TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION

For Frank Miles

My brother by choice.

Cover Design by Kurt Reichenbach

INTRODUCTION

"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it."

- Pablo Picasso
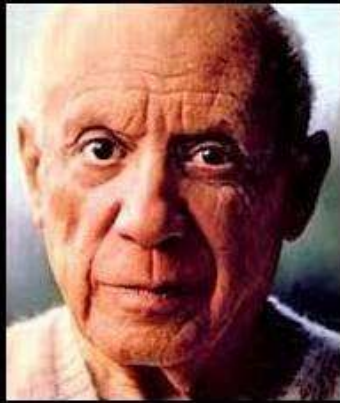
Can you really teach anyone to write jokes and humor?

Yes.

Uh, would you mind ... elaborating a little on that?

Sheesh, pretty pushy considering this book is free. Okay, fine.

Yes, I can teach anyone to write the funny. And the first step to learning how to write the funny is understanding how comedy, humor and jokes work. What are the cogs and gears, so to speak, and how do they all mesh?

A little background before I go on. I've been teaching stand-up comedy and joke writing professionally since 1982, or for history buffs, that's a little after Teddy Roosevelt left office. In the beginning I could write jokes and tell funny stories, but I didn't understand how I did that. If I was going to teach others how to do what I did, then I first had to understand how I did it. Right?

Most comedians work intuitively and that's great. Unless you want to instruct others. That's when you need technique. The only trouble was... there just wasn't any out there back then. Not any that made sense to me and that generated humor strong enough to put up on a professional stage.

So began my journey into discovering how information passes through the human mind to result in humor and laughter. What I call the machinery of humor. And eventually I

did learn a lot about how that machine operates. Now at last I really can teach you how to do what I did.

Does this eBook have two sections; one called Comic Structure and one called the Humor Generator?

Why yes it does. How odd you should ask such a specific question.

You're going to master two of the fundamental mechanisms required to create all comedy, humor, and jokes. In the first section I'll introduce those mechanisms and show you how they work. In the second section we'll actually use those two mechanisms in a step-by-step system for coming up with multiple joke ideas.

By the way, these tools, Comic Structure and the Humor Generator, were uncovered and refined through thirty-five plus years of teaching joke writing and stand-up comedy. They're in here because they really work and they've been shown to work over the long haul for many people in many places.

Why should I learn about stand-up comedy? I don't really want to be a comedian.

So don't be one. Seriously, you don't have to do that and no one here is saying you do.

As time went by, I'd get students in my classes who were public speakers, presenters, trainers, comedy writers, lawyers, and even doctors. Not a lot of politicians. Maybe they were already tired of being laughed at. Afterwards these people reported that the skills they'd learned in a stand-up comedy classes were helping them at work. Big time too. It became clear to me then that the techniques used by professional comedians could also be used for adding humor to almost any business situations and by absolutely anyone. Which is why we're here right now.

But you don't have to just trust me. Check out this article by Jenna Goudreau in Forbes Magazine: Are funny People More Successful In Business?

The article is about Steve Cody, the co-founder and managing partner of Peppercom. So one night he's suffering through an endless business dinner event in some hotel ballroom somewhere. He's getting ready to bail when the next speaker on the stage turns out to be an IT guy who also happened to do stand-up comedy. That guy's talk was both informative and funny. It was the memorable highlight of the entire evening.

Shortly after that, Cody signed himself up for a stand-up comedy class on the hunch that humor could be helpful in the office too, and not just on a hotel ballroom stage. He was right. He soon began experiencing the crossover benefits in his business relationships. He used humor to put his clients as ease. He got better at engaging his presentation audiences. Boardrooms stopped being bored rooms.

Cody wanted his employees to reap the benefits of his stand-up comedy training too. So he launched a 90-minute comedy class for his new recruits and staffers. Cody said, "It infuses them with confidence, bonds them with coworkers, teaches the nuances of reading an audience and environment, and livens up their presentations."

So yeah, you don't want to be a stand-up comedian. We knew that going in. But the skills of communicating with humor can give you a real advantage in business and life. And wasn't that your reason for downloading this eBook?

Have you seen any good Ted Talks lately by Andrew Stanton, and didn't you already kinda do this joke?

Yes and yes.

I was watching a Ted Talk recently, The Clues to a Great Story by Andrew Stanton (writer Toy Story, Finding Nemo). Stanton opened with a story that closed with a huge laugh. As the laugh subsided he said, "Storytelling is joke telling. It's knowing your punch line, your ending, knowing that everything you're saying, from the first sentence to the last, is leading to a singular goal, and ideally confirming some truth that deepens our understandings of who we are as human beings."

The structure of humor is the distilled structure of all powerful and pointed communication. It's all basically the same deal. Really it is.

Who would benefit from learning this Comic Structure?

