



How to Make a TON of Money Performing in High Schools!

by Cris Johnson, CH, CT.NLP

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DEDICATION

This course is dedicated to my friend Tim Piccirillo, a guy with a heck of a story and who was nice enough to take me under his wing while asking for nothing in return.

INTRODUCTION

Performing magic on stage in high schools is without a doubt one of the most challenging performing situations I've ever encountered. Teen audiences are often challenging, have the attention span of a gnat and are more than willing to shout out unsolicited comments.

So why do it?

I do it (and ENJOY doing it) for two reasons – one is somewhat superficial and one is I guess you could say spiritual.

The first reason has to do with the material I can perform. I cut my teeth on performing in elementary schools and that's still where the majority of my performing income comes from, but performing in high schools means I get to use tricks, routines and effects that I normally don't get to use. Most first graders don't care too much about a Blindfold Routine!

The second reason I enjoy performing in high schools is that when I make that connection and really captivate several hundred teens, I really feel like I've accomplished something. Despite what I wrote above about teens being combative as an audience, they are also appreciate of a good performance and they're not shy with expressing themselves if you hit their buttons.

The pay is great, but the REAL reward for me is food for my soul – getting to do certain routines and tie those routines into more complex messages than I often get the opportunity to do in elementary schools.

Also, throughout this course I will be offering opinions on the kind of routines and tricks that I've found work best for me and I'll also be offering my thoughts on things that I have found do not work for me. These are my opinions and if you agree with what I write, that's great. If you disagree with something, test it out for yourself. There's more than one way to skin a cat.

One additional note: this course is not meant to be a 'primer' on stage magic performing techniques. I do offer a few tips as well as obvious potholes to avoid in high school performing, but performing in high schools is NOT something I recommend to those new to stage performing. Just my two cents.

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Enjoy yourself – this is going to be a fun ride.

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7

HIGH SCHOOL SHOW BASICS

What School Officials Want From a Performer

Like many markets in the world of professional performing, it's good to start out with the basics and in this case, it means understanding what your client expects from you.

To make this perfectly clear – in most cases, your client (the person who hires you) is NOT the teens. In some cases with leadership conferences and such, you may get a teen representative who contacts you but even so, they are usually not going to have final authority to actually book you.

With that in mind, let's consider that in most cases, you'll have an official from the school booking you (principal, guidance counselor, etc.) and in addition to working with you, this person has a slew of other responsibilities.

Quite simply, to make a good impression on this person and quite frankly ALL of the adults you're going to encounter, you'll want to keep the following in mind:

- ***Your client wants you to be easy to work with***

This is important. People in high schools DON'T have time for "prima donnas" and word will get out quickly if you have an attitude. I once performed an all-day series of programs (a morning keynote, break-out sessions during the day and a closing program in the afternoon) for a high school and they told me all about the presenter they had the previous year – the fact he was demanding and such. This presenter is a very well-known performer in the national scene for teen groups but his high and mighty attitude has cost him bookings.

Another time, I was with a friend setting up for a stage hypnosis show and another performer walks into the auditorium. He looked around arrogantly and asked, "Where's the green room?" I answered, "In your car." Probably not the best way I could handle it, but just the fact that he asked the question showed

that he had no clue about working in high schools. Regretfully, I was right as his performance BOMBED.

I equate my work in schools in this way: I realize that my program is an interruption in the regular day life of school. I remember that it is a privilege to be there and behave accordingly.

- ***Your client wants you to have few needs***

This ties in with the above comment. If you are a traveling illusion show and you need specific lighting needs and such, you can certainly work in high schools but the reality is that handing your client a list of technical demands for your program will not endear yourself to your client for a daytime assembly.

Remember, your show is an interruption in the regular schedules of the day. Some teachers and school faculty will be grumbling about the time taken away from classes. Having a lot of technical needs will not further good feelings.

Now, I will say in the case of special nighttime performances, a larger, more elaborate show is not only tolerated but, in many cases, appreciated – when I've done night shows (family night, fundraisers, etc.) I'm usually greeted by very eager technical crews of students looking to satisfy my lighting and sound needs. Those shows are fun, but the main focus of this course is in daytime programs, which I have the most experience presenting because the opportunities are more plentiful if your program has a message.

- ***Your client wants you to be clean and non-offensive***

This is HUGE. I've lost count of how many times I've seen a performer in front of a teen crowd break out offensive or sexual material, believing they must appeal to teens by using harsh language or questionable material.

In short, many of these bozos think it pays to be 'edgy.'

In reality, being controversial in the slightest simply means you are going to alienate the faculty...and they're the ones you have to please just as much as the teen audience. It's a fine line to walk and when it comes to effect selection, later I will explain what's worked best for me and the approach you can take.

- ***Your clients wants you to be very good at what you do***

Despite the fact that you must be clean and non-offensive, you STILL must excel at what you do. If you're speaking to the audience, you must be good at

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speaking. I went to college and took speaking and acting classes. I studied great performers, great speakers and even great politicians. In short, I can speak effectively.

In terms of magic and mentalism, you must excel in this area. Your clients want you to captivate and hold the attention of the teen audience. This means, and I hate I have to say this, but have your material polished and ready to go. Professional performing is tough enough without breaking in new material on one of the toughest markets out there.

Also, it pays to have stuff that is truly amazing. The last thing you want is to pull out an effect that is captivating for younger kids but not so much for older audiences. I had a discussion recently with a good friend of mine and he has some somewhat silly things in his teen shows and he feels he can get away with it because he's playing these things up as a gag...I'm not sure I agree. I think teens want to be blown away. They're also impatient, so any gags stand the chance of killing rapport. More on this later.

Summing Up...

High School clients want you to be clean, offensive, easy to work with and very good at what you do. Period!

What to Expect at the Gig

When you arrive at your gig, in most cases for daytime assemblies or leadership conferences, you'll be going to a campus – high school in most cases for a daytime assembly and often to a college for a leadership conference where certain students from multiple schools converge in one location for a day or weekend event.

In either case, it's best to confer with the client to find out exactly which building you're going to because so often a high school or college campus can be quite vast and confusing. Ask your client which building to go to, where to park, what you'll need to access the building, and how you'll bring your equipment in.

I know that sounds like a lot but the fact is, gaining access to schools here in North America is not as simple as walking into your local Wal-Mart.

Very often, all doors are locked in school so you must ring a buzzer, identify yourself, and then you'll be granted access. You'll almost always need to sign in as a visitor at the front desk and pick up a visitor's badge which you must wear until the end of your visit. Very often you'll also be asked to supply your ID as well, so be sure to carry it in with you.

As far as parking goes, very often in high schools, visitor parking is not the best place to park your vehicle in terms of loading/unloading your equipment. Unfortunately, you may be asked to park very far away from where you'll be setting up, so I recommend bringing some kind of a cart with you. I currently use these neat fold-up wagon I picked up from Sam's Club for about \$70. The thing carries so much stuff and folds up nearly flat.

In some cases, you'll be told to park your car at or near an entry point close to where you are performing (which is nice!) and then told to park your car in visitor parking.

Just by asking your client the proper questions, you can have a good idea of what to expect when you arrive.

When you do get into the building, you'll want to head right for the main office, which is usually located right by the 'main' entrance to the office. In many cases, you'll announce yourself to a secretary...who will often have no idea why you are there.

You'll then need to explain the situation and name-drop your client. Eventually you'll get sent in the right direction, which could mean the person will flag down your principal or client or they may summon the custodian to give you access to your performing area (especially if it's in the auditorium, which are usually locked up when not in use).

If you're arriving in the morning, find out when buses arrive and plan on getting there and unloading your equipment BEFORE buses arrive as that's a hectic time and it's hard to hold anyone's attention for longer than a moment or two.

The overall key is simply to get as much information from your contact before you arrive. Ask for:

- Parking info
- Which door to use
- Who to ask for when you get to the school
- What time does school start
- What time does school dismiss
- Where will you be performing
- Where can you go to unload

Audience Sizes

In high schools, the vast majority of the time, you'll be performing your assembly programs for all or most of the teens in the school. Sometimes it's a very tiny school with maybe 150 or so kids. Other times you may be booked to perform at a school with 2000 kids, so you'll be asked to perform for 1000 kids at a time twice.

The key, obviously, is to be prepared, that your effects are visible for large audiences but if the audience is smaller and thus closer to you, then effects must be of the type that close proximity will not impede said effect...in other words, avoid thread effects or other tricks that rely on specific angles or lighting conditions, such as the black art principle.

Those are the varying conditions you can expect for daytime assemblies and keynotes for a leadership conference. The other daytime situation I've encountered most often is the breakout sessions. (I'm going to delve more deeply into these terms and what they mean in a later section, so hang tight.)

With a breakout session, you're very often going to be dealing with a smaller group of teens as the very nature of breakout sessions will mean you're only going to have a small segment of the school populace as an audience at any one time.

Therefore, once you receive your "guesstimates" from your contact as to how many people to expect in your breakout session, you may find it fun to incorporate smaller tricks, such as 'parlor' effects or even close-up effects.

Since you're going to be dealing with smaller groups of students, it's even more imperative that you use effects that can withstand a variety of less-than-ideal performing conditions. Once I do a keynote in the auditorium, I may then be asked to conduct my breakout sessions in the music room, for example, and I

may have teens seated or scattered informally anywhere, so again, trick selection is even more imperative.

As I said, we'll cover the differences between assemblies, keynotes and more in a later chapter.

Performing Venues

I touched upon this briefly several times thus far but when performing in high schools, the three most common places you'll be performing are auditoriums, gymnasiums and cafeterias, probably in that order.

Although many elementary and middle school buildings are being constructed with what is often called a 'multi-purpose room' that serves as a gym, cafeteria and assembly area (to conserve space and lower heating bills), most high schools I've performed in still have auditoriums. (I suspect this has to do with high school plays and such.)

Performing in auditoriums is nice in many regards in that you have plenty of offstage space to store cases and such that you may use to transport your equipment. It's also nice to have an offstage area to relax before the show as kids are coming in.

However, the one thing I DON'T like about performing in high schools is the distance between the performer on stage and the first row of the audience. There's a fairly significant distance there and while it's handy for making certain effects look better and hiding angles, there's also an EMOTIONAL distance too and I have felt in recent years that kids of all ages (not just teens) don't feel as 'connected' to the performance...and this sometimes has the effect of teens feeling more emboldened to make unwanted comments.

What this means for YOU as a performer is that you must project even more energy into the audience. I'm not just talking about voice and broader gestures, because it's too easy to become cartoon like...rather I'm talking about your overall energy. There are ways to fire yourself up and increase your inner energy using NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), self-hypnosis and visualization exercise that many pro athletes use all the time to get into the 'zone,' so to speak. (If you're interested, let me know and I can help you.)

Nonetheless, despite some of the disadvantages, I love auditoriums as the physical performing conditions are great and with the right persona, you're larger than life and will subconsciously get a little more respect.

The second performing condition you'll find most often in high schools in gymnasiums. Sometimes the kids will be on bleachers looking down on you, so there may be angle considerations with many of your effects, so keep that in mind.

Three immediate disadvantages come to mind when performing in a gym – first, you're 'naked' without an offstage area in which you can ditch props or bring out bigger props. In my case, for these situations, I'll bring a simple 3' by 7' roll-up banner with all kinds of information on it about my various high school shows. I'll have this off to the side and it allows me a small 'offstage' area where I can stash larger props. (More on my props later.)

The second disadvantage is the sound – acoustics in a gym are terrible as the sound bounces off of everything and can cause many portable sound systems to cut out on you. This is the sound system's way of protecting itself from frying. It's not fun...I have a portable Bose system I use and if gyms can sometimes wreak havoc on a Bose, you KNOW the acoustics are bad!

Do plenty of sound checks when you arrive and be ready to turn your sound DOWN even more when the audience arrives as the ambient noise for the kids can cause some portable sound systems to cut out at an even lower volume due to the additional chatter from the audience.

HUGE tip: if possible, ALWAYS bring your own sound system, especially to a gig where you know you'll be in a gym. Since I fly, I'm often at the mercy of what the school provides and despite visiting many schools with brand new gyms and what was reported to me as a "\$50,000 state of the art system" for the new gym, I have YET to use a house system in a gym that did not completely SUCK. I always sound like I'm speaking through a tinny, drive-thru speaker.

One of my "2012 New Year's Resolutions" is to simply RENT a portable system for any future flight gigs for high schools from this point forward. Most of the time, a good portable sound system can be rented for around \$25-\$30 a day.

The third disadvantage when performing in a gym is the fact that it's a GYM...and very often the coaches and/or Phys-ed teachers either were not told you'd be doing a show that day or if they were told...they don't care. It's a rough situation to be in, but all you can do is explain the situation, smile and be as accommodating as possible.

One situation saw me in a school where the Phys-ed teacher was so UN-accommodating that I had to wait by the entrance while volleyball games were going on, making it impossible to set up. Only when they started filing kids into the gym up into the bleachers did they give me a few minutes to quickly set up my equipment. I had to scramble FAST because my usual set-up time was 30 minutes and I had less than 10!

The other, hidden, subtle, disadvantage of performing in a gym when teens are in bleachers is the psychological aspect of the kids looking 'down' on you. Subconsciously, you become...I don't know...smaller, somehow. So again, PROJECT and walk with confidence and bravado. My personal opinion is that a high school show is NOT the place for a Woody Pittman-type of character. :)

The final, third-most-likely performing scenario you're likely to find yourself in when performing a high school assembly daytime program is in the cafeteria. Some schools have raised stages a foot or two off the floor, using the cafeteria as a multi-use room as discussed earlier. While this is more common in my experience in elementary schools, you may find it sometimes in high schools. While you're elevated to your audience, you're not SO high above your audience that you've got that emotional distance you do in an auditorium...this is a good thing.

The disadvantage? Many times students will be eating lunch when you come in to set up and all kinds of amusing or not amusing comments may come flying your way while you set up. I just smile occasionally and ignore it.

Setting up in these situations is also a bit tricky as you have no real 'hiding place,' so if you have a 'pack flat, play big' kind of show, you're in good hands, but if you don't, consider bringing a banner or portable backdrop with you.

Working The Stage

I know I mentioned earlier that this course is not intended as a basic instructional manual on performing stage magic, but for completeness' sake, I'm going to reprint a few pages of stage magic tips from my previous course on performing in elementary schools (Email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net for more details).

Imagine this: You've done all kinds of work to book school shows. You've got all of your props. You've meticulously researched the topic you'll be talking about. You've carefully tied-in your effects with your messages. You've prepared and rehearsed your act. You walk out on stage, and wait for your audience. You were told the number: 430 students, for example. No big deal, you think to yourself, it's just a number.

As you wait, standing there on stage, you see the students piling into the gym. They keep coming and coming...wave after wave, class after class! There's so many! Finally, after it seems as though half of a medium-sized city has poured into the gym, the principal quiets everyone down and introduces you. All eyes are on you. You freeze! Now what?

Congratulations, welcome to my first school themed assembly show! It was terrifying!

While it was true that I had done some school shows before this one, I'd often had a partner. I had also done a few school shows on my own, but those were the kind of set up I'm sure many of you reading this are familiar with: You're set up in a class room or corner of the gym and two or three classes are brought in to see a show as part of the day's spring carnival, end of the school year celebration, or whatever.

This was much different...and scary!

If you've never done anything like this before, it can be unnerving for the first few times, especially if you're stumbling along with no real help as I was. If you've done some school shows before, I hope to give you pros out there a few tips you haven't thought of or maybe just a refresher course in stage work.

Many years ago, twelve, I think, I was at an IBM lecture (no, not the computer company, but the magic group...oh, you figured that out? Sorry!), and heard a wonderful lecture from a

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part-timer named Jeff. Unfortunately, I don't remember his last name, so Jeff, if you're reading this...sorry!

Jeff's lecture was about working from the stage. When he made his announcement, you could practically feel the energy level drop in the room. Most of the guys (and girls) in the room were addicted to close-up and all the latest card tricks.

I, however, was in the beginning stages of establishing myself as a working professional in the Pittsburgh area and already knew I wanted to concentrate on stage and parlor work, so I perked up and began taking notes.

Jeff's theory, which I'm sure was not original with him, was based on what he called the 'Theory Of Thirds.'

The Theory Of Thirds

Basically, this is a simple technique that allows the performer to mentally divide the audience into three sections. Why is this important? Too many performers concentrate solely on what's directly in front of them, ignoring the audience sections on their far right and far left. This has the unwanted result of subliminally alienating those sections of the audience. Even if the rumblings in the aisles don't start, as someone in tune with the 'heartbeat' of an audience, I've felt it happen.

A Flawed Tip From Public Speakers

The other thing that amateurs do is take the public speaking tip of "looking to the back of the room" to avoid eye contact with anyone. Well, then you're cutting off, in a subconscious way, the people right in front of you as well!

When entertainers follow that tip from public speakers, I think they're forgetting the fact that the said tip was probably designed as an aide for people to just get through a public speaking engagement that they're terrified of and just want to finish it without looking like an ass.

I don't think the tip was designed for entertainers. Why? As entertainers, we're supposed to crave the limelight and engage the audience...if we're terrified of the stage and more importantly we continue to be, why are we there? Don't get me wrong, I still get butterflies before a big show, but I prefer to think of it as the Edge, something that keeps me sharp.

So, before I get into the theory of thirds further, my advice to you is to put the public speaking tip I mentioned out of your mind if you plan on being a stage performer with any degree of regularity.

Eye Contact

When you're on stage, you'll want to make eye contact and turn your body toward each "third" of the stage, the left, center, and right. I don't mean you should do this in a robotic, systematic fashion, either. It should look effortless, as though you're not thinking about it.

Also, when you're giving your attention to a section, it's important to keep in mind that your eyes should be moving—make eye contact with people in the front row, then the next few rows and then yes, send some 'energy,' some attention to the back. There's no particular sequence, just do it.

I do confess that I have a tendency to concentrate slightly more often to the center section, but I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing, because if you turn your body to the far left or far right, it's going to throw off your audience too.

After a while, you won't have to concentrate on "thirds" as much and many of these things will become second nature and you'll just be making those connections.

Including Your Audience

*On Jeff McBride's Commando Act Tape from his **Magic On Stage** series, he takes this idea of working from the stage further. He talks about keeping your body open to the other sections as you turn your head and 'energy' to one of the side sections. He also talks about keeping your arms and shoulders and especially gestures open and broad, not tight to the body, as you work back and forth so that even when you turn your head away from a section, your body language, the 'openness' of your posture, still keeps the audience 'with' you.*

In particular, what he talked about at one point was this: let's say you turn to the audience section on your right. You interact with them for a moment in the middle of your speaking, and then you want to move in the other direction. Instead of turning your back on them, you hold your right hand out to them and then, as you begin moving away toward your left, keep your torso "open," without completely turning your back on either section. This type of upper-body positioning coupled with the fact that you're holding your hand out to that section of the audience subliminally keeps them "included" even as you move away. Basically, you're trying not to turn too far to one side as you move back and forth across the stage.

Obviously with certain routines where you're interacting with an onstage volunteer and you're profile to them to facilitate the workings of an effect, this wouldn't necessarily hold true, but when addressing the audience as a whole and you're onstage alone, this is extremely effective. Like I said, on his video it makes a lot of sense. Try it yourself in front of a mirror. It works.

"How Do I Do This?"

I admit a lot of this is difficult to envision in print. I recommend first you get the tape I just mentioned. While the magic techniques on it are outstanding, I feel the working-from-stage techniques are more valuable. You'll actually be able to see what I'm talking about.

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Secondly, videotape yourself working on these techniques. Stuff like this, I feel, is more important in many ways than the actual magic presented, because as we all know, a lousy presentation can kill a great effect. You'll also see with the programs I present, I tend to shy away from overly complicated material from a sleight of hand perspective because I want to be able to concentrate on connecting with my audience...so, if you bought this course with the hopes of learning cool knuckle-busting techniques, sorry, it ain't gonna happen.

Personally, I've never been a particularly graceful person, so these techniques are something I struggle with to this very day. I've drastically improved, though as a perfectionist, I still feel I have a long way to go.

Movements

Making those adjustments to your body language and posture is important when working from stage, but so is actual movement. I talked about eye contact and movement as it pertained to 'including' all sections of your audience a while ago, but now I want to talk about movements in general.

When you're on stage, remember that you're one person. Consider how tiny you'll look from the back of an auditorium or gym for audience members. It's difficult to see you! Now think about how short adult's attention spans are...now think about the fact that children's attention spans are even less!

Commanding Attention

One way to combat boredom and wandering attention is through movement. Oh sure, you've got your shiny props and if you're like me, your doves, backdrop, etc., but I know a lot of good performers like to "pack flat, play big," and they seem to get by just fine. In fact, I know of several magicians with big props who really don't capture anyone's attention at all. Why? Presentation, for one thing, but here we're not talking about that.

