

*Entelechy's Newsletter for Trainers, Managers, HR Professionals and Others  
Responsible for the Performance of Others*

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HUMOR IN TRAINING

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Training is serious business. Right?

Well, sometimes training is a joke – literally:

An astronaut graduated near the bottom of his training class. On his first mission into space, he was teamed up with a monkey who was top in his training class.

They each got an envelope that they were to open once they got into orbit, with instructions for their mission.

Once they had blasted off and were in space, the monkey opened his envelope, read the instructions, and began flicking buttons and hitting switches.

The astronaut opened up his own envelope and found a note that read: “Feed the monkey.”

With that little joke, I’ve softened up more audiences and opened them up to learning than with facts and figures, professional presentation graphics, or powerful words.

Laughing makes us receptive to learning. Laughing together makes us a learning community. Laughing is food for the soul.

Storytelling and humor is good for making a point or reinforcing one already made. Storytelling and humor add your personality to the presentation.

### *EXAMPLES OF STORYTELLING*

- “I remember the first speech I made in high school. Becky was sitting in the front row....”
- “What’s the difference between being having a root canal and making a speech?”

### *GUIDELINES FOR USING STORYTELLING AND HUMOR*

Decide the point you are trying to make before selecting a story or piece of humor. Do not use storytelling to fill time and do not use humor to “liven up” an otherwise dull presentation.

You don’t need to start with a joke. Instead, use a relevant joke to help your participants relax after a serious topic. Well-timed humor is like a good stretch break.

Storytelling is usually much more intimate than a presentation. When you tell a story, use a more personal, confiding posture; vary your tone, pace, and inflection.

Rehearse the punch line of the joke or the key portion of the story. These make – or break – the impact of the story or the joke.

Not good at remembering jokes? Write it down and read it as if it were a letter from a colleague or relative. I am from Minnesota and poke fun of my heritage. Minnesotans – especially my folks – are warm, simple, and a bit naïve. Sometimes I read a letter from my Mom who may have a story that’s relevant to the training. Here’s a story I read when I want to emphasize exercising caution or planning (as you’re reading this, you may want to interject phrases like, “fer sure”, “you betcha”, and “cripes”):

Dear Son,

We were at Our Lady of the Lake Church listening to Pastor Eulie Torkleson give his sermon this past Sunday. You probably remember that the reading was about the good Samaritan.

Anyways, Pastor Eulie tells his own little parable about the good Samaritan; he's modernized it a bit. A guy arrives at the pearly gates, waiting to be admitted. St. Peter is reading through the Big Book to see if the guy's name is written in it. After several minutes, St. Peter closes the book, furrows his brow, and says, "I'm sorry, I don't see your name written in the Book."

"How current is your copy?" the guy asks.

"I get a download every ten minutes," St. Peter replies, "why do you ask?"

"I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I was always the stubborn type. It was not until my death was imminent that I cried out to God, so my name probably hasn't arrived to your copy yet."

"I'm glad to hear that," Pete says, "but while we're waiting for the update to come through, can tell me about a really good deed that you did in your life?"

The guy thinks for a moment and says, "Humm, well there was this one time when I was driving down a road and I saw a group of biker gang members harassing this poor girl. I slowed down, and sure enough, there they were, about 20 of them harassing this poor woman. Infuriated, I got out my car, grabbed a tire iron out of my trunk, and walked up to the leader of the gang. He was a huge guy; 6-foot-4, 260 pounds, with a studded leather jacket and a chain running from his nose to his ears. As I walked up to the leader, the bikers formed a circle around me and told me to get lost or I'd be next."

"So I ripped the leader's chain out of his face and smashed him over the head with the tire iron. Then I turned around and yelled to the rest of them, "Leave this poor innocent girl alone! You're all a bunch of SICK, deranged animals! Go home before I really teach you a lesson in PAIN!"

St. Peter, duly impressed, says "Wow! When did this happen?"

"About three minutes ago."

After reading the above story in a Minnesotan accent (and waiting for the laughter to die down), I'll talk about the importance of planning.

Here's a joke that I use in management training at an appropriate time:

Several cannibals were recently hired by a big corporation. "You are all part of our team now," said the HR rep during the welcoming briefing. "You get all the usual benefits, and you can go to the cafeteria for something to eat, but please don't eat any of the other employees."

The cannibals promised.

Four weeks later their boss remarked, "You're all working very hard, and I'm satisfied with you. However, one of our secretaries has disappeared. Do any of you know what happened to her?" The cannibals all shook their heads no.

After the boss had left, the leader of the cannibals said to the others, "Which one of you idiots ate the secretary?"

A hand rose hesitantly, to which the leader of the cannibals continued, "You fool! For four weeks we've been eating all the managers we wanted and no one noticed, but noooooo, you had to go and eat a secretary!"

Then I'll go on to talk about the importance of employees or something related. A point made with humor is a point remembered.

