



THE  
BUSINESS  
OF  
MAGIC

Richard Osterlind

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# DEDICATION

For all the women in my life—  
Lisa, Ruth, Rachel, Brittany and Megan.

Because each one is a success, I am a success!

# FOREWORD

Although this book is directed to success in the corporate market, the contents apply to all performing venues. I hope you will not overlook its contents if corporate work is not what you do or want to do. I began writing my “success” books a few years ago and they seem to be well received. I am always amazed about that since I don’t believe I have any incredible insight. I recently received a letter from a person who just read *Making Real Magic*. His exact words were:

“I’ve read through it a few times. I really like your theories. Even in the last 24 hours they have helped me to no end. As odd as this sounds, it helped me realize things I already knew. If that makes sense!”

I believe that is the secret of my books. I don’t say anything new, just what you already know, but maybe haven’t thought too much about. I feel confident in my writing because I rely only on common sense and experience. I give what I live by and what I firmly believe in.

May you have great success in all your endeavors.

Richard Osterlind  
Falmouth, KY  
February 2005

# PREFACE

As I sit here and write, the nagging question that keeps popping into my mind is, “What right do you have to talk about success?”

There is no one as critical about Richard Osterlind as Richard Osterlind. Right now, because of my videos, books and effects, my name seems to be very prevalent. I am, however, completely aware that could change overnight. In fact, I fully expect it to! I have been in this business far too long to believe anything is “*for sure*” and know that what goes up, must come down. At the moment, though, I am on a bit of higher ground. While I am, I will cash in on it!

If you think that is a bit presumptuous, that’s fine. It is and that is the first rule of success. Cash in on the situation while you can! If I wrote this book five years ago, no one would buy it. Now they probably will. There is nothing wrong with taking advantage of that. In fact, you will never be successful until you learn how to benefit from your own achievements.

Years ago, I was a salesman for a large company. One of the most important rules I learned was to ask for referrals immediately after making a large sale. Usually, salesmen gloat over a big, profitable deal and go home to celebrate. They lose a golden opportunity to seek out further business while the client is still hot about his purchase and the product.

When you have a great performance, that is the time to give out cards, talk about what else you can do and look for new clients. You are hot and that’s when you should try to spread the fire! That’s simply what I am doing here.

Do not misinterpret the above to mean this book is sub-par. The advice in here works! Whatever you paid for it is small in comparison to what you can get out of it. I know that because 35 years in the business has taught it to me. I know this is needed because I am constantly being asked the kinds of questions I am answering in these pages. You may be tempted to interject some

of your own thoughts and ideas while you read. Please wait until you are finished before doing so. If something seems illogical at the moment, or a corner left unturned, you may find that I round that one in the next chapter.

I wish you success in magic and in life. I promise you I have two goals in mind in writing this. The first is to clarify and help you see your dreams. The second is to continue making a good living!

# — 1 — WHERE YOU ARE

Remember the old saying: *Be careful of what you ask. You may get it!* It is true, especially in magic. There are thousands of magicians performing professionally and many are looking for something better. That may or may not be what they think it is. Everything comes with a price and you have to be prepared to pay it.

Look at some of today's superstars. They are beautiful, make tons of money, go to exotic places and are always in the news. We picture their existence as some type of fantasy. But look at the kind of life they have to lead. They have no privacy. They cannot walk the streets, go shopping or dine like the rest of us. Everyone is trying to get their money and the tabloids are always ready to dig up (or make up) any dirt they can about them. People try to break up their marriages, photograph them at their worse, find skeletons in their closets and harp on the smallest of mistakes. They are flooded with temptations of all kinds. Sex, drugs and alcohol go hand in hand with fame and fortune and the worse kinds of characters are lurking everywhere.

Pitfalls are not limited to the world of entertainment. Over the years, I have been fortunate to work for many high-profile people from many walks of life. I can tell you not all of what I have seen is desirable. The ultra-rich life may seem attractive until you see behind the façade. People must choose their friends because of their station in life and what they have to offer. They belong to country clubs because it is "expected." They throw extravagant parties to keep up the show. More often than not, these people are far less happy than you would imagine.

I am constantly approached by magicians wanting to know what they have to do to make more money in the business. No one ever seems to be happy with their current situation. Yes, it is possible to make some very good money as a magical performer,



but not without hard work and certain risks. Over the years, I have gravitated to corporate events. (I will explain *why* in a later chapter.) I now perform approximately once a week for a fairly high fee. This might seem like heaven to the guy doing five or six birthday parties, family shows, scout parties, etc. each week trying to make ends meet. It can be, but it can not be!

When we were attacked on September 11, 2001, my performing world stopped. So did that of my friends who do the same kind of work. Overnight, every show I had booked was cancelled. No one thought it was appropriate to hold their planned events and no one wanted to fly. Everyone was affected, but the guys doing the local shows fared much better. The smaller shows will always go on and very rarely will they be drastically affected by world events. I, on the other hand, became basically unemployed! I realize that my own small predicament was nothing compared to the pain and suffering caused that day, but it did affect my family and I for months.

Working for higher fees has another big disadvantage. You cannot work at a certain rate for one client and cut your price for someone else. If you suddenly find yourself commanding a four-figure fee, you have to maintain that. If times are hard and you have no work, you cannot go out and perform for a couple hundred bucks for some quick cash. If word got out, your career would be over. With each jump you make in your fee schedule, you basically cut off all shows that fall below that level.

You also are expected to deliver for what you are being paid! A bad show in the \$200 price bracket, although not commendable, will soon be forgotten and you can move on. A bad show in the \$5000 bracket can haunt you for years and cost you countless clients! By “bad show,” I am not just referring to a bad performance. The cause may be a faulty microphone, a bad performing area or even a rude crowd. These things may seem far removed from your responsibilities, but the audience and the person booking you won’t think so. At the end of the night, if the show was a failure, it will be viewed as your fault.

