

THE HISTORY //

Acting Up is an innovative and unique corporate story-telling company, which inspires engagement from the workforce. The approach involves high-impact performances coupled with workshops that use fictitious scenarios to generate problem-solving conversations about health and safety, leadership, wellbeing and culture in general.

Since its inception in 1997, Acting Up has worked extensively with Shell, The National Grid, the London 2012 Olympics and many others and has been recognised in the Creative Partnership and Creative Training categories of The Arts & Business Awards.

THE SPARK //

Acting Up was founded by Scottish actress Emma Currie in 1997, when she was asked by the DTI Oil & Gas Division to turn a dry company message into something more engaging.

It was a Eureka moment, showing Emma that there was an urgent need for better communication of important messages, messages that could save lives.



"It's about taking theatre out of context and to a different audience. It gives oil workers and people in industrial jobs a real shocking experience of the emotional side of health and safety, whereas normally they are just shown PowerPoints."

- Emma Currie

THE STORIES //

The live theatre performances Acting Up deliver communicate important messages through relatable, real-life characters. Here are some descriptions of some our live pieces.



- ***Gail's Shoes*** takes a look at a marriage struggling to cope in the aftermath of an accident.
- ***Below Par*** tackles the important subject of workplace bullying through the eyes of a complacent supervisor
- ***The Vigil***, where an accident waiting to happen is personified as a femme fatale.
- ***Davy's Baby***, reveals that the clues to an accident are already in place before it happens

By using characters, as opposed to pie charts and PowerPoints, people engage more deeply and more immediately with the message being put across, and are therefore better equipped to enact change in their own work.

We use films too, which are each beautifully put together stories, unusually told. These films form the backbone of a library of e-learning modules, Acting Up World.

“By filtering these everyday, real-life scenarios through recognisable characters and situations, as opposed to pie-charts and slide-shows, people engage more deeply and more immediately with the message being put across, and are better equipped to enact change in their own work.”

Emma Currie

THE STEPS //

The first stages would be for Acting Up to show and then gather stories from the workforce. We can then show the stories told by the workforce in multiple ways: they can be turned into a film, a presentation, a monologue or a short novel. We creatively produce an account of the culture as it is and so generate future conversations designed to shape and improve organisational intimacy and with it, culture.



THE TESTIMONIALS //

“Acting Up gave us the opportunity to explore some of the ‘could happen’ accidents from the eyes of our staff through the world of make believe and storytelling. The information gained helped me to understand the messages and information that hasn’t quite landed or hasn’t been interpreted as it was intended. I can now explore other ways of communicating and introduce new ideas generated by a story!”

Lucy Innes – UK Power Networks Services SHEQ Lead.



“It’s a hell of a way to present a message. Very, very powerful”
- AGR Peak Well Management



You smashed it! - Mel Chisolm, SSE

CASE STUDY // SSE (ENERGY SUPPLIER)

OUTLINE:

A previous client, Richard Gough, remembered Acting Up from a few years ago when he worked at E.ON. He asked if Emma could present at their Managing Director, Colin Nicol's leadership event in Reading. Graeme Barclay, Project Director for the Caithness Moray HVDC link project was at the event and spoke to Emma about some of his engagement challenges in Caithness & Moray.

PROCESS:

Emma developed a process in sympathy with Richard Gough's work with the wider SSE strategy, to suit the HVDC Link Project. She worked closely with safety advisor Mel Chisholm and together, on site in Caithness and Moray, ran a series of sessions with the frontline workforce. Emma set a task to develop a character with particular traits to represent the typical site worker, having got their attention with a performance of Gail's Shoes and some fun story-telling tasks. Together they developed a profile which was an accurate (and amusing) portrayal of a fictitious person. This character was exaggerated but was familiar to them. The room was then able to identify this person's imbalances

and their relationship with the culture on their site, their processes and their reaction to the leadership. They were able to say things freely, as they were working with a made up character.



They were asked to take three recommendations to the management team to improve the life of said fictitious site worker. The session involved lots of engagement and energised conversations which would not have been forthcoming had direct corporate questions been asked of them. We then were able to gauge the culture on the sites and identify the areas in which the leadership could improve to support the frontline.

OUTCOME:

We took our findings back to Graeme Barclay and identified some specific gaps to do with the frontline's needs. It transpired that their requests for culture change were achievable and really to do with trust and "human-ness". Graeme Barclay asked if Acting Up could come back to deliver more sessions with those that hadn't managed along to the original sessions and also asked for some support with their supervisor's Tool Box Talk skills, in order to support the site supervisors in communicating and engaging the frontline in day to day safety.

Acting Up is now working closely with Mel Chisholm to fulfil this request and to make sure that the Tool Box Talk sessions are as engaging and informative as the first roll out proved to be.

CLIENT COMMENT:

The Client was happy that we made it a down to earth process and felt that the delivery style had been exactly what they needed.



CASE STUDY // UKPN (DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OPERATOR)

OUTLINE:

Lucy Innes, UK Power Network Services SHEQ Lead, contacted Acting Up after a member of her team had Googled us. She realised that she knew our company owing to her involvement with the National Grid, who commissioned Dead Jed, and Lucy had been using Dead Jed for a few years as part of a talk. I went to see Lucy and described the workshop process Acting Up uses to generate workplace conversations about culture. Lucy was excited and asked if I could present to the wider team, as she wanted everyone on the team to buy in to the process.

Some weeks later my colleague Suzanne and I went to London. I performed Gail's Shoes and took them through our process. Everyone agreed that the process was exciting and different and so we organized dates for the eight sessions, all to be held in London.

PROCESS:

We ran two 90-minute workshops a day for four dates, reaching 350 people. The process consisted of a surprise performance of Gail's Shoes, a story-gathering task, a challenge to become the HSE department and change the existing HSE material to suit followed by lively debate and finishing off with a look at the habits and traits of inspiring leaders.

We also gave Lucy access to the Acting Up e-learning platform to make use of as a follow up.

OUTCOME:

The sessions were really well attended and in fact attendance to each session grew as word spread that here was something fresh and different. Clients of UKPN started attending and there was a buzz about the opportunity to bring ideas to the table and address unanswered questions.

TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT US OR TO GET IN TOUCH

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