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**Save money
on NSA
winter
workshops**

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**Voices of
Experience**

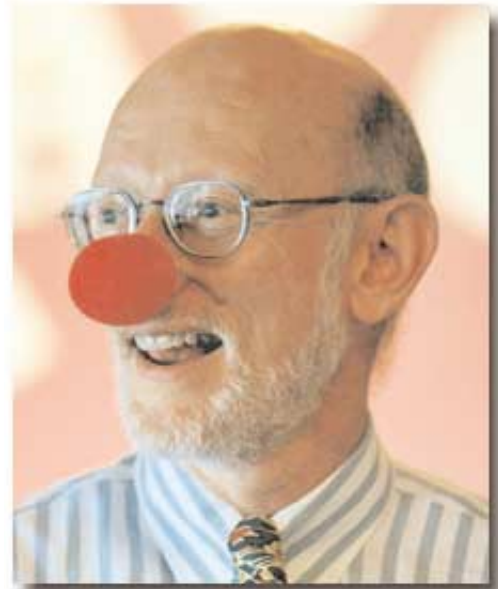
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Holiday party

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How to be funny without telling jokes

Seven humor
tips for speakers



Allen Klein, CSP

By Allen Klein, CSP

For 16 years, I have been showing audiences how to find humor in not-so-funny stuff. Thousands of people have laughed a lot in my presentations, yet I don't tell jokes. Here are a few ways I get people to laugh. You can too.

❶ **SET THE SCENE FOR LAUGHTER.** If you want to lighten up your program, you might want to let the audience know this, even before you say one word. Project some lighthearted visuals as the audience is entering the room. Play some copyright-free, uplifting music as they enter. Or, add some humor to your presentation title or program description. My bio, for example, has my list of accomplishments, playfully followed by, "His mother is very proud of him."

❷ **POKE FUN AT YOURSELF.** Again, even before you open your mouth, you can show the audience that you don't take yourself too seriously by adding some playful things about you in your introduction. I have the introducer tell the audience that I am the author of seven books that have sold well over 30 copies. Then the person corrects his/her mistake and says, "Oops, that's 300,000 copies."

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Western Workshop needs Catholic volunteer

NSA/Oregon, which will host the 2004 Western Winter Workshop January 30 – February 1 in Portland, is looking for an NSA member who is a practicing Catholic to be in charge of the workshop's Catholic service.

The chapter can find a local priest to do a mass, and it would be good to have a member involved, too.

If anyone in our chapter can do this, please contact Margaret Marcuson at 503/701-7621, or via e-mail at MJMarcuson@aol.com.

How to be funny without telling jokes

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③ GET A LAUGH WITH A PROP.

It has been said that 80% of what people learn is visual. If this is true, then speakers need to enhance their talks with something to visually illustrate what they are saying. A prop is a great way to do this because it not only makes your message memorable, but it can also get a laugh.

Among other things, I use balloons to illustrate how people can let go of their stress, an inflatable globe to illustrate how we often carry the world around on our shoulders, and a plastic hammer that I use to hit myself on the head when I goof up. All make a point and all get a laugh.

④ USE YOUR HUMOR STORIES.

Open your humor eyes and ears and look and listen for the funny things that happen all around you. Families are an especially good resource for finding humor stories.

Not too long ago, my Mom, who is 93, told me of an incident that I have incorporated into my opening.

Every time she goes to the doctor, she hires a van service to take her there and back. One late afternoon it didn't show up to take her home.

Since the doctor had to close the office for the day, he suggested that she wait for the van

in the pizza parlor next door.

After waiting a long time without the van arriving, my mom went up to the counter and asked, "Do you deliver?" When the man behind the counter replied, "Of course, we do. We're a pizza place." My mom said, "Great. I'd like a pepperoni pizza and I'd like to go with it."

⑤ **BORROW SOME WITTY WORDS.** While waiting for your own humor-related stories to appear, you might want to borrow some funny short quotes from famous folk to lighten up your talks.

Quotation books, TV, newspapers, and magazines such as Readers Digest are great resources for locating great quotes.

Since I frequently speak to hospice groups, Woody Allen's comments about death and dying are appropriate. My favorite is, "There are worse things in life than death. Have you ever spent an evening with an insurance salesman?"

⑥ **COLLECT AUDIENCE ANECDOTES.** Sometimes audiences say the funniest things. When they do, write them down. They could be a big laugh in your

next presentation.

For years I've been asking audiences, "How do you spell relief?" My answer is "L-A-U-G-H." One day a woman in the back row called out, "D-I-V-O-R-C-E." It got a huge laugh for her that day and continues to get a laugh for me when I retell it.

⑦ **MAKE IT RELEVANT.** One final word about using humor in your presentations. Make sure it is relevant.

Amusing an audience for the sake of getting a laugh might be ideal for a stand-up comedian or an after-dinner humorist, but it's probably not OK for most speakers. If your humor doesn't make a point or have a purpose, don't use it!

The bottom line

For non-humorists, some of the ideas presented here may seem too frivolous for your subject matter. Nevertheless, I would still encourage you to seek some way of upping the entertainment value of your talks, because it might also increase what you charge. As Steve Allen once noted, "People will pay more to be entertained than educated."

Allen Klein, CSP, is the recipient of a Toastmasters Communication and Leadership Award and the author of seven books. Contact him via e-mail at humor@allenklein.com, or via his website at www.allenklein.com.

NSA/NC holiday party Sunday, Dec. 14

JOIN
YOUR FELLOW NSA/NC MEMBERS AT OUR ANNUAL
HOLIDAY PARTY ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14,
FROM 1-4 P.M. AT THE SPECTACULAR TIBURON HOME OF
JOYCE TURLEY, CSP, AND HR HUSBAND, FRED NICHOLAS.
ENJOY GREAT FOOD, WONDERFUL PEOPLE AND SOME OF THE MOST
BREATHTAKING VISTAS IN THE BAY AREA!

Address: 5 Midden Lane, Tiburon

Phone: 415/435-3875 or 415/272-4166

Cost: \$15 per person

Register: online at www.nsanc.org or by phone 650/871-4220. Please register by December 12 so we know how many people to plan for.

Directions: From Highway 101 (either direction), take Tiburon exit. EAST on Tiburon Boulevard (Route 131) for .07 miles to the third traffic signal. LEFT at signal past Cove Shopping Center onto Blackfield Road. LEFT at second stop sign onto Via San Fernando. Go one block, then RIGHT on Paseo Mirasol, and go up a long hill. RIGHT on Midden Lane. Second house on right.



Cantu comedy club formed



Guest presenter Ken Braly donned the apron for an updated release of *Kitchen 2000* at the inaugural Laugh Lovers meeting

In honor of the late John Cantu, NSA/NC President-elect and former Toastmasters District Governor Craig Harrison recently formed Laugh Lovers, an advanced Toastmasters club in the East Bay.

The club helps speakers add humor to their presentations and understand the writing and delivering of comedy.

Laugh Lovers meets the third Sunday of every month from 6-8pm at a private club on Lake Merritt in Oakland. NSA members are welcome. For more information and to learn about guest speakers e-mail Craig at humor@craigspeaks.com.



Virginia Tooper told a tall tale at Laugh Lovers' first meeting.