Because of that, you have to go out of your way to assure that everything necessary for a successful show is in place. Some performers have a reputation for being difficult to work with or too demanding. Let me tell you that over the years, I have probably fallen into this category. I have demanded new sound systems,

moving the stage to a different area of the room and other major changes. Twice in my 25 year career, I have found the venue I was to perform in elaborately set up for my performance as per my rider with the stage, spotlight, sound system, decorations, etc. in perfect order, but with a loud band in the next room! In both instances, I demanded that either they move our room or the band's. The meeting planners and hotel officials were dumbfounded at this demand, but in the end, they moved our room (with absolutely everything in it!) to a different location. Both shows went great and in both instances I was commended at the end of the night for taking the initiative to make things right.

At this level of performance, there are too many people's reputations on the line. Meeting planners are always paranoid as their jobs hang by a thread, my manager's reputation with the company is at stake and the booking agent (if one is involved) has his status to think about. This all rests on the performer's shoulders. Big money brings big responsibility.

When you jump a step higher, the stakes really increase. David Copperfield is a friend and I cannot think of a more exciting evening than seeing his amazing show. He is the consummate artist and never disappoints his audiences. I have watched him run his show from in front of and behind the curtains. The pressures are incredible! I have seen him use special tents behind a smaller theatre to hold and prepare huge props that must be moved in and out of the auditorium at a moment's notice. I have seen him deal with last minute changes or illusions gone wrong. I have seen him perform when he was so sick that he should have been in bed.

Last year, by coincidence, one of his vans was involved in a very bad accident (thankfully, the truck driver recuperated!) at the very exit where I live in Kentucky. My brother-in-law works at the garage that they towed the semi to and the stories he told me about the recovery were amazing. The performance was cancelled for a couple of days, but replacement props were soon in place and the show went on.

The last time I saw David live was in 2004 in Dayton, Ohio. It was his second show of the day and he, like always, was incredible. Afterwards, David came out to say hello to a few old friends and he looked totally exhausted! He was so tired he could just about talk. After spending a bit of time with him, we moved on

to go home, relax and ponder the show. David, on the other hand, went back to directing the massive take-down and back to his bus to hit the road for the next town. There is not a lot that is glamorous about show business once the lights and music are turned off!

Please do not think that I am trying to dissuade you from improving your position in the performing world. I, like you, am always thinking of ways to do better and advance. I am only trying to show the realities of what this business is about.

To blindly go after a goal without understanding the possible results is not smart. You must weigh all the consequences of your actions, before you make them. Do your best to see performers of all kinds and try to meet them and see what their lives are like. Find out what they have had to give up in achieving their success. Remember, this is show *business*. Treat it as such.

# — 2 — 95%

I was attending a *Meeting of the Minds* a number of years ago. All of the top mentalists were there. After discussing some of the new books and products that had recently come out, one attendee said, “95% of all the new mentalism out there is junk!” Bob Haines, who was a great friend and a wonderful human being, responded with, “95% of *everything* out there is junk!”

I don’t want to take issue with a person who is no longer with us and was such a good person, but I think his comment depends on where you look. Sure, if you study your junk e-mail which promises you all kinds of happiness and drugs that offer an increase in the size of certain body parts, that rule will hold true. If you look at the credit card applications in your real mail that promise you immediate credit, but with a \$200 membership fee, a top limit of \$350 and a 27% interest rate (when you read the small print), you may also agree with Bob. There is, however, a different way to look at things and that is what this chapter is about.

It is my contention that 95% of what we have offered to us in life is wonderful and useful! Some magicians may read the ads for this book and think, “Not another book on becoming successful in magic! Aren’t there enough of them already?” Yes, there are a lot of them and most of them are worthwhile! They are written by people who know what they are talking about and there is a lot to be learned. If you follow their advice, you will be more successful!

This is not only true in magic, but in life in general. A trip to your local Barnes & Noble will reveal bookshelves full of tomes on how to improve your life, make more money and be happier. Do you know what? They work! Most of them are written by professionals who make important points about life and give good advice about how to improve it. I just read Donald Trump’s new

book, *How to Get Rich*. If you follow his advice, you will get rich! This is not a book full of insignificant words that teach nothing; it is a life-changing book. But there will not be a lot of people who will read it and get rich because they will not *do* what the book says to do. That is the problem in today's world; we are overloaded with good stuff!

For years, I have told magicians to read *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie. Another on my must-read list is *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale. These 2 books, in conjunction with a good memory course by Harry Lorayne, could just about guarantee your success in any area of life! I know this sounds very simplistic, but I hold by it. Read, study and apply these materials and you will go far.

The problem is that most people won't. Because there is so much good literature available, most of it is overlooked. This was, of course, not always the case. When our great land was first founded, people had to fend for themselves and use their wits. Knowledge was crucial and people strived to get it. News of world events took months to reach our shores and new inventions and innovations were slow to reach the masses. The ability to go to school and learn was not there and the thought of any really advanced training was limited to the rich. Contrast that to the life we live today.

We often see immigrants from poor countries rise to the top of their professions here in America. The work ethic they bring is not hard to understand. In their impoverished homelands, there was little hope for self-improvement. Then they come to America and can't believe the opportunities available. They relish the thought of improving their lives and take full advantage of the prospects that have long been available to all of us. They train their children to study hard and rise to the top of their class. They are what all Americans were when they first reached our shores.

Look at the cynical view many Americans have of their own situations. They see themselves as prisoners of their lifestyles. They can't believe they can break out of their financial circumstances and that they are doomed to the life they now have. With all that is available, they choose instead to continue on their present course which is leading nowhere. Anything new that is offered or anything that could change their lives for the better is

viewed with skepticism. Please, don't be in that frame of mind. Walk out your front door, take a deep breath and just consider all that is out there for you to grab hold of! There is no reason you cannot achieve anything you set out to accomplish. All you need is...to do it!

# — 3 —

## YOU HAVE TO BE GOOD

Before we can start talking about how to be more successful in magic, you have to realize one thing – you have to be good! There is no substitute for that! Yes, you can use a lot of what I am writing in this book to help you get better shows that pay higher fees for better clients, but you will not sustain that for long unless you deliver. You have to be what the client expects and more. You cannot ever disappoint your audience and a standing ovation should be the norm and not the exception. To accomplish this, you have to be devastatingly honest about what you do and how you do it.

