addition, keep the story short. It should be one to two minutes at most. Remember the goal is to keep the audience interested but not distracted from what's important.

The way a presenter tells the story can also be funny. An audience who is drifting can be recharged by over-exaggerating a word, changing your voice, having a strange facial expression or adding a huge gesture. A funny aside or a play on the company's over-use of acronyms or abbreviations can also be compelling.

Humor works wonders. Consider using it anytime you feel that you might encounter resistance or bore your audience. You don't have to be a comedian to use humor successfully. It takes a willingness to have a lighter approach to a topic. For other ways to add humor, read "1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking," "Wake 'Em Up Business Presentations," or "Crackers for Your Soup."

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