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BOOK MARKETING: How to Use Humor in Your Writing, Marketing and Presentations Interview with David Glickman

Susan Friedmann: Welcome to Book Marketing Mentors, the weekly podcast where you learn proven strategies, tools, ideas, and tips from the masters. Every week, I introduce you to a marketing master who will share their expertise to help you market and sell more books.

Today, my special guest is a humor expert. If laughter is the best medicine, then a dose of David Glickman should be covered under every insurance. He's been a professional speaker and entertainer for over 25 years, and has presented over 2,000 speeches and shows. He's appeared on the Evening at the Improv, and several other national television shows. He's been the opening act for stars such as The Beach Boys, Ellen DeGeneres and more. David has worked with Steven Martin and even performed at Gloria Estefan's birthday party.

In addition to his performing expertise, David has a wealth of business experience. He's the former owner of a chain of comedy clubs, as well as the current owners of a popular humor-writing service for executives. David believes that funny is the new serious, and that with the proper perspective, you can enjoy a successful work-laugh balance. He's a dear friend and colleague, and I'm thrilled to welcome him to the show. David, thank you for being this week's special guest expert and mentor.

David Glickman: Thank you, Susan. What a lovely introduction you gave me. I appreciate that. The dirty little secret for everybody that your listeners should know, guests write their own introduction. Everybody should know that, that when you're hearing glowing words, the guest is writing that. Can I tell you a quick, quick funny story about how I learned about that?

Susan Friedmann: I'd love you to, David.

David Glickman: My very first performance as a speaker/comedian in front of a paying audience, I was very, very young. I was I think 21 years old. First time, Susan, in front of a paying audience. It was 50,000 people in a stadium. It was at my university's homecoming pep rally, a night before our

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football game. At University of Florida they would do a very large show in the stadium. I was given a five-minute comedy set to do in front of all these people. Now, nobody knew me at all, so I wrote my own introduction just like you read the introduction of me right now, that most of your listeners probably thought you wrote, I wrote it.

I wrote, "The performer you're about to see, David Glickman, is very, very funny." I played it up real big. Introducer who read it said, "I'm going to read this introduction, and this guy says he's very fun. He wrote this himself, so he's got to be funny. He's saying right here how funny he is." Well, he set me up for disaster, posturing it that way. I came out. I did not do very well in front of 50,000 people. Finally, in the last 90 seconds of the five minutes, I got the crows on my side and left to a rousing round of applause and cheers, but it's just very funny that most people don't know that every introduction you hear is written by the person being introduced.

Susan Friedmann: Most all, but sometimes people don't give you an introduction, so I have to create one. I know you're a true professional and you chose, so thank you. David, I know that there's a lot of confusion between humor and comedy. I'd love you to set the record straight for us, so that we can really understand the difference between the two.

David Glickman: The joke I usually say is the difference between a comedian and the humorist are the number of zeroes at the end of a paycheck. A humorist makes far more revenue than a comedian would for possibly the same material being delivered. It's positioning and marketing, but it's not really that simple. Comedy is kind of no holds barred, not a lot of rules, not necessarily a lot of filters. It's a broader way of getting people to laugh, but it's also done in venues and settings where it's using material that would not necessarily be appropriate for all audiences. That's the difference in my opinion, where humor is defined ...

Humor is typically much more driven for all audiences. Meaning that if I'm a humorist, I can talk just as well or present just as well to an audience of middle-aged folks, to an audience of teenagers, to an audience of senior citizens. It doesn't matter whether I'm doing that in presentation, Susan, or in the written word. There's a far different way of presenting what's funny for writing it. You can write You can call it politically correct. You can call it whatever you want. Humor is something that's going to be more acceptable to all audiences.

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The only other thing that a lot of people say, and I don't know that I necessarily agree with this, is that humor typically has a point associated with. In other words, you might hear a funny story or a funny example of something, and then there's a message buried in there. I don't know that that's always true. I think it's true much of the time, but I've seen plenty of humorists who are writers who don't necessarily have a point. They're just being funny but doing it in a very inclusive politically correct, yet very funny way, if that makes sense what I'm saying.

Susan Friedmann: Yes, it certainly does. Are there some basics of humor writing that our listeners could use maybe to lighten up a more serious or technical let's say presentation or blog post, or an article, or even their books?