I wrote a trilogy called *Making Magic Real*, *Making Real Magic* and *Essays*. These books were designed to help you be the best performer you can be. As I pointed out in the last chapter, there is a mountain of available information from which to choose your material and your performing persona from. There are books, DVDs, VHS tapes, conventions, lectures and private instruction for you to perfect your craft. There is no excuse for not providing top-notch magical entertainment that is totally professional.

I will not give you a time frame for you to base your progress on as that is totally personal. It depends on your effort and dedication, but nothing good comes easily or quickly. Whatever type of magical entertainment you pursue, there are plenty of professionals already successful for you to compare your own skill level with. Just be honest with yourself as to how good you are. Finally, do not be misled. The technical side of magic is the easiest. The sleights and moves that magicians pride themselves with are, by far, the simplest part of magic to master.

Being good goes far beyond just the technical elements of magic. You must also be a good *people person*. You have to know how to talk to and handle all kinds of individuals. You have to be

able to speak to them and command their attention. You have to say things in such a way as to generate interest and make them want to listen to you. I have often said that you should be able to engage a group in a conversation for some time before you do your magic and still come across as a magician! Try talking to someone new and let them know you are a magician. Your first impulse will probably be to *do something* to prove you are a miracle man. Instead, try to just talk about what you do and see how long you can go before they make you do something!

You also must project a certain image and persona that says you are professional. You are a magician and that should mean you somehow look and act the part. For some, one look may be appropriate and, for others, a different look will fit. But whatever the look, you should look special! I have written about wardrobe and grooming in other places and Tarbell (magic's greatest teacher) also had a lot to say about it. Be concerned not only with your looks, but how you act, your manners, your courtesy and your friendliness. When you walk in the room, people should look at you and know you are someone very special!

Have you seen the show *American Idol*? Have you sat back and wondered what the heck some of these people are thinking when they get up to sing? It is laughable, but also sad, to see how many of them believe they are really good when they are pitiful. It just goes to show how self-deluded some of us can be.

Do not be like those contestants. The tried and true formula for determining just how good you are is to perform in front of *real* people. (*This does not include fellow magicians or members of your family.*) You should perform at every opportunity that's appropriate and leave whoever you perform for radically impressed! They should walk away thinking you are the greatest magician they have ever seen! If you can do this consistently and in all kinds of environments, you will know you are good. If, however, you come across as a nuisance or someone to be put up with, you are not there yet.

This is a test that I have seen a lot of so-called professionals fail at. They may be fine most of the time, but put them in certain situations or with certain age groups and they just do not shine. You need to be a magician anytime, anywhere and for anyone! You need to do your best regardless of who you are performing for. Even if it is a little off-hand stunt for the waitress at



your table, or a quick effect for someone you just met, you should try as hard to do your best as you do for your most important show. That is the golden rule to being good. *You must do your best every time you perform with every effect you perform!*

Let me end this chapter by giving you the converse of the above advice. Imagine you have just arrived for the most important show of your life. You have been flown in first class, picked up by a limousine, are being housed in a fabulous suite and you are being paid more money than you ever thought possible. When you walk into the room where you are to perform, do you want your guests to be better dressed than you, speak better than you and project a better personality than you? And when you finally walk out on the stage to perform, do you want to come across as ill-prepared, unprofessional or uninteresting?

As I said in the previous chapter, success requires responsibility. It is the total package that you are selling and it is your responsibility to make sure that everything you supply is worth what they are paying for.

# — 4 — TRAVELING

I am now going to give you the most important secret for making big money in magic. It is so obvious to me that I cannot believe this hasn't become general knowledge for magicians. The secret is: *If you want to make big money in magic, you have to travel!* That's it, plain and simple. It goes back to biblical days where the Bible says, "You cannot be a prophet in your own city." Until you are hired to fly somewhere to perform, you will never really make big money! No matter what the company is, or what the event is, if they know you live a couple of miles away, you will be considered a local boy and will get paid what local boys make.

Let me take this a step further. If you make \$500 a show in the area where you live, you should make at least \$2500 (this does not include airfare or accommodations) to fly somewhere to perform.

The main reason is that you are *selling your time*. If you have to drive for an hour to a show, your total time investment is about four hours to do a one-hour show. Figure one hour to prepare, one hour to drive there, one hour to do the show and one hour to drive home. If, however, you are flying to a show, you are probably investing the better part of two days of your life! That is worth a lot more and the client has to pay for it.

Gary Puckett (of the old Union Gap band fame) has a wonderful line on his promotional demo. He says, "You don't pay me to sing. I love singing and would sing for free. You pay me to go on the road!" That is exactly what I am talking about.

It is human nature for people to assume you are important if you travel. Even though most of my shows are booked by referral, the majority of the people in attendance usually don't know who I am. When I introduce myself as a mentalist they usually say, "That's nice." But when I explain that I am from Kentucky and that their company flew me in for this event, they suddenly

have a new respect! It's unspoken, but means, "He must be good if they flew him here just for this party!" Everyone knows the price of air travel these days and knows a person who was flown in doesn't come cheap.

This, of course, is just the start. If you routinely fly to most of your shows and your fee goes up accordingly, then, as pointed out in the chapter *Where You Are*, your general fee has to go up for all your shows. Even a local show demands more money as your general fee is now much higher. The client doesn't have to pay airfare and accommodations, but your fee is your fee. This is how you can still work local and yet not be considered one of the local boys. In other words, you normally fly, but this time, luckily, you can just drive to the show.

Let me add one quick story here that is worth telling. Some years ago, I traveled to a number of cities on a lecture tour for the local magic clubs. At one such event, one of the local fellows stood up and complained that no one in that area pays good money. He stated that \$100 was about the top fee any magician could get in that town. I didn't have the heart to tell him that, just one month earlier, I was in that same town doing a show for a local company and was paid my standard fee. I am not relating this story to brag, but just to illustrate my point.

So the obvious question is, how do you go about getting shows that require you to travel by air? We will discuss this at length in a later chapter. For now, however, you have to heed the advice in the earlier chapter, *You Have to be Good*. Regardless of how you get to the point where a company pays you big money to fly you in, when you get there you had better deliver. Shame on you if, after all that trouble, you don't shine and make them feel it was worth the money. That is why there is no way around this. You have to be good—*really good*—if you want to live this life.

