

HEROIC FLOL: OF

Is it important for you to be funny?
Are a pig's assets pork?

BY JUNE CLINE, CSP

Introducer: “Please welcome speaker, humor coach and the adoptive mother of a crazed Shih Tsu . . . June Cline!” (Laughter and applause.)

June Cline, CSP: “Ladies, I’m your fourth speaker, and you’ve just had lunch. Would you trust me this early in our relationship to stand up for just a minute for a quick energizing exercise? (Audience stands in delight with moans and groans of “Oh, yes, thank you!”)

Just follow me. Shake your hands out up over your head like you are going ape. Yes that’s it. Continue shaking your hands while making noises like you are an ape—ooou, ooou, ooou, ahhh, ahhh, ahhh. Now, bend to the floor—act like you are eating grass. (Audience laughing aloud, looking at each other as they pretend to eat grass.)

OK, you can stop now . . . (perfect pause) . . . can you believe the power of a speaker? (Big audience laughter.) I had all y’all going ape. Please be seated as I tell you why.



“ In the beginning of my speaking career, I gave four different speeches in four different states within three days. Those four speeches changed my life. ”



First, never make anyone do anything stupid, silly or look foolish—without a point. I have three. First, you needed to move. I know I did. Last year, I lost 52 pounds (said with a dramatic flair and perfect pause while audience responded with gasps and applause). I discovered my butt has a bone in it. (Big audience laugh and applause.) Who knew these chairs were so hard without all that padding? (More laughter.) Do you feel the energy shift in this room from us moving and laughing? That’s the power of laughter.

Second, going ape is the official response if you ever encounter a silver back gorilla—or a demanding boss. It’s practical. I promise it will change your mood and cause those around you to leave you alone. (More laughter! And now my closing story is set up.)

And, third, APE is an acronym for the three points I want you to take away from the 20 minutes I have with you. So it’s functional. APE stands for awareness, permission and fun. (Audience eyes flare, eyebrows arch, confused faces stare.)

Ah! (I point at them.) That’s it! That’s the moment I wanted you to experience. Surprise—the unexpected—that’s where humor comes from. APF doesn’t spell anything. There’s no connection for you to experience, or a hook to hang on to. But having you go APE and connecting it with fun—I’ll bet you

dollars to a donut you’ll never forget going ape with me and what it stands for: awareness, permission and fun. Creating the unexpected requires changing something—as simple as swapping an ‘e’ for an ‘f.’”

The above was the opening of my speech the day before I wrote this this article.

I was the fourth speaker at a lovely International Women’s Day Champagne Brunch sponsored by a well-known and respected financial planning firm. Each speaker had 20 minutes. Let’s “audit” my opening so you can know the return on investment (ROI) of laughing out loud (LOL).

Know Before Hello

Are you getting a laugh out of your introduction? “Adoptive mother of a crazed Shih Tzu” gets one every time. I provide the introducer the phonetic enunciation of “she zoo” with an opt-out if they are uncomfortable with it. No one ever has refused, and they always get a laugh. It’s a great audience gauge and a way to engage them in laughter before you even step on stage. If they don’t laugh where you know other audiences do . . . uh, oh. Yep, even through your intro, you learn things.

If they did not laugh, what don’t you know? Is something wrong—like a huge layoff announcement just before your

speech? Did somebody die? Gosh, I hope it was just the intro. Is this the wrong audience—like 99.9 percent male electrical engineers? No slam to EE’s as I have a perfectly good one of my own at home. Though I love him dearly, a ballroom full of engineers is not my best audience. Yep, I’ve experienced all of the above. And though I know how to handle it now and coach others how to as well, it wasn’t pretty nor funny, then. And, I knew it at the introduction.

Know Comedic Styles

In the beginning of my speaking career, I gave four different speeches in four different states within three days. Those four speeches changed my life.

Each audience responded totally different to my speeches. They caused me to pause—and need therapy. I’m joking—kinda. Back then, I didn’t know what I didn’t know. Those audiences made me want to know what made my tried-and-true material receive such mixed reactions. That’s when I discovered that audiences matter and, in fact, are informal members of specific comedic styles.

I created and categorized my four different audiences into four groups, much like the behavioral styles you’d be familiar with from Myers-Briggs, DISC® and others. My four copyrighted humor styles are: Crazy, Caring, Cerebral and Caustic.



“ Make it a great ride and pay attention to the bumps in the road. This is the material that generates humor. In fact, it’s our foibles that make us fabulous. ”

I researched comics who exhibited those four styles and discovered traits and characteristics of each that I call the Four Quadrants of Comedic Styles®. I used these quadrants to help me to understand why my humor was received so differently by those four clients.

Later, it dawned on me to use it with my humor coaching clients so they would know their comedic style, and if their style was helping or hurting their presentation and their bottom line. But more important, just like me, my clients needed to know and understand the comedic style for each of their audiences.

Know Thyself

“I can make pre- through post-menopausal women lose fluids.” TMI? One day, about three years ago, I actually heard what I said and thought—I need more therapy. Then, I thought, “Duh! Why don’t I create and attract that audience? They love me. I love them. Pre- through post-menopausal women need to laugh out loud or we will explode. Many are right there on the crazy and caring side of my quadrants, meaning their humor is pointed in, it’s self-effacing.”

And so my one-woman show was born. It is based on IMO’s—idiot moments, mine and others around life’s bumps in the road. Heck, learning to

ride my Harley-Davidson 883 Custom Deluxe Sportster, “Good Golly Ms. Molly,” gave me plenty of new material.

They came. They paid. They laughed. They lost fluids. TMI? They went home happy. And they told others.

I found my people. Who are yours? What do you know about you and the audiences that love you? And like me, who are the ones you need to say “no” to? That’s the absolute best way to make your humor work. Be in front of your right people.

Know What You Know

I now know through my own research, understanding and creation of my Four Quadrants of Comedic Styles® that it’s best when your presentations tap all four quadrants just a titch (which is a unit of measurement bigger than a smidgen and less than a skosh). I knew the “crazies” would love going ape. I knew the “carings” would empathize with my discovering a bone in my butt. I knew the “cerebrals” would want to know and understand why I made them look foolish by going ape. And, I knew “caustics” would get the sarcastic tease about the power of a speaker.

So what was the ROI of LOL for me from this fun mere 20 minutes with an audience who loved me? It’s the same as it can be for you when you make your right audience laugh out loud.

They wanted to be sure they were on my mailing list for my next one-woman show, where to download free information and get updates about other programs, how their organization could be in contact for this presentation, and how to connect with a humor coach to help funny up their presentation skills.

The bottom line is laughter makes them want more of you. In fact, they could even go APE over you. When you are in the moment with audience awareness and give yourself permission to make a fun energy change in your presentation, their laughter escrow account grows exponentially from the intro—where you had them before hello.

Is there an ROI of LOL? Is it important for you to be funny? NSA founder Cavett Robert, CSP, CPAE, answered that question with “only if you want to get paid.” And, you now know my southern, sassy and savvy response: “Are a pig’s assets pork?”

June Cline, CSP, is the Southern, Sassy and Savvy Harley-Riding Humorist and Coach. Cline is president of the Center for Laughing and Learning: Where ROI Meets LOL. She is quoted in over 200 media outlets as diverse as CNN, Selling Power and Harvard Business Review. Cline helps individuals and teams know if their humor is helping or hurting their bottom line. Go to JuneCline.com.