

Innovation Through Humor Techniques & Application

Jim Tosone
NJOD Annual Sharing Day
May 2014

Today's Goal

- Understand the building blocks of humor
- Illustrate them
- Show how to apply them to innovate in business

Today is about awareness, not mastery

Humor Techniques

- Contradiction
- Reverse
- Exaggeration
- Analogy
- Brevity
- Visuals
- Incongruous Ideas



Observational Humor

“Did You Ever Notice...?”

- “That there’s very little advice in men’s magazines? Because men don’t think there’s a lot they don’t know. – Jerry Seinfeld
- “That anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?” – George Carlin
- “That when you put the words ‘The IRS’ together it spells ‘Theirs’?”



Contradiction - Examples

“If you think healthcare is expensive now, just wait ‘till it’s free.” – P.J. O’Rourke

“Science may never come up with a better office communications system than the coffee break.” – Anon.

“We made the wrong mistakes.” – Yogi Berra

“In Italy under the Borgias they had war, murder and bloodshed but they produced Michelangelo, da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock.” - Orson Welles

Contradiction - Exercise

Complete These Contradiction Quotes

- “A life insurance customer wins when _____”
- “We just initiated a nine-month program to make our company more _____”
- “Don't let schooling interfere with your _____” - Mark Twain
- “If I had had more time, I would have written a _____ letter.” – Winston Churchill

Contradiction Innovations



Not exercising is exercising



Computers can be in more than one state at the same time

Reverse - Examples

“I will not make age an issue of this campaign. I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience.” - Ronald Reagan, 1984

“Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen.” - Mark Twain

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” - Winston Churchill

Reverse - Exercise

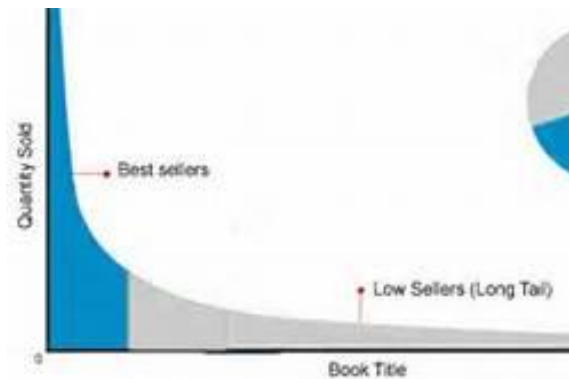
Complete These Reverse Quotes

- “When you hire people that are smarter than you are, you prove you are _____”
- “Suicide is man's way of telling God, "You can't fire me – I _____" - Bill Maher
- “The workers at the Federal Mint went on strike today. They are demanding to make _____”
- “Because of the embarrassment over their name, The Washington Redskins have decided to drop the word _____.”

Reverse Innovations



Reverse Innovations



Reverse Innovations



B.Y.O.D.
(Bring Your Own Device)



Exaggeration - Examples

"President Obama had dinner with some top tech executives: the CEO of Facebook, the CEO of Apple, the CEO of Oracle, and their waiter, the CEO of MySpace." - Jay Leno

"People's Number 1 fear is public speaking. Number 2 is death. That means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy." – Jerry Seinfeld

Johnny Carson: "Man, is it cold out there today." □

Audience: "How cold is it?" □

Carson: "It is so cold that lawyers are putting their hands in their own pockets." □