Anyone who works with other people, sometimes gets in front of them, and wants to be more humorous. See if you are anywhere in the following list:

•Sales People

•Managers

•CEOs, CFOs, and E I E I Os

•Business Speakers

•Business Writers

•Business Trainers

•Business Presenters

•Public Speakers

•Motivational Speakers

•Toastmasters

- Copywriters

- Clergy

- Creative Writers

- All Writers

- Teachers

- Doctors

- Lawyers

- Police

- Everyone at the DMV

- Comedians

- Actors

- You

I've been told that humor can be dangerous in business.

In the hands of the uneducated and inexperienced, jokes can be too controversial, or inappropriate, or outright offensive. Like the one about the Priest, the Leprechaun, and the Holy Lubricant. (Damn, I wish I could tell you that one, but it wouldn't be inappropriate here.)

This is where the power of knowledge really comes into play. Once you know and can apply Comic Structure, you'll make fewer missteps with your use of humor.

Are you going to teach me about how to deliver or perform humor, and am I getting paid to lob you these set-up questions?

Yes and no respectively.

Just understanding comic structure, and what's going on beneath the words and actions, will tell you a great deal about how to perform humor at work or anywhere.

How?

Well, for one thing you'll know why it's funny. Knowing the desired outcome informs your word choices, which is a part of the performance. Take for example this deceptively simple story:

> *"A Zen monk was on one side of a rushing river and wanted to cross it. He saw a second Zen monk on the other side of the river, so he yelled, 'How do I get on the other side of the river?' The second monk yelled back, 'You're already on the other side of the river.'"*

This story can be easily messed up by not understanding Comic Structure. For instance,

> *"A Zen monk was standing on a river bank. He saw another monk on the other side, so he yelled, 'How do I get to your side of the river?' The monk yelled back, 'You're already on the other side of the river.'"*

The Comic Structure is wrong because the beginning doesn't support the Punch. Just a few changed words and the funny story turns into nonsense.

What are some other ways this new knowledge could help?

Knowing Comic Structure keeps you safer in the business world because you'll be using humor exactly when and where you want to. And nowhere else. If you don't know Comic Structure, you can accidentally make inappropriate jokes in, let's say, a presentation, and not know why everyone is laughing.

For instance, I was watching a well-rehearsed talk at a business workshop. A young lady was giving her talk and said, "I was at home eating. This guy… [pause]." Terrible place for a pause because the audience heard, "I was at home eating this guy." The crowd laughed really hard and for a long time. At her. Not with her.

She was puzzled because she didn't recognize the joke. And that's because she didn't have a deep and habitual understanding of Comic Structure. If she did, she could have easily identified and changed the language. Or just not paused.

I'm afraid that if I try to inject too much humor into my work it will just backfire.

Yeah, it probably would. So don't do that. (See, that was easy.)

Look, professional stand-up comedians must work in at least five laughs per minute. But in business, as a speaker, trainer, or presenter, if you get one laugh every three to five minutes, you'll stand out as entertaining and humorous. Getting one appropriate laugh every five minutes is a doable goal by anyone who gets up in front of people. And you don't need to tell a joke in every single conversation either. Also, when you do crack a funny one, leave it at that. Just one. You don't need to tell more than one joke in the same topic or situation.

So how would you sum up this opening section?

Laughter is universal because Comic Structure is universal. How the human brain processes and responds to humor is exactly the same for everyone. My book Step by Step to Stand-Up Comedy has been translated from the original English version into Chinese, Indonesian, and Spanish. This was only possible because the Comic Structure I teach applies to every language and every culture.
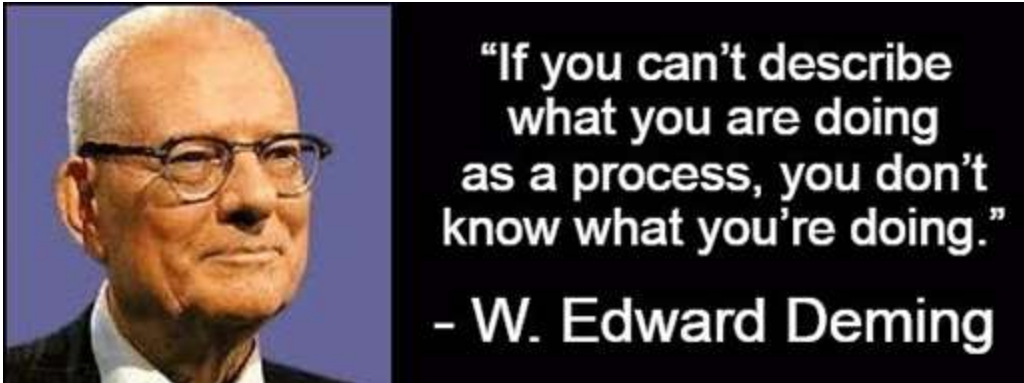
So let's move on now to those two fundamental elements of Comic Structure I mentioned to you earlier. Right after we close with a riddle style joke.

> *"How can you miss every deadline you ever set, deliver nothing you promised to your customers, have all of your bosses know it, and still keep your job?"*

"Get reelected."