Once you can do this, however, you will find that the work will just grow on itself. Although most meeting planners will have a stable of local acts to call upon for the smaller shows, for something really big, they won't use that talent because of the "local boy syndrome." They will, instead, seek out what they consider to be talent a step above.

If you have a history of world travel and success for other clients, they will feel safe booking you. Just like you will be blamed for not producing should something be wrong with the sound

system, etc., they will be blamed if the talent is not up to par. As stated before, meeting planner's jobs hang by a thread and they will not take any unwarranted chances. They want a tried and proven act and that is what you must provide.

# — 5 —

## THE RIGHT CLIENTS

I promised earlier to explain why I choose to go after the corporate market in my career. I am a firm believer in learning from the greats. Max Malini had a motto: “If you want to make money, you have to go where the money is!” I have found this rule to be a guiding light in my work.

In my *Making Magic Real* series, I tried to gradually build up my view of what the art of magic is all about. I have a mathematical mind and that comes across in all my thinking. In mathematics, you can use all the right formulas and perfect logic, but one small mistake in the basic math can throw off the entire problem! That is why I often harp on very basic principles when dealing with a complex problem. In trying to solve the intricacies of magic, I used that procedure. I will do that here.

The belief that you will make as much money as you are worth is not entirely true. As a matter of fact, it is rarely true! There are so many factors involved with this question that it is impossible to discuss them all. Let us, however, try to boil it down to a few simple ideas. You will make as much money as you are worth *depending on what you negotiate and what the client is capable of paying!* I know this is obvious, but many performers don’t think this through. They believe that the better they get, the more money they will make. Unless you seek out the types of clients that can afford to pay more, you will not improve your fee no matter how good you get. Again, if you want to make big money, you have to go where the money is.

Rich people have money! On a side note, I have met a lot of regular people who resent rich people. I can’t understand this. I love rich people! It’s the rich people that have the money to pay me! It’s rich people’s money that allows us regular people to live well. This is not just in magic, but in all of life. Rich people put their money in banks so that normal people like us can get loans

for new houses and cars. Rich people build things that employ normal people such as carpenters, electricians, plumbers, etc. Rich people go into stores and spend lots of money so that those stores can hire normal people to work and make a living. Never be so naive as to think badly about the rich.

Rich people get their money from big corporations. If there is a lot of money around, there is a corporation behind it. Even in those industries we think of as being apart from the suit and tie corporate world, they are still there running things.

Take the music industry, for instance. Rock stars, rap singers and country artists seem about as far removed from corporate America as you can get. Yet, the recording companies, the television music stations and the performing venues are all owned by huge corporations who call the moves. Movie stars seem to live in a world of their own making, but take away the desire of the movie companies to employ them and they are finished. Football stars, basketball players and professional golfers can only go as far as the corporations running things allow them to. These people do create their own demand, but still it is the corporations that act on that demand.

I know this all seems obvious, but it is necessary to drive home the point that it is people sitting behind desks in huge office buildings that make everything happen. The smart move is going directly after these corporations and their own events if you want to make really big money. Although the businesses they own may be lucrative, nothing will come close to working for the home office.

As an example, the Trump organization owns many casinos. You might get a job performing in one of their lounges and your fee will be dictated by what that casino normally pays such an act. If, however, The Donald's home office is having a Christmas party and you are lucky enough to get a job performing there, your fee is negotiable and the sky is the limit. You can bet what you end up with for a night's work there will be a lot more than that job in a casino!

This kind of work is plentiful and not just for holidays. Large corporations constantly hold events all year long. Many hotel chains rely on these meetings for a main part of their income. Marriott hotels, Four Season hotels and a slew of other hotels and resorts have huge banquet rooms primarily for such corpo-

rate events. Usually these award banquets feature some after dinner speaker. This speaker can be a famous sports figure, a politician or some type of entertainer. This is where you can fit in!

You can only imagine what a company might pay to get an ex-politician such as Jimmy Carter or Bill Clinton to speak. A current baseball star or professional golfer commands huge fees. If you move into that area, the meeting planners are used to paying big bucks! A fee that might seem totally extravagant to you will probably seem like a bargain to them. You have a benefit as you are going to *do something* rather than just speak. But your speaking qualities and personality have to match what they are used to getting in those other speakers. You have to be able to *fit in* and that is where the real challenge is.

I have found that mentalism works perfectly in this situation although any magic can work equally well if it is thought out and appropriate. Some type of *message* always helps such as the *Power of the Mind* or *You Can Accomplish Anything*. You don't want to get too corny and you shouldn't try to portray yourself as a motivational speaker (a much worn-out phrase), but there should be a *reason* why you are there. Of course, your main job is to entertain, but if you can offer a little something extra, it can pay tremendous dividends. Just be subtle!

For many years, I was brought in on the last night of meetings as a "closer" for the event. Lately, however, I am often booked on the opening night. The companies I work for found that my show was a great way for all the attendees to get to know each other and get them talking. Because I involve so many participants and since much of my show deals with their individual thoughts, it is a natural way for everyone to loosen up. That has now become another selling point for my show.

If you can establish yourself as a corporate speaker, there are enormous benefits that will come your way. The first is the tremendous size of these companies. Many corporations are so big that you can do numerous shows throughout the year for the same company and never repeat an audience! Meeting planners speak to other meeting planners and quite often a company officer or some other important figure in the company will recommend you to other groups. Your fee will be known so there are no negotiations necessary. Often, members from other companies will be in attendance and can get you an "in" with their own organiza-

tions. Also, if you can perform on stage for an audience of 200 to 500 people, then it goes without saying that you are more than qualified to do smaller, more intimate gatherings.

I personally make it a point to perform whenever and wherever possible. By doing a few things before and after the main show, I let it be known that I am very capable of working at trade show booths, hospitality suites and private parties. From such engagements, I have found myself performing before governors, ex-presidents, famous sports figures, television stars and even on stage in Beijing, China for 600 Chinese businessmen through the use of an interpreter!

The road to getting into this kind of work is not easy and there is a lot that must be understood. Hopefully, the following chapters will help you get there!



