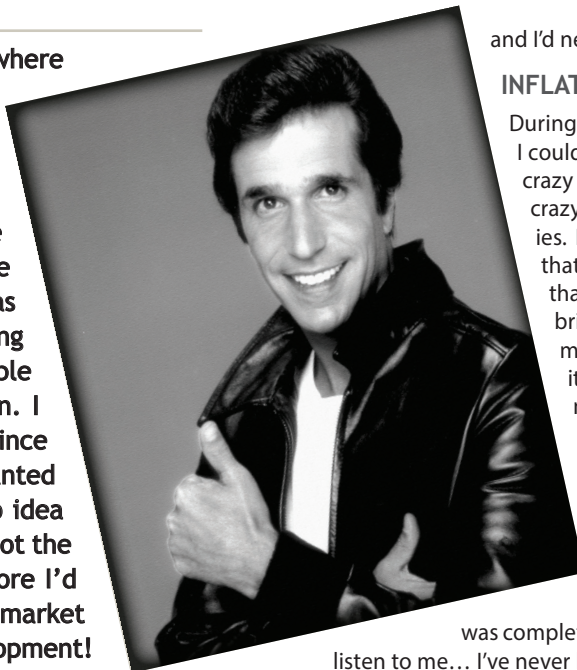


The Fonzie Effect

YOUR REPUTATION PRECEDES YOU...SO MAKE IT COUNT

By Stu Chisholm

I'll never forget my very first gig where I broke the four-figure pay barrier. Fresh from college, a good friend of mine had set her sights on a career as promotions director for a radio station. To occupy her time during her job search, she thought she would further pump-up her resume, as well as her bank account, by forming a DJ group and promoting her stable of entertainers. I was the first one in. I expected rates to go a bit higher, since she was taking 10% up front and wanted to maximize her profits, but I had no idea she'd be charging four figures until I got the contract in the mail. In the days before I'd made my own business plan or did any market research, this was a stunning development!



and I'd never met them before.

INFLATION THEORY

During the entire party, it seemed as if I could do no wrong. The people went crazy when I played it safe. They went crazy when I pushed their boundaries. I had a couple of new routines that I'd never even rehearsed before that night, but the attitude of the bridal party and guests inspired me to give them a try. They ate it up! At the end of the night, I not only got hugs and handshakes from the couple, but the biggest tip I'd ever received from the Father of the bride.

He pumped my hand, saying, "I told my daughter that I would pay for a band. When she told me she'd hired a DJ, I

was completely against it. I'm glad she didn't

listen to me... I've never had a better time at a wedding!"

Again, I was taken aback by the sheer adoration that seemed to flow from a group that, when I arrived, I felt may have been taken advantage of!

Lying awake afterward thinking through the night, I tried to figure out what was different. The most obvious difference was twofold; my friend had advertised, found the couple and booked the gig, and she'd also met with them, doing all of the pre-planning. The only time I had spoken directly with the client was when I called the Bride a few days before to go over the itinerary and name pronunciations. Why should these things make such a huge difference?

HAPPY DAYS

While I was lost in thought, the TV was on. I hadn't been paying attention to it up to that point, but suddenly noticed that an old episode of *Happy Days* had come on. The show had been very popular when I was in my first year of college, and students would often gather around the TV in the lobby of the girl's dorm once a week to catch "The Fonz," as we dubbed the show. The Fonz was short for one of the main characters, Arthur Fonzarelli, aka Fonzie, the ultimate 1950s cool guy.

I'd watched the show since the very first episode, which had actually been a segment of an older show called *Love American Style*.

When the show first premiered, there was no Fonzie character. When the producers decided to write the character in, they laid the groundwork by having the established characters talk about his exploits. Stories were bandied about until, at long last, the actor Henry Winkler, dressed

A LITTLE RESPECT

It was quite a surprise when I arrived at the venue. Some of the people the bride and groom designated to set up the hall had finished early and were standing outside. As I got out of my van, I heard guarded whispers: "It's the DJ! Wow...our DJ is here!" They all seemed to have this sense of awe that caught me off-guard. One of them came up a second later and introduced himself, welcoming us to the venue. Thinking about the job at hand, I asked him which entrance I was supposed to use. He pointed it out and said, "Do you need any help? We'd be happy to move your equipment in for you!" It took me a second to realize that he wasn't joking. Pointing out my assistant, I thanked him for his offer, yet the excitement and respect in their voices was unmistakable.

Once inside, I was directed to the stage. Tables, which I required at the time, were in place and skirted. One of the men, holding the checklist I used to send out, pointed out the electrical outlets and showed me how they'd marked the two different circuits I had specified on the list. All of this was again a bit unusual; I'd often have to run around trying to scrounge a table, or have to deal with a broken or bowed table provided as almost an afterthought, and then prowl around with a circuit tester to find the necessary power, as most clients ignored the details of my contract. The final touches, though, were the pitchers of ice water that had been placed in the dressing room adjacent to the stage, and the sign with my name on it that had been placed in the placard holder on the door. Clearly these people were impressed with me,



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in full '50s "greaser" garb walked onto the set. The characters—AND the studio audience—let out a collective, "Whooh!" The Fonzie character hadn't even spoken a line yet, and the audience was already impressed. He could do no wrong! Thinking of this, the proverbial light bulb went off: I made the connection.

AGENT PROVOCATEUR

Being a media junkie and broadcasting student, I dubbed this writer's device "The Fonzie Effect." Apparently my agent, who was also an excellent sales person and, I'll admit, biased as to my talents, talked me up to the point where all I had to do was show up to impress them! The fact that I commanded a higher price than most of the other DJs also had played a part, putting me in a class all by myself in their minds. And, ironically, it made my actual performance easier and more adventurous and innovative than it might've otherwise been.

In the years since, my agent friend moved on to bigger and better things, and although I've worked with other agents from time to time, I've also had to find more innovative ways to achieve the Fonzie Effect. One solid way is to issue press releases and get an article published in a local paper, or maybe even a mention on a TV or radio program. This once again is seen as other people talking about you before your client actually meets you directly.

Big companies are using YouTube to achieve the same

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results. They create videos that feature their product or brand that looks as if it was made by "Joe Average" in the hope of going viral. Not to be outdone, everyone from bands and

singers to small businesses are doing the same thing, since the cost of admission is low. With just a minimum of effort, a cheap camcorder and a whole lot of hype, an aspiring rock star, new business or funky new product can potentially get in front of more eyeballs than traditional advertising could provide, and at a fraction of the cost. It gives the appearance of being posted by a third, disinterested (but impressed) party; MAJOR Fonzie effect!

All DJs know, or SHOULD know, that word-of-mouth is the best form of advertising. Former clients talking about "the great DJ they had" at their wedding is Fonzie effect in actuality! So along with a marketing plan that includes an agent, press releases and a decent video campaign, entertainers should never overlook their best advertising asset: happy customers. Don't wait for them to recommend you! Talk to them. Send them a thank you card. Enclose a satisfaction survey. Solicit a letter of recommendation. Ask them to record a video testimonial. Stay in touch! Over time, you will have a literal legion of fans promoting your service; an unpaid sales force generating the Fonzie Effect for your business. Aaaaaaay!

Until next time, safe spinnin'! **MB**

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