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## A Shot in the Head

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Ken Futch delivers a keynote presentation for the 2007 National Speaker's Association in Denver.

*Ken Futch was awakened to discover his life's calling. Though it worked for him (luckily), he recommends that others use a different method ...*

"It took a shot through the head to open my mind," quips Ken Futch, president of [Ken Futch and Associates](#), an Atlanta-based training company that teaches organizations and individuals how to turn opportunity into success. He is also the author of [Take Your Best Shot: Turning Situations into Opportunities](#). Although he is a very popular humorist on the motivational speaking circuit nationally, his opening line isn't a joke. Futch really did shoot himself in the head, quite accidentally, and thus, he says, set his mind free.

"I'm not saying you have to shoot yourself in the head to take a new direction in your life, but it sure worked for me," laughs Futch.

At the time of the accident, Futch was 31 and the picture of success. He was the top revenue producer in a group of 6,000 AT&T salespeople, and was soon to be promoted to top trainer at AT&T's prestigious National Sales School. Everything was coming up roses; he just didn't expect the thorns to draw blood so suddenly.

"I was sitting on the bed talking to my wife when I noticed my Saturday Night Special on the nightstand, and, for some reason, picked it up by the barrel," he says. "Just as my very agitated wife said 'Are you sure the safety is on,' it went off, aimed directly at my face." The bullet entered his right cheek and exited his left temple. The wound should have been fatal; instead, it was life-altering. "What started as a tragedy ended up as destiny," muses

Futch.

The bullet miraculously passed through Futch's sinus cavities and nose, traveling under his eyes, following a natural hollow space found in every human head. The doctors were stunned, but no more so than Futch.

He left the hospital, he says, "with two band-aids, a tetanus shot and a note that said I could return to work tomorrow." He arrived home with wounds on his face and a lot on his mind. "I liked my job. I was very successful, but I thought there was more I could do with my life. The problem was, I didn't have a clue what that might be."



Ken Futch speaks at an Aflac sales rally.

It would take three years before Futch would get an inkling of what he might like to do, and another seven years before he was able to pull it off. His vision for the future struck him while sitting in the Fox Theater where Zig Ziggler, Art Linkletter and other famous speakers and comedians were performing in one of Atlanta's top-billed motivational seminars. "I knew that's what I wanted to do, I just didn't know how to do it," he says.

To develop professional speaking skills, he joined Toastmasters and entered every competition the organization offered. It wasn't long before he found himself president of the Georgia Speakers Association and a Toastmasters International humor champion.

The promotion to instruct at the AT&T sales school in Denver, Colorado allowed him the opportunity to exercise and hone his speaking skills on a daily basis. It also later provided him with much-needed contacts to get his new business off the ground.

The final push to make the actual leap, however, came in the form of a buy-out contract. "AT&T was downsizing and they offered me a package to leave as well as the option to stay. It was the toughest decision of my life," he says.

In the end, the decision to finally break into something new came from a single consideration. "Bottom-line, I didn't want to be 65 and have my grandson ask why I never became a professional speaker," Futch says. "I didn't want to say that I didn't have the courage to try. I'd rather say I tried, I starved, then I got a real job."

Now, at 61, he delivers more than 100 high-impact programs annually for corporations that count among the Fortune 500, including GE, Coca-Cola, NCR, Pepsico, Volvo, AT&T, Scientific Atlanta, Aflac, Merrill-Lynch, Prudential and GulfStream. He has trained over 100,000 people in seminars presented throughout North America and Europe.

A passionate believer in lifelong learning, Futch has continued his own development by completing a five-year educational and experiential process, earning the designation of Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) from the National Speakers Association.

Futch maintains there is a single key to finding opportunity in any situation, even in the darkest moments of life. "It's not what you look at," he says. "It's what you see."

#### Most Requested Programs:

Ken Futch gives keynote presentations and does after-dinner entertainment at company banquets. He also conducts workshops and seminars, and does personal success coaching. He could easily make it as a stand-up comedian, but says you starve until you make it, if you ever make it. As a motivational speaker, he says, he still gets to perform but also makes a great living while providing a service. His most requested programs are:

- **Motivation: "Take Your Best Shot!"** --Turning situations into opportunities
- **Leadership: "Give Your Rifle Away"** --Principles and techniques for achieving results
- **Managing Change: "Grabbing on or Holding on?"** --Embracing the potential that change offers
- **Customer Service: "Providing Lagniappe"** --Increasing client retention
- **Team Building: "Bushy Eyebrows and Other Misperceptions"** --Improving communication and building trust