And now we move on to the section on Comic Structure.

GREG DEAN'S COMIC STRUCTURE

"If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing."
— W. Edward Deming

What's a joke?

Good question. Most people would define a joke as something someone says or does that makes others laugh. That statement, though true, doesn't really tell us what a joke is. It just describes the desired effect. What about jokes which get a huge laugh in one situation and a roar of silence in another? If a joke doesn't get a laugh, does it suddenly stop being a joke?

Interestingly enough, people usually recognize a joke whether it makes them laugh or not. Why? Because there's some consistent, intrinsic structure that everyone identifies as humor. Until now, no one has presented this structure in an understandable manner. That's about to change. Explaining Comic Structure to you is exactly what this section is all about.

ONE-LINER JOKE STRUCTURE

First let's examine the one-liner joke. Since this is the simplest type of joke it's easier to understand the elements and how they fit together. Later, I'll go deeper into the variations of how jokes work in storytelling.

SETUP AND PUNCH

Let's begin with what most people already know about one-liner jokes. Traditionally, they contain two parts: Setup and Punch.

Why don't you use the term punch line?

For one-liner jokes that term works well, but as we get into the non one-liner variations, it quickly becomes apparent that some joke Punches are not always lines. To avoid confusion, we'll use the term punch.

Let's examine this one-liner joke:

*"I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works. I've already lost three **days**"*

The Setup and Punch are usually defined in this way:

The Setup is the first part of the joke that sets up the laugh.

The Punch is the second part that makes you laugh.

And that's great except for one small problem: it doesn't really explain anything. Let's see if we can do better.

To help explain the joke structure, I've designed a visual device, Greg Dean's Comic Structure Diagram. When we put the above joke on Diagram 1 (next page) we can clearly identify the Setup and Punch:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 1

Setup: *"I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works. I've already lost three…"*
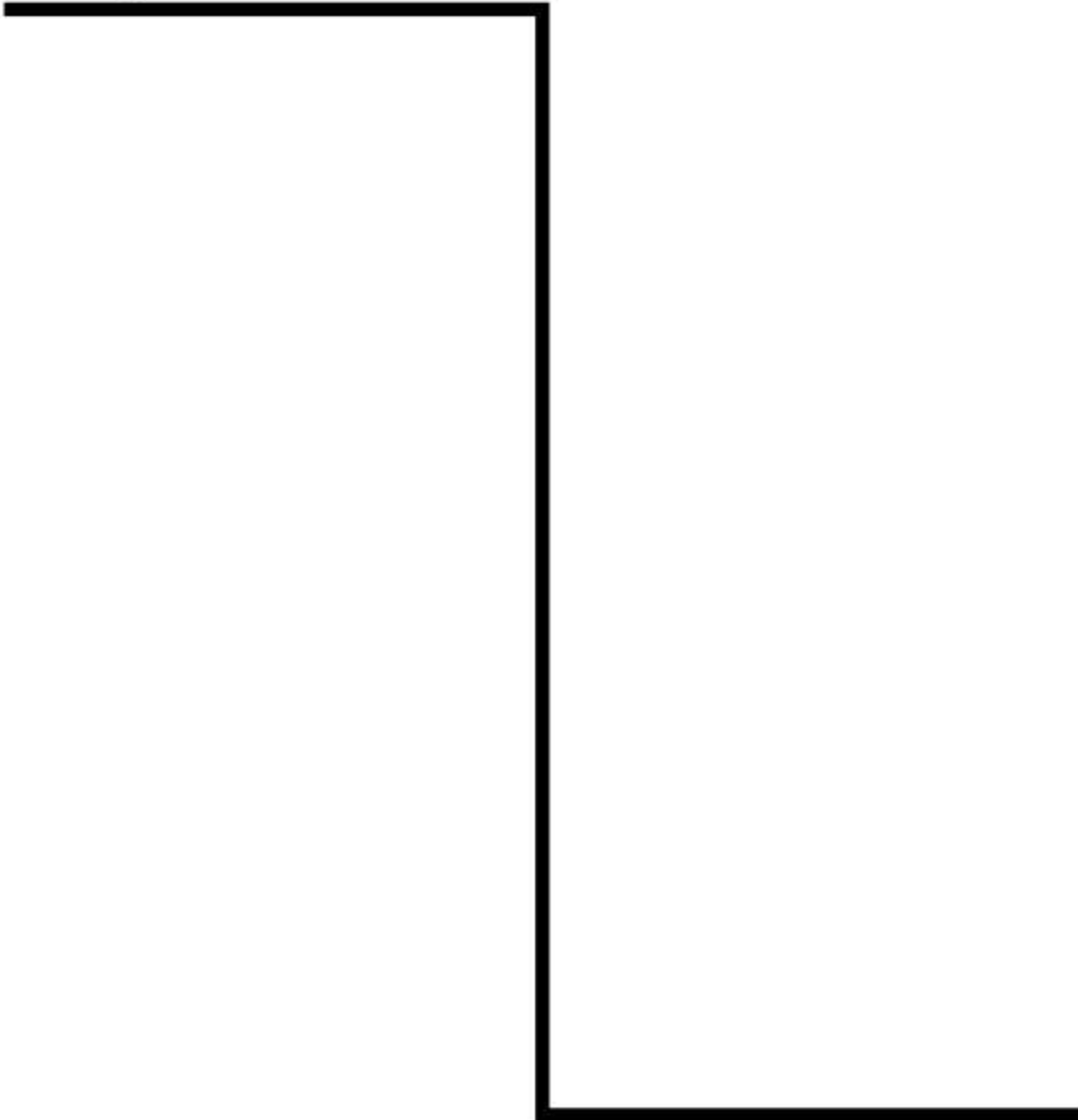
Punch: *"days."*