This information comes from *High Impact Training*, a module in Entelechy's *High Performance Training* program. If you want more detailed information on this skill and others from our *High Performance Training* program, please visit our website at <http://www.unlockit.com/> or contact me directly at <mailto:ttraut@unlockit.com>.

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CLIP-ART: CRUTCH OR CURE?  
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I admit it. I'm a clip-art fanatic. I own two clip-art packages. You know, the ones with 2.3 gazillion pictures! I'm obviously a fan of clip-art. At the same time, I also think that clip-art is overused and has become a crutch for many trainers.

If you look through one of your presentations, do you get a bit squeamish about the lack of graphic appeal or the lack of professionalism due to clip-art? If you do, you're not

alone. Come join us in clip-art therapy. Hi. My name is Terry, and I'm a clip-art junkie....

There are two truths to using graphics:

- Beautiful Truth: A picture (or graphic) is worth a thousand words.
- Ugly Truth: A picture (or graphic) that is irrelevant is a thousand words of noise.

The problem with clip-art it's too easy. It's too easy to stick something – anything – into your participant guide, PowerPoint presentation, or WBT. As a result, the clip-art is not as relevant as it should be. It becomes noise.

And while my 2.3 gazillion clip-art collection theoretically gives me a greater chance of finding THE graphic, sorting through 2.3 gazillion graphics takes a long time.

Let's talk about tips after a brief and necessary technical explanation of different graphic types

### *A BIT ABOUT GRAPHIC TYPES*

As you probably know, graphics come in two basic types: vector graphics and bit-mapped graphics. Much of the stuff you get in the clip-art packages is vector graphics. Vector graphics are graphics that are formed with lines and shapes – vectors. Vector graphics can be shrunk without losing detail or enlarged while remaining sharp and clean.

Bit-mapped graphics cannot be ungrouped because there is nothing to ungroup. Bit-mapped graphics are made by assigning each bit (or pixel) a color. Bit-mapped graphics do not resize well nor are they as easy to modify as vector graphics.

Photos also use the bit-mapping process to render an image. Photos that are less detailed (and therefore have a smaller file size) will lose detail if they are enlarged; photos that are detailed can be easily enlarged but will be much larger in file size. File size can be an issue if you are emailing or copying files with detailed pictures.

### *TIPS FOR USING GRAPHICS*

- Tip 1: Avoid bit-mapped graphics for PowerPoint or Word presentations. Bit-mapped graphics work well in WBT since they transport well and are not subject to enlarging. But they get rather ugly rather quickly when projected on a large projection screen.

- Tip 2: Create the text for your presentation or WBT first. Make text notes of the types of graphics that may be appropriate (i.e., “Need a broken down car or truck – personal transportation.”) After you’ve created and refined the text, pull out your clip-art catalog and look for those specific pictures that fit the description. Pull in all that seem to fit the description; you can always delete the less relevant ones.
- Tip 3: Vector graphics can be easily modified using PowerPoint® or Word® by using the Ungroup feature. Click on the clip-art and then from the Draw menu, select Ungroup. You may be told that, “This is an imported object, not a group. Do you want to convert it to a Microsoft Office drawing object?” When you click Yes, the vector graphic is ungrouped allowing you to recolor, delete, resize, or otherwise alter any of the graphical elements. When you’ve made your changes, regroup the object (click and drag your mouse to encircle the graphical elements and then click on the Group icon in the Draw menu).
- Tip 4: Professional artists create artwork that has a similar look and feel throughout the presentation. Using the Ungroup feature, modify the clip-art by simply changing the colors of the object to a single color with various shades. Doing this to all of your clip-art gives the artwork a similar look and feel throughout your presentation.
- Tip 5: I have found myself using photos in place of clip-art. Photos tend to look more professional than clip-art – especially the clip-art that is usually accessible and used by trainers. (If I see one more picture of that guy in the blue suit bending at the waist with magnifying glass in hand, I’m going to cry!).
- Tip 6: One of the sites that I use most often for theme clip-art and photos is Microsoft’s Design Gallery Live (<http://dgl.microsoft.com/mgo1en/eula.asp>). It’s free. And it allows you to search for the object of your choice (e.g., bird, telephone, businesswoman), the type of graphic you want (i.e., clip-art, photo, sounds, or motion).
- Tip 7: Find good graphics and reuse them. I use the same photos in my customer service training that I use in my sales training. They’re professional looking, diverse in ethnicity and gender, and relevant.

If you have a favorite site for graphics or photos, share it with your colleagues in the next issue of *The Key*. Simply write to:

[mailto:ttraut@unlockit.com?subject=Graphic\\_site\\_or\\_tip](mailto:ttraut@unlockit.com?subject=Graphic_site_or_tip). Include the URL or tip and any information about yourself that you wouldn’t mind broadcasting to 35,000 people!

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MAILING AND PRIVACY INFORMATION  
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Send this email to your friends and colleagues who may be involved in training and the performance of others and could benefit from FREE performance tips, tools, and techniques.

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