

By Bill Guertin

The 800-Pound Gorilla

BUSINESS LESSONS FROM “HEE HAW”

Remember *Hee Haw*, the corny comedy-variety show? From 1969 to 1993, people loved the country-bumpkin humor, the hilarious oddball characters, and the pickin' and grinnin' talent of Buck Owens, Roy Clark, and their many musical guests.

One of the signature *Hee Haw* segments was two forlorn hillbillies singing:

*Gloom, Despair and Agony on me (Woe!)
Deep dark depression, excessive misery (Woe!)
If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all (Woe!)
Gloom, Despair and Agony on meeeee!*

How many business owners do you hear singing this song today? The words are slightly different, but the message is the same:

“Business is horrible.”

“Nothing positive ever happens in this town.”

“If only I could afford to advertise/move/buy better merchandise/buy out my partner/get a better sign/(fill in the blank), I'd be doing a lot better.”

Nobody ever achieved their goals by being miserable all the time. That is, unless their goal was to be miserable. What are you doing to purge these people from your life? And if you're one who's singing, there are people that are going to want to purge *you* – so why aren't you changing your tune?

Another popular segment was when people would pop up out of a cornfield set and recite one-liners. A unique part of the segment was the use of “bloopers” to make it even funnier. If someone screwed up their line, they kept the cameras rolling and tried it again. Some of the actors got the giggles so bad after the fifth take, they never could get their lines out.

Why were the screw-ups always the funniest bits? *Because they were genuine and unexpected.*

The best advertising and marketing being created today has those same two qualities; it's genuine, and it's something the listener or reader isn't expecting. Predictable ads are boring, and go largely unnoticed.

Does your advertising look and sound like everyone else's? How predictable is it? How genuine is it? The era of hype and exaggeration is over. People are now responding to what's being portrayed as genuine, and the best advertisers are the ones finding ways to project genuineness in unusual, unexpected ways.

The incredible talent of Buck Owens and Roy Clark was showcased on nearly every episode of *Hee Haw*. Just when you think it couldn't get any better, each week the duo managed to out-do themselves with their

fancy fingering and fabulous performances. It was a sharp contrast to the simple, backwoods style of the rest of the show, and every week it looked like they were having a ball.

What they proved every week is that you can be excellent at what you do and still have fun at the same time.

Does your staff understand this simple concept?

Do your people (and you) truly love serving others at work? And if so, does it show? If you were to choose five customers at random and ask them if they thought the employees liked their jobs, how would those customers respond?

Is your staff a' pickin' and a' grinnin'? And if not, what would it take to get them there?

Let's sum up these three Hee Haw Business Lessons:

- **Be positive.** Make sure that you and others around you—including those who represent you—are positive, and shake yourself free of those who aren't.
- **Be unexpected.** Surprise your potential customer with honest, unique approaches to your marketing message. Same'o same'o gets lost; unexpected gets noticed. (And by the way, surprising your current customers with something they're not expecting is also a good idea. Regular stuff has to be extra good to be noticed; pleasant surprises are talked about far more often.)
- **Be excellent and have fun at the same time.** If a guitar player and a banjo player can prove it can be done for over 500 episodes, certainly you can find a way to do it too.

Great performances are a combination of many talents, skills, and abilities all working toward a common goal. If you can be positive, be unexpected, be excellent and have fun, your business will grow as tall and straight as this year's corn crop.

And if y'all E-mail me at bill@The800PoundGorilla.com, I'll send you a few more Hee Haw business tidbits I've discovered... including the power of BR5-49.

Bill Guertin, Chief Enthusiasm Officer of The 800-Pound Gorilla, works with companies of all sizes to improve their sales, marketing, service skills, and profitability.