You'll notice that in this diagram I've added the words "expectation" and "surprise." This is a key to understanding the mental processes of humor. Let me unpack that now.

WHAT JOKES DO

Expectation and Surprise

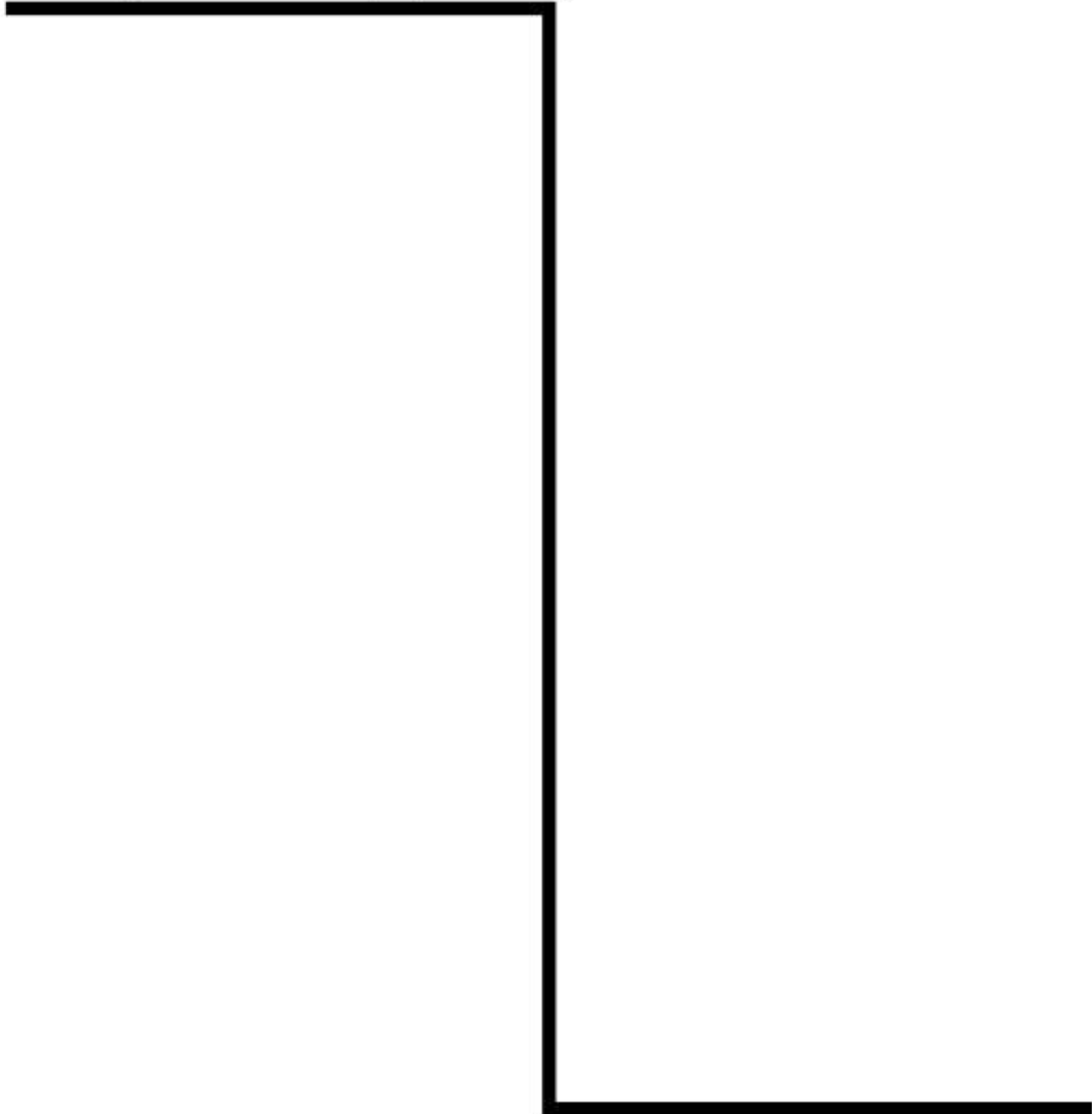The Setup and the Punch are directly related to expectation and surprise. Let's keep looking at the same joke to understand the relationship between the Setup and expectation and the Punch and surprise.