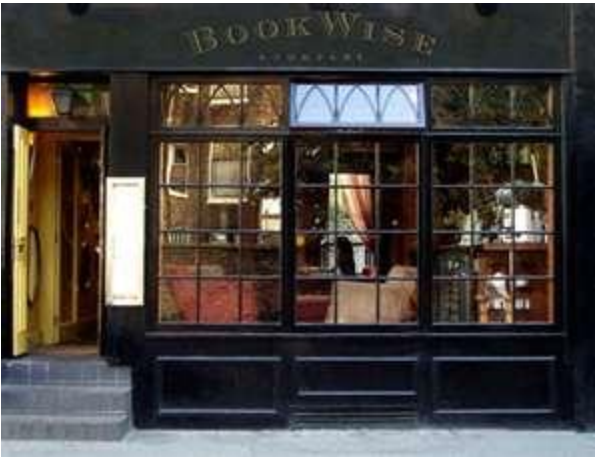
IMPROV Means Business™

Exaggeration - Exercise

Complete These Exaggeration Quotes

- “I love to go to Washington - if only to be near my _____”
- Bob Hope
- “Someone sent me a postcard picture of the earth. On the back they wrote, ‘_____.’” – Stephen Wright
- “When I was a boy the Dead Sea was only _____” -
George Burns
- “I bet on a “great” horse the other day. It took _____” –
Rodney Dangerfield

Exaggeration Innovations



1980



1990



2000

Exaggeration Innovations



7 Days



1 Day



0 Days

Time Between Episodes

Exaggeration Innovations



\$219



\$29



\$0

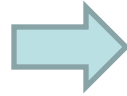
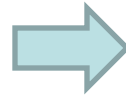
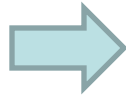
Analogy - Examples

“The plan was simple, like my brother-in-law Phil. But unlike Phil, this plan just might work.”

Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it.”

“The ‘Obamacare’ website crashes so often that they are renaming the Affordable Care Act ‘Lindsey Lohan-care.’”

Analogy Innovation



Brevity

The Hemmingway Challenge

Earnest Hemingway was once challenged to write a story in six words.

He wrote: 'For sale: baby shoes, never used.'

Assignment: Write memorable a six-word story.

*Satan- Jehovah- fifteen rounds. A draw.
– Norman Mailer*



Brevity Innovations

Twitter ('nuff said)



Visuals



Write Your Own Captions

Visuals



“The new edition of ‘The Joy of Sex’ has a typo on p. 198.”



“No, you’re wrong. First of all George Clooney is much taller than me.”

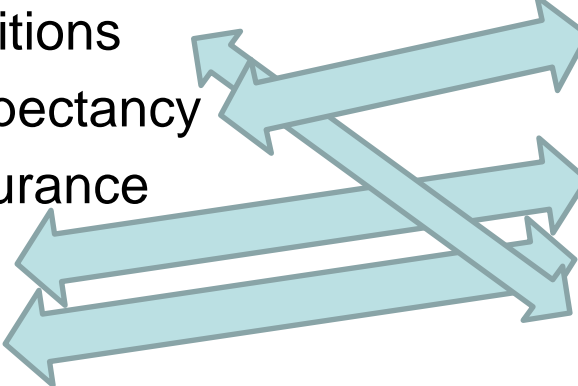
Incongruous Ideas

Create for Your Industry

- Contradiction
- Reverse
- Exaggeration
- Incongruous ideas



Incongruous Ideas

- Mergers & Acquisitions
 - Increased Life Expectancy
 - Banks Selling Insurance
 - Driverless Cars
 - Climate Change
- 
- Tasting Menus
 - Celebrity Entrepreneurs
 - D.A.R.E to Legalize Drugs
 - Travel Writers
 - Ronald McDonald's Exit Interview



Incongruous Ideas

- **Ronald McDonald's Exit Interview**
 - Conduct exit interviews in a fun place to elicit more honest responses
- **Tasting Menus**
 - Provide food according to healthy meal plans in exchange for lower health insurance rates
- **Travel Writers**
 - Use travel writers knowledge of changing weather conditions as input to price of trip insurance
- **D.A.R.E to Legalize Drugs**
 - No raising rates for DUI in driverless car



Applying the Techniques

- Notice your physical space, people
- Record what you notice
- Turn your observations into humor using the techniques
- Collect your humorous observations see how they relate to problems & opportunities



IMPROV Means Business™



Improv Means Business™

Jim Tosone

www.ImprovMeansBusiness.com

jim@tosoneassociates.com

©2014 Tosone Associates LLC