By moving. By exaggerating gestures. If you're opening your hand to show it empty after a vanish, sweep your hand and arm out in a graceful, or at least broad, gesture. Walk back and forth across the stage as you make contact with the different sections of the stage. I don't want you to get the idea that you need to be manic—too much movement can be distracting. It's just that I've seen a lot of struggling magicians plant their feet center stage and deviate from that spot very very rarely. Study Jeff McBride's tapes. He took a lot of mime and it shows. Although his emphasis on grace is not everyone's cup of tea, at least a basic understanding and appreciation will help your stage performances.

What You Can Expect From Your Audiences

Here's a few quick notes on what you can expect from your audiences, as a whole, when performing in high schools...

First, when performing a daytime assembly program, in most cases the audience is going to be thankful to just be out of classes. This gives you a HUGE psychological advantage when starting your show. The audience is happy and receptive, so take advantage of this positive energy and use it!

Most importantly, realize that modern teen audiences are going to judge you very quickly, so it's best to 'hit the ground running,' so to speak. Maintain that rapport!

The only times I've found when teen audiences were NOT as receptive to a daytime assembly program is when it's the day before a holiday break or anytime in the last week of classes before school breaks for the summer. Those audiences can be VERY tough indeed as the psychological mindset of the teens has shifted. I'm certainly not saying that these are bad shows, only that you may have to work a little harder at maintaining their interest.

When it comes to volunteers, I've noticed a very amusing trend over the years in high schools: when a volunteer is called on stage, he or she will often have their own 'cheering section,' so to speak. There will often be a lot of hooting, whooping and things shouted out like, "Yeah, you GO Sharon!"

This amuses me greatly, as the volunteer is just **STANDING** there and hasn't done anything.

I chalk it up to a few things like the fact that just being in front of the audience is seen as being a kind of 'big deal,' as teens want and crave attention. So right away, in these situations, just by having a volunteer(s) on stage, we're causing the audience to generate a lot of positive energy toward us. Don't be intimidated by the hooting & hollering...wait it out for a count of 3 and then continue with your routine, while smiling.

ANY positive energy is good for your show!

Later on in this course, I'll share with you the types of routines to avoid so that you don't kill that positive energy with volunteers on stage.

The Mindset of Your Audiences

While I covered this a little a moment ago, I also want to touch on some additional variables.

In virtually any case with an incoming speaker, the teen audience is going to be looking at the person with a bit of a challenging attitude, a sort of 'why are you here? Why should I pay attention to you Are you worthy of my respect?'

I believe most of this attitude is below the surface, in the subconscious...in other words, they don't do this intentionally, but the nature of being a teen, expanding boundaries, wanting to explore the world and test things coupled with the misguided teen belief that they know EVERYTHING about ANYTHING can make it difficult for a speaker with a message to really 'reach' the audience. (Don't worry, as a magician or mentalist, you already have an advantage over most speakers, plus I'll be giving some killer 'tools' to use in your presentation to increase the odds in your favor!)

Of course, there are some audiences that just hang on your every word, such as most leadership conferences I've performed at, but understanding the teen mind is important when designing your show.

Also, and this is something I learned fairly recently, a human being's cognitive functions are not fully developed until their mid-20's. This means, to put it in a simple way, their "logic circuits" are not all firing until they reach their mid-20's.

I believe this is the reason why complex mentalism routines sometimes fall flat for teen audiences...at least in my experience. In fact, now is a good time to touch upon one of my most REVEALING sections in this book...

Mistakes I Made and How to Avoid Them!

When I first starting performing in high schools, I made several mistakes that impeded my growth in that market for several years and I'm going to share the ones I remember with you now. (The ones I DON'T remember...well...if you're a hypnotist, contact me and we can talk about repression!)

First of all, when I started performing for high school audiences, I performed at a few 'sweet 16' birthday parties and other events, and the mindset there is even more...challenging...than at a daytime assembly!

The first mistake I made was presenting a regular magic show as I would present it to adults. Years ago, before I nurtured my love of mentalism, when I was booked for a corporate holiday party, I performed regular, visual magic for these company events.

I performed Multiplying Bottles, Dancing Hanky and many other really cool routines. Most audiences loved them, with Multiplying Bottles being especially popular. And I know they really did enjoy them as I was booked repeatedly for some of these events along with requests for certain routines from the year before. So life was good.

As I started booking high school parties, I presented the same kind of material to teen audiences and I'm sorry to say the results typically were NOT pretty. During the Multiplying Bottles routine, shouts of "They stack!" were often heard and during the Dancing Hanky routine, shouts of "It's string!" were heard.

It was unbelievably painful but I learned from it (so you don't have to!)

So I started performing more mentalism for high school gigs, parties and such and the results were much better. I believe it's because regular magic triggers a defensive "he's trying to trick me" reaction, plus the curiosity factor of teens to learn and expand their environments makes them want to understand how everything ticks. On the other hand, mentalism, when done right (along with much mental magic) is so powerful because it seems more impossible and invasive – "Dude, you're in my head!"

Unfortunately, I had a couple of more lessons to learn.

When I started performing high school gigs with a motivational message, I made the mistake of listening to a couple of performers in the speaking world and bringing minimal props with me. The idea was to 'be a speaker,' I was told, and to focus more on the message and less on the props.

In an hour's show, I had maybe five effects, totally about 15 minutes of performing time. The rest was me speaking about my messages. The results were good, not great. The kids were generally quiet and respectful, but not as into the program as I'd like.

I believe my problem stemmed from billing myself as a magician with a message. If I had a website that ONLY spoke about my speaking with ZERO mention of my magic, the program would've probably gone better.

However, as a marketing edge, I've had countless clients tell me, "We brought in a speaker last year and he had a good message, but we really want something more FUN for the kids, but still have a message. That's what I saw on your website."

My original shows worked against the mindset of my clients.

So, I injected more 'tricks' into the program and a LOT more energy. Honestly, when performing for teens, I am more comfortable with this approach.

This brings me to my biggest concept in this section – be true to yourself! We'll cover this more in a later section.

Trouble-Shooting at the Gig

At the gig itself, one of the things you can expect to encounter much of the time when performing in a high school auditorium is encountering a slew of chairs and music stands...the last band rehearsal of 50 or so students left it all there after rehearsal is over.

Sometimes, the client will apologize profusely and round up people to help clear the stage.

Other times, to be quite frank, you're on your own. That's why I always recommend getting to your gig very early to give yourself the extra time to clear the stage just in case.

The other dilemma, and this is true mostly in the situations when you're performing in a gym or a cafeteria, is the fact that you may have zero privacy when setting up. Earlier, I mentioned that I often carry a roll-up banner with me and I'll set that up and set up some of my most sensitive material behind it. Another option is bringing a portable backdrop with you. There are many out there, but quite frankly, I would shy away from that consideration simply because it looks like you're trying to hide something...which of course you are...but in the case of teen audiences, I've found this can be a major turn-off.

The final solution is to have effects which require minimal set up and most of the time, with one or two exceptions, this is what I try to do – select effects with set-up that can be accomplished simply by keeping the props in the table or using my body as a shield against prying eyes.

Another reason for arriving early to a gig is stage lights – I've lost count of how many times I've arrived at a school, was brought to the auditorium to set up...and left alone in the dark, trying desperately to find the stage lights.

The obvious answer is to find someone and ask for help. It's not a big deal to ask for help, obviously, but it's surprising how often people act perturbed that I can't seem to

find the lights on my own! I only mention this as another exercise of gritting your teeth and continuing to smile.

Ditto for the other issue I've faced and that's finding electrical outlets to plug in my sound system. In gyms and cafeterias, this usually is not an issue, but in the auditoriums, very often there are no electrical outlets on the sides, and if there are outlets in the back of the stage, they're often blocked or covered by giant flats – set pieces for stage plays. This obviously makes those outlets inaccessible.

Outlets are often available at the front of the stage and quite often, that's where I plug in my system.

I should point out that I use a single-speaker Bose system called the L1 tower, and when I perform, I place this single unit off to one side, slightly in front of me. Thus, the speaker sitting at the front of the stage means no cords will be laying across the stairs that volunteers will be using to join me on stage during the show. This is a HUGE deal, as if someone were to trip and fall because of my equipment, I could be held liable.

In the past, I used a Peavey Escort system, which had a central mixing board and two separate speakers with a lot of cords. This system was not at all suitable to parking it at the side of the stage.

So, the 'take-away' here is to consider using a one-speaker system of some sort. There's a bunch of great ones out there and the set-up is always much, much easier than the more traditional 'DJ-type' set-ups of the multi-speaker units such as the Fender Passport, the Peavey I mentioned, and others.

Another 'trouble-shooting' tip I'll mention applies to performers in the U.S. (Other countries may have their own versions of what I'm going to talk about.)

In short, there are many times when, even after double-checking with the client many times, I'll arrive and someone in the business office will tell me, "We can't process your check until you provide us with an invoice and/or W-9."

The simple answer is to always bring with you a completed W-9 and invoice. For your reference, an invoice is simply something you can print up on your own letterhead that says "Performance Invoice" at the top. Then, under it, list the client's name, address, name of your show, gig date and so on. The client just wants it to say "Invoice" at the top. A key thing to include on your invoice is the name you'd like to have the checks made out to – your business name if you have one, or your own personal name.

If you're a U.S. performer and are not familiar with a W-9, it's a government document that is used for tax purposes, to prove that a business entity has paid monies out to another business as a one-time expense.

Often, they (the clients) don't think of these details until I arrive. Because I'm dealing with school clients, they have several layers of business to deal with and it never fails to frustrate me when I repeatedly ask beforehand about the proper paperwork and then I get hit with this stuff at the gig.

So now, I always come prepared. :)

HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING TIPS, TRICKS & TECHNIQUES

Sound System Tips

I've already covered some sound system tips earlier in that I recommend using your own as much as possible and a one-speaker system to minimize issues with cords, but when it comes to using the school's (as I have done in the past when I flew to gigs), I STILL recommend using your own microphone.

There have been times in the past when I have used everything from the school – PA system, mic, etc. I've been burned in that I requested a headset or lavalier mic but when I got to the gig, I was told the only mic available was a traditional handheld mic on a mic stand. I know many other performers are comfortable using a handheld mic on a stand, but I prefer to have my hands free while I perform without any restrictions where I stand or walk.

Therefore, I find that by bringing my own microphone, I can 'hook into' the hosting school's system...as long as I bring the proper cables and hook-ups.

These 'hook-ups' are available from Radio Shack for just a few dollars each. Because I do not know until I arrive which connection thingies (a technical term) I will need, I simply bring with me the three most common connectors that just about any PA system will use.

The three are:

- XLR
- 1/4"

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

- RCA plugs

Asking any customer service rep at stores such as Radio Shack, Guitar Center and other stores will give you what you need. Toss them into your carrying case and you'll be set.

Length of Shows

In most cases, for daytime assembly programs, you'll be asked to perform either a 45 minute show or a 60 minute show. Occasionally, I'm asked to perform a longer 90 minute show for high school audiences.

Interestingly, if I'm booked to start a program at 1:00pm, very often in a school setting (of ANY grade level!) the students will start filing in around 1:00...and everyone is not seated until 1:10 or 1:15, meaning, obviously, I start my show late.

When I see these situations happening, as students are filing in, I track down a principal or some other faculty member in charge and ask if I should do my entire 60 minute show (for example) or cut it short.

Depending on when in the day I'm performing, I may be asked to end at a specific time. For instance, if I'm booked for a 2:00 show and school dismisses at 3:00, and students are still filing into the auditorium at 2:15, then I know I will have to shave 15 or more minutes from my 60 minute program.

This recently happened to me at a middle school – I was due to start my program at 10:00, but due to lagging classes (the audience in a school show obviously makes their way to the assembly area in classes), I didn't start until 10:20...and I was told this group's lunch period started at 10:50, and then the principal gave a long-winded introduction to my show, so out of a 45 minute show I only performed a 25-minute show. It was out of my hands. Some of the teachers looked confused, but I was powerless.

However, if I'm due to start performing at, say, 9:00am and I'm not able to start until 9:12am for example, in most cases, the client tells me to just do the full show.

This presents another potential challenge: let's say you're booked to perform two back-to-back assemblies...one at 9:00am and one at 10:00am and each assembly is to be 45 minutes in length. Assuming everything starts on time, you've got 15 minutes in between performances to re-set everything. Easy, right? Well...

What has happened to me countless times is the 9:00am show starts at 9:15am and when I finish my 45 minute show at 10:00am, the second group immediately starts filing in!

To prevent this, right before I start the 9:00am show (now 9:15am – grrr!), I speak to the client and say, "We're starting this show a few minutes late. I need a few minutes in between to re-set for the second group, so if we could hold off on bringing the second group in until, say, 10:10am?"

Usually, they're very accommodating and I get my few minutes to re-set.

Obviously in I'm in an auditorium, I can just do my re-set in the wings, but in a gym or cafeteria, I don't have the cover I'd like.

As far as daytime assemblies go, that's about it for times, although I will add that keynote presentations will usually be 60 minutes, too. (Again, I'll cover this terminology later.)

The other two daytime performing situations you may encounter are breakout sessions and workshops. Breakout sessions can vary in length, although most I've encountered are in the 35-40 minute range. Your client will tell you what length of program they expect, so be prepared. Workshops can be 45 minutes to an hour or 90 minutes long to three hours! Workshops for a high school group is not something I have a tremendous of experience in but I'll cover the details of all of this a bit later.

What Kind of Tricks to Use

Here's where I had to do a LOT of research and experimentation with high school audiences over the years to figure what works best. Bear in mind that this list is what works best for ME and stuff that I claim will not work may work just fine for you. (Case in point: my friend Rodney from Texas performs the linking rings for teen audiences all the time but I personally would never do it.)

In short, the kind of effects that I've found work really well for teen audiences have a kind of Criss Angel flair to them. I know what some of you reading this are thinking – "I hate that guy!" The fact is, to mainstream teen audiences, Angel is regarded as THE guy and modeling him will help you when performing for teens.

I also want to break in and mention that the effects I mention are obviously not the ONLY effects you can use but simply what I like to use and are intended to get your creative juices running.

Danger...

Criss Angel does a lot of effects with danger (real or perceived) and teens like that. For myself, I've used Wayne Dobson's Smash & Stab for years in front of teens. (DISCLAIMER: I assume ZERO responsibility for any injuries people may inflict by using any of the marketed effects I mention in this or any book!)

I've also tried using The Pain Game by Jon Allen which is MUCH safer, but I found it plays less well for teen audiences. Nonetheless, it may work great for YOU.

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

Another danger-type effect I've used with incredible success for teen audiences is Confessions of a needle Swallower by Steve Spill. I do want to point out that whenever I use this effect (usually as part of my Leadership show) I always clear it with my client first.

So, look through your effects and see if there's any kind of 'danger' to them and chances are, they will work well for teens...with a few caveats I'll discuss later.

Shocking/Startling Effects...

For my money, just about the BEST investment I've ever made in magic was the purchase of my Pro Viper from Hocus Pocus. It's so good I can close my high school shows with it and sometimes I do that, especially my leadership show. It's shocking, funny, and really makes everyone JUMP. Perfect teen effect.

Another, even better, teen effect is Bobby Motta's Alive. This is the one where the volunteer selects an animal card and the selected animal appears inside a previously empty box. The volunteer does everything – they look inside the box and verify it as empty, they themselves close the box and when it is time for the reveal, the volunteer opens the box. It's all mechanical and is simply wonderful.

I've also used flash paper via a simple hand flasher as a quick, attention-getting opener.

Speaking of openers, I like to open with a 'shocking' or startling opener and besides the fire flash, I usually use two bowling ball effects: Bowl-A-Rama by Kevin James and Freefall by Andrew Mayne. Although I feel Bowl-A-Rama is far superior, if you're on a budget, Freefall is nice, and I usually use it for repeat audiences and it plays very well, plus the angles are slightly better than Bowl-A-Rama.

Mentalism...

I really like doing mentalism for teens with a caveat – the set-up HAS to be QUICK or if it's not, it at least must be interesting. In this end, I often do a blindfold routine for teens and the routine I use is right off of John Archer's brilliant Blindfold Tips DVD.

I've also used Bobby Motta's Taste very successfully because it seems so impossible.

Probably the BEST mentalism effect I've ever used for teens has to be PK Touches by Banachek. Often copied, never duplicated, I just use the physical technique described in

the little \$10 booklet. I use a vastly different presentation and the fact that the routine is propless is wonderful.

By using two volunteers as I do, we're involving teens and making them the stars of the show. My way of presenting the effect also seems to involve the mindreading happening between two people and not me. The idea of the mindreading happening between two people from the audience is one of my favorite plots in mental magic or mentalism, but for my tastes, it's also the toughest to find really good effects...that don't involve playing cards. I have nothing against cards in mentalism, but I am very fussy about which card effects I use.

Another great mental magic type effect that plays well for teens is the classic B'Wave. I first saw my friend Rodney from Texas use this effect for teens and it killed.

I've used Bill Abbott's Smart Ass to great success as well and I believe it's because of the complete open fairness of the procedure. For those of you who do not know, in Smart Ass, the volunteer sits on a jumbo card. The volunteer takes a deck of cards and cuts in half and tosses one half over their shoulder. They cut the remaining deck in half again and toss one half away once more. From the remaining few cards, one is selected. Of course it matches the card they are sitting on. (From completeness' sake, this is also how the animal card is selected in Bobby Motta's Alive.)

One theme I really want to stress in my own work in teen shows is the fact that any time I have a volunteer on stage, I am respectful. Teen audiences do NOT appreciate the kind of magic where the volunteer wears a silly hat as with paper tears, but they DO like seeing someone startled or shocked, as with the Pro Viper trick. This would seem to be contradictory, but I feel it's due to teens often liking and enjoying the rush they get from things like roller coasters, so a 'jolt' type of effect is fine, but the silly aspect of a hat tear is regarded as a juvenile.

As I said, this section is intended as a starting point. When you read the two show scripts I provided with this course, I'll cover in detail the effects I use.

Humor: Avoiding the Potholes and Landmines!

Teens not only expect to laugh during the show but they almost demand it. An overly serious stage act will not appeal to them at all. I'm not saying you can't have serious segments in your show...rather, having a show with texture and different emotions is desirable. The point is to have highs and lows. Even movies have moments of humor to break up the tension.

However, humor can also turn off teens if you're not careful.

For instance, you're not going to want to use the old "look-no-see" principle.

Another obvious one I should mention even though I wish I didn't have to is NO sexual innuendo. Trying to appeal to teens by using the same type of humor as the movies teens watch will only come across as crass and maybe creepy. I remember once I was performing a show and afterwards, one teen came up to me and thanked me for not being creepy. It said a lot about the quality of performer they'd had in the past.

Yet one more kind of humor to be avoided is no swearing. Just as with the sexual innuendo, swearing will only anger the school faculty.

You also want to be careful with how you treat teachers. As you'll see in my scripts, I do involve teachers during the show. Rather than bring the audience down, by announcing a teacher will be assisting, the teens get really excited.

You've got a lot of positive emotion going on here...treat the teacher(s) with the utmost respect. Not only will you endear yourself to the teens, but the faculty will have so much

more respect for you. Let's be honest: the teachers do NOT want to be up on stage. So be NICE.

I was told a story once about another performer who was doing something inappropriate and was asked by a teacher not to do it. Rather than stop, the performer told the audience, "Oh, Mrs. Jones wants me to STOP! Booooo!" And the whole audience started booing.

I couldn't imagine the character of person who would pull something like that in a school setting.

Another classic of magic humor, the "magician in trouble" plot, can be used, but I feel it's ground you have to tread carefully on. 'Accidentally' cutting a rope during the course of a rope routine will not cause the audience to feel any sense of trepidation. Rather, they'll usually roll their eyes.

The 'magician in trouble' plot is best used with teens in terms of danger, or at least physical discomfort. In my case, the teen audience reacts really well when I wrap the duct tape around my head. It's not a stretch to understand that it causes me some discomfort...teens like that!

To sum up, use plenty of humor but keep it clean, keep it non-offensive and keep it...um...non-dorky, and you'll have a better shot at maintaining rapport with your audience.

What to Avoid

In terms of effects, there's plenty to stay away from.

Guns, Knives and Other Geek Effects...

In terms of the danger effects I talked about earlier, it's imperative to avoid any and all effects using guns or knives. Most high schools have a zero tolerance policy in regards to guns. In fact, I was told a story once about a performer who got an earful by an angry client because of "all the guns he used" on stage and the reality of it was the performer used the WORD gun ONE time. There's simply no excuse.