Using the same joke in Diagram 2:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 2

Setup: *"I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works. I've already lost three…"* (expectation)

Punch: *"days."* (surprise)

Notice how the Setup creates a *false expectation* and the Punch comes as a surprise. The trick is you cannot be surprised unless you're expecting something else first.

This understanding of expectation and surprise actually goes back to Socrates. This was an important breakthrough in humor theory because it established that jokes have two parts.

And here they are:

> The Setup, which creates an expectation.

> The Punch, which reveals a surprise.

So now that you understand this, you should be able to write a joke?

Yeah, but I can't. So what's the deal?

The deal is simply this: it isn't enough to know what a joke does. You need to know how a joke does what it does. And I'm going to explain that right now, just because you're reading this eBook.

HOW JOKES WORK

Assumptions Create Expectations

It should be clear that what Setups do is cause us to have an expectation. To understand how jokes work, we must understand how the mind builds an expectation.

Here's how. After hearing a Setup, we imagine a scene in our minds. Since this scene is only in our minds, it isn't real. We've constructed it by making a series of assumptions based on our past experience so that the Setup makes sense to us. Then we accept what we believe the scene means, and then fully expect that belief to be true.

With jokes, making assumptions about the meaning of the Setup is what creates our expectations. Since the expectation is built from a collection of assumptions, it can function as a false expectation to misdirect the audience. This is what allows jokes to work.

What's an assumption?

I'm sorry, I assumed you knew.

An assumption can be any thought based on remembering, taking something for granted, presupposing, conjecturing, presuming, forecasting, projecting onto, theorizing about, speculating upon, or accepting that something is as it's always been. If that doesn't help, try this definition:

Assumptions are everything you know or imagine, but aren't directly perceiving right now.

That's deep.

But it's true. Anything you currently cannot see, hear, feel, taste, or smell exists only as an assumption in your mind. The chances are that it does exist, but since you have no direct evidence that it does, you're making an assumption.

We do this because sane human beings, as a rule, have a profound need for things to make sense. If something doesn't make sense, we'll fill in the information so it will. And we do that by making assumptions based on our past experience.

Take this eBook for example. You know it's a book because of your past experience with other eBooks. Now, since your perspective or point of view limits the information your senses can experience directly, while you're reading one page, you can't see the other pages. This is a fancy way of saying, it's impossible to experience everything all the time.

But, because you have a mental model of what this and other eBooks are like, you assume the text will not end until the eBook is completed. You assume the writing will continue to be in English. You assume you'll continue to read from left to right. You're making assumptions about everything about this eBook you aren't directly perceiving, right now.

Doing this is not a bad thing. In fact, it's absolutely necessary. Imagine a world without assumptions. You'd have to carefully test each step you took to make sure the floor would hold your weight. You'd have to peek behind everything to find out whether the backs were actually there. You'd have to look in a mirror to make sure you're still human. You'd have to call the IRS every year to determine if they still wanted your money. Get the idea?

HOW SETUPS CREATE EXPECTATION

Target Assumption

The first joke mechanism I'd like to explain is the Target Assumption. Of the many assumptions you imagined based on this Setup,

   "I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works, I've already lost three…"

at least one will be the Target Assumption.

Here's the Target Assumption on Diagram 3:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 3

Setup: *"I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works. I've already lost three…"*

Target Assumption: **He lost weight.**

Reinterpretation:

Punch: *"days."*

The function of a Setup is to misdirect the audience into accepting the false Target Assumption, he lost weight, as the Setup's intended meaning.

It's called the Target Assumption because the Punch targets this particular assumption created by the Setup and makes it wrong. Remember, you cannot be surprised unless you're expecting something else first.

HOW PUNCHES CREATE SURPRISE

Reinterpretation

The next joke mechanism is the Reinterpretation, which is expressed by the Punch. Just as the Target Assumption creates a false expectation, the Reinterpretation must be an unexpected, yet compatible meaning of the Setup to create surprise.

Here's the Reinterpretation on Diagram 4:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 4

Setup: *"I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works. I've already lost three…"*

Target Assumption: He lost weight.

Reinterpretation: **He lost time.**

Punch: *"days."*

Here you see the Reinterpretation in action. The word "days" supplies the audience with an unexpected, yet compatible new way to see what it is that the speaker lost. And it makes the Target Assumption, that he lost weight, wrong.

The aim of the Reinterpretation is to shatter the Target Assumption, which creates surprise. When Punches shatter people's assumptions, they laugh.

Here it is on Diagram 5:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 5

Setup: *"I'm on the Drinking Man's Diet. It really works. I've already lost three…"*

Target Assumption: ~~He lost weight.~~

Reinterpretation: He lost time.

