

ARE WE HAVING FUN YET?!

WELCOME TO SPEAKER-TAINMENT

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Each day it seems the economic picture gets a little bit brighter.

But, are meetings?

For months, even years, the corporate market has seen fear and cutbacks and slashed budgets and canceled events and dwindling attendance and scaled-back programs due to actual money problems, or fear of a perception of lavish spending during difficult times.

And the result: meetings (when they happen at all) have become boring! The challenge: To bring back fun and excitement, laughter and joy, while still hanging on to a very real need to create genuine pride, loyalty, commaderie, and results - without spending an arm and a leg.

The answer, in a word: Infotainment. Motivatainment. Inspirtainment. Entervation. Techfotainment. Inspirmotivatainment.

Ok, maybe it's too difficult to say in one word. And these are pretty ugly words! Try several words: the perfect blend of entertainment, motivation, and customization. You could call them "speakers who entertain," or "entertainers who speak," but no matter what you call them, they are the perfect solution for meeting planners looking for an event that makes an impact on all levels.

In an effort to save money, and/or not appear frivolous, some are bringing in

technology experts, financial analysts, and economic prognosticators, or worse yet are pinning the success of their meeting on internal speakers delivering news from their department. They are missing the main point of any event: entertainment.

But wait, isn't the main point of a corporate event to get people to work harder and better? No, that's the purpose of a productive day at the office!

A 3-day event in Cancun, or Vegas, or Cleveland, is for letting your people know how important they are, letting them see what an awesome organization they work for (or with), thanking them for the excellent work they're doing, and inspiring them to go back energized, motivated, and wanting to work harder. And that's what entertainment does.

Besides, you'll have plenty of opportu-



nity for the nuts-and-bolts approach during your event's break out sessions. When it comes to your keynote, give your people some entertainment.

Now more than ever, what a conference needs is a speaker who motivates and inspires through fun and laughter, awe and amazement, who can lift your people up to a new place. That's what entertainment does. A room full of employees or customers who are doubled over with laughter, wiping tears from their eyes, sharing an hour of visceral excitement and joy, is far more important than imparting the latest sales technique. And one of the only places to turn for this result is a professional entertainer.

Prior to becoming keynoters, "infotainers" have spent the bulk of their careers in front of hundreds of audiences in every conceivable situation, honing their skills, learning to work an audience, analyzing the anatomy of a joke, perfecting pacing, audience participation, the drama of suspense and release. They have been on cruise ships, comedy clubs, concert stages, in the streets, schools, parties. And, they are doing what they do because they absolutely love and couldn't possibly do anything else. That dedication, that love, is the infectious ingredient that every audience can see and feel. And any top-level professional performer got where they are because of that passion.

So, is every entertainer a good "infotainer?" Absolutely not. That is where a savvy buyer needs to be careful. Because it's true that you want your keynoter to bring fun to the event, but you need a lot more than that. You don't want your people walking away saying, "Gee, so-and-so was good, but what does that have to do with our company?" The good infotainer knows that the client's dollar needs to do a lot more than just buy laughs, or some oohs and aahs. The performer needs to understand the audience, who they are, what they do, what they care about, why they do what they do. He or she needs to know the goals of the meeting. Is it a "congratulations on a great year," or is it, "we need to do bet-



ter in the coming year," or "thank you for being our valued customers/partners," or is it something else?

A performer who knows corporate keynoting will research the client, will incorporate the client's products, terminology, acronyms, ad slogans, their people. And when it comes to audience involvement on stage, not every entertainer is going to understand the climate of a corporate event!

In a comedy club, usually when a comic gets someone on stage it is to get as many laughs as possible at that person's expense, often by making that person look foolish. That can not be the approach at a meeting, when the CEO (or anyone else) is on stage participating! This is an incredible opportunity for a performer to help an executive connect with the people, to show they have a sense of humor, that they are willing to have a little fun and do something a little out-of-the-ordinary for the audience. But to that end, the performer must make the audience member a hero, the star of the show. Yes, it can be funny, but the entire attitude needs to be "we are going to do something awesome for this audience, and I can't do it without you," rather than,

"thanks for coming up, now I'm going to make you look like a fool."

Do not trust your event to just any entertainer. You need to find an act that has been doing corporate events for a long time, who understands the nuances of corporate culture, the goals of a meeting, and who juggles chainsaws (what? How did that get in there?).

Also, there are definitely different mixtures, different ratios of entertainment to information. Know whether you are looking for someone who does a killer job of entertaining, and then customizes a few things, works in the theme, and uses a volunteer, or whether you are looking for someone who gets in deeper, and has experience motivating a sales force, or inspiring through a personal story, that sort of thing. What you are probably looking for is anywhere from a mixture of 90/10 Entertainment/Information, to 60/40 Entertainment/Information.

Once you reach the 50/50 point, or start to slide the other direction, you are no longer looking for an entertainer. You then want an expert who speaks. And that is a different article.

The reason you only need about a 90/10 split, or maybe 80/20, is because a little bit of customization and motivation goes a long way.

Most of the positive outcome will be from the way the entertainer makes your people feel. With a few well-placed nuggets of customized wisdom, an act can transform to a keynote without losing the fun and pacing of an entertaining show.

Entertainment is magical. Laughter transcends all boundaries. The shared experience of being entertained by a true professional who understands corporate events - this is the best money you can spend right now.

So go out and get yourself an infotainer. Or some motivainment. Or a techno-median. Or whatever the heck you want to call it. Under any name, it'll bring you the results you want.