FINDING THE FUNNY FAST
How to Create Quick Humor to Connect With
Clients, Coworkers and Crowds
(a few excerpts)

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INTRODUCTION

A BRIEF SAMPLE. ..

CHAPTER 3   ANALOGIES, STEREOTYPES AND COMMON ASSUMPTIONS, OH MY!

> **Use common knowledge, even if it's inaccurate (example: Women are bad drivers.), to get to the funny fast.**

Another way I write humor fast is by making connections between elements in the environment and stereotypes, common assumptions and analogies we have about those elements. The only time you're allowed to use stereotypes and common assumptions is when writing and speaking comedy—and then, only as long as you're *nice*.

When I walk into a room where I'm speaking, I make a list, either on paper or in my head, of all the things in the environment. Who's in the room? Is it cold? Is it hot? Are there decorations? What's the seating like? And then I take one of those elements and list common assumptions, stereotypes and analogies about it.

> **SIDEBAR/NOTE**
> **Have some fun with common stereotypes we have about people. For example, the rich: "Bill Gates threw a top-secret party on an Alaskan cruise ship for 500 of the world's most famous people, including many top models. For the first time, there was more saline on a ship than in the water."**

For example, if I see 700 women in the room, which is one of the elements in the environment, I then list all of the analogies, stereotypes and common assumptions (even if they aren't exactly accurate) that people have about women. Women talk a lot, carry big purses, take a long time in the bathroom, have PMS, bash men, wear a lot of makeup and are not good drivers.

Then I make a connection between the element in the environment (women) and the common assumption, analogy or stereotype (long time in the bathroom) we have about that element to come up with a joke such as, "It's nice to be here with 700 women, but I've been trying to get into the bathroom since 6:30 this morning." Or, "I knew there were a lot of women at this event. All the cars in the parking lot have dents." All right that one's easier to get away with *if* you're a woman. (We'll get into some of the rules for using humor later.) And again, the stereotype may not be correct. (I think women are actually *better* drivers than men.) It just has to be the collective viewpoint.

Another example: Suppose you walk in and it's really *freezing*. I mean so cold that everyone feels it, so you've got to say something. Come up with things that everyone associates with cold. You can start with the obvious stuff, which is usually not that funny, but it'll get you

warmed up, so to speak. Things we associate with cold include the sniffles, Mt. Everest, snow, refrigerators, Eskimos, ice cream, ice cubes.

Then ramp it up a bit. Take the opposite of things we associate with cold—things we associate with hot. Anything funny? The devil, hot flashes/menopause, sweating. Get outrageous. Ask what's cold? Where is it cold? Who is cold? Step over the line if you have to; you can always come back. Who is cold? Naked people, people who live in Iceland, my ex-husband/wife, the Clintons' bedroom. (Not being political, just trying to be funny—and political figures are fair game!)

Ahhhh, now we're getting somewhere. "Boy it's freezing in here! Who's in the audience? My ex-wife?" Or, "Hey, this place is colder than the Clinton bedroom."

Now try it again with another element of the environment. Maybe the ceilings are high. What does everyone associate with high? When do we associate with high? Who do we associate with high? Where do we associate with high? Again, get outrageous and you can come up with things, like, the sky, birds, Ozzy Osbourne. This might lead you to, "Hey, the ceilings in here are almost as high as Ozzy Osbourne."

The cool thing about referencing the environment when talking with someone or in giving a speech is that you don't need to use a lot of words to do it. You don't have to say, "It's freezing," because people in that environment know it's freezing. Start out looking at the stuff closest and easiest, like the room set up if you're physically present. And then move out from there to the entire hotel, the city, the state.

Using the Environment When You're Not Present
But what about if you're writing a sales letter and you're not physically in the environment? You can still figure out what's in your audience's environment by . . . .