# — 6 —

## AGENTS, MANAGERS AND MEETING PLANNERS

I can't tell you the countless times I have been asked by younger magicians if it is necessary to have a booking agent to be successful. This simple question shows how misunderstood the nature of the business is. Booking agents are only a part of corporate business and sometimes play a very small role. Of equal or even greater importance are the meeting planners and the managerial agencies the corporations deal with. Let me explain the function of each.

Entertainment agencies are in the business of selling talent. A client comes to an agency and says they need a particular type of act. The booking agent finds and sells the client that act. He collects his percentage and that is the end of the deal. Entertainment agencies have no vested interest in the talent. They will continue to use an artist as long as everyone is satisfied, but the agency has many artists and will use a different one if necessary. I am not trying to make the booking agent sound cold. It simply is not his job to promote the artist any further or to become directly involved in the artist's career.

A personal manager, on the other hand, does have such an interest. His job is to further the artist's career as much as possible. He advises him on his act, his looks, his dress, his behavior and his career choices. He works with the artist to create promotional material. He handles press coverage and TV appearances. He handles all the financial aspects of the business and does all the booking whether it is directly from a client or from a talent agency acting in behalf of a client. For all this, a personal manager receives a much higher percentage of the artist's fees than a talent agency does.

Obviously, the relationship of the artist to the manager is a

very close one. It must be one of complete honesty and trust. I have been represented by my personal manager for over 25 years!

Meeting planners are just that. They plan meetings from beginning to end. They are responsible for the banquet room, the decorations, the music, the menu, the lighting, the entertainment and every other aspect of the event. Notice I said they are *responsible*, not the deciding factor! Usually they are given the guidelines for the meeting by the CEO or other prominent official and they have to make everything work. Depending on the company and circumstances, they have more or less power to make decisions.

You should know that there are two types of meeting planners. The first is from within the organization and they are actual paid employees of the company. The second are the independent meeting planners who have their own businesses and work for many clients and companies.

These are the basics of each of these jobs, but usually there is an overlapping of responsibilities and interests. Many professional managers also run entertainment agencies. This is the way they find the talent to represent and this is the way they make contacts.

In my own situation my manager handles a number of other types of talent such as musicians and comics. Our main clients are in the insurance industry and my manager often gets called to provide a piano player, trio or comic for a smaller event. By servicing these accounts throughout the years, he has built up a relationship with them that helps immensely in promoting me. When a client calls and asks for entertainment ideas for an upcoming event, he is in a perfect position to recommend me.

My manager also services meeting planners. By doing so, he has an “in” for other events. As I mentioned earlier, the meeting planner’s job often hangs by a thread. If the event does not go as well as planned, regardless of circumstances, the meeting planner is ultimately responsible. Like the team leader in *The Apprentice* TV program, if they lose, it’s into the board room to see if they will hear, “You’re fired!” By supplying top notch and successful talent, my manager knows the meeting planner will show appreciation in the future. An often-heard phrase from them is, “You made me a hero!” This, of course, also makes my manager a hero in their eyes. You know they will come back!

The reverse, unfortunately, is also true. I was performing at an event where the client wanted a comic as an opener. My manager booked the talent through an agent in Atlantic City and was told that he was perfect for the job. My manager repeatedly stressed to the talent that he should not work dirty. Still, like so many comics do when they are not going over well, he reverted to blue material. It was the exact opposite of what he had been told to do! My show went great, but still, the evening was a disaster. The meeting planner felt the wrath of God from her boss and my manager felt the same from her.

Although it was entirely the fault of the comic, we lost that client for five years! Luckily, we now have them back and the relationship is mended, but it goes to show how just one mistake can cost you thousands of dollars. A good relationship between your manager and meeting planners and talent agencies is essential!

You may be thinking, "I will just do it myself." I'm afraid it is very difficult if not impossible to represent yourself in the corporate market. Without someone with the right contacts, you will have to rely on making them yourself. That can take years and you will never match what the agencies have. Plus, you will be viewed as competition! You are outside the circle.

When an event or meeting planner is hired to run an event, they like to supply everything, including the artists which they get from talent agencies. They base their profit on their total expenditures versus their total fees.

Having to deal with a single, outside performer makes it more difficult. If that person's fee is high, the company may ask the meeting planner to reduce what they are supplying or reduce their price. That makes you an enemy! It is far better to work with them then against them.

You are much better off being on their payroll and being part of the solution instead of part of the problem. Working through a manager and/or entertainment agency that supplies the event planner with other talent keeps you part of the team. If you do a good job and are dependable, you will be used time and time again.

My best advice is to seek out the entertainment bureaus, managerial agencies and meeting and event planners in your area. Find out who does what and the type of clients they service. Look

for agencies that provide talent for big corporations all over the country and the world. (Remember the rule about traveling!) It may take awhile and you may have to prove yourself time and time again, but eventually, if you are worth it, you will prove your value and will be signed.

One last thought. I have come across some magicians and mentalists who call themselves corporate entertainers, but who really are not. They write books and give advice that is simply wrong! Yes, they may do a few corporate shows, but they make up the rest of their income from lesser paying shows at local comedy clubs, schools and smaller affairs. Do not be misled. What I have listed above is how the corporate world operates. To be part of it, you have to play by the rules.

## — 7 —

# PROFESSIONALISM

This is a very important chapter in this book. It might be the *most* important chapter. I would urge the reader to read it over a number of times and make sure all the points sink in. I am *sure* of this advice and, if you don't follow it, you will be hurt.

To begin, you must look the part of the professional. I covered much of this in my book *Essays* and will not repeat everything here. The basic gist is that you must look good – really good. Your clothes and grooming must be top notch. You must be freshly shaven, with your hair cut properly, and be wearing nice cologne. Even your jewelry should look expensive.

This is not vanity, but common sense. Think it through. You are booked to do a corporate show for thousands of dollars. You are supposed to be successful and a performer who travels all over the world. If you are doing that many shows and making that kind of money, wouldn't you buy the best clothes and jewelry? Wouldn't you get your hair cut really well and have your fingernails manicured? Would you wear a Timex watch or one that is much more expensive?