It's the same thing with knives – no tolerance.

No guns and no knives means I'm not able to use Velocity (Scott Alexander's paintball catch) or Lethal (Bobby Motta's knife card stab) in my daytime high school performances. It's a shame because both effects play incredibly well for teens. There ARE times when I can use those effects – post-prom late night gigs, fundraisers, etc., but in these situations I still have to tread carefully and I always get special permission. But regardless, I NEVER use them for DAYTIME shows.

With regards to razor blades, that's another prop I never use. The classic 'swallowing razor blades on thread' routine is great, but I stick with needles because of the subtle connotation of suicide that razor blades may bring.

With all of this in mind, it's also not a good idea to use blood in the show. It's just not tasteful.

Stepping aside from the dangerous of gross effects, another kind of effect that I've found does NOT play well for teens are sucker tricks. Silk to Egg and other effects that seem to take advantage of teen volunteers will be rejected. Remember, teens (and really everyone) do not enjoy being 'fooled,' but they do enjoy being entertained.

Psychological Tests...

Another category that I tend to avoid now are psychological-type effects where the outcome is anything less than 100% guaranteed to succeed. In the past, I have used mentalism tests such as Banachek's A-B-C-D test (I modified it for stage) and the old Circle/Triangle, and when they hit it is very strong, but when the tests do not hit, it falls flat.

In my case, I structured my routines in such a way that if I use some psychological tests and they fail, I end the routine with a sure-fire effect. That works well, but as I get older, I prefer to be less 'artistic' and more 'sure fire' in my shows.

I know many mentalists like to use psychological tests as a challenge for themselves to make things more interesting and as a way to come close to 'real mind reading.'

Honestly, I read about such views in essays and routine descriptions and from a strictly intellectual standpoint, I find things like that interesting, but since I use my shows as a way to pay the bills, my view is my clients pay for RESULTS. I know some performers maintain that the occasional failure adds credibility to their performances but I just don't want to go down that road and with teens, especially, failure is failure and then you have to work harder to get the rapport back again.

Lengthy Set-Up...

Another consideration when choosing effects is to avoid anything with an overly lengthy set-up.

In my case, I'm talking about Question & Answer Acts. All of the passing out of slips, asking the audience to fill out slips and collect them again...and then FINALLY getting into the actual mind reading...it's just too long and teens will not have the patience for the process.

It would seem to contradict the fact that I use a blindfold act, but even though it's a lengthy set-up, it's an entertaining set-up, one that captivates the audience.

Illusionists...

I also have seen illusionists crash and burn in front of teen audiences and other than the 'trick box' aspect of some illusions, teens seem to reject the whole 'strut, strut, pose' method of presenting illusions that so many performers use. It comes off as pretentious, and teens reject that.

I hope I don't step on too many toes with my observations, but as I mentioned very early on in this course, teens can be very disconcerting audiences.

My Show Structured Format

The format I'm going to give you is what I've found works best for me. It's going to simply lay out certain effects that I've found work best for me. As I've said over and over again, teens can be a very demanding audience, so when I find a certain kind of effect that works, I try to find other effects in the same vein. As with everything else I mentioned up to this point, realize that what I write about works for me. Experiment and decide for yourself.

Quick Opener...

I've talked about this previously, but because teen audiences (and really all modern audiences, if you think about it) will judge a performer very quickly, I prefer to hit the audience fast with a quick eye-opening effect.

This immediately gives me credibility – the first thing any audience is going to think, at least subconsciously, is "Why should I pay attention? Will this be any good?"

My three choices for fast opening effects for teen audiences are Bowl-A-Rama by Kevin James, Freefall by Andrew Mayne and a simple quick flash of fire with a simple hand flasher.

I do NOT recommend doing any kind of lit torch or candle effect as it may give the faculty pause that you're doing something dangerous and/or are in danger of setting off

the fire alarms. I feel that a quick flash with flash cotton or flash paper is over and done with so quickly that it will fly by everyone and just look cool.

I've experimented with using a quick mind reading effect, such as a simple nailwriting bit or even Steve Spill's Mind Reading Goose and for me, it doesn't work as well as something visual and hard hitting. (In particular, the Goose comes off as too silly or childish to teens, which is surprising considering how well it plays for adult groups!)

The Second Effect...

Here is where I try to do another really quick effect. In an ideal world, this second effect is one that summarizes the main 'thrust' of the show. For my "It's Your Life, It's Your Choice" show, my second effect is The Enchanted Cube sold by many magic dealers. It's the effect where you show a mixed up Rubik's Cube and toss it in the air, showing it's solved itself instantly. I like this effect because it's quick, to the point, and involves something that everyone is familiar with rather than a 'trick box.'

Because of the bright colors, it also plays well even for very large audiences.

From here, I like to fill out the majority of the program with routines that fall into certain categories. The overall order is not important, and instead I shift the order of effects to fit the needs of my script.

Danger...

I've written about this many times, but a danger routine is some teens really get into. There's no reason why you couldn't put more than one into the show, too...provided it fits the needs of the script and the motivational messages used in the show.

As I've indicated before, some of the effects I like most for teen audiences are Smash & Stab by Wayne Dobson, Confessions of a Needle Swallower by Steve Spill and others.

There are others out there, but it's so difficult for me to find others I like that also will not upset faculty.

Two Volunteers Mind Reading...

I always try to include some kind of a routine where it appears that two people from the audience are reading each other's minds. I love PK Touches by Banachek – that's my current favorite.

Another one I will use is Richard Osterlind's brilliant Watch Routine from his first Mind Mysteries from L&L. In essence, one person thinks of any time at all and a second person randomly spins the hands on a watch. The two times match. It's a brilliant routine.

I also use a jumbo Split Deck, in which a 'split' deck is used. Two spectators each select a half-card. Surprisingly, both halves match. Working with the 'rough and smooth' principle, the trick is easy and very clean in the handling.

In this category, I would strongly advise against ANY 'instant stooge' tricks because your volunteers will want to be just as amazed as the audience...plus they would be prone to spilling the beans to their friends. Quite frankly, I don't do 'instant stooge' type of effects for any age of audience for the same reason.

Startling or Shocking Effect...

Here is where I would use my Pro Viper snake basket effect or Bobby Motta's Alive. Both are very startling and work extremely well for teens.

Another effect that I've found works very well for teens is Tim Wisseman's Spirit Table. Using that prop, you can cause a coin to jump off a table, a bell to ring and much more. People literally JUMP when the inanimate object jumps off the table!

The only issue I have with using the Spirit Table in a stage show is the fact that it looks like an antique and nothing like what would fit into my modern stage show...therefore, I had Tim build me a more modernistic version of the same prop. The best is it's smaller and was only half the price.

Longer Mentalism Routines...

Although I've found it difficult to find really great mentalism routines for teens that do not involve a lengthy set-up, they are out there. I mentioned the blindfold routine earlier. Another is Bobby Motta's Taste, which is his incredible, fair drink mind reading routine.

One reason why I like both of these routines is that they are so fair looking. There's no counting involved or weird card shuffles...nothing. Plus, you're not using playing cards, ESP symbols or other things that teens don't care about.

I've also had some success using various routines using the "add-a-no" principle. Check out Banachek's PSI Series for a killer Add-A-No handling that can be constructed for pennies and looks very fair.

The key, again, is avoiding routines with a lot of exposition or wordy verbal set-up.

Book Tests...

While I don't consider this a 'must have' in my high school shows, the fact is, I've got certain messages that fit in very well with a book test.

The issue I have with many book tests is the weird way they count or arrive at a word. Also, I am also going to shock and disappoint people by saying I'm not the biggest fan of The Mother of All Booktests as I've found some spectators don't always pay attention and wind up settling on a shorter word, rendering the effect dead in the water.

The booktest I've found to be really successful for teens is The Shakespeare Experiment. First of all, it looks fair – the spectator opens the book to ANY page and without knowing the page number, you can immediately begin revealing certain bits of information.

Additionally, some of the phrases of information revealed are actual Shakespeare quotes, which adds a sense of authenticity to the program. Teachers also like the fact that I use Shakespeare in the program.

Teacher Trick...

Although I do not consider it imperative, I do like to include an effect where I have a teacher assist me onstage. That's because one of my generic all-purpose, any-show messages is to ask a teacher or other trusted adult (mentor, counselor, parent, etc.) for help if you're 'stuck' in life.

For the teacher trick, I may read their mind via nailwriter or I may even perform Bill in Lemon. (There's a million versions out there. For the record, I use Cody Fisher's

wonderful Bet Your Bucks as the handling is so easy I don't even feel like I'm doing a trick.)

Most of the time I would NEVER perform Bill In Lemon with a student because if you take a student's money and destroy or steal it (as in many Bill in lemon handlings) the audience of teens can turn on you as there's a strong desire to take the side of their 'comrade' on stage and may feel angry if they see a friend being 'victimized.'

However, using a teacher for the same routine seems to go over rather well.:)

The Ending Effect...

It's not necessary, but I do enjoy building to a good ending effect. Often it's Bobby Motta's Alive – probably the best teen trick I've ever used. Other times I do indeed end the show with Pro Viper.

However, there are times I need to have those two effects earlier in the show for structure reasons within the script.

Other effects I've used to end the show include Bobby Motta's The End, a very slick variation of the old Spelling Bee trick but one that allows you to remove the letter cards while the audience watches. It's a nice added convincer. I've also occasionally ended the program with my Blindfold Act.

In short, whenever possible, I try to end the program on one of my strongest effects.

It's also beneficial if this ending effect can serve as a recap of the entire show. As you'll see in my Leadership program, I end the show with Pro Viper because the way I present it, we have a subtle recapping of the main points I wanted to get across in the show.

Obviously, there are other kinds of effects I use (as you'll see in my show lineups elsewhere in this course) but by working to include effects from these 'categories,' I am certain I'll have a successful lineup.

Dress for Success: Options

So, what to wear, that is the question! 'm going to give my opinions...as much of this course is in fact my opinions, but it's backed not only by my success but also my observations of what has or has not worked for other performers.

First, myself: I wear simple black slacks and black shoes. The black shoes were dress shoes in years past, but due to my intense performance schedule over the years, I found my feet were in agony with the dress shoes I wore, despite putting gel packs and such in my shoes. Finally, I transitioned to black Nikes which look just fine on stage. I also wear a simple black sport coat and a dark dress tee, which is sort of an ageless look, in that it's a look that doesn't 'date' me. I look professional but not too stiff.

It's just my opinion, but I feel that if I were to wear a button-up dress shirt and tie, I would run the risk of breaking rapport with my audience, as the vast majority of teen audiences I perform for would find the tie look to be a reminder of school faculty and other 'authority' figures in life.

I've also known other performers who wear the similar sport jacket and dress tee, but instead of black slacks, they choose jeans. It's also a great look for stage and looks very fashionable. I'm considering doing this, but two things are presenting me...one, I have a hard time finding a pair of jeans I look good due to my build and two, most jeans have

somewhat constrictive pockets and there are times I need to easily access my pockets for remote controls to tricks and so forth. I bring all of this stuff up because it's all important to consider – balancing what you feel comfortable in with functionality.

I've seen other performers wear simple jeans and some sort of short sleeve shirt, either a designer tee or something more casual. I like the look but I'm a bit on the fence...one hand, you have a better shot at good rapport, but age and physique plays a part, too. If you're a bit larger around the mid-section, a jacket is a great way to minimize it visually. Also, age plays a consideration: I think someone in their 60's wearing jeans and a tee would be a tough look to pull off, but stranger things have happened.

With all of this in mind, there are a few things I do NOT recommend, chief among them are tuxedos! It still blows my mind how many magicians, young and old, still believe that the tux look is the way to go whether it's for a birthday party in someone's room or a stage show. I don't get it, as most performers in tuxes wear garments that no longer fit, are wrinkled or are completely out of date.

What you wear should be dictated by a few factors: your market, your character and your age. Speaking of character...

Your Character

Who are you? Or more accurately, who do you want to be onstage? Please note that when I talk about 'character' I'm not necessarily talking about playing Batman or Sherlock Holmes onstage. To be sure, playing another character with a name different than yours is always an option, but from an acting (and thus believability) standpoint, this is TOUGH, so my recommendation is to play a character that's close to home for yourself.

In my case, I always found that the more I tried to be 'cool' onstage the more likely I was to fall flat at most and simply seem insincere at least.

At my heart, I am a guy with a good sense of humor who's a bit of a dork at heart. That's who I play and I'm unapologetic about it so I bring those facets of my personality to the forefront of my performances.

However, I'm also very shy, a bit high strung and rather untrusting, but since those are not fun qualities for a performance, I don't let those facets of my personality come up during my programs.

So, who are you? Ask your friends and family to answer that question and let those qualities influence your programs, both in terms of your scripting and dress but also in terms of effect selection.

Since I'm not a smooth, suave guy, wearing a tux and performing dance-filled illusions would be severe mistakes for my character. Honestly, if this type of performance does fit you, then by all means, run with it.

Right Before You Go Onstage...

Walking out onstage can be intimidating for any performer regardless of how many times you do it. An old friend of mine used to refer to 'the edge,' the tremor in your core that kept your senses sharp for a superior performance.

The key to utilizing this 'nervous' energy properly is to keep negative thoughts out of your mind. However, just as we know to stay away from suggestions like "Don't think of a pink elephant" (what pops into YOUR mind?), we know not to say things like "Don't worry about it" to ourselves.

One of my hypnosis instructors truly believes in the following affirmation and says it to himself countless times in a day. His belief (as is mine) is that the brain is a bio-computer and by putting good stuff in increases our chances of getting good stuff out in terms of confidence, poise and resourcefulness.

Here's the affirmation:

There is no person, thought, idea, memory, image, feeling or sensation out of the past, in the present, or ever to arrive in the future that could stop me from putting on the best positive performance.

Use this affirmation each day as a positive reinforce and most importantly, right before a show.

HIGH SCHOOL THEMES, THOUGHTS & STRUCTURE

What Kind of Messages Schools Want for a Presentation

The clients who bring you in for a high school performance want messages that are positive, upbeat and filled with the idea of respect.

Realistically, that kind of message is important in any presentation for any age group, but in high schools, it's what clients want more than anything else. I believe this is due in part because after high school, a person has no legal obligation for education. By "legal" I'm obviously talking about the fact that up until age 18, a person is supposed to attend school, though exceptions due occur.

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So, if a person elects not to continue their education after high school, it's no doubt that those in charge or involved in high school education often feel an increased sense of responsibility to trying to help teens become as prepared for the real world as possible.

Issues of moral character or at least decency in treating other with respect will be looked favorable by those in charge of considering a presenter.

Another ideal school faculty like to see addressed is the idea of perseverance. We'll get into this in a later section (very soon), but if you have some sort of story you can frame your program around, a sort of overcoming-the-odds story, that will help you a great deal.

Now let's consider specific topics in detail...

“Hot Topics” Schools Want Addressed NOW

High school clients LOVE messages of the following topics:

- Leadership
- Respect
- Personal responsibility
- Bullying
- Substance abuse
- Perseverance
- Overcoming the odds

Other slightly less 'hot topics' include programs on improving school work and school subjects such as science or history.

In fact, there is a sub-set of performers who present historical shows from the standpoint of one historical figure, such as Benjamin Franklin. An actor will present the entire show as if he's reciting personal memoirs. I've seen a few of these and they have a great deal of potential to be very good.

My two programs included with this course focus on respect/responsibility and leadership. They are designed both for daytime workshops as well as keynotes for other teen events.

As far as Bullying goes, at the time of this writing, bullying is red-hot because of the epidemic of teen shootings and teen suicides across the U.S. While I've been presenting a bullying program for years to elementary audiences, I've shied away from bullying as a teen topic because I always regarded the term "bullying" as something associated with younger kids, the fact is, the problem is INTENSE. Therefore, I have developed a bullying program aimed at high school groups that I plan on marketing this school season.

I deliberately did NOT include the program with this course because it's not proven – I have yet to present it. However, feel free to email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net in six months' time and maybe I will have had the opportunity to present the program.

Another hot topic issue I do offer a program on to school clients is the subject of substance abuse. In the past, decades ago, a magician could get away with offering a 'say no' magic show that simply told kids that "drugs are bad" and "say no" and that's all you really needed.

These days, drug awareness programs need to have more 'meat' to them. In my case, I now offer a high school substance abuse awareness program that tries to get into WHY someone tries drugs. In my case, I believe that despite all of the logical information we have regarding the dangers of drugs, the fact is that logic is overridden by our emotions and those people who do try drugs and get hooked on them do it because of a combination of peer pressure, low self-esteem and the simple functions of the subconscious mind, including the very human need to belong...belong to a group, fit in with your peers, and so on.

It's an ambitious program, one that I'm very proud of, but I did not include it with this course because the program uses NO magic or mentalism and relies extensively on hypnosis as a means to not only captivate the teen audience but also illustrate much of what I'm talking about.

The notes I just wrote about peer pressure relating to substance abuse could provide you with a jumping off starting point of your own to develop your own program using magic and mentalism.

However, if you are in fact a hypnotist and would like to explore my program further, email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net and we can discuss it.

In the area of school work improvement, I offer a Improving Memory workshop for teens that utilizes Mnemonics (memory aids) to make schoolwork easier. It's based on a Quentin Reynolds program that I changed up, but if you're interested in presenting such a program, look into the works of Lee Earle and Harry Loraine as those two gentlemen can give you plenty of raw material for such a program.

Unfortunately, because much of my program is based on the Quentin Reynolds presentation, I am not able to reproduce it here.

Nevertheless, the two complete scripts that came with this course will keep you very very busy in the high school market.

Now let's look at some finer points when it comes to putting the program together...

Variety

One of the keys to success to performing high school programs is variety. By including a great deal of different presentational hooks in your program, you'll have a better chance of maintaining student interest.

This is fairly obvious: how many times have we listened to that boring professor in school who just droned on and on endlessly with a dull monotone quality in their voice?

We as professional performers have a lot going for us in that we have additional 'tools' to hold the attention of our audiences. In addition to magic and mind reading, we also have the following tools at our disposal:

- ***Humor*** – everyone loves to laugh! We also learn more when we laugh. You'll also be more memorable, too.

- **Pathos** – if done well, a story of pathos (struggle) can captivate audiences. They will associate (subconsciously step into your story) and their emotions will hook them, keeping them riveted until the end. It takes a great deal of skill to develop this technique into the powerful tool it can be, but the effort is worth it and has the potential to mean a lot more to the success of your program than your magic!
- **Stories** – Just using stories in general is VEY powerful! I'll share some notes in just a bit to help you maximize the effectiveness of your stories.
- **Music** – I often use music to increase the energy of a show or to provide emotional context to a routine
- **Group interaction** – getting everyone involved is a key component, not only by asking the audience directly to think or respond in certain ways, but also to give them tasks or activities to do right from their seats that can rivet them during the context of the show.
- **Onstage volunteers** – this one is obvious. Kids like to be involved and teens are no exception. By establishing early on that you'll be using volunteers, you've established a hook for the rest of your program.
- **Stage movement** – Don't remain static on stage. Standing behind a podium and delivering your script will bore your audience to tears. A podium speaker is fine for a school faculty member or the city's mayor when he's dropping by for a special event, but it is not going to endear you as a professional speaker. Move! Pace the stage in measured steps during moments of relating your struggles in your program. Speed up your movements when you're delivering a robust chunk of your script. Use this movement to make eye contact with as many people as possible during your presentation.

Using and weaving these techniques throughout your entire program really adds a professional feeling of texture for the whole message.

You can incorporate various techniques into one routine: using humor and pathos within the same story is a highly effective way to take your audience on an emotional roller coaster.

Utilizing humor, stage volunteers and music with your magic is another example of using various 'tools' together to make your show more appealing and captivating as well.

Change What You Do Every...

An advanced technique to consider is to change what you are doing every 5 minutes or so. In other words, rather than telling a 20 minute story of pathos, inject humor into the story at various points to keep things from continuing on the same track. Once again, we are talking about variety.

Because the 'same thing' will lull the human mind, by constantly changing the tools we are using, we are subconsciously and continuously 'jolting' the audience in a subtle or not-so-subtle manner to keep them from tuning us out.

The best movies use this technique all the time. Horror movies will have scenes of tension building...building...building...and then a bit of humor to break up the tension followed almost immediately by something truly horrifying happening. So

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

you've been subjected to three presentational 'tools' in one scene to where your emotions are all over the place. Once again, it's effective at maintaining interest without going overboard with one idea, concept emotion.

In terms of magic or mind reading, I prefer to use a series of 5-7 minute routines, with nothing longer than 10 minutes. I've just seen too many performers drag a routine out too long.

