

The Keynote Chronicle



Humor News from Jan McInnis

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200 People, One Night, and a Lot of Beer

Have you ever had to call HUNDREDS of people within a few days? It's not something you look forward to! Back when I was the membership vice president of the Alexandria, Virginia Jaycees (Junior Chamber of Commerce), we wanted to grow our chapter from the 200 members it had been hovering around for years to double that number. To do this, we relied on some of our fun community projects that gave us great visibility so that we could collect potential member information.

One annual event was the Alexandria Red Cross Waterfront Festival. It was basically a weekend party in Old Town Alexandria along the waterfront that had bands, booths, and beer! Our chapter was in charge of pouring and selling the beer on behalf of the Red Cross. This was a huge deal because the beer sales at this event were the biggest moneymaker for any Red Cross event in the country. People liked their beer! We did too because our "payment" was all-you-could-drink beer all weekend long. We never had an issue getting volunteers from the chapter to sign up for a shift.

Selling the beer also gave us a great opening to gather names and phone numbers for recruiting. All we had to do was tell people about the fun projects, like drinking free beer while selling it for the Red Cross, and they would sign up for more information. When the weekend was over, we had hundreds of potential members, and a BIG phone calling problem.

This was way before cell phones, and email was in its infancy, so we would have to rely on chapter members to call from their homes. I knew that wasn't going to happen: who the hell wants to spend the night calling strangers? I wasn't getting any takers.

But I figured out a solution: the "Beer & Pizza Phone Tree!"



Hate Exercise? Change it up with an outdoor workout. This is near me at the Rosebowl!

Spotlight

Make sure You're Using Jan For:

- ✓ Her *"Finding the Funny in Change"* Keynote
- ✓ Her *"Bouncing Back"* Keynote
- ✓ Master of Ceremonies for your Banquet

Scan my code to see a clip of my popular keynote "Finding the Funny in Change".



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I convinced someone to convince their boss to let us use their office after hours for one night, and then I brought in a bunch of beer (nobody was tired of it!), sodas and pizza. Going from “Hey, would you call these 20 people tonight?” to “Hey, would you join us for a fun night of beer, pizza, and phone calls?” was the ticket to getting people to sign up.

And I didn’t trick people by saying it was going to be fun—I made sure it was fun! There was lots of joking and commenting on the calls. For example, if someone called a number and the person was a jerk, you could say so after the call. Others would laugh or maybe commiserate with “Yeah, I called him last month and he was a jerk then too!” Or “Hey, I can top that!” It created a lot of camaraderie and got a boring task finished easily in just one night.

We used the beer and pizza phone trees a lot that year: we doubled our membership, and then we called the new members to get them active and engaged. It worked like a charm!

I know beer and pizza parties may be overdone at work these days, but when you’re faced with a tough task, find SOME WAY to make it more palatable. I’ve heard of people who work from home, buying a season pass to Universal Studios just so they can work in the common areas and take breaks to ride the rides! If I had to get people to make boring calls today, I might make it fun by taking these ChatGPT ideas, such as giving out prizes for the weirdest call, keeping a best excuse list, or making the calls into a game like bingo where you have a card with things like “Rude Person” and “Dogs Barking in the Background.” There are tons of things you can do to beef up the boring.

Remember, people will make time for something if it sounds fun, interesting or different, so focus your efforts on making that boring task fun, interesting, or different! You’ll be surprised by the response, and you may not even need free beer (although it could never hurt).

Jan has shared her customized humor keynotes with thousands of associations and corporations, and she is the author of 2 books: “Finding the Funny Fast” and “Convention Comedian.” She was also featured in the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, and the Huffington Post.

Feedback from recent events:

“Finding the Funny” was the perfect message for our customer service workshop. Jan helped our group think about communication and confrontation and connection in a different way. Sometimes, the best tool is a good-humored joke or observation. Jan was entertaining, educational, and engaging.”

“Our group of school business officials had the pleasure of having Jan McInnis for our keynote speaker at our annual conference. Her presentation on Finding the Funny in Change was exactly what we needed after a day of attending content heavy professional development sessions. Change can often feel overwhelming and frustrating, especially in our world of school business operations, where policies, budgets and expectations are constantly shifting. Jan engaged the audience with her humor and energy and reminded us with a few key pointers that embracing change and hard times with a sense of humor can make all the difference.”

“I can’t thank you enough for joining us last week and sharing some much-needed laughs and insight with us. We had amazing feedback, and the group loved the idea of incorporating humor into their everyday conversations with customers. This year we are really focusing on getting back to the basics with our customers and finding that human connection again and I think your keynote really set us in the right direction to achieve that. Folks are still talking about it!”

Connect with Jan on Social Media:

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About Jan . . .

Jan McInnis has written for Jay Leno’s Tonight Show monologue as well as many other people, places, and groups radio, TV, syndicated cartoon strips, and even guests on the Jerry Springer show (her parents are proud). For over 20+ years she’s traveled country as a keynote speaker and comedian sharing her unique and practical tips on what business leaders can learn from comedians (no, it’s not about telling jokes). She can be reached at TheWorkLady.com, Jan@TheWorkLady.com or contact her assistant Brenda@TheWorkLady.com 703-581-7604