David Glickman: I'll explain the way I've always taught people to do it. What happens, Susan, people feel a lot of pressure when they think, "Oh, I should make this writing funny." Unless you do this for a living like I do, you don't necessarily think funny all the time. What I always say to take the pressure off, just write what you write. Write what you know. Don't worry about the humor on the first pass. The humor comes on the second pass. You look at what you've written, and then you go back and see if there's ways to add [inaudible 00:07:27] to it, and so it takes a lot of the pressure off.

To answer your question, how do you find that funny? Well, you look at something perhaps that you've written, and then you find ... Maybe there's an example you can compare it too. There's something else that ... You've made a statement let's say, and then you say, "Well, that's like this, this, this, and this." It's where you do compare and contrast. When I help speakers add humor, sometimes I advise them to think of it like they're watching a football game being telecast. One person who's on the broadcasting does play-by-play. That's kind of what your writing is. It's your content. It's play-by-play. It's what you're writing. The other person does what's called color commentary. Color commentary is adding all the things in between, and that's where the humor or the possibility for humor comes in.

It's really almost just thinking like ... It doesn't have to be sarcasm, but it's just making fun of what you've already written, if that makes sense. I'll just make up something here. Let's say you're writing something very serious. The root of prejudice isn't usually hate. Prejudice usually stems from ignorance. Then you might add this comment. It means if you are prejudice, you probably can't spell prejudice. See what I'm saying?

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Because you're talking about and ... That's not a hilarious line, but I'm commenting on the comment as it were.

Susan Friedmann: You would chuckle over something like that.

David Glickman: Right, exactly. Humor does it ... Maybe that's another difference between humor and comedy. Comedy, you're going for a lot of what we call LPM, which is laughs per minute, belly laughs, as much as you can, as many times as you can per minute. Humor doesn't need to have the bar that high. It's great if you can. As a humorist, I try to bring a lot of my LPM to that stage too. When you're writing something non-fiction, people are not expecting humor typically. When you can add moments of [inaudible 00:09:35] just like that, anything is considered fun if you it can add a small to their face, if it's not all serious.

Susan Friedmann: It's interesting that you talked about the fact that the first time around you just write, and then you look at some associations or how you can beef it up to make it a little funny with your examples. I remember when I was writing *Meeting and Event Planning for Dummies*. The *Dummies* series tend to have humor built into them. It really made me nervous because I don't tend to be a funny person. I was getting so worked up about the fact that I have to be funny in my writing. I found that just reflecting back and being sarcastic about myself added a slight sense of humor. Do you want to comment on that?

David Glickman: Self-deprecating humor, making fun of oneself or poking a little fun at oneself is something that audiences or readers enjoy. We love to see vulnerability in the person who is presenting or writing. If you think of two great humor writers, Dave Barry and Erma Bombeck, going back a few years, both of them would poke lots of fun at themselves in their humor writing. I've seen that in quite a few non-fiction books. Your right, the *Dummy* series does, just by its very nature, doesn't take itself that serious.

The other thing is when someone is having a challenge trying to see what's funny in something, another thing they can do is try to find a humor body. It doesn't have to be someone who's necessarily hilarious either. It doesn't have to be another humorist, but there is synergy in getting two brains together to think of something funny, versus just working in solitude. If you can find another writer in your market, it can be via Skype or the phone, but it's a heck of a lot easier over coffee, in person, to sit there with two legal pads and say, "Here's the chapter I

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wrote this week. Do you see anything funny here? What can I add to this?"

Now you've got two people working it, and the humor quotient goes up exponentially with a humor buddy like that. A lot of people just do it with their family. I'm blessed to have a very, very funny family. I can just go to my wife, or my kids, or my siblings, and say, "What do you think of this? Is there something funny here?" They don't do this for a living, but sometimes they'll see something I never saw at all.

Susan Friedmann: Is it true that like the funny shows, the David Letterman type shows, that there's in fact a whole team of people who are working on different gags and different funny ideas? It's not just one person.

David Glickman: Yeah. You could have a writing team. I think you and I have a mutual friend. I think you know Bruce Turkel. Bruce is a commentator on Fox Business Channel for business issues, and he's on quite often. When Bruce is given a topic, usually a few hours in advance of when he's on air. He reaches out to four or five of us, folks you know, myself included. We all quickly, quickly, quickly brainstorm some funny lines for Bruce that he can use on air that day. There is just great synergy, like I said, in all of us kind of batting the lines around. It's also kind of fun because we know there's pressure. We know he's on the air at three o'clock, and by god we better have those lines to help him and be ready.