One of the tricks I see dragged out too long is Cutting a Person in Half (A sawing effect, hand chopper, guillotine, and others in the same 'genre.')

So often, the big Lester Lake-style head chopper is brought out and the performer tries to get as much time as possible from the big expensive prop. The longest I saw nearly 17 minutes long and after so many false starts and stops, I sensed the audience just wanted the whole thing to be over with.

I understand the desire to milk an effect, and something like a Head Chopper is in reality a fast effect when you get right to the chopping, but I feel that more restraint is necessary. Many times I hear a performer with decades of experience say, "Oh, I can get 20 minutes out of Trick X."

There seems to be this weird magician's pride with bringing as little to a show as you can and milking a routine/trick/prop/joke/gag for all it's worth. I've never quite understood it. I feel that a long routine is great, but regardless of what the routine is, the right length is just what it is necessary for the audience to have the most enjoyment, and preferably not a moment more.

In my performance, my Pro Viper snake basket routine runs between 5-7 minutes in length, and it varies because some audiences need a shorter runtime than others. Listen to your audience – if you are in tune with them, you'll get the information and feedback you require.

Some of this also goes along with an individual performer's unique gifts. John Archer's blindfold routine runs 20 minutes but whenever I watch it, it feels like only 5 minutes! Archer is just so skilled and fast on his feet with funny comments and asides and, I don't know how to break this to most people, but most of us are not that skilled in our adlibbing!

Jeff McBride, who is an incredible performer, freely admitted in one of his Magic on Stage DVDs that he is not the funniest guy in the world so when something

amusing does happen during a show or lecture, he is quick to write it down later so he can hopefully incorporate it into future performances.

Again, listen to your audiences.

Recap

Any good speaker knows to stick with the simple structure of a good speech...that is, start off by telling the audience what you're going to tell them, then tell them...and finally, tell them what you told them.

Essentially, I'm talking about doing a recap of sorts to wrap everything up at the end of the program. By giving the audience a recap, a summation of the entire program, you're giving them a way to see and appreciate the value of the information you've presented. Thematically, it's a satisfying way to end the program.

In my two programs included with this course, I provide a recap coupled with an effect, serving as a summing up of the programs.

Keynotes, Breakout Sessions and Workshops

There are different forms of programs you'll be asked to present. I've alluded to each previously in this course, but I wanted to add some additional thoughts on each in this section.

The keynote presentations are typically 45 minutes to an hour long and are presented to the entire school body. Many times, if a school district is hosting a leadership conference or some other multi-school event, select students are invited to the event.

The event, which can run one day to several days, usually starts off with what's called a keynote, where a speaker presents a program that encapsulates the entire event.

Once the keynote is over, attendees travel from room to room or area to area and participate in other events called workshops and breakout sessions in smaller groups. The workshops are typically very interactive and are often less formal in nature, involving exercises and activities by the presenter or leader or whoever is running the event. Many times the workshops are presented just once per day, and run for lengths of times from an hour to three hours.

The shorter events, the breakout sessions, are often shorter, from 30 minutes to 60 minutes, and are repeated throughout the day, with the presenter running the event multiple times.

In most cases, the breakout sessions are also very interactive in nature and focus on an educational aspect of what the day's events entail.

As I've stated, the two programs I included with this course are both designed to be a keynote presentation or daytime assembly presentation. Workshops and breakout sessions are more focused on a narrow aspect of the day.

Some possible workshop or breakout sessions topics for high school include:

- Memory (improving school work)
- Conflict resolution
- Stress management
- Interpersonal relationships

How & Why to Make It Personal

Here is one of the most powerful techniques to increasing the impact of your programs. In short, metaphor...or stories!

The reason why stories are so powerful is because of the nature of the human mind. In short, we have two minds: the Conscious Mind, which is logical and limited, and the Subconscious Mind, which is vast, and houses our long-term memories and *emotions*.

This last one, emotions, is the key to truly connecting to anyone!

When we are born, we have zero grasp of logic, language, math, or pretty much anything other than our five senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell. We process the world around us using those five senses and our memories are built upon the data we process with those five senses.

Because the data is processed with those five senses, it's primal and very captivating. We find ourselves in conflict between our emotions and our logic. The truth is, our Subconscious Mind is far more powerful and will override logic just about all of the time over the long haul.

So, since magic appeals to our sense of logic ("How does that work?") why not boost the emotional resonance of our programs by appealing to our senses? The tool to this is of course metaphor!

Think about it for a moment. When we are told a story, at least one that appeals to us, our Subconscious Mind is activated because the story appeals to our emotions.

For generations, information, family history and the stuff of legend is and was passed down through the use of story. We respond to stories in much the same way at our base level regardless of our age.

Now, since we're hard-wired to respond to stories, we can increase the power of them by using descriptive language that includes descriptions of things we'd see, hear, feel, smell, and so on.

This means simply to use descriptive language when we're relating a story.

With that in mind, what kind of stories shall we tell?

The answer to this is simple: the kind of stories that best illustrate and enhance the messages you're delivering. You can search out stories of celebrities and in the case of overcoming adversity, there are plenty of stories to tell of course.

In my case, I most often use stories from my past. I do this for a couple of reasons – first of all, since they're my stories, I can tell them the best! Secondly, by revealing personal aspects of my life as they relate to the concepts I'm presenting I am exposing myself to the audience and hopefully this gesture of openness helps them to feel a little closer to me.

In my case, for my main show, "It's Your Choice, It's Your Life," I share the story of how I was homeless for a brief period of time. Oddly, this was by my own choice! But I share this story with my teen audiences because I want them to believe that if I can overcome the problems associated with being homeless, then they (the audience) can overcome anything.

So...what is YOUR story? Look into your past experiences. Recall past failures, past successes and see how you can incorporate the experiences into your programs. Of course I must point out that you don't have to share intimate details of your past with your audiences, but I feel that not only are the connections to your audience likely to be stronger, but your clients who hire you will feel more confident in your experience in your show's messages. Remember, pathos will be one of your strongest tools to getting your message across.

Besides my own story of being homeless for a few weeks, a friend of mine suffers from Tourette syndrome and he often tells the story of his life and his struggles growing up. Another friend of mine is dyslexic and he sometimes uses that as one of his stories in his high school programs.

Other times, I do in fact use stories of famous people in my programs. For my leadership program for example, I tell a brief story of NFL legend Jerry Rice and his perseverance into being one of football's all-time greats.

So...what is YOUR story?

GETTING THE HIGH SCHOOL BOOKING

Booking: Decision Makers, When to Mail & Other Details

One of the challenges with getting high school gigs is getting your information into the hands of the person who books you. Obviously, in this day and age, a strong online presence is required. Everyone wants to know, logically, what to put on their website or in their letters, postcards and fliers.

Understanding WHO is booking high school performers is one of the main points that will tell you what kind of information to include in your marketing efforts.

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The four main 'categories' of people who will be booking high school performances, at least in my experience, are the following:

- **Principals** – they have a lot of power in the school, but they are sometimes the most disconnected in terms of assemblies, and as a result, the next few categories often have more influence in booking gigs.
- **Guidance counselors** – these folks are often the most concerned about the actual content of your program than how you deliver your message.
- **Psychologists** – similar to counselors, but often have even more of an emphasis on the speaker's credentials and exactly what is going to be covered by the program. In the past, I've had some psychologists give me detailed information they wanted included in the program. This can be tough, as you want to keep your client happy yet you'll want to have your information polished, rehearsed and in great shape for the gig. My policy was to do my best to accommodate the client if they gave me the information with at least a month's preparation but if they asked me on the day of the gig to make a bunch of changes, well, I just told them the truth: if I had time to prepare, that's one thing, but last minute? It's too tough to make changes.
- **Parents organizations** – Known by many names, PTO, PTA, PTSA and many others, these volunteer parent groups do a lot for school systems and often have to fight for everything. It's a thankless job, but it's good to know there are concerned parents out there willing to donate their time to help the students do their very best, stay safe or whatever the agenda is. This group is also often very concerned with the entertainment value of the program – yes, the message is still key, but the parent group also wants the kids to be invigorated and pay attention, too.

When I write a sales letter, I try to keep one thing in mind: the fact that regardless of who I'm sending the information to, the thing I focus the vast majority of my effort on is the value of the messages during my programs. Simply put, schools do not have time for 'just for fun' programs most of the time during the day.

I usually start my direct mail sequence in the fall, right as school is starting for the year here in the Northeast where I live. I usually mail three times – the first is a long-form sales letter, the second and third much shorter letters or sometimes a postcard.

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Incidentally, while some people have declared direct mail dead, I still do just fine with it and I like the fact that I'm being proactive...in other words, rather than just hoping the phone will ring, I'm doing something to make the phone ring.

A Quick Note On Websites: I am not a web specialist, but in terms of design, I would encourage you to follow basic rules, both of copywriting and what high school clients are looking for from a presenter. Below are some format guidelines and suggestions that work very well in terms of basic copywriting. You'll see all of these concepts in the sales letters I include in this course. One simple website technique is to simply make your sales letter into a web page. I've done this in the past and it does work very well.

The point is, with any offer (web or old fashioned sales letter) is to NOT focus on how amazing and great you and your show are but rather how what you offer is a solution to a problem the client has. In the case of high school clients, they're searching for ways to motivate teens, reinforce important concepts taught or encouraged in school and hopefully give students 'food for thought' they can take with them as they move forward in life.

Notice with the above paragraph how I didn't mention anything about how enjoyable the show is? While you do want to mention that the show is fun (no one likes a boring program – I've had countless clients tell me "the last speaker was so boring!" so even though it's way down the list, the fun aspect of the show is something I do bring up...just not at the forefront of my efforts.

Here are some quick guidelines to crafting a tempting offer for high school prospects::

- Start off with a compelling, benefit-driven headline.
- Build up the need for your message in the beginning of your letter
- Continue to build up the need for this problem
- Reveal that your show is the solution to the problem
- Focus on benefits (instead of features) of your show
- Stress how easy you are to work with
- Emphasize how clean & non-offensive your programs are
- Build up your credibility with past client testimonials and client lists
- Offer a guarantee (almost no one is doing this!)
- Focus on how beneficial your messages are
- Build up how fun your show is (not a primary concern for bookings but still a concern)

- Write in a conversational tone. You'll appeal to more people by writing how you talk
- Use SHORT paragraphs. Longer blocks of text intimidate people and will cause them to throw your letter away
- Break up the paragraphs with interesting 'hooks' in the form of sub-heads
- Include a 'call to action' telling prospects exactly what you want them to do.
- Include TWO and ONLY two ways to respond, such as email and phone number. Too many ways of responding (text, email, Facebook, Toll Free phone, etc.) will only confuse clients. Just give two ways of responding.
- Make sure one of the ways IS email. People are afraid of being "sold" so email is still very popular as a low-risk way of contacting you.
- Include a timely offer such as a discount tied to a deadline to motivate clients to contact you NOW rather than later...late never happens!
- Include a "p.s." that re-states the key concept of your offer or deadline
- Include a TON of testimonials from satisfied clients! If you don't have a lot of high school clients, use corporate or adult testimonials. You can also call up a few local high schools and offer a few free programs with testimonials being your form of "payment."
- Mail the sales letters in simple white envelopes – no logos on the outside...just a simple return address. Make it look like a personal letter as opposed to junk mail.
- Do NOT use "metered mail" as postal carriers have been known to throw away sacks of metered mail! Use a real, live stamp.
- If your list is small enough, hand address the envelopes. It looks even more like personal mail and odds increase that it will actually get opened!

Lists

So...where do we get the lists of schools to mail to?

Yellow Pages Online...

There are a few different sources I've used in the past. The first is to simply use the online "yellow pages" for your area. It's free and you can "cut and paste" the information into an Excel spreadsheet fairly quickly.

However, it is admittedly tedious and the information is not always up to date.

The second source I've used is this:

<http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/>

This government-based website can give you school lists based on geographic location, grade levels, public schools, private and much more. The wonderful features about this site mean you can narrow down your list very quickly and easily. Generally, I stick to just public schools unless the list is small in which case I add in the charter schools (private schools run by a management team as a business).

The only downside to this resource is that it's not the most up-to-date. In recent years, it seems like schools all over the U.S. are being closed down, reframed for different grade levels and so on. It's very confusing trying to keep up with it so after your first mailing, you'll probably get a small percentage of letters returned to you. You'll want to continually update your mailing list whenever these returns come in to maximize the effectiveness of your next mailing.

InfoUSA...

The third resource I use for lists whenever I'm putting together a direct mail campaign is www.infousa.com. What's nice about this company is that once you buy the list (yes, you must BUY the list) you OWN it so you can mail to it as often as you like. (Many companies only RENT lists for a one-time use, which makes direct mail very expensive.)

Additionally, InfoUSA sells lists that are more up-to-date than any other source I've tried. Chances are you'll still get some returns but not as many as other resources.

Frequency of Mailing...

Most direct mail experts advocate mailing once every 10 days or so. If the letters are spread out more than that, prospects have more of a chance to forget about you while more often may cause resentment over the perception that you're being pushy.

As I said earlier, I often use a three-step sequence in the beginning of the school year, another three-step sequence right after the winter holiday break, and sometimes another sequence in the spring.

Some assembly experts recommend mailing year-round as schools do in fact book programs all school year. If your budget can take it, I do feel that mailing 10
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months out of the year (don't mail when school breaks for the roughly two months summer when school is not in session – no one will read the letters!)

Sales Letters to Make the Phone Ring

Just to reinforce what I said, I love sales letters. For your website, you can take the letter copy from a good sales letter and convert it to a webpage and you'll do just fine. Therefore, look at the sales letters I provide you as possible website copy, too.

Study these babies and analyze them with the list of guidelines in mind as you read them. One thing I try to do is make the sales copy flow, so it's easy for prospects to read...no overly fancy language. Just because these folks work in schools does not mean they have the time or desire to read a long wordy drawn

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out sales letter. Your letter is an interruption in their day. It may end up being a WELCOME interruption, but in the beginning unless you 'grab' them and captivate them quickly, your sales letter will get tossed. So leave your thesaurus on the bookshelf!

The first two sales letters are about 8 pages long each – that will be four 8x11 pieces of paper, printed on both sides. (Quick Note: four pieces of paper is the maximum allowed by the post office in terms of weight. Anything more than that and you'll get hit with higher costs than just a regular stamp.

The first sales letter is one I used several years ago. The second one is an updated one that reflects my newer programs I discussed earlier in addition to the primary two shows that came with this course.

Of importance is the fact that I include prices – I do this because that will be a primary factor in the client's decision as schools are very budget-conscious and secondly including fees gives me a chance to offer a fee discount attached to a deadline if the client responds quickly. It's more incentive to book NOW rather than "think about it" and come back. People get distracted and if they don't act immediately, the chances that they will act later drop like a rock.

Also notice the "double readership path" the long letters take. If someone wanted to just skim the letters they could get the gist of the letter by scanning headlines and picking out bold text and so forth. Other people are into the details, so including a long-form letter like this can appeal to both kinds of readers.

It's a classic copywriting formula that has worked well for generations.

The third letter is very short: one page of information, single-sided, and one page of testimonials, also single-sided.

This letter is the second step in the sequence and it serves as a 'reminder' of who I am and may appeal to people who simply will not sit down and even skim a longer letter.

In the past I've referred to it as my 'handshake' letter because it's just designed to introduce myself and mention a few tidbits to get the client to contact me for more information.

The more someone sees your message, the more likely something will 'stick' in their minds, hence the beauty of the multi-step mailing sequence.

For the third sequence, I often just send out the second letter again or maybe a flier with the headline "Time is Running Out to Save \$100" with all or most of the second letter reprinted below it.

On all letters, I also include my letterhead at the top. It lists my contact information in an easy-to-find spot.

Study these letters and of course change my information to yours and alter the show descriptions in case you decide to go in a different direction with your program development.

Letter #1:



**"Interactive, Informative and Fun Character-Education Assembly Programs That
Your Students & Teachers Will Remember Today, Tomorrow & Forever!"**

CRISTOPHER J. ROBINSON

www.cristopherrobinson.com

716.288.1373 Toll Free: 866.558.0077

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

Attn: School Assembly Coordinators...

**“Discover How Your Students Can
Learn About Accepting
Responsibility, Having A Healthy
Self-Esteem, Leadership Skills &
More!”**

From:

Cris Johnson

Niagara Falls, NY

Dear Friend,

If you are interested in an easy and effective way to teach your students to make good choices, develop a positive, healthy self-esteem and discover the importance of good leadership skills, then this is going to be the most exciting message you'll ever read!

Here's why:

I have an amazing series of programs called “***Success Magic.***” My name is Cris Johnson and, for the past 15 years, I've presented highly entertaining and very educational assembly programs on character development to schools in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maine, Indiana, Colorado, North Dakota, Minnesota and Canada. Here's what one of my recent clients wrote:

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

“They didn’t want the program to end!”

“Mr. Johnson presented an AWESOME program to our 7th & 8th graders. Middle school principals: if you’re concerned about the kids being attentive and cooperative, they were all of that and more. Some of the students that I usually have the worst problem with, today wanted to participate. If you’re looking for someone to come into your school and give this type of dynamic presentation, Mr. Johnson is the individual you need to seek. He was awesome!”

Dr. Gina Stevenson, Principal, Charter School For Applied Technologies, Buffalo, NY

How do I do get amazing results like that? Unlike most speakers who merely lecture students, I use a variety of presentational tools, including fun-filled magic, 100% safe comedy, audience participation, music, and inspirational stories to get your students’ attention, open their minds, and get them to understand the importance of good character, whether it’s accepting responsibility for their choices, respecting the rights of others, developing a healthy self-esteem, or learning good leadership skills. I reveal all of this in my popular, proven **“Success Magic”** assembly programs.

The assemblies are amazing. Here’s a sample of what each reveals:

“It’s Your Choice, It’s Your Life!” – This flexible program focuses on issues of self-respect, making right choices, accepting responsibility for those choices and respecting the feelings of others. To illustrate how hard work and determination can help overcome adversity, I illustrate my own hardships in life and those of famous people who have overcome tremendous odds. As your students learn these concepts, they will witness eye-popping, state-of-the-art magic, apparently send thoughts to each other, witness a hilarious game show (complete with music) and more, guaranteeing they will be attentive and enthusiastic during the entire program. This program has been designed for maximum flexibility, meaning I can also incorporate messages of bullying, reading, drug awareness and more.

“Lead To Succeed!” – This program teaches students the skills and traits that all leaders develop, why they are important and more. I also reveal an effective 7-point success formula that all successful people follow. This program is highlighted by magic, humor, “mind reading illusions” and more, including the incredible “Dream Job,” where students get to plan the occupation of their dreams...and I reveal it was predicted in advance!

“How To Remember Your School Work In HALF The Time!” – This program teaches several simple but effective ways to increase the speed students can remember facts, lists and more. Using these techniques, students will literally be able to remember their school work twice as fast, in half the time! You will actually see the students demonstrate the power of these techniques, on stage, mere moments after learning the concepts! Enhanced, like all of my programs, with magic, “mind reading illusions,” and humor, this program will benefit your students and faculty for the rest of their lives if they apply the techniques.

“Stage Hypnosis Show!” – This program is the ultimate in fun rewards for your students! Volunteers will be placed into a gentle hypnotic state and then experience the thrill of visiting Hollywood, going to the Bahamas and more! What’s more, I’ve even able to add educational content into the show to show us the power of the mind, how our imaginations and feelings

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

impact us physically and much more. Fun, interactive and safe – Stage Hypnosis is the program your students will love and remember for years!

Pretty amazing, don't you agree? But don't take my word for it. Here are more testimonials:

“We have had him two years in a row...”

“Cris is really great with the kids...He is both entertaining and informative. We have had him two years in a row and the kids really enjoy Cris' programs. Outstanding!”

Carm Proctor, Principal, Jefferson Middle School, Jamestown, NY

“It was money well spent...it was one of the finest assembly programs that our school has presented.”

“The teachers commented that the students' attention was remarkable...it was one of the finest assembly programs that our school has presented. Not only were the students attentive, their feedback proved that they had gained knowledge and retained important information that Cris was hoping for. We thank Mr. Johnson for helping our students learn important life lessons through magic and hope to have him back again in the near future. It was money well spent!”

Regina Granchelli, Vice Principal, DeSales Catholic School, Lockport, NY

“...well-presented, dynamic, and very entertaining.”

“Cris was able to keep the audience captivated for 45 minutes. The program was well presented, dynamic, and very entertaining. His upbeat show along with his sense of humor and timing provide an excellent program for students. I would recommend this program for schools without hesitation.”

NancyJean Osborn, Principal, Byron-Bergen Central School

But that's not all. Here are...

