

What trainers can learn from Standup Comedians

Perhaps I have been watching too much late night television, but recently I have come to the conclusion that there are a lot of things that trainers can learn from stand-up comedians. As a result, I have compiled a list of advice that I think crosses over well:

Know your audience

The most successful comics tailor their material to the audience. They will add some local references and avoid jokes that may put that audience off side. The same can be said of successful trainers who consider their audience before developing content and resources.

Use stories and everyday observations to make your point

Some of the funniest humour comes from a shared experience. Comedians will often use reference

points to things the audience can easily connect with. With the context in place, they can focus more on the joke, as the audience is already part of the way with them. Conversely, if a trainer uses a common reference point as a trigger for content, they will have a greater chance of creating the connectedness required for learning to stick!

Make the rehearsed seem spontaneous

At the end of a long tour, the comedians that can hold the same energy and freshness as the opening night are the ones that ultimately enjoy long and successful careers. The sets need to be tight, but the audience still needs to feel that they are getting a unique experience. The same can be said for trainers, particularly when they deliver the same workshops regularly. The lesson here is to continue to keep it fresh and engaging for every

audience, regardless of how often it has been delivered!

Handle the hecklers

Good stand-ups will have some redirection techniques in their bag of tricks, to deal with hecklers. Whilst the same routines may not work in a classroom, the methodology is the same. For example, if a participant constantly interrupts the trainer or others whilst they are talking, the trainer needs to be able to redirect the behaviour. Additionally, difficult situations can often be diffused with a little humour.

Don't take yourself too seriously

Comedians will often be the source of their own humour. This grounds them and gives them an everyday quality that enables them to build rapport with their audience. From the trainer's perspective, it is also important to build a sense of authenticity – you are a real person, who has flaws, but has learnt from these and has experiences to share. 6. Don't be afraid of failure.

Almost all comedians experience failure in their career. What defines the successful ones, is the ability to refocus, rebuild and keep trying. Similarly, as trainers, we can all experience difficult groups, behaviours or situations, but like stand-up comedians the true test of our metal is in the getting up, the trying again and search for learning from each experience.



By Marc Ratcliffe