

John Cleese

Comedy legend, award-winning actor, author, screenwriter

John Cleese, writer, actor and tall person, is probably best known for the iconic television comedies Monty Python's Flying Circus and Fawlty Towers and the film A Fish Called Wanda.

His comedic genius is likely to have had its beginnings at school where he was often tormented for his height - he was six feet by the age of twelve - and eventually discovered that being funny could deflect aggressive behaviour in others.

However, although he has often been named "the funniest man alive," John Cleese is also an extraordinarily popular lecturer who enthralled packed audiences worldwide and a leading business motivator.

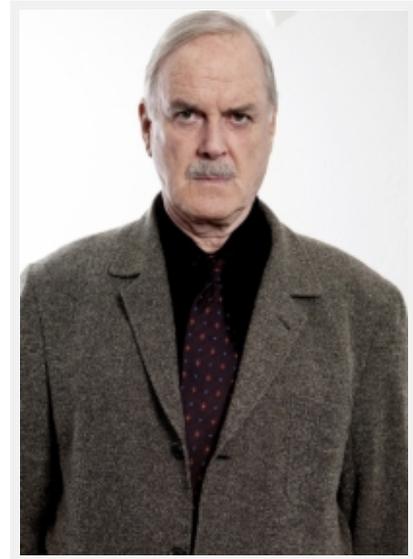
Video Arts, the video training company he helped establish, pioneered the use of humour in training and is now the world's largest provider of business training programs.

More about John Cleese:

John Cleese studied Law at Cambridge University, but devoted a great deal of time to the university's legendary Footlights group, writing and performing in comedy reviews, often in collaboration with future fellow-Python Graham Chapman. During the Sixties he was a scriptwriter for a number of BBC TV and radio programmes, including the influential Frost Report, presented by David Frost.

He was a founding member of Monty Python's Flying Circus which ran from 1969 to 1974 on the BBC. It was written and performed by John Cleese, along with fellow members Michael Palin, Eric Idle, Graeme Chapman, Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam. He also co-starred in and co-wrote the films Monty Python and the Holy Grail, Monty Python's Life of Brian and Monty Python's Meaning of Life.

After three seasons of Monty Python, John Cleese left the show although he continued his collaboration with other members of the Pythons for many decades. He then achieved probably his greatest success when he wrote and starred (with then-wife Connie Booth) in Fawlty Towers, which became a comedy classic despite only a dozen episodes being made. It recently topped the British Film Institute list of the 100 Greatest British Television Programmes.



During the 1980s and 1990s John Cleese focused mainly on film work. He has won BAFTA and Emmy awards, and was an Academy Award nominated screen writer for his film, A Fish Called Wanda. He appeared in two James Bond films, The World Is Not Enough and Die Another Day and, more recently, in the Harry Potter films. John also supplies his voice to numerous animated and video projects, and frequently does commercials.

In 1972 he set up the video training company Video Arts, now the world's largest provider of business training programs. He produced a series of acclaimed videos using humour (and many of his colleagues from British entertainment) to show good business practice, such as time-management, communication, customer service and creativity. From 1972 to 1991 Video Arts produced 100 films teaching skills in management, sales and service and John Cleese wrote and appeared in many of these. John Cleese attributes his success to his fascination with psychology and his love for teaching and making people laugh. He believes that "humour in training increases retention and decreases anxiety. When the training point is surrounded with humour, it can be readily digested, remembered and applied."

John Cleese is a passionate advocate of the need to encourage creativity in business life. He challenges the basis of the decision-making processes prevalent in most of today's organisations. He argues that unless organisations are brave enough to reject the notion that business managers should think and act fast they will lose the ability to come up with innovative ideas and solutions and consequently put their futures in jeopardy.

Throughout his career John Cleese has used humour as a teaching tool. Along with his Monty Python cohorts, he has helped present relatively advanced concepts in philosophy, science, history, religion, politics, human relations and physics to general audiences.

Education and learning are ongoing and important themes in his life. John Cleese holds an M.A. in law from the University of Cambridge and an honorary LL.D. from St. Andrews University, where he was rector from 1973 until 1976. He was an A.D. White Professor at Cornell University in New York for eight years - two years longer than the normal term. By popular demand from Cornell students and faculty he was appointed Provost's Visiting Professor talking to students about topics as varied as business, psychology, customer service, group dynamics, celebrity and writing.

John Cleese has also co-written two best sellers on relationships, Families and How to Survive Them and Life and How to Survive It.

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