7 More Reasons Why You Should Bring Cris Johnson's Assembly Programs To Your Students

1. **Smiles & Laughter** - You'll see the smiles on your students' faces and hear their laughter as they learn the important life lessons in each program.
2. **Amazing Content** – Regardless of which program you select, your students will be amazed, whether they are witnessing amazing magic, participating in fun “mind reading illusions,” or experiencing the fun of stage hypnosis. These skills are NOT only for fun, but to help students remember and understand the important concepts.
3. **Age-Appropriate Humor** – The comedy in each show is guaranteed to be clean and age appropriate. I only use humor that is safe and free from any and all objectionable content.
4. **Targeted To Your Grade Levels** – I offer different versions of each program for students ranging from 6th to 12th Grade. .

5. **Audience Participation** – Your students are actively involved in the programs through the magic, comedy and fun-filled audience participation. You’ll feel their excitement as they volunteer to help with the program.
6. **Flexible Program Length** – The typical program length is either 45 minutes or 60 minutes, but it can be adjusted to fit your school schedule.
7. **Self-Contained Programs** – Each program is entirely self-contained. I bring my own tables and even provide my own state-of-the-art sound system and wireless microphone. The ONLY things I need from your school are: access to one power outlet and an audience!

“...he was great to work with!”

“It was a great program! The kids really paid attention and they really got something out of it. Cris was very accommodating and very accommodating. He didn’t ask for anything and he was great to work with.”

Elizabeth Smyton, Guidance Counselor, Charter School For Applied Technologies, Buffalo, NY

“Outstanding!”

“The program was very productive for them. He was very easy, very simple to deal with. He had everything as a complete package and we had to do very little. I would really recommend him to other schools and we want him back too!”

Principal Shelby, Haverstraw Middle School, Haverstraw, NY

“Excellent! Pacing & review of content was very valuable!”

“I thought it was a great show...Everyone was very attentive and they felt very involved. I would highly recommend this program to other schools.”

Holly Brink, Class Advisor, Sherman Central School, Sherman, NY

“Cris did a great job!”

“Cris is very easy to work with...The students enjoyed the presentation, especially all the magic. The messages of respect and how to handle bullies was easy for kids to understand. Cris did a great job!”

Dan Bracey, Principal, Washington Middle School, Jamestown, NY

You’ve read details about the program content. You’ve read how I deliver the messages to your students. You’ve seen several testimonials from your fellow educators. However, in

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

case you still have any doubts about the quality and effectiveness of this program, I'll completely guarantee it:

My Better Than Money Back Guarantee

A word of warning. Never bring any speaker or entertainer to your school who doesn't offer you a complete money-back guarantee.

This is the "ultimate test" of whether someone has a strong conviction about what they're offering or if they're just full of hot air. If a presenter really believes in the quality of their program, they shouldn't hesitate to guarantee it.

"My guarantee is simple and straightforward. If you're not completely satisfied that my programs taught your students valuable concepts and life-lessons, you get 100% of your money back plus I will donate \$100.00 to your PTA just for wasting your time."

That's right. You get the complete fee refunded plus one hundred dollars! I can't be fairer than that, can I? There's no risk for your school whatsoever. But here's the truth:

If you've read all the testimonials I've given you, you know that you don't have anything to worry about. You won't be disappointed. You won't want your money back. In fact, out of the hundreds of programs I've done to date, no one has ever requested their money back!

The point is you will be thrilled with the program – guaranteed.

"The show was great!"

"I thought the show was great! A lot of the students were involved. It was really awesome. He had everyone laughing and having a good time after a day of leadership."

Erin Rubin, Deputy Prime Minister of the York Region President's Council, Canada

"...fantastic and hilarious..."

"It was fantastic, and hilarious! I would highly recommend it to anybody."

Steve Leffler, Class Advisor, Starpoint High School, Lockport, NY

"They loved it!"

“It was totally entertaining and fun to watch. The kids were really involved and they loved it. It was really fun to see their personalities come out and their creativity. I would LOVE to recommend this program to other schools.”

Liz Banner, Teacher, Brockport High School, Brockport, NY

“They loved it!”

“Outstanding! The program was able to ring true to them all. They loved it!”
Marsha Miller, Teacher, Northern Chautauqua Catholic School, Dunkirk, NY

Let’s recap, with the *Success Magic* program or programs of your choosing, your students are guaranteed to learn the important benefits of a healthy self-esteem as well as examples of good character and respect, regardless of which program you decide upon.

So how much does all of this cost?

**Okay, Cris, Everything Sounds Great
But How Much Will It Cost?**

Please pick up the phone right now and call me at **(716) 283-1373** or email me at **crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net** I’ll be glad to give you single and multi-program pricing information for schools in your area. I promise not to try to “sell” you. I’ll merely give you the information you need. No hassles, no pressure.

With everything you’ve read so far, you’re probably expecting this program to be way out of your budget. In fact, my fellow professional speakers charge fees starting at \$1,500 a day plus expenses, but I don’t. I want to deliver my messages to as many schools as possible. When you find out what my fees are, I’m sure you’ll be pleasantly surprised at just how reasonable my rates are.

Why didn't I include prices in this letter? This letter is going to states all over the east coast of the United States, so it'd be impossible to give you an accurate figure in this letter. Also, I can often save you money if I can add you to a scheduled tour in your area.

**But wait, you can get a \$100.00 cash discount
if you act quickly; here's how:**

You Can Save \$100.00 With My Quick-Response Discount

That's right, you can deduct \$100.00 off your investment in my program if you call me by November 30, 2007 to schedule a program at your school.

Why am I giving you this discount? Very simply, to encourage you to schedule your program now so I can concentrate on doing the presentations rather than booking them.

Here's How Easy It Is To Bring Success Magic To Your School

Please pick up the phone right now and call me, at **716-283-1373 or email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net**. If you have any questions or need additional information, I'll be happy to help you. Dates and times are limited so I encourage you to call today. I promise not to try to "sell" you. I'll merely give you the information you need. No hassles, no pressure.

Also, if you are concerned about funding, call anyhow. I can often save you money if I can add you to a scheduled tour in your area.

Don't delay; call me today, at **716-283-1373 or** if you prefer, email me at **crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net**. I'm looking forward to visiting your school!

WARNING: Available dates are extremely limited. I urge you to call today so you and your students don't miss out on the "*Success Magic*" programs.

Sincerely,

Cris Johnson

P.S. Act now and get a tremendous savings with the enclosed coupon, printed on the reverse side of this page. This Early-Bird Discount Coupon entitles you to deduct \$100.00 off your investment in my program for any 2007-2008 school year date. But, you must respond by November 30, 2007. Why am I giving you this discount? Very simply, to encourage you

to schedule your program now so I can concentrate on doing the presentations rather than booking them.

P.P.S. Remember, if you don't feel that this program taught your students how to accept responsibility for their choices, develop good leadership skills, and how to live their lives by respecting themselves and others, you get your complete investment refunded plus I'll donate \$100.00 to your PTA/PTO just for wasting your time. What other speaker offers a guarantee like that? Call me today at **716-283-1373 or toll 1-866-553-0077** or email me at: **crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net**.

P.P.P.S. Here's some more testimonials:

"Excellent!"

"Cris did a great job with our assemblies! His presentation was developmentally appropriate and his message was delivered in a fun way. Cris was very easy to work with and his message was outstanding! Excellent!"

Principal Bonnie Smith, West Valley Central School, West Valley, NY

"Great message!"

"Outstanding! Very entertaining...great idea to relate message with personal experiences! Great message!"
Ms. Kelly Kotlik, Teacher, North Tonawanda Catholic School, North Tonawanda, NY

Letter #2:



"Interactive, Informative & Fun High School Programs Your Students & Faculty Will Remember Today, Tomorrow...Forever!"

**© Fantasies & More Productions
www.FunHighSchoolAssemblies.com
716.283.1373 toll free 1.866.553.0077**

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

“Discover Affordable Assembly Programs That Will Teach Your Students Not To Bully Each Other And Make The Right Choices”

Dear Friend:

Do you remember what it was like growing up? I do – it was incredibly difficult! Here’s a cause for concern: *our generation of children and young adults have it even tougher.*

For our children, middle and high school can be a tough time in life: we’re growing up, increases in peer pressure and school becoming even more challenging. The pressure to ‘fit in’ or ‘stand out’ is enormous, and it often leads some students to make unwise choices in how they conduct themselves and treat others. Of these poor choices, “bullying” is one of the biggest concerns.

The Problem With Bullying And Teens

You can tell a student to not to pick on someone or join in with the wrong crowd but when it comes down to crunch time, it’s their feelings about themselves, their peers and their own worry of what others will think about them that are going to determine whether they make the right decision, wouldn’t you agree? In fact, *‘emotions’ will win in a debate over ‘logic’ any day.* (Contact me and I can explain exactly why.)

This means a logical approach to bullying and critical life skills is NOT the approach to take.

What You Can Do To Reduce BULLYING in Your School and Help Raise Our Students’ Self-Esteem and Feelings Of Self Worth...

In this letter you will find out details on how to help your students make better choices, but first I’ll bet you’re wondering...

Who Are You And Why Should I Listen To You?

My name is Cris Johnson and for the last 15 years, I’ve worked with middle and high schools across the United States and Canada. My specialty is working with today’s students by bringing

a series of educational, motivational and inspirational assembly programs that entertain students while teaching them important life-changing concepts. Here's what one client said recently:

"We want to book Cris for next year already!"

"That was just EXCELLENT! They loved it! Cris is very energetic and funny. The kids and the teachers were very impressed. We want to book Cris for next year already! One middle school teacher said it was the BEST assembly ever presented at this school! Outstanding message!"

Principal O'Neil

St. John Of Rochester School, Fairport, NY

I believe in today's youth: their energy, creativity, abilities...and most importantly, ***their potential***. However, if a people are truly going to live up to their potential, they need proper guidance, the right attitude and compassion for their fellow citizens.

I know you probably have never heard of me, so before I get into details about my topical and exciting program, I wanted to give you...

Three Good Reasons To Listen To Me...

One: I am a full-time professional speaker/educator/author, presenting programs that my clients rave about all over North America, making my services high in demand!

You see, with my background in neuro-science and hypnotherapy, I have the training and experience to understand how the human mind functions. That understanding enables me to craft presentations that will BEST appeal to young adult audiences while giving them the MOST value and impact (My latest e-book, "***Quiet in the Classroom: Behavioral Modifications for Teachers & Parents,***" tackles communication struggles between kids and adults).

Two: As you'll soon see, I have a truckload of letters and testimonials from schools and other satisfied clients, which attest to the quality of my programs. Any speaker can talk about how great he or she is---it's more important to see what OTHER PEOPLE think of him. The last page of this letter has plenty of comments and praise from school administrators and PTO presidents, which goes a long way in proving my credibility, since I'm not "famous!"

Three: Most importantly, my assembly programs are different from most speakers because not only do I get everyone excited and feeling great about themselves, but I will also give your students specific step-by-step tools to better themselves and succeed in life!

A File Drawer Full Of School Testimonials Prove My Programs Are Of The Highest Quality

People sometimes ask me, “Cris, aren’t some of those testimonials made up?” Nope. Why would I make them up when I have a file drawer literally full of signed, honest-to-goodness testimonial letters and evaluation forms? Besides that, it’s considered fraud if you make up testimonials and you can go to jail for it!

Here’s How My Topical BULLY Program Is Going To Benefit You And Your Students...

I have FOUR programs that will positively impact your students.

“No Bullies Allowed!” – This program tackles bullying with middle and high school students head on! In addition to concepts of diversity, tolerance and respect, I challenge students to step in and get involved if they see someone getting bullied. I give the students a simple 1-2-3 plan of action if they themselves are bullied. In short, I work to help students realize they are NOT alone and there is always an option!

That’s my “core” program and I’m proud of the fact that I am one of the FEW speakers offering a program aimed at middle and high schools on the topic of bullying. However, I also have three other programs you’ll find exciting...

“SAY NO: The Breaking Peer Pressure Show” – Why do some people start taking drugs or drink alcohol at a young age? For years, we’ve been told it’s peer pressure. The fact is, peer pressure PLUS a low self-esteem is the recipe for poor choices. In this illuminating program, I explain exactly how a person’s mind functions and how these functions override “logic” and allow emotions to move a person toward making unwise choices. Additionally, students will learn simple ‘safeguards’ to put into place to reduce risk in certain ‘peer’ situations.

“It’s Your Choice, It’s Your Life” – At the core of this presentation is one critical idea: we create our own future! While discussing key ideas such as responsibility and a positive attitude, the overall theme challenges students to realize that the only person stopping them from achieving success is themselves!

“Lead To Succeed” – What are the “secret ingredients” to becoming a successful leader? In this exciting program, I reveal 9 characteristics of true leaders and the BEST part is this: Being a leader has NOTHING to do with money, skin color or background and EVERYTHING to do with attitude and a positive outlook on life!

Pretty amazing, don't you agree? But don't take my word for it. Here are more testimonials from past school clients:

"It was money well spent...it was one of the finest assembly programs that our school has presented."

"The teachers commented that the students' attention was remarkable...it was one of the finest assembly programs that our school has presented. Not only were the students attentive, their feedback proved that they had gained knowledge and retained important information that Cris was hoping for. We thank Mr. Johnson for helping our students learn important life lessons through magic and hope to have him back again in the near future. It was money well spent!"

Regina Granchelli, Vice Principal, DeSales Catholic School, Lockport, NY

"They didn't want the program to end!"

"Mr. Johnson presented an AWESOME program to our 7th & 8th graders. Middle school principals: if you're concerned about the kids being attentive and cooperative, they were all of that and more. Some of the students that I usually have the worst problem with, today wanted to participate. If you're looking for someone to come into your school and give this type of dynamic presentation, Mr. Johnson is the individual you need to seek. He was awesome!"

Dr. Gina Stevenson, Principal, Charter School For Applied Technologies, Buffalo, NY

"Outstanding!"

"The program was very productive for them. He was very easy, very simple to deal with. He had everything as a complete package and we had to do very little. I would really recommend him to other schools and we want him back too!"

Principal Shelby, Haverstraw Middle School, Haverstraw, NY

As you can tell from the above testimonials, these are NOT boring programs! I use a variety of tools to capture your students' attention and never let go! Your students will laugh, participate and be motivated to succeed. Here's just a sample of what I use to hold the audience's attention:

- ***Humor & Laughter*** – People love to laugh! My audiences are never bored during my presentations because I appeal to their sense of humor. Nobody wants to be lectured and told what to do. It IS easier, however, to impart critical ideas to people as you're making them laugh. Important note: Even though I'm presenting to teens, ***there is NO off-color language or anything offensive in my programs!*** Everything I do is in

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

good taste...guaranteed!

- ***Magic OR Stage Hypnosis*** – Not many speakers use magic, and almost NONE use hypnosis, but like I said, I want to grab students’ attention and hold it. With eye-popping and amazing displays of magic or hypnosis, your students will be riveted. Also, it’s your choice as to whether I use magic or hypnosis in the program – in other words, **I will use ONLY what your school is comfortable with**. The best part? Anything I do relates DIRECTLY to what I’m talking about...in other words, *it all has a point to it!*
- ***Audience Interaction*** – It’s nearly impossible not to have an interest in something if you’re directly involved! During the program, I get your entire group involved in fun ways and I even involve some students on stage for specific portions of the presentation!
- ***Personal Experiences*** – In the speaking world, it’s a well-known fact that stories of personal experience, perseverance and inspiration can serve as an effective way to illustrate a concept, rivet an audience, and drive home an important point. Why? Most people are drawn to an “against the odds” story. It works much better than statistics—they’re just numbers...but a true story has a real flesh and blood person in it! They want to see how it will turn out! Therefore...Bingo! They’re hooked.

“Great message!”

“Outstanding! Very entertaining...great idea to relate message with personal experiences! Great message!”

Ms. Kelly Kotlik, Teacher, North Tonawanda Catholic School, North Tonawanda, NY

“We would LOVE to have you back next year!”

“The show you presented was GREAT! We found you easy to work with and best of all, the program content was safe and appropriate. We would love to have you back next year!”

Bob Campese, Assistant Principal, East Syracuse Minoa High School

East Syracuse, NY

“You were amazing!”

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

My FCCLA members and I had seen you at Conway district meeting last year and recommended you to our health coordinator...Our students had very positive things to say about your interactive presentation. Thanks for the messages you bring, Annette:-)

**Annette Hays, FACS and FCCLA, Acorn School, Ouachita River District
Mena, AR**

Now that you have an idea of the presentational tools that I'll use to hold the attention of your students, I want to share with you...

Your Students Will Get “Tools” They Can Use To Improve Their Lives!

It's easy to get a group fired up. I'm sure you've heard of plenty of speakers who are great at doing it. Maybe some have visited your school. However, after everyone leaves the auditorium, and all is quiet, what then? What happens when the euphoria fades? Many students, after hearing inspirational messages, are convinced that they can't succeed because their situation is hopeless. In reality, they're convinced that they can't succeed because they don't know what to do.

My programs give students easy-to-understand processes for getting whatever they want in life.

These critical differences are what set my programs apart from other youth speakers. I want your students to succeed and the only way to ensure that my program has lasting positive effects is to give them a “blueprint for success” that can positively influence their future!

These Concepts Are Presented In An Entertaining, Fun Way So That Students Will Remember And Act Upon These Principles

All of my programs teach life skills our young adults must adopt to have a fulfilling experience in school and life.

My personal guarantee is this:

Long after the lights are off and the auditorium is empty, the students will remember my words and the lessons I taught. I also guarantee I will be the easiest speaker you will ever work with.

Since I'm not a "famous" speaker, I also want to remove ANY feelings of risk you may have. I believe in my programs and more importantly, so do my past clients, so I'm more than happy to put my money where my mouth is and guarantee my program.

Speaking of guarantee, here's my exclusive:

Better Than Money - Back Guarantee

My guarantee is simple and straightforward. If you're not completely satisfied that my program entertained your students while teaching them important life concepts, you get 100% of your money back PLUS I WILL DONATE \$500.00 TO YOUR PTO/PTA just for wasting your time.

That's right. ***You get the complete fee refunded PLUS \$500.00 dollars!***

I can't be fairer than that, can I? There's no risk for your school whatsoever. But here's the truth:

If you read everything that I've given you, you know that ***you don't have anything to worry about.*** You won't be disappointed. You won't want your money back.

In fact, out of the thousands of programs I've done, no one has ever requested their money back!

The point is, you will be thrilled with the program - guaranteed.

Okay, Cris, Everything Sounds Great But How Much Is It?

With everything you've read so far, you're probably expecting this program to be way out of your budget. In fact, when I travel all over North America, my fee often starts at \$1,500 a day plus expenses.

But the truth, life on the road is VERY tiring and I'd rather be doing more programs closer to my home. Since your school is so close to me, I can offer you my programs at a fraction of their real value.

The following single-day regular price program packages already include all expenses for YOUR district, so there are no additional charges. **By sharing these packages with other schools in your area, the fee for each school goes down.** The packages are:

Bronze Package - 1 School - \$700
Silver Package - 2 Schools - \$600 per school
Gold Package - 3 Schools - \$500 per school
Platinum Package - 4 Schools - \$400 per school

(Please turn the page and continue reading...)

As you can see, you save tremendously by sharing the silver, gold or platinum packages with one or more other schools in your area. Also, it's easy to get other schools in your area to take advantage of the savings because I also offer assembly programs for grades K-6 in addition to middle and high schools. (Please visit www.ElementarySchoolAssemblies.com for more information on my K-6 programs.)

But wait, you can get a \$100.00 cash discount if you act quickly; here's how:

You Can Save \$100.00 With My Quick-Response Discount...

That's right, you can deduct \$100.00 off your investment in my program if you contact me AND BOOK your programs for the 2012-2013 by October 31, 2012. (You can book your assemblies for ANYT month, but to receive the discount, call or email me by October 31, 2012.)

Why am I giving you this discount? Very simply, to encourage you to schedule your program now so I can concentrate on doing the presentations rather than booking them.

Here's Your Discounted Investment

With your discount, you're getting the lowest rates I'll ever offer. If you act now and use your \$100.00 Quick-Response Discount, your investment would be:

Bronze Package - 1 School - \$600
Silver Package - 2 Schools - \$500 per school
Gold Package - 3 Schools - \$400 per school
Platinum Package - 4 Schools - \$300 per school

Everything Sounds Great, Cris! Now What?

The next step is up to you. My schedule fills up VERY quickly because I perform for over 200 clients every school year. To avoid losing your date and time, I urge you to call me TODAY at (716) 283-1373 while it's still fresh on your mind, or send an email to crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net.

It's important that you call right away – this program just may be the most important incoming program you bring in all year.

I'm looking forward to your call.