Punch: *"days."*

Now we have the mechanism that explains expectation and surprise. The Setup's Target Assumption creates a false expectation and the Punch's Reinterpretation reveals a surprise.

Where do Reinterpretations come from?

Reinterpretations come from the kind of mind that notices what others assume, then uncovers or invents an unexpected, yet compatible interpretation. This is done by either going to the opposite or contradicting the Setup's expectation.

Comedy writers and comedians continuously play the mental game of noticing what others assume, and then searching for an unexpected interpretation. I call this the comic leap.

Playing this mental game doesn't always yield a funny idea for a joke. But, if you go through this pattern often enough, you'll hit on a few assumptions you can find an unexpected interpretation for. Then decide if you want to present it publically to find out if it's funny.

Most funny people aren't even aware they're playing this mental game as they have been doing it since they were children. The constant mental repetition of the comic leap eventually becomes the intuitive and spontaneous act of creating humor.

Welcome to the other side of the looking glass.

But what about all those funny comments I laugh at that don't have Setups? Huh? What about those?

Calm down. I was just getting to that actually.

NON ONE-LINER JOKE STRUCTURE

Now that you understand the structure of one-liner jokes and how they use the Target Assumption and Reinterpretation, we'll move onto a very important variation of the non one-liner Comic Structure. This will explain how humor uses storytelling, satire, parody, analogies, and comparison jokes.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE SETUPS

Non one-liner jokes appear to have no Setups. But of course they do. They aren't part of what the funny person says or does, but rather already exist in the form of Shared Knowledge or Existing Assumptions. This means all of the assumptions, including the Target Assumption, already exist in the minds of the audience.

Here's how the Shared Knowledge Setup and its Existing Assumptions fit into our basic diagram (next page):

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 6

Shared Knowledge Setup:

Target Assumption:

Existing Assumptions:
(In the audience's mind.)

Reinterpretation:

Punch:

Let me illustrate all this with something that actually happened to me. I was sitting in an authentic Chinese restaurant in which many of the other patrons were Asian immigrants who spoke little or no English. There was a big screen TV mounted on the wall and a Gallagher concert was starting.

Gallagher made his entrance riding a bicycle with a square wheel. Everybody watching cracked up laughing. Regardless of language or cultural differences, everyone has already made the Target Assumption that bicycle wheels must be round. Because this Existing Assumption is universally accepted as true, there's no need for a Setup.

Look at how all this plays out on Diagram 7:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 7

Shared Knowledge Setup: *the form of bicycles*

Target Assumption: Wheels must be round.

Existing Assumptions:
Bicycles have two wheels.
•Wheels must be round.
It has handlebars.
Seat faces forward.

Reinterpretation:

Punch: (Gallagher rides a bicycle
with a square wheel.)

To make this joke, all Gallagher needed to do was ride a bicycle with a square wheel as the Punch. (Remember when I said Punches aren't always lines? Here's an example.)

We already had the target assumption: *wheels must be round*. This Punch surprises us with the Reinterpretation: wheels can be square. Even though it causes a ridiculously bouncy ride it's clear that *wheels can be square*. This Reinterpretation makes the Target Assumption, *wheels must be round*, wrong. And there's your joke.

Here's how it looks in a simplified Diagram 8:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 8

Shared Knowledge Setup: *the form of bicycles*

Target Assumption: Wheels must be round.

Existing Assumptions:
Bicycles have two wheels.
•Wheels must be round.
It has handlebars.
Seat faces forward.

Reinterpretation: Wheels can be round.

Punch: (Gallagher rides a
bicycle with a square wheel.)

Many jokes have Existing Assumptions that everyone accepts based on physical laws, societal norms, cultural and national presuppositions, accepted definitions and procedures, stereotypes, and familiar environments, just to name a few.

On a daily basis, everyone makes tens of thousands of assumptions without realizing it. It's these unconscious assumptions that are targeted by non one-liner jokes' Punches. The Target Assumption exists, but it's not performed.

All comedy, humor, and therefore jokes require a Target Assumption, as well as a Reinterpretation as its Comic Structure, but not necessarily a performed Setup.

This understanding about Comic Structure only took me twenty years to figure out.

WHAT'S NEW

There's more to Comic Structure than I've described in this eBook. These are only two of the basic mechanisms of laughter.

If you'd like to develop a deeper understanding of why we laugh, go to humor4biz.com to receive three Free Comedy Training videos. These videos will share with you more of what you'll need when you're **Writing Humor for Business and Life**.
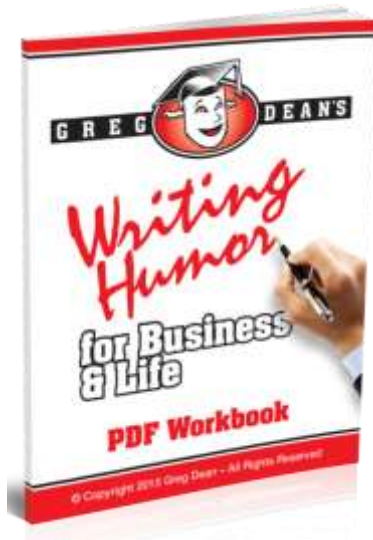
It's not enough to know Comic Structure in order to write jokes and humor. What you need next is a process that applies Target Assumption and Reinterpretation in a system that results in ideas for humor.

