



The Keynote Chronicle

Humor News from Jan McInnis
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Stripper Clothing... and Other Labels

So I'm sitting in a factory surrounded by women from other countries who are fast at work on their sewing machines making. . . stripper clothing. That's right, clothing for strippers (also known in the industry as "dancers"). I couldn't talk with these women due to the language barrier, but I'm sure they wondered what a tall, gawky-looking girl like me was doing there. They probably figured I was the bottom of the barrel when it comes to dancers – maybe a dollar store dancer or something.

That was many years ago, and I happened to be there not because I was looking for new outfits for the stage, but because I had a day off between comedy club gigs and I was staying with a comedian friend who also had a lucrative stripper clothing line going on the side. I could hang out in his factory and use the internet all day for free. (Hey, those were the dial-up days and I needed a phone line!)

I love my job because of all the cool people I meet and the interesting industries that I get to learn about, but also because I find myself in all sorts of unique situations. Comedy encourages strange bedfellows, and as such, I think one of the most useful skills we comedians have learned is not to judge and label these situations. We just go with the flow!

Going with the flow isn't so easy, but in the long run it's more productive than slapping a label on something. Once you determine that something is bad, or good, or weird, or inappropriate, then the label colors how you feel about it and how you react to it. Many times, these labels tend to hinder rather than help the situation. You can't sit in a stripper clothing factory and worry that you might have taken a wrong path in your career: you have to just enjoy the moment.

I've done shows on cruise ships, which are a lot of fun, but they can be scary also. Not because you're in the middle of the ocean and if the ship loses power you might have to turn your trashcan into a toilet. No, it's because there's always someone (or even a few people) in the audience, usually sitting in the front row, whose outfit includes jewelry, a dinner jacket or dress. . . *and an oxygen tank*. Oh, and they're usually asleep. . . at the 6:00 p.m. show. I typically estimate this person's age at 130, give or take a decade. On the other hand, sometimes I do shows for colleges, and I look to be 130 to them! But if I start to label that these situations are not going to work, and the audience is too old or too young for me, then guess what? My show tanks and I start wishing for a loss of power so that I can get off stage. Sometimes labels aren't all that helpful.

I once had a job in which my coworkers thought I was mentally challenged. I'm neither joking nor am I making fun of those who are, but I was put in that category and it was weird. Right out of college I was temping for a major corporation, and they had me working with a guy I'll call Bob, who was mentally challenged. We worked in the computer room delivering computer printouts, because it was back in the day when no one had their own printer and the massive paper printouts came from a computer the size of an IMAX movie screen. (Yeah, I'm THAT old!) I didn't chat much with the people I was delivering these printouts to, other than to say "hi" and "how are you", and they'd say "hi", "I'm fine" and "nice sweater." (I always wore these cool sweaters. Okay, cool for the 80s.) I was more shy than I am now, and I thought these people were very important (they had their own computers, for gosh sakes) so I was intimidated to talk with them and take up their time. And because I was so quiet, and I worked with Bob, the looks I got from these people were compassionate looks, and caring looks, and looks that just let me know that they knew I was

Spotlight

Jan's Keynotes:

- *Finding the Funny in Change* - Learn to use humor during change situations to diffuse tense situations, kick off tough topics and facilitate communications.
- *Finding the Funny in Communications* - Learn how to use humor in your business communications to connect with clients/coworkers, sell your product/idea/service, get people to listen to you and be memorable.
- *Hilarious Hosting* - Keep your audience engaged and keep the program running smoothly and on schedule with Jan as your emcee.
- *Cubicle Comedy* - Clean, customized comedy focusing on work, family and day-to-day life.

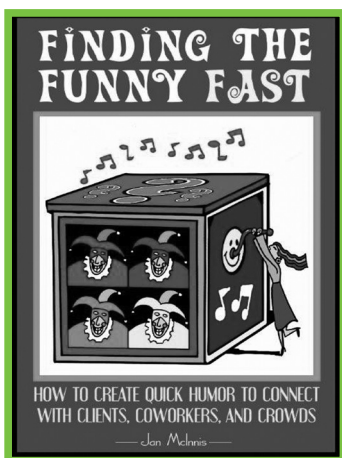
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different. . . like my “boss” Bob. About two months into my computer-printout-delivery career, I was walking down the hall to the cafeteria and one of the computer guys asked if I wanted to join his group for lunch. I’m pretty sure he thought he was being kind and doing me a favor. The lunch table chatter turned to colleges and who went where. I chimed in that I had just graduated from Virginia Tech. You could have heard a pin drop, aside from one guy who actually blurted out “But we thought you were . . .” before catching himself. I explained that I was temping and they had me working with Bob. In an instant I felt the energy shift and the label these people had given me change.

In my keynote, *Finding the Funny in Change*, I reference Cesar Millan, the *Dog Whisperer*, because he’s a great example of watching the way you label things. He talks about using your personal energy to change the behavior of dogs, and that you should watch the thoughts that go through your head because they influence the dog’s behavior! Cesar says that you must change the conversation in your head and speak from the inside out. He understands the power of a label. He’ll even strongly suggest that someone change their dog’s name, if it is something like “Killer” and the dog is vicious.

We try to prepare ourselves with labels about the past, the present and the future, but many times we are way off. Remember the millennium? All of our computers were supposed to crash at midnight. That didn’t happen until a couple years ago when Microsoft came out with Vista! Remember when eggs were bad and asbestos was good?

According to the book [Stumbling on Happiness](#) the average person spends 12% of their waking hours thinking about the future, and I bet we’re labeling most of it. Instead, why not just take it easy on the labels and enjoy the ride? Even if it takes you to a stripper clothing factory.



Jan has shared her customized humor keynotes with thousands of associations and corporations. She is also the author of “[Finding the Funny FAST: How To Create Quick Humor To Connect With Clients, Coworkers And Crowds,](#)” and she was featured in the [Wall Street Journal](#) and the [Washington Post](#) for her clean humor. From a recent client: “Jan McInnis took the time to learn about our company and delivered jokes tailored to our audience. Jan’s comedic performance is universal which makes her a great choice for a variety of events. We have received numerous compliments from the attendees and would highly recommend her.”

Baby Boomer Comedy Show; Clean Comedy For People Born Before Seatbelts, Safety Helmets, and Facebook

Jan McInnis co-stars with Kent Rader in the Baby Boomer Comedy Show for theaters and private events around the country. This is a hilarious 90-minute laugh-fest, with clean humor on topics that the “boomer generation” can relate to - family, kids, work, do-it-yourself projects, dieting, aging and all. Check it out at www.BabyBoomerComedyShow.com to see when they’re coming to your town, or contact them to book the show at your event!

The Baby Boomer Comedy Show is Appearing at the Following Locations:

- Clayton Opera House - Clayton, NY, July 25, 2013
- Historic Masonic Theatre, Clifton Forge, VA, Sept. 7, 2013
- AT&T Center, Dallas, TX, October 4, 2013
- Bay City, MI – Sept 13, 2013
- Missouri Theatre, St. Joseph, MO, Nov. 2, 2013

“A full house and an invitation to return is the best reference anyone can receive”

— Norm Small, Theatre Winter Haven



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