

Title:

Ten Helpful Hints for New or Professional Storytellers

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Sometimes a simple reminder can put us back in charge of our craft/

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This storytelling thing we do is a powerful medium in our world of images and sound bites. And what better way to transport people into different worlds is through storytelling. Our modern world is built around how many choices we have and how many flavors we can get. Through this medium of storytelling, you can invite those around you to see what you have to offer. Hopefully, some of the following tips will help you on your journey up the Storytelling Mountain.

1. Be Funny - Lighten up! I've seen to many storytellers with a bad attitude. You must be fun to be around! Who would want to hire you if you aren't lively! That's your job, first and foremost. Storytelling comes second. You don't want to distract the audience from your program by having a bad attitude. Make a determined effort to stay as sharp as possible.
2. Write it down - One way to stay sharp as a storyteller is to record every funny or interesting thought that comes into your head or out of your mouth. You may want to use a pocket tape recorder, or a notepad, or whatever. Just get it down somewhere. You'll have time later on to go over this raw stuff and possibly create something incredible. All kinds of stuff comes from you and your life and places you've been so do yourself a favor and keep track of it! There is a story waiting to be told from all that information!
3. Get a web site - Get a web site. (like www.greatstoryteller.com) It's just the thing to do. Until something better than the internet comes along for getting information out, get a web page. I know, sometimes they can be expensive, and you may be a complete cyber-idiot. Solution: Ask around your circle of friends, your church, and the guy in front of you in the grocery line. I guarantee you know someone who knows how to develop web pages, and would

probably do one for you at little or no charge. Bottom line, it's worth any time or money investment to be on the web.

4. The 10-10-10 rule - Here's a great tip for someone just starting out or a seasoned professional storyteller, who wants to market themselves. After you do a show that goes well, give the event coordinator of that show 10 bio sheets and 10 stamps. Ask them to send them out to 10 people they know that might have a use for what you do. I've never had someone reject a request to do this. Put that in your contract. (You are working with a contract aren't you?) You will be amazed at how effective this will be to get the ball rolling in your area. Even better is to have them attach a personal note or letter to the bio. Scientists have recently discovered that the most powerful force in the universe is the personal reference. So don't just sit there, go make a bio sheet and get the word out about you! Be Shameless!

5. Get accountability - As iron sharpens iron, you need accountability. Whether it is a group or just a friend, you must maintain a tie with someone who isn't afraid to critique your work. I know an accountability person or group may cramp your style as you climb the ladder of personal fortune and worldwide fame, but this world has a way of turning us into idiots if we're not careful. I belong to the South Carolina Storytelling Network (www.scstorytelling.com) and they have been great in helping me become the teller I am. Once again, Get with someone and who can watch over you!

6. All the world has stages - Not quite the Shakespeare line, but all the world does have them. And you need to find them, and perform on them - wherever, whenever, and for whomever you can. Don't ever be afraid of experience. Experience is sometimes bitter, sometimes sweet, but always nutritious. I think stage time is sometimes more valuable than the money you make. So look at every opportunity as another step closer to reaching your goals as a storyteller. (You do have goals don't you?) Be creative as to where you will perform. Find new venues. I once was asked to tell stories at a biker rally. I must say it was a tough crowd, but it was fun!

7. Find your own voice - We all have our influences. And don't kid yourself into thinking these influences won't spill over and provide some of the essence of your performance. Still, it's important for you to find out where your strengths lie, and find your own voice. That means, if you are a great folk teller, you'll probably want to spend more of your performance time doing folk tales. If you're a master of the silly story song, do mostly silly story songs. If you're good with bold face lies, you might want to run for a public office. Remember find your own voice, don't borrow one. It is already being used!

8. Product - After an audience has just been floored by an hour of the best

storytelling they've ever experienced by...well...you, why not give them the chance to take something home from it? CD's, cassettes, t-shirts, etc. will bring your gig to the next level financially, and give you some extra creditability. (You may be a year or two away from recording a quality CD, but now is a great time to start preparing for when that time comes.) I started out with special bookmarks for a \$1.00 that had my promo info on one side and a short silly story on the other. People will buy anything from you if you are worth it!

9. Be proactive -Once you've decided to do this crazy thing called storytelling, it's now time to take massive action. Make efforts to get to know several event producers in your area. You know churches, festivals, hospitals, schools, etc. Call them, email them, go meet them in person. Let em' know who you are and what you do. Take them a bio sheet, or some cookies, or take them out to dinner. Get a list of upcoming events in your area. Contact these places and ask if they'll let you MC the event, or warm up the crowd for 5-10 minutes. Go for it. Awaken the storyteller within. I met with one event producer and asked them if I could warm up the crowd before the main performance. They thought I was nuts but thought it was a good idea, so I put together some of my funniest short stories and went for it. It went well and I was scared to death! But it worked and I received other work from that. Oh the name of the event? When John McCain came to town when he was running for president, he had an opening act! PS. I didn't vote for him but I did use his event as a springboard.

10. Enjoy yourself -I know you hear a lot about how tough professional storytelling is, and how hard it is to get started, and all that stuff about paying dues. Listen, performing is worth it. So enjoy the process. The audience will have more fun watching you if they can sense that you're having fun. If anything, you should realize that you do something that over 99% of the population doesn't have the guts or the talent to do-stand up in front of a crowd and make them laugh, sing, cry and have a good time. To many times folks want stories told at an event, rather than hiring a storyteller to tell stories. There is a big difference. Anyone can tell a few stories to anyone, but only a storyteller can make the performance a special memory. So enjoy what you do, do it well, continue to be an asset to any event you're at and most of all be proud to be a STORYTELLER!