It's time to put theory into practice.

GREG DEAN'S HUMOR GENERATOR
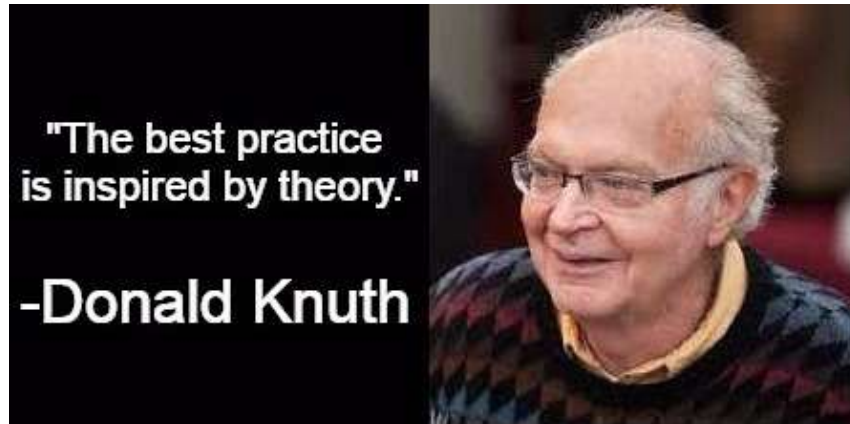
I always thought some people were just funny or some weren't.

Yes, but now you know it's not magic because comedy has a specific pattern that can be learned. In this section, you'll see how to take Comic Structure and apply it to a system of comedy writing skills that anyone can learn and practice. And the more you practice, the better you'll get, until you can create humor virtually at will.

The Humor Generator uses the mechanisms of Target Assumption and Reinterpretation to generate ideas for jokes. This system is based on the Non One-Liner Joke Structure of Shared Knowledge. If you aren't clear about the Non One-Liner Joke Structure, then please go back over it until you are. Otherwise, this system may be confusing.

CHOOSE A TOPIC

So now, we're going to write some joke ideas. The first step is to find a situation you want to write humor about that contains many items of shared knowledge. In other words, pick something that everyone is familiar with and will generally make the same assumptions about it.

In this case, I'll select a traditional American wedding.

LIST EXISTING ASSUMPTIONS

Next, list as many things, events, and people that you expect to be at a traditional American wedding. Don't try to be funny. This part of the process is not funny. The funny stuff comes at the end.

Here's Shared Knowledge Setup and several examples Existing Assumptions on Diagram 9:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 9

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Punch: ?

Of course, these aren't all the possible Existing Assumptions. You probably thought of a few of your own, which demonstrates how easy it is to use Shared Knowledge to generate humor.

FORM A JOKE PREMISE

Next we need to create an opposite or contradictory point of view to focus the Reinterpretations. This is called the Joke Premise. Here's my definition:

Joke Premise Definition: a negative opinion about a subject.

In general, we assume everyone hopes this marriage will be successful. So, let's go to an opposite or contradictory position, which will give us our Joke Premise.

Joke Premise: This marriage is doomed.

Here's the Joke Premise on Diagram 10:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 10

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: **This marriage is doomed**

Punch: ?

SELECT A TARGET ASSUMPTION

Next, we'll select one Existing Assumption, *bride's gown is white*, as the Target Assumption.

Here it is on Diagram 11:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 11

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: **Bride's gown is white.**

Existing Assumptions:
• Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed

Punch: ?

WRITE SEVERAL REINTERPRETATIONS

Then from the point of view of the Joke Premise, this marriage is doomed, we'll search for some Reinterpretations. To do this, ask yourself a series of questions which are framed by the Joke Premise, this marriage is doomed, and that will result in Reinterpretations that are opposite or contradictory to the Target Assumption, bride's gown is white. Always look for the worst case scenario for the Reinterpretations.

Some Sample Questions

"What's the worst color the dress could be?"

"What's the worst kind of dress could this be?"

"What's wrong with this dress?"

Here are a few examples of Reinterpretations on Diagram 12:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 12

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: Bride's gown is white."

Existing Assumptions:
•Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed

Reinterpretation: **black**
stained
see through
ghillie suit

Punch: ?

Notice how all the Reinterpretations are examples of the Joke Premise this marriage is doomed. This is what I meant by the Joke Premise framing the ideas for the Reinterpretations and Punches.

Will all of these Reinterpretations lead to a funny Punch?

Of course not. The purpose is to generate unexpected, yet compatible, ideas you can use for writing Punches. You may not like any of the above Reinterpretations, so make up some you yourself find funny.