Sincerely,

Cris Johnson

www.FunHighSchoolAssemblies.com

P.S. It really is important that our students enter adulthood prepared and ready, mentally, for the challenges that lie. This program can help lay the foundation, but my calendar fills up incredibly fast, so call **(716) 283-1373 TODAY** while it's still fresh in your mind, or email me at **crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net**.

Letter #3:



***"Interactive, Informative & Fun High School Programs Your Students & Faculty Will
Remember Today, Tomorrow...Forever!"***

**Phantasms & Magic Productions
www.HighSchoolAssemblies.com
716.288.1878 Toll Free 1.866.553.0077**

Dear Friend:

I know you're busy, so I'll make this fast.

My name is Cris Johnson and I'm writing to let you know of the motivational assembly programs that I offer to middle and high schools. I currently offer four programs that other schools across the United States have found extremely effective for character education. They include:

It's Your Choice, It's Your Life! – This program teaches students the value of accepting responsibility for their own choices, respect for others, a healthy self-esteem and more.

Lead To Succeed! – A fun, informative program that teaches students leadership skills, why leadership skills are important, a simple, 7-step success formula and more.

Say No: The Breaking Peer Pressure Show – With this program, your students (and teachers) will learn the truth behind WHY a person may be prone to peer pressure and how to safeguard against it!!

No Bullies Allowed! – The name says it all: I give students a simple 1-2-3 process to use if they are bullies and I challenge students to get involved and take this problem seriously!

The programs use audience interaction, magic, hypnosis, music, clean humor, and interactive "mind reading illusions" to encourage your students to have **good character, use good judgment, and respect the rights and feelings of others**.

Don't forget about my "**Early Bird Discount Savings:**" If you respond to this letter by October 31, 2012, you can book your programs ANY TIME in the 2012-2013 school year and receive an instant \$100 discount!

I understand that you're busy. No problem. Just give me a call TOLL FREE at **(866) 553-0077** or email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net and we can talk about it in more detail. Just for responding I'll send you two FREE reports: "**9 Sources Of Funding For Assembly Programs,**" and "**7 Mistakes Schools Make When Hiring Assembly Programs...And How To Avoid Them!**" Both of these reports will make bringing in assembly programs MUCH easier!

Sincerely,

Cris Johnson

P.S. Response to my first letter has been unbelievable so my calendar IS filling up quickly. Why not call me now while it's still fresh in your mind? Call **TOLL FREE 866-553-0077 right away**. Also, please check out the other side of this letter to see what recent school clients had to say!

What Other Middle And High School Administrators Have To Say About Cris Johnson's Programs...

"They didn't want the program to end!"

"Mr. Johnson presented an AWESOME program to our 7th & 8th graders. Middle school principals: if you're concerned about the kids being attentive and cooperative, they were all of that and more. Some of the students that I usually have the worst problem with, today wanted to participate. If you're looking for someone to come into your school and give this type of dynamic presentation, Mr. Johnson is the individual you need to seek. He was awesome!"

Dr. Gina Stevenson, Principal, Charter School For Applied Technologies, Buffalo, NY

"We have had him two years in a row..."

"Cris is really great with the kids...He is both entertaining and informative. We have had him two years in a row and the kids really enjoy Cris' programs. Outstanding!"

Carm Proctor, Principal, Jefferson Middle School, Jamestown, NY

"...he was great to work with!"

"It was a great program! The kids really paid attention and they really got something out of it. Cris was very accommodating and very accommodating. He didn't ask for anything and he was great to work with."

Elizabeth Smyton, Guidance Counselor, Charter School For Applied Technologies, Buffalo, NY

"Outstanding!"

"The program was very productive for them. He was very easy, very simple to deal with. He had everything as a complete package and we had to do very little. I would really recommend him to other schools and we want him back too!"

Principal Shelby, Haverstraw Middle School, Haverstraw, NY

"Excellent! Pacing & review of content was very valuable!"

"I thought it was a great show...Everyone was very attentive and they felt very involved. I would highly recommend this program to other schools."

Holly Brink, Class Advisor, Sherman Central School, Sherman, NY

"Cris did a great job!"

"Cris is very easy to work with...The students enjoyed the presentation, especially all the magic. The messages of respect and how to handle bullies was easy for kids to understand. Cris did a great job!"

Dan Bracey, Principal, Washington Middle School, Jamestown, NY

"The show was great!"

“I thought the show was great! A lot of the students were involved. It was really awesome. He had everyone laughing and having a good time after a day of leadership.”

Erin Rubin, Deputy Prime Minister of the York Region President’s Council, Canada

“...fantastic and hilarious...”

“It was fantastic, and hilarious! I would highly recommend it to anybody.”

Steve Leffler, Class Advisor, Starpoint High School, Lockport, NY

“They loved it!”

“It was totally entertaining and fun to watch. The kids were really involved and they loved it. It was really fun to see their personalities come out and their creativity. I would LOVE to recommend this program to other schools.”

Liz Banner, Teacher, Brockport High School, Brockport, NY

Phone Scripts to Captivate Prospects

So, you've got your website up. You've sent out your letters. Now the phone rings (we'll cover email soon enough). How do you handle the call? I definitely feel it's a mistake to just "wing it."

My preference is to respond to callers with a structured format that's been rehearsed. You want to come off as professional, without a lot of uh's and um's. I prefer starting off with a word-for-word script that will keep me focused on the important points I want to communicate with my clients.

After delivering the scripts a few hundred times, I've usually got the points ingrained deeply so I can then handle phone calls without a written script in front of me, sounding more spontaneous but still retaining control.

That last word, "control," is very important when it comes to phone calls. If you just react to what the client asks, you're not going to be doing yourself any favors.

Why?

Usually, one of the first questions that's going to pop up will be "How much?" and if you pop off with a price before you've had a chance to build up your value, then the prospect may, in his/her mind, compare your fee to a part-timer charging \$50 or even worse, feel that ANY fee is unjustified because in their mind they are comparing you to the local police officer who donates an hour of his time to talk to the kids.

I've included my most up to date script for the two presentations included with this course.

Before I get into the actual script, though, a few notes...

First of all, you'll notice that I start off the script by asking a LOT of questions of the prospect. Quite simply, by asking such questions, you'll be gaining a tremendous amount of information about the proposed gig as well as the person you are speaking with.

Realize that every person in every corner of the world does NOT view the world according to reality but only their PERCEPTION of reality. This means if the

person on the phone mentions that teens require a stern hand and an ultra-serious program filled with useful, hard-hitting information and entertainment be damned, well, then, you'd be best advised to emphasize the educational aspects of your program. (Trust me, the vast, vast majority of prospects WILL want at least a moderate amount of 'fun' during the presentation.)

On the other hand, if most of your prospects start off their end of the phone call by lamenting how BORING last year's presenter was, you'd be best served to really focus on how much FUN your program is.

In other words, by asking questions and really listening to how your prospect answers the questions will guide you as to which features/benefits of your program to emphasize and which to soft-pedal around.

To be clear, I am NOT talking about lying. If, hypothetically, you were to encounter a client who wanted an ultra-serious presentation and this client also stated their school would never bring in a magician, I'd advise turning the gig away!

And while it sounds ridiculous that a prospect could contact you and not know what you do during the show, the fact is prospects contact me all the time after viewing my website and innocently ask, "So, what do you do?" This tells me they just skimmed my website.

So, although I include word-for-word scripting for the phone call, I really recommend knowing the script inside and out and then asking the prospect a lot of questions and adjusting your phone presentation as needed.

You can conclude, after you've built up your value, with your fee. If you know the fee you'd like for the gig, by all means, give it. However, my included script includes wording that tells the client that you'll take the information given to you and work up a proposal for them.

This is useful for several reasons: if you're not familiar with the geographic area where the prospective school is located, it's tough to give an accurate fee without understanding what your expenses will be. I personally believe in giving a client one flat fee – it's a pain in the butt to give your client your show fee and then tack on your hotel, flight, etc. Clients don't like that and don't like being told just how much they're paying for expenses with a separate fee for the show itself.

Why?

If you're jumping on a plane and flying for a gig, and your "local" fee is \$700 (for example," your client may hear "\$700 plus \$1000 for expenses" and may come to the conclusion that they are "over-paying for a \$700 speaker." It's an odd psychological thing. So give clients an all-inclusive fee.

Of course, you can also prepare for phone calls by mapping out your performing area (and mine is generally considered North America) and know what you'll charge based on where you're traveling.

I myself have fees based on local (within 2 hours), 3-4 hours, 5-6 hours, 6-7 hours, 8-9 hours and anything over that (as long as it's in North America) for a flat fee for each.

So, as soon as a client calls and tells me where they are from, I usually have a fee in kind for a program at that school. If they give me an area I'm not familiar with, I can go in two different directions: I can tell them I'll work up a proposal (as in the upcoming phone script) or I quickly look up their city and state on www.Mapquest.com and look at the travel estimate. Admittedly, this is what I do most of the time for, again, one program.

However, another scenario could crop up which may necessitate telling the client that you'll work up a proposal and get back to them. Suppose the client's needs are more extensive?

Suppose the client wants a fee proposal for one keynote program of 45 or 60 minutes (fees for both) and then five 35-minute break-out sessions throughout the day, with an option for a 'concluding' program at the end of the event the next day...and a matching fee proposal but WITHOUT the concluding program?

Some clients may want a variety of different fee options and packages because they are still finalizing both their schedule and their budget.

You may know what your break-out session fee may be, but with somewhat unusual opportunities like the above scenario, I find it beneficial to have some time to work up a proposal.

Yet another option is to offer what some performers call the "all day fee," in which you'll do whatever they want (within reason, of course!) and I admit, there are

times when I do this. I let the client know that my keynote fee is X dollars and the fee for each break-out session is X dollars, but I have the 'all day fee' at a discount of X dollars. Many schools really like this!

Some speakers opine this approach, saying they can maximize their dollars by going to a second school on the same day, but for me, I've found that I prefer doing more in one location as opposed to bouncing from school to school.

One friend of mine really works the school market very hard, trying to do two schools a day every week day for weeks at a time and while I take the work when it comes, I don't push things as hard as him because I just don't have the stamina anymore.

Regardless, with everything I've covered, you now have several options to consider.

Also, again just to reinforce what I wrote earlier, the beginning of the script asks a lot of questions of the caller. Your goal is to find out what they liked or did not like about past presenters and emphasize or de-emphasize aspects of your programs based on those responses.

In essence what you're doing is similar to how certain therapists work – you take what the client gives you and reflects it back to them. This helps strengthen rapport!

What follows is my phone script...

Phone Script for High School Assembly Programs

Thanks (NAME) for the interest. Do you mind if I take notes while we talk?
Terrific...

First, what kind of presenters have you used in the past?

What did you like about them?

Was there anything you didn't like?

So, tell me what you have in mind and what your needs are?

What subject or subjects would you like me to incorporate into your presentation?

What specific learning tools would you like me to present to your students?

Tell me what is happening...what is going on in your school or district to make this the right time to do this?

After everything is said and done, what specific changes or skills would you like your students to take away?

And what else?

OK, and what additionally?

With those considerations in mind, what would be the expected benefits?

What sort of length did you envision for the presentation?

What else can you share with me to get more insight into your school or district and help me do a better job for you?

Now, may I tell you a little about my programs? I like to give some details so clients know exactly what they are getting. I'm a little unique and want clients to understand they're not getting the run-of-the-mill shows with me.

First, some background...

EXPERIENCE – I have 15 years' experience and have thus far presented programs in 25 states in the US

INSURED – I have had no incidents in 15years, but I am insured for your peace of mind.

EASY TO WORK WITH – I don't need any special lighting or fancy curtains on stage or anything that will make your job difficult. I will show up, do my job, and leave, all with you not needing to lift a finger.

100% CAPTIVATED AUDIENCE – I guarantee that no one will be bored or restless – everyone will be watching on the edge of their seats, captivated, not knowing what will happen next.

HIGHLY INTERACTIVE – my programs are filled with laughter, sprinkled with magic and interactive mind reading and even some music. All of this not helps to convey and illustrate my concepts, but also hold the attention of even the most jaded teen audiences.

WITHIN DRIVING DISTANCE? – If you are within driving distance for me, I provide my own state-of-the-art PA system and wireless microphone, which guarantees everyone in your group will be able to hear me.

FAST SET-UP – My set up time is 30min or less, meaning life will be easier for you, the banquet facilities' staff and everyone involved with your event.

SIMPLE – My fee is all-inclusive – no hidden charges

INCENTIVES – I offer price incentives on multiple programs / breakout sessions. For example, some clients book a daytime motivational or educational program in conjunction with a night time “for fun” show to make the most out of my visit to the school.

GUARANTEE - 100% Money Back Guarantee. If I do anything offensive or dangerous or if anyone goes home upset, you get the program for free...and I'm proud to say I've NEVER had anyone take me up on my guarantee in 15 years and across 25 states in the U.S. and many areas of Canada.

Individual Programs:

“IT’S YOUR CHOICE, IT’S YOUR LIFE”

Many incoming speakers bore teen audiences. A good youth speaker knows that he or she must grab the attention of a teen audience very quickly. My program is effective because I captivate your teen audience within the first minute of the program...without me saying a word.

Many teens are very visually oriented. They love seeing things and being surprised. When I come on stage, I capture everyone's attention by drawing a picture of a bowling ball on a sketch pad...and I cause the drawing to turn into a real bowling ball that drops to the ground with a thud! It's visual, magical and completely catches the audience off guard!

Many speakers try too hard to lecture kids. Unless you give kids a reason to pay attention to your message, they will tune you out. High school teen audiences always stay focused and riveted on my presentation because I explain how I was homeless for a brief period of time about 12 years ago.

I then relate my journey toward a better life and how, in a short amount of time, I built up a very successful business, bought a new car, bought a house and got married. If I can do it, ANYONE can do it.

My main messages during this assembly are simple.

First, it was my decisions that got me into that situation 12 years ago and it was my decisions and hard work that got me out of it and to where I am today. By personal example, I will show

your students how you can accomplish anything as long as you take personal responsibility for your actions.

Secondly, I encourage everyone to think before they act. there's enough negativity in the world – what we say or do can and will influence those around us. In addition to encouraging kids to stop and think before they say something they might regret to someone, I also explain why it's important to be careful who you pay attention to in life – how some people only focus on the negative.

During this segment, I will get your entire audience involved as from their own seats, everyone experiences the power of their own imagination. Everyone will realize, in a very dramatic way, just how much they can accomplish merely by focusing on something.

Throughout the presentation, I will engage the teens, using magic, mind reading, onstage volunteers and audience participation to hold their attention, illustrate my concepts and encourage them to realize that their lives are whatever THEY make of it.

“LEAD TO SUCCEED”

Many people believe leaders are born. Others have felt the same way. As a result, many teens believe if they are 'born' into a bad situation, they have no hope for life. Many leaders in the past have come from poor neighborhoods and what would seem to be a bleak future.

True leaders create their own future and refuse to admit defeat. After combing through history, I have distilled several common characteristics of successful leaders. The good news is that there never is, nor likely ever will be, any kind of prerequisite to being 'born' a good leader.

My Lead to Succeed programs will cover 9 characteristics that all good leaders should adopt. The best part is that these characteristics are easy to learn, easy to remember and easy to implement.

By using football legend Jerry Rice and other success stories as an example, your students will learn during this presentation that even the most gifted of individuals had to convince one person – themselves – of their potential before they achieved success.

Your students will laugh, learn and be amazed as they watch amazing magic, participate in stunning mind reading illusions and participate, both onstage and from their seats, as they learn that being an leader is not a right, but rather a choice.

Wrap Up

I am going to review my notes, figure out exactly what's going to be right for your situation. I will work up a proper proposal and outline the different

options of how we could work together and I will have that proposal in your hands by (DATE). Is that all right? Would you prefer it via email or snail mail?

If I don't hear from you, what I would like to do then is follow up with you to get your input. Would that be OK?

Thank you very much.

Questions That Will Be Answered Along The Way With The Script:

What length are they looking for?

How many presentations?

How many people will attend?

What type of presentation? Hard-hitting? Light? Fun? Interactive?

Detail-oriented person?

Video

I'm going to cover just a few quick notes on demo videos and my preferred approach along with a few things to avoid. I'm not going to get into details such as which camera to use, editing software or anything like that. I'll leave it up to each individual – if you're comfortable with technology and want to do it all yourself, by all means, have fun. If you're the kind of person uncomfortable with technology, I advise you to hire someone to film a few gigs to get raw footage and then take said footage to a professional to get it edited.

First of all, include live footage from REAL shows. In this day and age of skepticism, a demo video of you performing magic in a studio is not going to fly.

In particular, speakers need to be shown speaking to the audience!

I typically start off my demo videos with some music against a black background with a benefit-oriented title that appeals to the client I'm trying to attract. It's usually shorter (out of necessity) than the headline of my letters.

A sample title might read:

“Are You Looking For A High School Presenter With A REAL Message?”

Then I may dissolve to:

“A Presenter Guaranteed to Captivate Your Teen Audience?”

Then I dissolve again to footage of me in front of the group. I like to start off with a few rapid-fire edits of me in front of different groups (subtly telling the client I work a lot in different locations!).

These different cuts are usually climaxes of effects, with the audience reacting audibly, which is very cool.

Sometimes the cuts are 20-30 seconds, other times they may be shorter. The key is to show REALLY powerful clips. Stuff like the bowling ball dropping to the floor, the snake jumping out of the basket and so on.

I will sometimes include a longer routine coupled with a few minutes of me talking to the audience so prospects can get an idea of my speaking style – I tend to be pretty high energy, so this serves me well in front of teens.

I think my current video has me being introduced to wild cheers to an audience of 500 teens and then the camera slowly zooms in on me performing the bowling ball trick and after the trick is over, I start off speaking, outlining some of the key points of my program, so it's the best of both worlds – a really cool visual trick coupled with a sample of what I'm talking about.

After a couple of clips, I then shift to video testimonials of clients. Sometimes I preface this with a title against a black background saying something like,

“Now that you've heard the reactions from students and seen what Cris can do, what do clients have to say?”

Then we fade in to on-camera testimonials of my clients talking about my shows. I typically just get a few sound bites, around 30-40 seconds from each client. I also list the client's full name, school name, city and state below their face.

I do this for credibility – there's nothing more shady than a bunch of testimonials that have names such as “B.K. from Texas” listed. ZERO credibility! In fact, I reference this aspect of the testimonials on the phone with my client, telling them, “And when we watch the video, you'll see testimonials of past clients on camera, with their names, schools, city and state so you know I didn't just get my Uncle Bob to say nice things about me!” That usually gets a nice laugh!

A quick note on getting video testimonials...

I usually ask for the video right after the show. The client is on a post-show ‘high’ if I've done my job well, and they're more likely to say “yes.” I then turn the camera to them and just ask for some quick thoughts on the program.

I've found that with high schools, getting written testimonials is TOUGH. They intend to, but people are busy. It happens. So I grab my camera and ask right at the gig. It's harder for them to say “no” to your face!

If I need written testimonials (as in the sales letters), I can just transpose what they said...most of my written testimonials for high schools started off life as a video!

Quick Notes...

I recommend your video be short – no more than 5 or 6 minutes. Anything longer than that and you risk people turning off the video before it's finished.

A key point I also want to bring up is unless you are showing the complete routine of a trick, avoid the silk to egg trap many magicians fall into...they'll show a clip of themselves cracking an egg into a lass and the audience applauding. I get that it's a great trick, but to a viewer of a video, there's no context...they don't understand why in the world cracking an egg is worthy of applause.

Therefore, if you're going to show just the climax of a trick, make sure that a viewer of said clip can pick up what's going on. A dove production (or ANY live animal) is good. A disappearance, something startling, something funny...just think to yourself, if someone JUST saw the end of the routine, would they get what's going on?"

I personally feel that's why so much mentalism falls flat on video...the set-up takes too long. I once saw a guy's online demo video and he was using a one-camera shoot and during the course of a mentalism routine, he had to go into the audience for several minutes to pass out cards and pens but the camera never moved, so there was literally 5 minutes (I timed it) of the camera pointed at an empty stage while you heard the muffled voice of the performer off-camera. Ugh.

Also, at the very end of the video, I feel it's really important to include another call to action. I list my website along with "Visit my website for more info" if I'm posting the video on YouTube (always a good idea) or "Call 716-283-1373 TODAY!" as the final image they see.

Multiple Show Options for More Earning Potential

This idea refers back a little to what I mentioned in the information about the proposal, but you can also offer multi-show options right on your website or your sales letter.

For instance, in a sales letter, you can often list something like this:

One program: \$900

Two programs: \$1500

Three programs: \$1800

I'm NOT saying you should use this price structure – it's just there for illustration purposes. In my example, one show is \$900 but each show is only \$600 per performance in the "Three programs" example.