Yeah, if you could have just like your masterminds groups and there are writers groups, you can have a humor group. You could meet once a week, once a month, it doesn't matter, just to bat around ideas to see what you could add to it. The sarcasm, you just to watch it. You can watch in people's faces if you've gone too far with the sarcasm. You'll see, people are the arbitrator of what's funny and what's not funny, at least in the live situation. In writing, it's a little more difficult, but you can read something out loud. If you see someone cringe, you know you might have gone too far.

Susan Friedmann: What are the differences then in humor in writing versus speaking?

David Glickman: Good question. I will tell you I have not figured that out entirely myself, but certainly the way I'm speaking to you know, I'm using a lot more words than I would when I write humor. When I go and write a blog post or something like that, I try to be as concise as possible. I do that when I'm speaking also, but a lot of freedom I might have when I'm speaking, you want to stick with more rules, at least I do, when I'm

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writing just so that it's easier. There's no inflection in writing. You can put something in italics or lots of exclamation points, but short of you listening to the writer read it or someone else read it, you lose a lot of that. The words have to convey more of the power. There's no facial expressions on the page. Maybe that's part of the difference. I believe the spoken word is easier to get laughs. I think you writers have a greater challenge, and I think that's why humor writers are revered because they are able to get laughs from the written page more easily.

Susan Friedmann: Are these essential ingredients then to humor that our listeners could use?

David Glickman: There are little tricks. To answer that questions, Susan, I would say this. When in doubt, leave it out. I know when I'm writing ... I was just writing something last night. I remember this. I'm just writing something last night, and there was a line and I'm, "Maybe, maybe not." I walked into the other room where my wife and two kids were. My boys are teenagers now. I said, "Guys, what do you think of his line?" I didn't tell them my hesitancy on it, and they all kind of looked at me, and they said, "Really, dad? Really?" I said, "You're right. I knew it." That is one thing. When it doubt, leave it out. If you're not sure if a line is going to fly, then leave it out.

That being said, those who speak their humor have a greater opportunity to try a lot, because there might be a line that, "Okay, I'm not in doubt. I think this is going to work. I tried in front of an audience." If your authors are doing a book reading, they may want to have patter or talking in between sections they might read. They've written a funny line, and the line gets no reaction. They say, "Ugh, I'm never going to do that again. Never ever going to do that line again." What I would say is don't necessarily drop it. If you believe it's funny, try it a second time and a third time. If it hasn't got a laugh in three times, Susan, it's probably worth dropping. I always just say at least when done out loud, try it at least three times if you truly believe it's funny.

Two other things. If you have to write a number in your writing, odd numbers are funnier than even numbers. I don't know why, perhaps because they're odd. I don't know, but if you have to write a number, it's funnier to say 27 than 26. Brand names are funnier than just saying something generic. It's funnier to say, "So I got into my Ford Pinto," if you're using an old thing, or you could use something current. "I got in my Ultima," versus saying, "I got in my car." Brand names are funnier than just the generic word.

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Then the rule of three, just an old humor technique. We are giving an example where you say something normal, something normal, and then the third one is a deviation from what people are expecting. I'll give you an example here. Because we're audio, you can't see me, but I will tell you that I am fairly bald. I don't have a lot of hair. If I were speaking, I might say, "I remember when it started, I had dreams, I had hopes, I had hair." Normal, normal, switch. See what I'm saying? The third one is the one you're not expecting.

Susan Friedmann: That's a good tip. I love that one, and I always seem to remember that one out of all the tips that I've heard from you and from other humorists. That's the one that always sticks in my mind. How about funny sounding words? Are there words that we could easily use that sound funny? I know you mentioned brand names, but are there other common everyday words?

David Glickman: The letter K is a funny letter. There's something hard and guttural about the letter K. If I have a choice of two or three words, just ... The cereal, Kaptain Krunch, you got two Ks in there, is funnier than saying Cheerios. I don't know why. I'm not a researcher or a PhD. I don't know the science behind any of this. I just that I stood in front of an audience over 2,000 times. I know what they laugh at. The K sound is something that's funny. I'm not even sure if I can talk of that too much more intelligently. It's just certain words.