Personally, the one I liked best is ghillie suit. But I didn't think enough people would have the shared knowledge that it's the camouflage tan grass outfit worn by snipers to remain completely hidden.

SELECT A DIFFERENT TARGET ASSUMPTION

With the first round of the process complete, we'll repeat the system. This time let's select a different Existing Assumption to become our new Target Assumption. This time, we'll choose Bride walks isle to "Bridal March."

Here's the new Target Assumption on Diagram 13:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 13

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: **Bride enters to "Bridal March."**

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
•Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed.

Reinterpretation:

Punch: ?

Remember, to find Reinterpretations, ask yourself questions that'll give you and opposite or worst case scenario.

"What's the worst kind of music for a bride?"

"What are some titles of famous songs that would send the wrong message?"

"What are some famous lyrics that support the Joke Premise?

Now, considering the Joke Premise this marriage is doomed, check out the Reinterpretations on Diagram 14:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 14

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: Bride enters to "Bridal March."

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
•Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed.

Reinterpretation: **"Taps"**
Vader's "Imperial March"
"Dueling Banjos"
Theme to "Jaws"

Punch: ?

Of these Reinterpretations, I liked the Darth Vader's "Imperial March" because it's also in the cadence of a march.

I know, next we're going to do it all over again, but with a different Target Assumption. Right?

REPEAT THE SYSTEM

Right. This time let's select the next Existing Assumption on the list as the Target Assumption as shown on Diagram 15:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 15

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: **White cake with fancy frosting.**

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
•White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed.

Reinterpretation:

Punch: ?

Next, from the point of view of the Joke Premise, this marriage is doomed, ask questions that lead to ideas opposite or contradictory to that of the Target Assumption, white cake with fancy frosting. These will be your Reinterpretations and the ideas for Punches.

"What's another kind of cake?"

"What might it be made of?"

"What could happen to the cake?"

Here are some Reinterpretations on Diagram 16:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 16

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: White cake with fancy frosting.

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
•White cake with fancy frosting.
First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed.

Reinterpretation:
**black frosting
cup cake
urinal cake
stripper jumps out**

Punch: ?

YOUR TURN

Now, it's your turn to think up some Reinterpretations. You'll use the Existing Assumption, first kiss is between bride and groom, as the Target Assumption. Next, based on the Joke Premise, this marriage is doomed, create some Reinterpretations. Remember to ask some questions.

"Who else is there?"

"Who shouldn't kiss?"

"Who would you like to see kiss?"

Think of some Reinterpretations and mentally place them on Diagram 17:

Greg Dean's Comic Structure - Diagram 17

Shared Knowledge Setup: *Traditional American Wedding*

Target Assumption: **First kiss groom and bride.**

Existing Assumptions:
Bride's gown is white.
Bride enters to "Bridal March."
White cake with fancy frosting.
•First kiss groom and bride.

Premise: This marriage is doomed.

Reinterpretation:

Punch: ?

When you go through the Humor Generator with your own Shared Knowledge Setup and its Existing Assumptions, you'll be able to easily write ideas for original humor.

I guess you really can teach anyone to write humor.

Yes. This is possible by having a theory that when put into practice yields predictable results. You now understand Comic Structure and how to apply the mechanisms of Target Assumption and Reinterpretation to my system the Humor Generator to create ideas for jokes at will.

WHAT'S NEXT

Of course this isn't all you need to know to write jokes. This system is easy because the Setups and Target Assumptions already exist in the audience's minds as Shared Knowledge. Next, you need to learn the more difficult challenge of writing Setups that create the Target Assumptions and how to write Reinterpretations as short precise Punches.
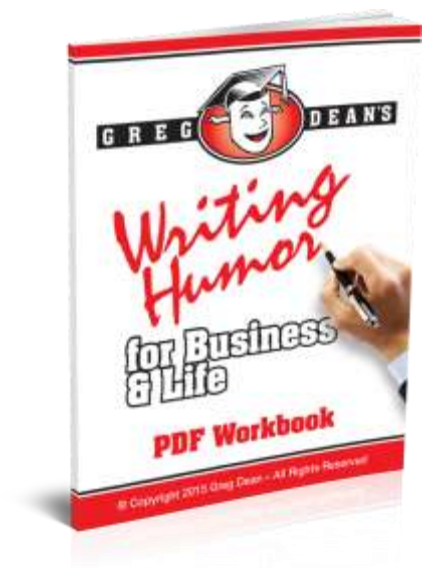
To take the next step in your journey to becoming an accomplished humor writer, go to humor4biz.com. You'll receive three Free Comedy Training Videos, which includes Lesson One from my online course Writing Humor for Business and Life.

What do you have to lose, except your mind?

ABOUT GREAT DEAN

Greg Dean lives in Los Angeles, California USA with his wife, comedienne Gayla Johnson. He continues to identify, write, and teach the fundamental techniques and skills of joke writing, performing, and humorous speaking.

humor4biz.com

humor4biz@gmail.com