My own clients are mostly insurance executives and money management people. I have spent years looking at their clothes and jewelry and it is always top notch. If you don't come up to their level, they will notice! Again, it sounds vain, but it is common sense. The unspoken thoughts go something like this: "Look at his watch. It's a cheap one I saw in Wal-Mart. His suit comes from Sears. He must not really be as successful as he pretends. His show probably is not that good either!"

I know that sounds unfair, but that's how it is! As mentioned in *Essays*, a particular item of your apparel that is often overlooked is your belt. No matter how good your suit looks, if your belt is a cheap one with the gold plating coming off and the leather frayed, it will kill your whole appearance. The same holds true

for your shoes. Also, don't forget about your overcoat in colder climates! Make sure that matches the class of the rest of your appearance.

A very difficult subject to talk about is how you carry yourself. Each person is an individual and we all have our own style. I can tell you, however, that successful people stand tall, smile a lot and greet each other warmly! You have to look like you are happy to be there and can't wait to begin. You have to look like you *belong*! You must project an air of confidence that tells everyone you are quite capable of doing what you are there to do and that you have done it countless times before.

The only way I know how to create this impression is to believe it yourself! If you feel the part, you will act the part. One of the tricks that I use to accomplish this relates to the previous paragraph. I always have my suits freshly pressed and my shirts laundered and starched from the dry cleaner. My shoes are shined and the watch I wear is a good one strictly for my shows. Once I shower and get dressed, I feel special! The clothes make the man!

An important point to bring up is the "dead time" when you get to a performance. Let me explain. You arrive for the show and meet the people who have hired you. You go over all the staging, lighting and sound requirements. You set up your act and now you are done—and there's still half an hour or longer before show time! What do you do?

Yes, you can engage the meeting planners in conversation, but they will probably have many other things to attend to. Often, you will find yourself standing there alone feeling like an idiot! That does not help with the impression you make. It looks like this is your first time in this situation and you don't know what to do.

It is always good to have a place to go. If you use a rider in your contract (and you ought to), you should stipulate there must be some type of dressing room (or waiting room) available for you. This is where you can go to freshen up or just wait patiently for your show to begin. If you don't stipulate this beforehand, make it a point to ask for such a room when you arrive at the show. Most banquet facilities have smaller rooms that are being unused and it shouldn't be a problem. If you don't, you may find yourself standing in the corner with all the guests looking at you wondering who you are as they stream into the banquet room!

Another point that is touchy is how to act if things aren't the way they are supposed to be when you arrive. I mentioned earlier that over the years, I may have become a little difficult at times because of such problems. It was totally justified. Let's reason it out.

This is your livelihood. You make your living and support your family doing what you do. In any other occupation, no one would let someone else jeopardize their job because of their ineptness. Unlike a job in an office, where you can screw up occasionally and still be alright, if you mess up at a high-level performance, it will haunt you for years! Word will get around and you may lose thousands of dollars. The old saying that "You are only as good as your last show" may be a bit overstated, but not by much. You owe it to yourself, your manager, the meeting planner, the audience and your family to see that things go right!

If you call for a stage that is sized 16 by 20 feet and you get one sized 4 by 8 feet, you have to demand it be fixed. If you require a lavalier microphone and they give you a microphone on a stand, you have to tell them to go get you what you need! Period! If you test the sound system and it's awful, that will translate into "you're awful" unless you get it fixed.

You don't have to go as far as to threaten you won't go on, but you can insinuate it. You might say something like, "That simply won't do and I need it fixed before I can go on!" See? There are ways to say things and other ways to say things. A high-ranking official of a large corporation won't threaten, but will say things in a way that makes it clear he means business. You must do the same. At your show, you are as important as any of the company's officials!

Your show itself should be the easiest part of the evening. That you have control over and you should know your business. Most of my other books deal with performing and you should have that well under your control. I will mention one small point that is very significant and often not thought of.

You will, of course, have an introduction typed up for the person who introduces you (and use large type!) That is mandatory. What is often overlooked, however, is what happens *after* your show. Make sure that you tell the person who introduces you what your last effect is. Then tell him to come on stage *to take you off* after your bow! He should say something like, "Let's

hear it for Richard Osterlind!” Often he might add his own comments and can induce a standing ovation. It also puts a definite finish to the show instead of everyone sitting there wondering what to do next. Use this advice. It works!

Now we come to a very important point—socializing! Often, after a successful show, people will want to talk to you and socialize a bit. You want to be friendly and be able to interact with the CEO and other high-profile officers on a level which they do with each other. That is fine and it gives you a chance to sell yourself even more, but you have to be very careful here.

There is always a strong temptation to let down your guard and lose your professionalism. You cannot do this. A few rules go without saying. You should never smoke or drink with your clients! Even if they do, you don’t. Don’t ever swear or tell off-color jokes with them, again, even if they do!

If, after your show, the activities start to deteriorate, that is the time to leave. As a matter of fact, there is a kiss of death in this business that you must avoid at all costs and it doesn’t even concern your own behavior. It concerns theirs!

Sometimes, at these events, even a CEO or VP can have a little too much to drink. *The worse thing in the world for your career is to be around them if that happens!* They will forgive you being drunk in front of them quicker than they will forgive you for seeing them drunk! When you see things heading that way, excuse yourself and say that you have to get to sleep for the plane trip tomorrow—and leave.

We can boil all of the above down to a simple formula. Put yourself in the frame of mind that you are an important CEO from a visiting company. Act like you would imagine they would act and hold yourself with the same kind of dignity they would display. If you do that, you can’t go wrong.



## THEY ARE BOOKING - YOU!

I am about to tell you something that may make you mad, jealous or upset. My fee for performing is quite high, much higher than I ever thought it would be. It is not based on what effects I do, how long I perform or what kind of show I do. I make the same money for a performance of walk-around mentalism as I do for my full evening show! As a matter of fact, if someone wanted to fly me in to do nothing more than talk to their guests, my manager would charge the same fee. No one else can take my place even if they do my stuff. If they want *Richard Osterlind*, they have to get *me*! Am I making the point?

At the risk of sounding really conceited, let me try to illustrate this with another story. There is a trade show I have been doing for the same company for almost 20 years. I have become established at this show and many people look forward to coming by our booth to watch me perform. Last year I was doing a number of new effects and I would ask some of the regulars what they thought of them. They would laugh and say, “Yes, that was great, but I expect you to do stuff like that!”

