

## How To Fit the Right Humor To The Right Audience

By Peter "The Humorator" Fogel – NSA Member

A joke has two parts: a set-up (premise) and a punch-line (pay-off).

In comedy club humor you can push the envelope with subject material, your language, etc. People are drunk, looser, and give you the benefit of the doubt.

Of course, there's a different mindset when you are in a corporate environment --  
- presenting a comedy show or speaking to the rank and file staff. People are uptight... they're in work mode... and no company president wants to get sued by his employee for a rude racist remark made by a comedian or speaker during work hours. (See Michael Richards)

I think you know we live in a politically correct society...yes, albeit, a little anal retentive one.

Okay, a lot! But there are rules. Whether you're speaking to people that have bought your book or you're training employees at Westinghouse... you MUST (or should) know the psychological make-up or demographics of your listeners.

Here's an example. It's a political joke. Now I don't know if you're Republican or Democrat...but understand that Humorists are equal opportunity offenders. We 'knock' and find fault with all of society. I am trying to be very bi-partisan here.

'When it comes to America's politics - dealing with the Democrats and Republicans, don't you feel that with all their mud slinging and 'broken promises' that you're at the point where you're just trying to figure out which one is 'Evil' or 'Less Evil'?

Now THAT was a moderate joke (or an attempt at one). With that joke, I am empowering my audience to make a decision. Because I know, in an election year, that's what is on everyone's mind, and what they're trying to figure out!

Here's a Bush joke I wrote a while back during his re-election.

'Folks our country is divided. Some Americans think Bush is the worst President this country's ever had...and others think he's the best President this country's ever had. Are you kidding? He's not even the best President in his own family.'

Now if you're a Bush fan - PLEASE - keep an open mind about this joke. If you're left winger - you will undoubtedly laugh at it. (A friend who wrote for Letterman wanted to buy it from me.)

If you're a right winger you probably won't like it -- but you still might appreciate the 'truthfulness' of the joke.

When I performed at a black tie Republican right wing military college... you just KNOW I didn't do that joke (or any Bush jokes). They might've rushed the stage and burned me at the stake--or ask me for a party donation!

BUT I might use that particular joke in Florida where there's lots of seniors who are not huge fans of 'W.' My point is...know the wants, needs, and desires of your audience. Know the boundaries that you can leap over or should avoid like a drunk uncle at a wedding.

Make the time to have a discussion with the person who hired you - so you have no concerns, aggravation, or regrets later on about certain 'subject material.'

Remember: part of your job as a speaker is to make the event planner who contracted you look like a genius for using you. (You do want to get paid, don't you?)

When in doubt - leave it out! (Especially when it comes to religion or politics (priests...pedophiles...politicians that are pedophiles...you get the idea.)

Remember: when you're speaking, use humor to attract -NOT distract from your message...If you insist on being controversial then go for it and have plenty of ammunition to back it up.

Here's another joke that crosses all boundaries that I use when I have a mixed audience or an audience of boomers. (It's fail safe.)

'You know folks...I know I am getting older. I remember when Michael Jackson was black.'

This gets a huge response because the audience is - yes --- thinking the exact same thing! And Sir Michael is a controversial celebrity at best.

Remember: Victor Borge once said, (and he said this when he was alive) 'Humor is the closest point between two people.'

Use it wisely, Grasshopper!

**Peter "The Humorator" Fogel** is a speaker/author/copywriter and humorist. He is also the creator of Peter "The Humorator" Fogel's Guide To Effective Public Speaking. For more information on his program or his FREE 7 Days To Effective Public Speaking e-course go to [www.publicspeaklikeapro.com](http://www.publicspeaklikeapro.com).  
[www.fortune500comedy.com](http://www.fortune500comedy.com)