If your listeners are old enough to remember when Jerry Lewis used to do things, just make these crazy sounds. "Yelowahey" and "Elcafeden," strange syllables and things like that. People laugh at that kind of stuff, the just nonsensical. There used to be a cartoonist named Don Martin who drew for Mad Magazine. He would just take these strange syllable, "Karflumpf." Now again, those are not real words, so I'm probably not helping your listeners that much. I guess if you're looking at the choice of two different words, say them out loud, and if one sounds funnier, you'll intuitively know that that one is a little bit funnier.

Susan Friedmann: Well, how about made up words, like you said, this Don Martin's said? If you make up a word ... I know brand names, even Google or Haagen-Dazs, they're not K-words, but they found funny because they're different.

David Glickman: They do. We could spend two hours just on branding. If your listeners are trying to create a non-fiction movement as it were on something, if they can create a word and perhaps you can have Sam Born on as a

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guest at some point. She can talk to this wonderfully. There are ways where you just ... One of my blog post recently, I wrote a word called ranticipate. Ranticipate is the ranting that we do while we're anticipating that something is going to go wrong and usually does not go wrong at all. We build up in our minds how terrible something is going to be, and we complain, and we yell, and we scream, and we ranticipate, and it really doesn't happen. A made up word like ranticipate is good.

I'll give you another example. It's a title of one of your books, Susan, which is Riches in Niches. Rhymes are very, very pleasing to the ear, very pleasing to the ear, and very pleasing to the eye, very pleasing to the eye also. When we read, we hear the word in our head. If you can rhyme something, I'm not saying to do your whole book in poetry, but titles and phrases and things like that, any time you can use anything ... If you could find a way to make it rhyme, you're ahead of the game.

Susan Friedmann: How about mistakes? Are there common mistakes people make when trying to be funny in their either presentations or their writings?

David Glickman: Again, one we addressed earlier which is when in doubt, leave it out. If you feel something is crossing a line, there's a good chance it is. The other mistake that people make quite often, this is more in the spoken word than written, but it's an error in writing too, and that is to use old jokes as the example or illustration of your humor. It's one of the main differences you'll see with a professional speaker and an armature speaker, is they think, they're under this misconception they're supposed to open with a joke, and typically it's an old joke. Typically it's a joke that everybody has heard, or most everybody has heard.

The funny thing is the audience still usually laughs, because even though we've heard a joke before, we love again, but it takes the credibility away, and it kind of screams amateur while watching that person tell the joke. Humorist don't tell jokes. Humorists use humor. Humorist use observational lines and comment on a comment, and find other ways to get the laugh. Even in writing too, steering clear of jokes is very important. I think that's a big mistake that people make.

Susan Friedmann: Yes. So many people, when getting up to speak rightly, they think that they have to make a joke. You're right. It tends to be an old one, and people, even though the laugh politely, it's like, "I've heard that a dozen times." If our listeners would like to contact you and find out more

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about your humor writing services, or the programs that you offer, how can they do that?

David Glickman: Sure. My website is DavidGlickman.com, and Glickman is G-L-I-C-K-M-A-N .com, DavidGlickman.com. That can also direct you to another website I have called funnierspeeches.com, which talks a little bit more specifically about helping folks punch up speeches. DavidGlickman.com, certainly a way they can find me. My email is David@DavidGlickman.com. My phone, I'm in Tampa, Florida. My direct line is 813 920 8283. That's how folks can track me down. I will just throw this out, Susan. If anyone is hearing this and saying, "Gee, that's awfully nice, what he's talking about, but I'm not funny. I'd love to try the stuff he says."

If folks come to someone like myself or another humor writer, we can help you. Folks like me, we can help you. We can take what you've written and make some of it funny, show you how it's done, and then you can either do the rest yourself or we can do it all for you. Don't feel stymie just because humor isn't coming naturally to you. There are resources out there, folks who can help you.

Susan Friedmann: If you were to leave our listeners with a golden nugget of information, what would that be, David?

David Glickman: We do business with people that we like. We like people who can make us laugh. If all authors are equal, and we know that's not true, but let's say everybody's book is equal. Everybody's book is equal. If you're an author who's funny, either in your writing or in the way you promote your book, if you are funny, people are going to want to do business with you. They're going to want to buy your book because they are finding you to be funny. Like I say, even if the book is not funny, we do business with people we like. We like people who can make us laugh.

Susan Friedmann: How true that is. Thank you. Thank you for sharing that wisdom, and thank you all for taking time out of your precious day to listen to this interview. I sincerely hope that it sparks some ideas you can use to sell more books. Here's wishing you much book marketing success.