Now, if you’re a reader of my other books, you know that I take comments like that seriously and examine them. I believe what they are saying is, “We have watched you time and time again and know that no matter what you do it will be really amazing and we love it!” I don’t think that is stretching the meaning too much. Since they continue to come by, that means they want to see more. Since they don’t really care what particular effect I do, that means all of my material has a certain feeling, or flavor, that they really like. Obviously, that comes from *me* and not the material. Sure, I try to choose the most powerful material I can find or devise, and that is part of it, but it my manner and my presentation that makes it work for me.

One year, my manager made a mistake with our dates. He

booked me for a show during the same time as the trade show. We got another very qualified magician to fill in for me. The next year, when I went back, I asked everyone how the other guy was. The answer was always the same. *“He was very good, but it wasn’t the same!”* That translates into, “He wasn’t you!”

*You* is the magic word. You must be unique and different. You have to stand out from the rest of your competition. You have to be distinctive and polished. You have to make them forget about what you do and just think about who you are! You won’t accomplish that by buying the newest trick or learning a difficult sleight. You will only get there when you examine who you are, what qualities you have and then capitalizing on them.

You can’t be false in this business, but don’t worry who you are. We each have within us all it takes to succeed. The first step is to believe in yourself. No one else will believe in you if you don’t first. The most damaging appraisal of another performer I ever heard was, “He lost confidence in himself!”

I consider myself to be a pretty average guy. There is nothing remarkable about me and I don’t possess any special skills that could have helped me along in my career. I am not particularly good looking, my voice is not deep and resonant and I don’t feel as though I have any physical qualities that help me to stand out.

Still, I have been successful in this business for over 35 years just being me and trying to make me as good as possible. The only times I have faltered are those when, as mentioned above, I lost confidence in myself.

That is the one downfall of being an entertainer. Most of us are pretty fragile underneath and it is not hard to start doubting oneself. The only remedy is to keep moving forward and never rely on your past achievements to get you through, but rather on what you are still capable of accomplishing!

More than anywhere else, a performer has to be well-liked to be successful in the corporate market. Your personality is your most important asset in succeeding. Unlike the public entertainment arena where success is measured by how well the box office did at your last show or how many people bought your latest DVD, success in the corporate world is usually governed by how well the CEO or a division head likes you! If he tells his meeting planners that he wants you at an event, you will be there! This may seem to imply that the road to success would be an easier

one, but it is not. I have found these people to be very shrewd indeed when it comes to sizing up someone. You have to remember that they spend their professional lives making decisions that are worth millions, if not billions, of dollars! They make these decisions by negotiating with other very shrewd people. If you make wrong decisions at that level, you are out of the game. The very fact that they are still in the game should tell you they know what they are doing. They can read people and they will be reading you!

To win over the confidence of such a person is not an easy task. Besides being a thorough master of what you do, you must display honesty, integrity and a very likable nature. At this level of business, these are the kinds of qualities that are most appreciated and understood.

You see that I keep coming back over and over again to the word *you*. It doesn't really matter what kind of show you do, how elaborate your apparatus is, how many laser lights you use or what kind of sound system you have. What it all comes down to is how much they like you. Perhaps it is the fact that these main decision makers don't have stuff themselves! They don't need props. Their value is measured by their communication skills and knowledge. They achieve with their ideas alone. They judge others by the same values. If you can demonstrate these same traits, you will be like them. And they will love you for it!

It is my hope and desire that the words I have written may hit home in some way. Perhaps just one sentence or phrase got you thinking in a new way or solved a problem you have been experiencing. Whether it is in the corporate market or the performing world in general, the opportunities are huge and there is plenty of room for everyone. Never think there is too much competition. Never think you don't have what is necessary! There is always room. Be yourself and make *you* the best. Success!

# — BONUS CHAPTER — TIPS ON TRAVELING! (HUMOR)

I always like to offer some kind of bonus in my books. Because I stress the need to travel so much in *The Business of Magic*, I thought this chapter would be useful. Please remember, you must now make a career choice. It's either having a job requiring air travel or professional bullfighting. I admit, the bullfighting career is less dangerous and stressful, but we must be faithful to our art.

Let's start at the beginning. Never allow yourself to become upset during air travel. Please remember that all airline employees are not real people, but rather androids (real people were replaced in late 1989.) Because they are programmed to say certain things, it is pointless to question or argue with them in any way. They will simply repeat the required response over and over again. Luckily, with the advancement of science, the new kiosk machines are largely replacing these rather outdated units and soon their only function will be to place destination tags on your luggage.

The security force, however, are not androids. They are ex-prison guards. It is highly recommended not to make eye contact and to obey everything they say. The disrobing lines at the X-ray machines are run by them. They have total authority over your life and have the right to shoot you if they so choose.

Incidents of this, however, are rare and only occur when a suspected bad guy attempts to gain access into the secure area with a dangerous weapon—such as a nail clipper or metal key ring. Be aware of accidentally leaving such articles in your pockets. You can avoid any problems by making sure everything you carry on board is purchased at the *5 and Under* department of your local *Toys-R-Us* store.

On a minor note, occasionally your ticket will have the letters SSS printed on it. This does not mean you are a very special person. It means you have been selected for a full body (and cavity) search. This, of course, is another attempt to capture bad guys. If you are not an old lady over the age of 80 or a young mother with a baby, there is no need to worry about this. They are the only ones ever selected for this search.

By the time you get past the security check (*if* you do), you probably will be a bit hungry since you most likely have been up since 4am. You should be aware that restaurants in airports are in no way affiliated with any that may bear the same name elsewhere. The term “McDonald’s,” for instance, does not signify the same food chain that exists in your local neighborhood. Airport food, from what I have been able to determine through my sources, is especially imported from a certain country in South America. This, I believe, is in partnership with the American Standard company.

Many seasoned travelers prefer just to buy a snack at the airport news store. Because of the cost of getting the highly trained, quality professionals who work in these establishments, it is necessary for the store to charge \$4.00 for a Hershey bar and \$7.00 for a Diet Coke. It is a wise investment, however, compared with the consequences of eating at the *Regina Tequila Salsa and Suds Restaurant*.