I've often offered multi-show discounts to schools if they need more than one performance or if they'd like me to do perform different programs in the same day.

For instance, some schools want my "It's Your Choice, It's Your Life" program but maybe their auditorium only seats 600 students but they've got 1000 students total. Obviously there's a need for a second program.

Schools expect, quite frankly, a discount on the second program because you're already there and already set up, so it just makes sense to discount additional programs.

My discounts are usually even more substantial than the example above. I may charge \$800 for one program and then maybe \$1000 as a package deal for two.

Other times, the school may want a 60-minute keynote, as I mentioned earlier, but then want one or two or more break-out sessions. In that case, I often add the break-out sessions on to the day for a very reasonable price, maybe \$800 for the first program and then the option for, say, \$1500 for an "all day" package.

I've also offered multi-show discounts for multiple schools in a district who book. This is something I've done a LOT in the elementary school market. Elementary schools in districts are often very eager to "partner up" to save on the cost of assemblies, but I've found high schools to be more resistant because there's often fewer high schools in a given district – often only one – and then, when it

comes to neighboring districts, you also have the whole “competition among sports teams” thing going on, too.

The point of this entire discussion is to get you thinking about your fee structure and ways to offer incentives to schools for more programs. Personally, I LOVE the all-day arrangement as I don't have to worry about packing up and heading out to a second school on the same day as I do so often in elementary schools.

Most of the time, the elementary schools are focused on delivering some assemblies to the kids and that's that, but as I've mentioned, in high schools you may have a lot of other things going on the same day. (This happens in elementary schools as well, just not as much in my experience.)

Another thing you can do as a strong enticement is offer to add a program for free for the 'all day' bookings. One of these which stands out in my mind was at a rural high school where I was booked for my 60-minute “It's Your Choice, It's Your Life” keynote in the morning and then 40-minute “Memory” break-out sessions for the rest of the day.

When speaking with the client over the phone she had asked me to consider adding in a short piece, 15 minutes or so, at the end of the day as a “wrap up” of sorts. I agreed to do it for free, just to be a nice guy. The day before the gig, I got talked into being taken out to dinner by the advisors and a few students (not something I like to do, but it was tradition each year with their incoming speaker and I didn't want to break a tradition).

During dinner, a few students made mention of the fact they had seen a stage hypnotist and how cool it was, etc. I remarked that I was a stage hypnotist and generated a lot of excitement. Long story short, we discarded the idea of the ending piece and decided to have a short stage hypnosis show to end the day instead. It went over great and my clients gave my whole day high praise.

Email Responses Made E-Z

Obviously in this day and age, you're going to have a lot of clients contact you via email. It's quick, convenient and despite what many people say, it's possible to build rapport in emails.

Whenever I embark on anything in my businesses, I try to turn it into a system any time I can. Therefore, I've created generic emails I can plug in any time I need.

I've got emails for times when the client wants information and prices but does not send me their location (since my fees fluctuate based on where I'm traveling, if I don't know their location, I request it before I can give them a fee quote).

I've got emails with fees when a client wants info and I DO know their location. I've got follow-up emails for the next few weeks after the initial contact when I don't hear from them again.

Let me interject here with a few notes about how I write emails – first, I write emails a lot like how I'm writing this course...a lot of the language is very casual and conversational in how I structure everything. This is on purpose as I want to come across friendly. I've had many people say, after reading some of my stuff, "It was like you were sitting across from me just talking." If people say that after reading your emails or sales letters, you're doing GREAT!

Another note: many times after I send a response, I don't hearing anything for days. Therefore, I always follow up with the prospect. I always assume that my email got lost in cyberspace somewhere or the person's email filters 'pinged' my email as spam (and try to explain to the average person how to check their email settings...most of my contacts are in their 40's and 50's and they just don't get advanced email settings, spam blockers or anything like that, so I rarely even mention those things anymore!).

The purpose of the follow-up emails is to poke and prod the prospect into responding. What I'm trying to get is for them to at LEAST send me an email saying, "Yes, I got your stuff." If I can get that confirmation, then I'm on the right track simply because I've received, in the past, angry emails from people saying, "I asked for information. Why haven't you responded?" Meanwhile, I HAVE responded. So, the follow-up emails are intended to cover my butt.

Also, if I can 'goose' the person into responding, then I can get a conversation going – do you want me to send you dates, where are you located so I can give you accurate fees, and on and on.

My emails are never pushy, almost always have the “:)” somewhere in them to indicate a smile or I will use “LOL” at times...things like that to keep things cute and friendly but still professional...just not as stiff.

Also, just like the sales letters, I never bunch the copy together into huge dense paragraphs. Dense paragraphs intimidate readers.

Subject Lines...

When I send out an email, I have certain subject lines I always use.

When someone wants info emailed to them, the subject line is “The School Assembly Information You Requested.” This lets them know that hey, this is what they asked for. Putting “School Assembly” in the subject line decreases the likelihood of the person thinking it's just spam because “School Assembly” is pretty specific...my spam box usually fills up with Viagra ads!

For the first “follow-up” email, I use the subject line “Quick Question.” A friend of mine well-versed in ‘the ways of the ‘Net’ told me it worked so I use it. It appears to work well.

The second follow-up email uses the subject line “I Hate Bad News.” Again, the same friend told me “Bad News” works well. I adjusted it to say “I Hate Bad News” and the email itself says that if my email information did not reach you, then I consider it ‘bad news’ because I don't want people thinking I've dropped the ball and so on.

The third email uses the subject line: “More School Assembly Information.” This email mentions that I haven't heard from them in a while and reminds them that they requested information from me and that I'll be adding them to my monthly ezine where they'll get more great assembly info and character tips, etc. In short, I want to keep them on my list. Then I send out a once-a-month email newsletter “ezine” that they can opt out of at any time.

That's the basics of my email system: respond to requests and follow-up three times, three Mondays in a row. I just do it all on Mondays because it's easier to set aside time every Monday as opposed to trying to do it every day.

Also, every 7 days isn't nagging...I've been on some email lists in the past that just hammer you every day and it's soooooooooooooo annoying!

Excel Sheet...

I use an Excel spread sheet and send my follow-up emails out on a 7-day sequence, every Monday. For instance, let's say a client emails me a request for information on a Tuesday. I make a note of the date on the date of contact field in an Excel spread sheet. I then have fields for "One Week," "Two Weeks" or "Three Weeks." I then enter into the "One Week" field what the date would be for the first Monday, then under the "Two Weeks" field I'd enter the second Monday's date and so on.

Every Monday, I open up my "leads" Excel file and send out the appropriate response according to the date. Doing this each Monday keeps things nice and easy.

Here's how my "Leads" Excel spread sheet might look...umm...if it were a word document...

Name	Email	Date of Contact	1 Week	2 Weeks	3 Weeks
Jane Doe	JaneDoe@Fake	6/1	6/6	6/13	6/20
John Doe	JohnFakeEmail	6/4	6/6	6/13	6/20
John Smith	FakeEmail	6/11	6/13	6/20	6/27

It's pretty simple. On Monday, June 13, I would look at this sheet and know that Follow-Up #2 (I Hate Bad News) would be sent to both John Doe and Jane Doe (no relation) while Follow-Up #1 would be sent to John Smith.

Automation...

Of course, many of you out there may elect to go with a completely automated system where as soon as the person fills out the contact form on your website, they automatically get put into an automated system.

You're certainly welcome to do that. I decided that I didn't want to do that for two reasons: 1) I'm cheap! My system only 'costs' me an hour each week when I've got 15 or 20 leads on the sheet (during those prime booking seasons) but less so the rest of the year, so for me, I decided the \$60 or so it would cost me each month wasn't worth it and 2), most of the time, the client fills out the 'comments' box and may ask a specific question, such as "Do you work with special needs students?" or some other specific question that is not going to be covered by a generic email.

Responding the way I do makes it personal. Yes, I have generic 'cut-n-paste' emails I can plug in, but when I read the comments or specific questions from a prospect, I can alter it and make it sound a LOT more personal.

It's kind of like those automated things some people use for birthday shows...you know the ones...you fill in your kid's name and you receive an auto-responder email that sounds a bit off:

"Hi MRS. JONES! Thank you for requesting information on how my shows can make LEROY's special incredible! LEROY helps out during the show and some of LEROY's friends help too! LEROY will love this show so much we're calling it the "Happy Birthday LEROY Show!"

Save your angry emails! I know many people use systems like this with great success. I just feel they're a bit 'alien' in the way some of them are worded. And with schools, because many times you're getting very specific questions, I vastly prefer to spend a few moments and try to connect with each prospect.

That being said, some prospects simply fill in their names, email and nothing else, so in those cases, there's not a lot to do to make it personal!

On the next few pages, you'll see five emails: a generic response for when I do not know the location and thus, no fees; a generic response for when I DO know the location and include fees; and finally my three follow-up emails.

The initial two emails are quite long as I work hard to answer most of the prospect's most common questions in each as well as build up the value of what I offer.

One final note: If you're going to go the route of generic emails, save them in your computer somewhere as a "plain text" document. This will prevent the

hidden code that Microsoft puts in Word documents from 'mucking up' the words when it gets to the prospect's inbox. Lesson learned the hard way!!

FIRST EMAIL – No FEES

SUBJECT LINE: The School Assembly Information You Requested

Hi <<first name>>

Thank you for requesting information on how my interactive, hilarious and informative assembly programs will help your students embrace concepts of responsibility, leadership, good character and more!

I have performed in schools across 33 states across the United States and several parts of Canada.

My top goal is to work with YOU and help make YOUR event the most successful, memorable event it can possibly be!

Before I tell you about my assembly programs, here's a few things that will set your mind at ease...

1. 100% PROFESSIONAL - I always show up dressed professionally. My goal is to represent you & your school in the most professional manner and the most positive light possible.
2. FULLY INSURED - In 15 years, I have NEVER had any kind of "incident" for any event, even after thousands of performances. For your peace of mind, though, I am fully insured and our office can fax you a copy of my insurance certificate upon request.
3. SIMPLICITY – In short, I am the easiest assembly presenter you'll ever work with because I understand how much work and stress goes into planning events like this. I am not concerned with "dressing rooms" or "bowls of green M&Ms" or anything like that. I simply want your students to succeed – that way, you win and we all benefit!
4. 100% CLEAN & NON-OFFENSIVE - Many other presenters think it's funny to slip in off-color jokes aimed at the adults, but that can reflect badly on you. Everything I do is completely age-appropriate and clean.

5. FUNNY, FUNNY, FUNNY! - Your students will laugh out loud and enjoy themselves even as they learn important life-changing concepts.

6. AMAZING PRESENTATIONS – Whether witnessing hilarious magic, mystifying mind reading or incredible hypnosis, your students will be riveted to the entire assembly simply because they will be so amazed. They won't want to risk missing anything!

7. INTERACTIVE – My programs are incredibly popular because I involve your students – both as an entire audience and with onstage volunteers. The point is, everyone will be involved, which helps hold everyone's attention.

8 – BETTER THAN MONEY BACK GUARANTEE: I am so confident that you and your students and faculty will love my programs that I will put my money where my mouth is. Simply put, if you don't feel my program was everything promised and more, not only will you get the program free but I will also pay your school PTA/PTO \$500. Try to find another presenter who even offers a guarantee, let alone one who will match my guarantee. (Oh, and after 15 years, NO ONE has ever taken me up on my guarantee!)

What A Recent Client Had To Say...

"Working with Cris is a completely pleasant and low stress experience: he is passionate, skilled, responsive, good-natured, reliable, brings all his own supplies, and does exactly what he says he'll do and more. By request, he incorporated the evidence-based substance abuse prevention strategy of "social norms marketing" in to his show, talking about positive peer pressure and the reality that most high school students typically choose to have their good times WITHOUT using alcohol, marijuana, tobacco or other drugs. He wasn't preachy about it, he just wove it in to his topical, entertaining routine.

Students were talking about his assembly all day, with the hypnosis part the hands down favorite. Because there was so much student involvement, our 9th through 12th grade audiences were engaged from start to finish. It is rare treat to be laugh for such an extended period of time while also receiving positive messages about making healthy choices for oneself."

Martha Iachett
Smithfield High School

Smithfield, RI

Now that you understand a little about me, here's some info about his programs...

It's Your Choice, It's Your Life

Every day, students face tough situations regarding drugs, alcohol and peer pressure. In addition, many students have trouble with personal responsibility, commitment, self-esteem and create self-limiting roadblocks in their lives.

Let's face it, part of the problem with achieving goals is our society, outside of school, does not really offer the best encouragement. Everywhere you turn, people are told what they CAN'T do, why something is so impossible and more.

In addition, our TV shows seem to thrive on laughing at people or airing their dirty laundry for all to see. In short, humility seems to be on the endangered species list!

"It's Your Choice, It's Your Life" is an effective, motivational program for teens because it tackles these issues head-on, not only the idea of our future being what we make of it but also safe-guarding ourselves against negative influences.

On top of all that, the program is also realistic in that it openly acknowledges the tough choices and difficulties life will throw at us. Mistakes will be made, problems will crop up and unfortunately, sometimes the people we are close to will scoff at our dreams of success. By dealing with such issues head on, "It's Your Choice, It's Your Life" is a program designed to provide real-world food for thought and challenges teens with concepts that will encourage them to think before acting.

Additionally, this program educates your students on the why's and the how's of these important issues by incorporating novel magic, mind-reading, audience participation and laugh-out loud humor and amazing demonstrations within the educational content.

Your students will have fun while learning how to handle the important issues they face on a daily basis, and how they can be the best person that they can be, and how they can have the life that they want...by accepting that it's their own choices that shape their lives.

In addition, I have included specific "keys to success" that are talked about during the program - things like continued knowledge, avoiding negativity, making positive choices, the value of mentors, making the most of your time, expecting the unexpected and much more.

I also include my own personal story of how I found myself homeless for a brief period of time over a decade ago. It was only when I realized that it was my decisions that got me into that situation and that my own decisions could change the direction of my life that I was able to change my life in a positive way.

Shortly thereafter, I found a great deal of success, both as a speaker & entertainer and in my personal life, enabling me to marry a wonderful woman and buy a new house and two new cars in a short amount of time. My message is simple: if I can overcome being homeless, anyone can have success, as long as they put forth effort.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This presentation can also be altered to touch upon bullying. I cover a few concepts on the right (and wrong) ways to deal with bullying.

Here's a small sample of what your students will see & experience:

- A drawing of a large, heavy object becomes REAL in an instant!
- A dramatic experiment in mind reading illustrates the value of choice!
- By causing one volunteer to send a thought or sensation to another teen, I illustrate how easy it is to influence one another...without even realizing it!
- The ENTIRE audience will experience the power of their own minds from their seats!
- A prediction about words and phrases to live by becomes ALIVE!

- And MUCH more!

Lead to Succeed!

Why are some people better than others at leadership? Is leadership something we're born into or can it be learned? What are the characteristics of a good leader? Why is leadership so important in this day and age?

My "Lead To Succeed" program answers all of these questions and much more.

This highly informative program teaches kids that leaders are made, not born, and that anyone can choose to be a leader if they choose. During the program, I cover 9 characteristics of great leaders, including:

- * Perseverance – giving up should never be an option. A true story from a famous athlete's past illustrates this concept.
- * Becoming Well-Rounded – in any leadership role, only by having a clear, thorough understanding of everyone's responsibilities can one truly be an effective leader.
- * Honesty – Anything less than the truth will destroy everyone's trust of you
- * Clarity of Communication – Bad leaders communicate badly and of course the opposite is true, too!
- * And many more!

The best part about the leadership traits presented in "Lead To Succeed" is the fact that none of them require special training, genetics or geographic location. Leadership, as I explain it, is an attitude, a choice.

Critical concepts such as the value of simply asking for what you want and the willingness to roll up your sleeves and get in there with those you are leading help illustrate the fact that with an open mind, anyone can be a leader.

As with my other programs, I will use magic, mind reading, music, onstage volunteers, audience interaction and humor to engage the audience, hold their attention, and illustrate his concepts.

Here's just some of what your teens will see & experience:

- I demonstrate the value of simply asking for what you want in a dramatic way that leaves a volunteer from the audience with something they will take home!

- My' "Mind Reading Goose" comically reads minds...and serves as a fantastic, memorable way to illustrate the value of teamwork!

- By putting his very health at risk, I illustrate why a true leader is not "above" doing any task...and why!

- A mindreading experiment involving famous literature dramatically demonstrates the need for becoming well-rounded as a leader and a person

- By using a "special guest," I will cause the entire audience to jump in their seats...and laugh hysterically to show why preparing for the unexpected is a critical skill for any leader!

- And much more!

The Next Step

Now it's up to you! Please contact us if you have further questions, need a quote or want to schedule a date. Please be sure to provide your address – since I travels nationally and internationally, fees do vary.

PLEASE NOTE: My schedule fills up VERY quickly, so we urge you to book ASAP to avoid losing your date and time.

We look forward to working with you on your event!

Sincerely,

Cris Johnson, CH, CT.NLP

EMAIL 2 – FEES INCLUDED

SUBJECT LINE: School Assembly Information & Fees

Hi <<first name>>>,

Thank you again for your interest in my programs.

I'm proud to say that I've performed in schools across 33 states (so far) in the U.S. and several parts of Canada, so I have the experience to guarantee your school a GREAT event.

When considering my services for your school, please remember these key benefits of my programs:

- 15 years' experience in delivering Teen motivational programs to schools
- fully insured with a \$2 million liability policy
- programs that are guaranteed to hold the attention of even the largest school groups
- topical programs with the messages and concepts that give students real benefits and tools for success
- fees quoted are all-inclusive: no hidden expenses to worry about
- age-appropriate humor, audience involvement, onstage volunteers, music, magic and fun to fully engage your audience
- backed by my full "Better Than Money Back Guarantee"

What A Recent Client Had To Say...

“Working with Cris is a completely pleasant and low stress experience: he is passionate, skilled, responsive, good-natured, reliable, brings all his own supplies, and does exactly what he says he'll do and more. By request, he incorporated the evidence-based substance abuse prevention strategy of "social norms marketing" in to his show, talking about positive peer pressure and the reality that most high school students typically choose to have their good times WITHOUT using alcohol, marijuana, tobacco or other drugs. He wasn't preachy about it, he just wove it in to his typical, entertaining routine. Students were talking about his assembly all day, with the hypnosis part the hands down favorite. Because there was so much student involvement, our 9th through 12th grade audiences were engaged from start to finish. It is rare treat to be laugh for such an extended period of time while also receiving positive messages about making healthy choices for oneself.”

Martha Iachett

Smithfield High School

Smithfield, RI

Physical Promotional Package

If you would like a physical promotional package sent to you, please email me your school's name mailing address, or your own mailing address. The package will include the following:

- Information on all of my high school programs
- A demo DVD of my assembly programs
- A demo DVD of my Post-Prom / Grad Hypnosis Shows
- Testimonials from past clients (both written and on-camera video testimonials)

Fees

As you will see, you may also receive discounts by setting up several schools in one district for multiple performances over the course of a week.

Here is a breakdown of specific discounts based on multiple schools in one district on consecutive days:

- 1 school - \$800 total
- 2 schools - \$700 per school – both schools in one day
- 3 schools - \$600 per school – all 3 schools in two days
- 4 schools - \$500 per school – all 4 schools in two days

Please note that fees quoted are in US funds.

Again, by simply calling or emailing other schools in your area, you can easily share the investment of my programs and bring the actual per program fee way, way down.

Please call my office at 716-283-1373 or email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net for further details.

Break-Out Sessions

If your school would be interested in adding break-out sessions after the main keynote presentation, I have two different break-out programs:

- Double Your Memory, Improve Your Schoolwork – Makes memorizing facts and vocabulary easier!
- Stress Management For Teens – Stress-busting methods that work FAST!

Both of these programs are available in 30, 45, Or 60 minute lengths. You can add break-out sessions to your day for only \$100 per session.

Family Nite Fundraiser Show!

I would also be happy to do a night-time, no-risk, no out-of-pocket family magic show/stage hypnosis fundraiser for your school in the evening of the same day I'll be performing your assembly.

I'll waive my normal minimum night time fee and simply split ticket sales with you. This is a completely risk-free way for your school to generate funds for sports teams, band trips, etc.

Again, I can give you further details over the phone or by email.

Take The Next Step

I'd love to work with you on your next event and help you make it unforgettable. Please give me a call at (866) 553-0077 or simply email me at crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net if you have any questions or to schedule a date!

Sincerely,

Cris Johnson, CH, CT.NLP

Office: 716-283-1373

Toll Free: 1-866-553-0077

Email: crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net

Email Follow-Up 1

SUBJECT LINE: Quick Question

Hi!

