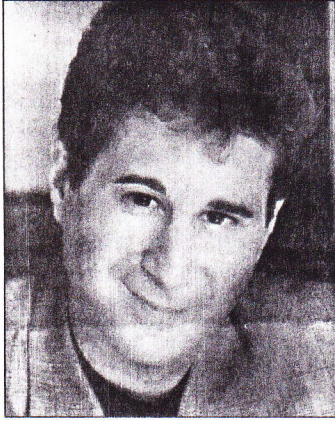


# Why It's Important to Effectively Use Humor in Every Speech You Give!

By Peter J. Fogel



Yesterday on CSPAN I was watching retired elder statesman George McGovern giving a speech to college students on how the Bush

Administration, (because of the Iraqi War) should make a concerted effort to mend fences with our allies, especially France. The talk was dry and monotonous and contained information we've all heard before from other democrats.

Mr. McGovern thought it was counter-productive that we were boycotting French products and that the Senate commissary had renamed French Fries as "Freedom Fries." George, matter-of-factly looked at his audience and said, "What's next? Do we ban French kissing? Well, the audience was completely caught off guard by the flippant remark from this grandfatherly figure and responded with LAUGHTER and APPLAUSE.

But it got better. You see, George then looked at the moderator seated to his right for a response and all he could muster was, "Well, it's been a long time for me, George. I'm more concerned about not going blind." The auditorium approximately 500 people showed their approval now with even bigger LAUGHTER and more APPLAUSE.

Now, I am sure these two men aren't off to headline The Mirage in Vegas. But they still couldn't help but soak up their audience's adulation. And that's because they effectively used

humor that was in the "moment." Using it at the right place and the right time, they had turned a very dry (and overly discussed subject) into an enjoyable listening experience for all who attended that afternoon.

## To Succeed As An All-Around Speaker You Can't Ever Be Boring!

And this proves a very important point for your own speaking career: even if you're an authority in your field and have the knowledge to change your audience's professional and personal lives with your information... it won't mean a hill of beans if you look out into the crowd and notice their collective heads have snapped back and zzz's are cascading out of their mouths and up into the rafters.

Yes, you want to make an impact! Yes, you'd be giddy if you got a real standing ovation... (and not the one where the attendees were rising and leaving the room anyway.)

But to help you get it... to assist you in your quest to break away from the pack of other speakers... to become the superstar platform presence or seminar leader that you're destined to be... you've got to get out of your comfort zone and learn to effectively intertwine humor into your speeches or seminars.

As shown by George McGovern, you should use humor because it will:

- \* surprise and keep your audiences off-guard so their defenses will be lowered.
- \* entertain and enlighten your listeners so that your message is absorbed better.
- \* break up the monotony of a very heavy, content-driven speech
- \* show your humanity, which will make your audience bond to you quicker. (Strong content, plus humor = higher evaluation forms)

### Three Effective Ways to Use Humor!

**1) Know Your Audience:** Humor is subjective. If you're making a playful remark about a particular person in the room... or you're mak-

ing light of a particular situation that happened to the attendees, go with your gut and clear it with the organizers, first. You want laughter, not security escorting you off the premises.

**2) Humorous Story:** Since cave-man days stories have enthralled and kept listeners on the edge of their seats, especially if the speaker was holding a spear. But your story should be organic. Never tell a humorous anecdote if there's no point to it. It's best to sprinkle little comedic croutons through out the story and end on a HUGE punch line... your payoff!

**3) Local Humor:** If you're visiting a town for the first time, pick up some humorous tidbits about the area that everyone knows and can relate to. Believe me, your audience will know you "did your homework" and appreciate you for it and laugh even harder!

Remember: Test your humor first on an impartial audience. If it works, great. Now if it fails... always have a "saver line." And don't immediately discard the joke. If it works two out of three times, analyze why it didn't work that third time. Was your delivery off? Was it for the wrong audience? Experience will show you when a particular "bit" is a keeper. Rinse and repeat procedure over and over again for success. And remember: You can't ever afford to be boring!

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## Speakers Bureaus Continued

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Bureaus may want to ask these questions when working with speakers:

Are you 'checking 6' for your speaker partners and keeping us informed?

Are you doing your part in promoting our expertise to your clients?

Do you seek to understand our talents, uniqueness, and what our business objectives are?

Do you provide feedback on our materials and help us to adapt to our changing environment when appropriate?

I think it is critical that we remember to thank each other on occasion, and not to take our relationships for granted. We should treat each other as partners in success and as extensions of our offices. Just like fighter pilots, we're all trying to effectively perform our missions, differentiate ourselves in a highly competitive environment, and win!

Having a 'check 6' relationship with your bureau partners will reap many rewards. The speaking industry requires a teamwork approach, and we should trust each other to do not only what is right from a business perspective, but from a people perspective as well.

So, next time you meet with your speakers bureau wingmen, shake their hand, and say, **"I'm Proud to be your Wingman!"**

Remember, it's all about relationships!

*Waldo Waldman, MBA, is a professional speaker and is President and founder of The Patriot Group, a leadership and sales consulting firm in Atlanta, GA. A former combat-decorated fighter pilot, Waldo demonstrates in his keynotes and workshops the value of teamwork and trust in business relationships and in life. You may visit his web site at [www.WaldoSpeaks.com](http://www.WaldoSpeaks.com) or call him at 770-333-9867.*