I should make special note of the prevalence of bars in the airport. You should consider this as the airlines’ way of keeping the masses quiet. Occasionally, however, a few who frequent such businesses do not remain totally composed. Southwest Airlines has generously jumped in to provide for that problem with its Monday night television program, *Airline* (8am Eastern, 7pm Central.)

It is important to carefully study the departure schedules to determine exactly what time your flight will be leaving. You will commonly see times such as 3:09, 7:41 or 6:22. You must make sure to get to your gate as the airlines abide by these departure times to the minute!

When boarding begins, the android will call out the order of the boarding sequence. Again, authorities have the right to open fire if you attempt to board before your number is called. Make sure you have your boarding pass removed from its holder when

it is your turn. Although you cannot be shot for this offense, you do leave yourself open to loud ridicule.

Once on board, do not be baffled by the luggage situation. Although there are definite rules concerning the size of carry-on baggage and the number of pieces, many passengers have special clearance that override those guidelines. You may be forced to place your own bag under your seat if all the overhead compartments are full. Do not worry as airplanes are known for the abundant leg room they offer.

As you board, please refrain from glancing into that secret chamber of the airplane known as “First Class.” Those sitting in that section do not appreciate being looked at. Do not make the assumption these individuals paid for these seats. Special cards with terms such as “Gold Elite” and “Million Mile Club” account for their positioning. Still, these are privileged persons in the one place in America where class distinction is allowed. So for now, go to the back of the bus. Don’t worry, one day soon you will have your own magic card and you can smile at the others who look on with envy.

Rest assured that the airplane you are sitting in is of the latest design with the newest and safest innovations. Do not be troubled by the fact that there is an ashtray in the arm of your seat even though smoking has been banned on airlines for close to two decades. Also kindly ignore any loose, hanging items from the roof of the aircraft or any small cracks in the windows. And remember, any fuel odors in the cabin are normal.

All cell phone usage must be discontinued once the aircraft doors are closed. You can use the convenient air phones which are provided in the seatbacks for only \$24.95 a minute (or any part thereof.) For some reason, which I have yet to determine, the airwaves of these phones are different than those of your personal cell phones and do not disrupt the aircraft’s navigational facilities.

Once airborne, you will probably notice that the flight attendant (the use of the term “stewardess” is punishable by imprisonment from 1 to 10 years) is not exactly what you might have imagined beforehand. Again, be assured that you will never find anyone of cheerier disposition and friendliness. She will be happy to attend to your needs no matter how many times you press the button to beckon her!

If the Hershey bar and diet Coke have about worn off, you will be happy to know you will shortly be able to “chow down” with the beverage service! It is always a happy surprise to find out what the day’s fare will be. Pay no attention to the date 1972 which appears on the bottom of your package of peanuts. With today’s preservatives, there is no cause for concern.

You will also be happy to know that when you are finished with the plastic picnic cup that was filled with your beverage of choice, you may be able to get a refill if the flight attendant feels so inclined. If you have not yet met the requirements for the television show *Airline*, here is your chance to do so. Alcoholic beverages can be purchased for only \$5.00 per bottle (two of these bottles are just about enough to fill a standard shot glass.)

A very important point to mention here is that, even though the seats are meant to recline during the flight, you run a 50% chance of upsetting the person sitting behind you which could result in violence.

If it should come to pass that you are in need of using “the facilities,” you are in for a new treat! The experience can only be compared to what it would feel like to go to the bathroom in the back seat of your car (if you are lucky enough to own a Volkswagen.) Please remember to stand before flushing the toilet as a number of passengers have been sucked out into space during this procedure.

When you have finally reached your destination, you will be asked to deplane. (This term was adapted from the TV series, *Fantasy Island*.) Please exercise caution when opening the overhead doors as the contents can shift during the flight. You should also exercise caution when stepping out into the aisle. It is a rule of thumb that if you do not step into the aisle within 2 seconds of the *fasten seat belt* light going off, permission is granted to everyone seated behind you to leave the plane first. Permission is also granted for you to be struck with their luggage if you find yourself standing at your seat while they go by.

The baggage claim area can be a unique and rewarding experience. Do not be misled into following the rest of the passengers on your flight to the correct baggage claim. They rarely are right. Nor should you look to the overhead displays to show which belt will be yours. The flight numbers are not posted until all the baggage has been picked up. That display is meant to show everyone

where the luggage for that flight *had* been.

Finally, you will have the opportunity to understand how busy and important all your new found friends from your flight are. When the proper baggage claim has been located and the belt begins to move, you will see how vital it is for each and every person to retrieve their luggage the moment it exits from opening. It is not uncommon for young children to be thrown onto the moving belt or for the elderly to be sucked into the tail end.

Do not worry if you do not see your luggage right away. In the unlikely event it doesn't show up (and only 35% of travelers have this problem), it will promptly be delivered to your home within two to three weeks. Should your luggage show up on the belt, please disregard any marks, tears, wetness or dirt that may appear. It is common knowledge that the average life expectancy of professional baggage is three flights.

Happy traveling!!!



# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Osterlind has been a prolific performer and creator of mentalism and magic for his entire life. Besides doing scores of shows yearly for Fortune 500 companies, he's found time to create some of mentalism and magic's most original effects. Besides the Osterlind Breakthrough Card System, he's the originator of the Slow-Motion Surrounded Center Tear, the Radar Deck, Industrial Strength Link, Thought Scan, the Osterlind Stainless Steel Blindfold, the Epitome and Ultra Boards, and many other marketed magic and mentalism effects.



His published works include *Dynamic Mysteries*, *Three Miracle Routines*, *Two Perfected Routines*, *The Very Modern Mindreader*, *The Perfected Center Tear*, and the best-selling e-book trilogy which consists of *Making Magic Real*, *Making Real Magic* and *Essays*. He also appeared in the *Challenge Magic* video in addition to the best-selling *Mind Mysteries* and *Easy to Master Mental Miracles* video series from L&L Publishing.

He lives in Kentucky with his wife, Lisa, and their two daughters.