Assembly Presenter Cris Johnson here. A few days ago, you visited www.FunHighSchoolAssemblies.com and requested information on my programs. I wanted to ask you if you have received everything? Please confirm the receipt of the information and I will rest easy, knowing it didn't get lost in Cyber Space – LOL.

If you have any questions about any of the material I sent (or anything else for that matter), please let me know. Thanks very much and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Best,

Cris Johnson

Office: 716-283-1373

Toll Free: 1-866.553.0077

Follow-Up 2

SUBJECT LINE: I Hate Bad News

Hi!

Stage Hypnotist & Teen Motivational
Expert Cris Johnson here.

I recently sent you information on my
“Better Than Money-Back Guaranteed”
Assembly programs, as you requested.

I haven't heard from you since then and
that worries me. The Internet is not the
most reliable means of communication.
Emails can be lost and I do not want my
clients to believe I do not respond to their
requests. In other words, if the information
did not arrive, I consider that very bad news,
indeed.

If you would take just a few moments to let
me know you received the information, that
would really take a load off my mind. If you
did not receive it, let me know and I will send
it out again right away.

As always, I am available if you have any questions. Thanks very much and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best,

Cris Johnson

Office: 716-283-1373

Toll Free: 1-866.553.0077

Follow-Up 3

SUBJECT LINE: More High School Program Information

Hi <<first name>>,

Cris Johnson here. A while ago, you visited my site, www.FunHighSchoolAssemblies.com and requested my free reports that can help your school find funding for your assemblies, know what to look for in quality assemblies and much more..

I wanted you to know that I have added you to my monthly High School Motivational/Educational Update newsletter. It's packed each month with assembly tips, fundraising ideas and other things to help you in school. Plus, it's FREE! You can opt out at any time.

As always, I love feedback, so if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best,

Cris Johnson

Office: 716-283-1373

Toll Free: 1-866.553.0077

The Booking Sheet

This is something I came up with a few years ago that would enable me to have everything pertaining to a gig all on one sheet. You can model this is alter it however you like. I found it to be very useful. I also use the contact management program ACT to automatically fill the sheet out once I've entered the client's info into the database.

While it's beyond the scope of this course to fully explain ACT and How I use it, I'll just mention that I've been using it for four years now and feel it's fantastic – I've got it set up to where I can just enter the gig / client info once and after that, with the push of one button, my contracts, booking sheet, cover letters and anything I need for corresponding with the client is automatically created, complete with the client's name and dates filled in. It's an awesome thing!

My booking sheet follows on the next page...

Show Info Sheet Date:

Client Info.

Company Name:
Show Date:
Contact:
Phone #
Ext:
Cell:
Fax:
Email:
Mailing Address:
City, State, Zip:
Country:

Client Contact Info:

Contact:
Contact's Home Address:
Client's City, State, Zip:
Client's Home Phone:

Show Location

Venue:
Venue Address:
Venue City, State, Zip:
Venue Contact:
Venue Phone:

Show Info:

Nature of Event:
Show Type:
Date Booked:
Show Times:
Show Length:
Number of Guests per Show:
Approx. Age of Guests:
Total Fee: \$
Deposit: \$ Date Deposit was Received _____
Balance: \$
How Did They Hear Of Us?

Credit Card# _____

Credit Card Exp: _____ Credit Card Sec. Code: _____

Credit Card Billing Address: _____

Performance Agreement

A noted children's performer once told me that contracts between a performer and a client, at least on a small scale, were useless...if a corporation really decided not to pay the average magician's fee, let's say anywhere between \$500 to \$2000, there's not a lot the performer could do about it as it's likely the corporation's lawyers would be more ferocious than the performer's and the legal fees would eat up the profits.

With that in mind, and because the term "performance agreement" sounds gentler, that's what I use: an agreement between two parties.

My agreement mentions a penalty in it if the balance of the fee is not received at or before the date of the gig. To date, I've only had one school client pay the 20% late fee.

This agreement also has the "act of God" clause in it that I like, in case a major snowstorm or some other calamity makes it impossible to make it to the gig.

Besides the spaces for deposits and show details such as times and locations, there's also a paragraph in there that mentions getting a testimonial afterwards and that the testimonial isn't necessary but sure would be helpful followed by a happy face. Obviously I'm trying for referrals. In the past, the wording was different and more aggressive and some clients were uncomfortable with it so it was changed.

There's also some wording in the agreement about the details being binding for only two weeks and that I need a signed copy along with the deposit and so on. This is useful as some clients REALLY drag their feet getting things back to me, so any little 'nudge' I can give them is useful.

You're free to use the agreement as is or make whatever changes you desire. Again, when you get down to it, the agreement really is just a formality. I believe that if a company was hiring David Copperfield for an event, the contract would be more binding and obviously have a higher fee attached to it, but for the amounts most of us will be commanding for a single day, it's just an agreement.

ASSEMBLY AGREEMENT

Issue Date:

This will confirm the agreement between the *Cris Johnson* and <<client>>(Client) or the presentation of:
<<program.>>

DATE: LOCATION:

SHOWTIMES: LENGTH:

FEE:

Client to provide:

As compensation for the performance, <<client>> agrees to pay Cris Johnson the total sum of \$<<fee>> to be divided as follows:

A deposit in the amount of \$<<deposit>> is to be paid with the signed agreement to secure the above date. Please make checks payable to Cris Johnson. The deposit is non-refundable if the performance is canceled within 45 days of the date of your event. The remaining balance of \$<<balance>> is due on or before the date of your event. If payment is not received the day of the show, there will be a 20% penalty added.

This agreement is valid 14 days after the issue date above. If the signed agreement is not received on or before that date, the agreement becomes void and Phantasms Magic Productions reserves the right to schedule another engagement on the date that is being held for the above event.

If program is satisfactory, the performer asks that the client agree to provide a typed testimonial letter on group, organization or company letterhead stating a few positive comments about the presentation within 14 days after the event. This is not required, but would certainly help the performer. ☺

Other than under the circumstances outlined above, neither party to this Agreement shall have the right to cancel this Agreement, except in the case of a mutual agreement by the parties to cancel, made in writing and signed by both parties, or in the event of an Act of God. Artist shall have the final determination of what constitutes an Act of God allowing cancellation by a party. The attempt by one party to cancel this Agreement in any manner other than those specifically allowed by the Paragraph shall be a breach of this Agreement.

As Agreed:

For the Client

Date

Cris Johnson, President

This agreement is not binding until the deposit has been received!

Invoice

Some schools and systems have their own unique rules about how they are and are not allowed to do things. One of the 'rules' I encounter a lot is the whole idea of invoices.

A client will say to me, "Please send us your contract and we can start doing the paperwork." Then, at a later date, or even sometimes on the day of the damn show, the client will tell me, "Oh, the business office told me they need your invoice before we can process your check." In years past, I used to respond with, "But I sent you my agreement weeks ago." The client would respond, "We need it to say 'invoice' at the top." This really burns me up!

As a result, I've got a simple invoice in my ACT system. When I enter the client info into the database, with the press of one button, my computer will generate three invoices for me: one for the deposit, one for the balance and one for the entire amount.

The vast majority of the time, one invoice for the full amount is sufficient, although I've encounter some clients who keep changing their story...so I just send all three. Still other times, after the client has requested my agreement AND an invoice, I will receive the invoice back in the mail to me! And then I occasionally get the phone call that says: "Okay, I've signed your contract, but I don't see any place to sign the invoice." Sometimes you just can't win!

The easiest solution to all of this business is to ASK the client what you need to do (more on that in the "troubleshooting" section coming up soon).

Regardless, on the next page you'll see my invoice. It has the necessary info throughout, such as names, dates, locations, fee amounts, etc. You'll notice I also include how I want to make the check out (to ME!) and I also include the name of my company, Phantasms Magic Productions, on the invoice. A few points on this...

Nine years ago when I went "full time," I wanted a name for my business so I used the one I'd been using all along – Phantasms Magic Productions, which is really pretentious sounding to say the least! I never got around to changing it (I've heard it's a tax headache) and many clients WANT a company name as their policy is to "not issue checks to individuals, only business names." Why this rule is in place is beyond me. I suspect it's a checks and balances thing, so Jane Doe on the Board of Education for that district cannot secretly write a check to John (her husband) Doe or something like that.



"Interactive, Informative & Fun High School Programs Your Students & Faculty Will Remember Today, Tomorrow...Forever!"

Phantasms Magic Productions
www.HighSchoolAssemblies.com
716.283.1373 Toll Free 1.866.558.0077

Invoice for Performance Services

This document will serve as invoice for BALANCE for the services of CRIS JOHNSON (PERFORMER) representing PHANTASMS MAGIC PRODUCTIONS performing programs for <<client>>(CLIENT)

Please make all checks payable to Phantasms Magic Productions.

Please mail DEPOSITS to

CRIS JOHNSON
PO BOX 4004

Niagara Falls, NY 14304.

Client Name:

Client Address:

Date of Event:

Services to be Provided:

Client Contact Name:

Client Phone #:

Performer Contact Name: Cris Johnson

Performer Mailing Address: PO Box 4004, Niagara Falls, NY 14304

Performer Contact Phone #: 716-283-1373

Balance Amount: \$2000.00

THANK YOU!

Don't forget to ask about our "Teacher In-Service" Programs!

Follow-up

So, you've done your performances and everyone's loved you. Now it's time to pack up and head home. Now what?

I'm a firm believer in maintaining a client database. I have two: one in ACT, which allows me to group clients by category, location and more very quickly. This means if I have a batch of past clients in central Florida for example, using ACT, I can generate that list of clients very quickly which would allow me to mail to just those clients if I have a specific gig date coming up in central Florida again.

The second way I have a client database is in a simple Excel document, that I not only have on my computer but also two separate external hard drives which means if my computer rolls over, belches and dies, I still have my data.

With this data, I can send out several follow-ups:

- Thank you's (right after the show)
- Monthly newsletters
- Monthly ezines
- "anniversary" mailings of the last show
- Special announcements (new shows being developed, for example)
- Holiday greetings (just to keep your name on their mind plus it's a nice thing to do.
- The previously mentioned "geographic" mailings when I'm going to be in their area again
- Surveys (find out what programs your client wants!)

That's just a few things to get you started. Your client list can be incredibly valuable to you.

Getting Testimonials

This section is going to cover a few ways to get testimonials and specifically why they are so powerful in your marketing efforts.

This is one of those subjects where I thought I could just breeze over it as anyone getting into high school performing would surely be familiar with, but I simply believe in covering all bases.

Imagine, for a moment, that you're considering using a mechanic's services to repair your car. You meet him face to face and he immediately tells you how great he is, stating he's the best and so on.

For most people, the natural urge is to RUN in the other direction! In this day and age, we're instantly suspicious of anyone touting their own credentials. We doubt them, so we want proof.

Instead, imagine you walk into his office and you see all kinds of "thank you" letters lining the walls from past customers. Some of the letters are handwritten, some are typed. But they all rave about the mechanic's skills and fair pricing.

In most cases, you're going to feel better doing business with this guy.

So, when you're marketing yourself, testimonials are of the utmost importance. They offer social proof. Here's a few "formats" in which you can obtain the testimonials and the high and low points of each.

Evaluation Forms...

By far the easiest kind of testimonials to get. I used these all the times when I was just starting out. I'd give one to the client, a few to the teachers and one to the principal (if he or she watched the program). As I handed the form to each person, I'd mention that I would still be in the assembly area packing up for 30 minutes or so if they could finish the forms and send a student down to drop them off.

I would include just a few questions with boxes the client could check off. Stuff like this:

In your opinion, the program was:

___ Amazing & fun

___ Enjoyable

___ A Waste of time

You feel that the program's content was:

___ Relevant to today's teens

___ Effective at communicating real-world issues to teens

___ Not relevant

I'd include a "comments" section where they could write in any thoughts. I'd also include a box they could check that allows me to quote them. Whatever the client checked off, I could ethically use that along with any written comment with quotes around it in written materials for marketing materials.

The key is making it EASY so they are willing to do it. And I should point out that you could receive less than perfect remarks. When I was developing my Reading Appreciation show for elementary schools, I received a LOT of less than flattering evaluation sheets. At the time I was modeling Dave Dee's "I Love to Read" show and most of the teachers did NOT feel the show was relevant. However, I used it as a great learning experience and now I have a great reading show.

Letters...

This is by far the toughest to get. People are just BUSY and even though they may intend to mail out that letter, time just gets away from them.

I have around 30 or so actual letters that I can send out if a client wants a physical promo package (doesn't happen often) and it looks really impressive to open the package and see that bound booklet of testimonial letters on school letterhead. I've also included 25 or so evaluation forms to give the booklet more bulk.

These days, I find it tough to get letters. I'd go into sheer "panic mode" if I ever lost the master copies of those letters...hmmm...I'd better start scanning!!

There are a few things you can do to increase the likelihood of actually getting the letter.

1. Get a verbal commitment for it at the gig when the client is still on the 'post-show high.'
2. Mail out a cover letter with an included self-addressed, stamped envelope to the client immediately after the gig reminding them of their agreeing to do this.
3. Include a small gift as an unstated ethical 'bribe' and guilt! In the past, I used \$5 Blockbuster gift cards. These days, I'd probably go with a Starbucks (or other popular franchise coffee joint) gift card.
4. Do NOT make mention AT ALL in the cover letter of the gift. It's best left unstated. That way you're not OVERTLY trying to 'guilt them into action.'

Video...

These days, I've gotten lazy and prefer this method to the others. Once the show is over, I wait for my client and maybe a couple of teachers (or even the principal) to approach me and tell me how great the show was.

I then tell them how thankful I am for those kind words and if they would be so kind as to repeat them into the camera? I then appeal to their ego, telling them that since I'm not famous, having comments from great clients such as them will really mean a lot as to whether people will decide to hire me.

If a client is steadfast in not wanting to appear on camera, I don't push but instead resort to...

Email...

This is my least favorite, but any testimonial is better than none. I can cut-n-paste their email comments into any written format that I want, including their name, position in the school, city and state. I feel that including all of that information will help make the testimonial read as more believable.

In closing, testimonials are critical for your long-term success in most markets in magic.

MISC. TROUBLE-SHOOTING

Confirm That Check!

Over the years, I've run into a number of annoyances when it comes to being paid for a school show performance. I've touched upon some elsewhere in this course, but I thought it would be helpful to have them all in one section for easy reference.

Quick Note: Most of what I'll be covering is based on my experiences here in the United States. If you live in another country, some of this will not apply to you.

Purchase Orders...

Purchase Orders or "P.O's" as they're often referred to is an invoice sent to the performer usually several weeks before the performance by the business office, district office or some other person in a 'business' or payroll capacity.

Sometimes the clients will warn me – "The business office is going to send you a purchase order." And that's often all they'll say.

When I started doing school shows, I'd get these cryptic things said to me. Other times, they'd ask my permission: "Is it all right if we send you a P.O.?" Or, "Do you accept/work off of a P.O.?"

In the beginning I did not know what the person was talking about so I simply said "yes."

The truth of the matter is that every school system/district/building has their own unique way of dealing with things here in the U.S. and the only way to make sure you're going to get paid is to ask a LOT of questions.

When a client for a high school gig says I'll be receiving a Purchase Order in the mail, it could mean one of several things:

- It may mean I have to call the business office after I receive the P.O. and send them a separate invoice WITH their P.O. number on it in order to be paid.

- It may mean that in addition to the above, I also have to send the business office a separate W-9 form filled out (more on this later).
- It may mean I ONLY need to send the business office a W-9 for tax purposes.
- It may mean I only need to give my social security number or business tax ID# to the business office.
- It may mean I have to do NOTHING at all. Rare, but it does happen!

Before I get into the details of the above scenarios, I want to touch on the P.O. itself. It usually comes addressed to me or my business and consists of one sheet of paper and usually looks like a packing slip. In fact, most of the time, there are cautions and warnings on it not to allow goods to be delivered without signatures, etc. Then there's a line or two mentioning me and/or the show I'm providing along with the fee.

The hosting school's name and address is also on the P.O. somewhere.

Somewhere on the thing, in some little corner, there is usually a note to the "vender" (performer) saying that an invoice needs to be provided before payment can be "processed." This little line is usually very tiny...elsewhere, you'll find the business office's address and phone number.

The first thing I do when I receive one of these things is to call the number, give whoever answers the P.O. number (usually at the top of the paper) and ask them to walk me through everything that I need to do to get paid on time.

Often, the person answering the phone has no idea what I'm talking about and I must get transferred to other departments at least twice until I get someone who can help me. I give my number one last time and then they usually walk me through the steps.

I must add in a cautionary note though...often these people treat me like I'm a moron because I don't know "their" process, and when you work across the country as I do, it can be very trying because everyone has their own way of doing things.

Fortunately, if you explain that you're a performer and that you work in multiple states and that every state has their own processes, most of the time these days I get sympathetic people on the other line of the phone who are happy to walk me through their process.

When I get a P.O., I ALWAYS call the business office number on the paper. I call even if the client at the school says I don't need to. I've found in the past that if I

don't do this, very often the client is mistaken and then on the day of the show, the client apologetically says, "Oh, I contacted the business office and they said they need a W-9 and an invoice from you and it takes three weeks to get the check processed." Those are irritating days to say the least!

So now, I always ask, at the time of the booking if they need anything else from me, such as a W-9. Speaking of...

W-9...

A W-9 is a U.S. government form that many clients ask you to fill out for tax purposes. It simply means that they are covering their butt with the government, saying they are paying out "X" amount of dollars to "John Doe, Magician/Speaker." (That's you.)

What this also means is once you fill out this form, if you don't claim this income when doing your taxes if you live in the U.S., you could get nailed.

The forms are very simple to fill out, just asking for your name, business name (if different), mailing address and tax ID# or your social security number. If you're doing business as a legit business, you may have a tax ID# from the federal government or, like me, you may do business as a sole proprietor and use your social security number.

Invoices...

I've touched upon this earlier but wanted to include it here. When the client says, "We'd like to book you," ask the client what they need from you. If you need to provide an invoice, well, do it. :)

Communication...

After you complete the booking, check in with your client periodically to make sure no one has dropped the ball. Most mistakes or misunderstandings can be avoided by diligent communication.

Directions & Parking

I remember the old days of needing to get specific directions from clients. It was so stressful! I had tried many times to read standard maps to get to a gig but I just found it to be something I couldn't do.

Then things got better with MapQuest, which I had pretty good luck with, even though there were occasional mistakes.

Where my life REALLY got better, though, was the day my wonderful wife Libby bought me a Garmin and this was a godsend! So, if you haven't picked one up yet, do it – you'll be glad you did.

On another note, ask your client specific questions about parking once you get to the school. Many schools have specific places for visitors to park and/or unload equipment.

In most cases, it's not a terribly complicated ordeal, but in big cities, parking may be an issue. I've been told by some schools to "park down the street in an open space." Some of the bigger cities' schools even have their teachers park on the street!

In my case, because I have so much stuff to unload, I tell the schools that regardless of where I end up parking, I MUST be close to the school in order to unload. Some principals have been miffed at this, but to me, asking a presenter to park two blocks away and wheel his stuff to the school.

In truth, while parking itself is occasionally a pain, getting the schools to allow me to unload as close as possible to unload is not an issue.

As with everything I've covered, ask questions and keep those doors open for communication.

Batteries

This is one of those obvious things I shouldn't have to mention but even a 'veteran' performer like myself still makes mistakes.

Double-check your batteries and use a battery tester to make sure they're charged.

A few years back, when I really started embracing electronic effects and props, I switched mostly to rechargeable batteries. It's a heck of a money-saver and it's good for the environment.

The only issue I've run into is keeping batteries charged. When I'm on the road for several weeks at a time, I bring my battery chargers with me.

This brings me to...

Checklists

So many times, as professional performers, when we pack and re-pack a show over and over, we go on “automatic pilot,” because we know our stuff inside and out.

Regardless of how many times we do a show, it’s a good idea to have checklists.

I’ve found especially in my work that checklists are really helpful as often when I am on the road, I often perform different shows – on a Monday, I may perform a Drug Awareness show for an elementary school, then Tuesday I may perform my Murder By Magic show for a corporate group and then my Lead to Succeed show for a high school on a Thursday.

This means I have a variety of different props for the different shows and sometimes it can be difficult to keep everything straight, hence the checklists.

Wrap Up

I believe I've been about as thorough as I could be with this course. Performing in high schools is both artistically and financially very rewarding. The shows can be challenging which makes a good performance so rewarding.

If you have any questions about any of the material in this course, contact me via email: crisjohnsoninfo@verizon.net.

Thank you for making this purchase. I look forward to hearing of your success!