

GAME SHOW TIME

By Mike Maione



Players Terry Oberman, Sherry Joy, and Alan Rubinstein try to come up with the top response.

Your monthly assembly meetings are probably like the Long Island Mystics Assembly 77's meetings used to be. They probably follow a standard format — a short business meeting, a lecture, or a theme show, and then finish up the evening at the local diner where the hardcore members share laughs and trade stories or techniques late into the night.

I enjoy our meetings, especially the diner part, but I do tire of the repetitiveness. The club shows each month tend to feature the same performers and the same themes repeated year after year. As a result, I am always looking to borrow or invent something that deviates from the usual. If you are looking for a novel idea to change your club's meeting from humdrum to humdinger, instead of just another silk magic or liquid magic night, you may want to consider a magic-oriented game show.

Our most recent foray into originality was a magic-based version of the popular television program *Family Feud*, complete with a projected game board, music, sound effects, prizes, contestants (costumed club members pretending to be families), and answers culled from surveys of 100 magicians. By all measures it was a huge success and certainly different.

Here's how we put ours together. You can do the same.

Using a free online survey service — www.surveymonkey.com — I created a ten-question survey. I asked things like "What's your favorite magic word" and "Name a famous TV magician." Using various magic on-line resources like SAMtalk, I sent the survey to magicians around the country and in a short

time had 100 responses. When the responses were tallied I started working with Microsoft PowerPoint to build the game display.

PowerPoint is a highly regarded presentation program commonly used by speakers to display information. It has all but replaced slides and overhead projectors in boardrooms, at conferences, and on the lecture circuit. It comes packaged with Word and Excel in Microsoft Office. Like all mature computer applications, it has expanded to include features most people don't utilize and casual users



Scorekeeper Lou Johnson, emcee and game creator Mike Maione, and Pat Darienzo who served as computer operator and judge.

are completely unaware of. Today, a PowerPoint presentation can include video, still photographs, moving graphics, customized animations, music, sound effects, slide transitions, and links to other pages in the presentation, as well as to other presentations, applications, and the Internet. Pretty much anything you can do on a Web page you can do in a PowerPoint presentation and then some.

I created my own template, starting with an original animated GIF for the background that simulates a marquee with chaser lights. For each round of the game, a new slide was created with the three to five top answers for each of the various survey questions added as text in the basic outline. A graphic bar was placed over each answer to hide it from view.

During the show, the cover bars vanish when clicked on, using the customized animation feature. For fun, we added buttons to display one, two, or three large red X's, a buzzer sound, applause, and the popular theme songs played at the beginning of the *Family Feud* show and at the start of each round.

A laptop computer connected to a digital projector was used to project the display onto a large screen. A second computer/projector setup was used to keep score. However, in retrospect, a better and far less complicated solution for keeping score would have been a simple white board — low tech, but just as effective.

The most difficult part of the production for those who want to attempt it will be the "lockout." Fans of the game show know that at the beginning of every round a question is

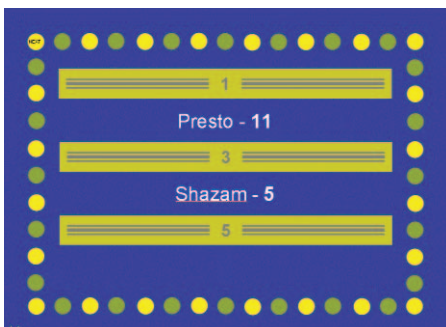


Jeff Miller and Ben Cohen face-off as Mike Maione reads the rules.



Magic Al Garber [second from right] gives the number one answer as team mates Ben Cohen and Steve Rodman look on.

put to the one player from each team in a face-off. During the face-off, the player that “locks-in” first gets to answer the question. A light signals which contestant locked-in first. Luckily, one of our club members, Steve Rodman, has a lockout for his *Game Show on Wheels*, a party entertainment his company sells, so we did not have to build one. For those less fortunate, a lockout is not that complicated to construct. Inexpensive kits are available on the web for those who like to tinker. For a less expensive low-tech solution, you can use a battery-operated closet dome light. Place the light between the players. When they face-off, the first player to hit the light, wins the face-off. I recommend that you make someone the official judge, just in case the face-off is too close to call. You’ll also need someone to work the computer, someone to keep score, and an emcee to ask the questions and interview contestants.



Powerpoint slide shows the 2nd and 4th most popular answers to the question, “Name your favorite magic word.”

Our program consisted of three games. In the first game, Family A competed against Family B. In game two, Family C competed against Family D. The winners of each game competed against each other in the third and final game. Because each Family was comprised of five contestants, 20 players were able to get involved.

We also encouraged club members to be creative and form Family teams prior to the meeting. They lived up to the challenge and three Families came to play in costumes. A fourth team was created from members who showed up to the meeting, their names drawn from a hat.

To fill in the natural breaks between games, we added some spoof TV commercials produced by member Pat Darienzo. One commercial spoofed a well-known Coca-Cola ad; the other was a public service announcement that promoted club membership. Both were well done, and very funny (and can be viewed at www.limystics.org.)

Inexpensive prizes were given to all contestants, winners as well as losers. But there really were no losers because everyone had a great time at a very unusual and extremely entertaining meeting. ❖

Mike Maione, who performs professionally as the Silly Magician, is a past president of the Long Island Mystics Assembly 77, and recently served as M-U-M's official photographer for the S.A.M. convention in Louisville.

Survey Said

The Long Island Mystics Assembly 77's Magic Family Feud game show, much like the popular TV program, pits two “families” against each other in a contest to name the most popular responses to survey-type questions posed of 100 people – in this case, magicians. Here's how some of the answers stacked up.

Name your favorite magic word?

The top 5 answers:

Abracadabra, Presto, Hocus Pocus, Shazam, Alakazam

Name a card magician.

The top 5 answers:

Dai Vernon, Cardini, Ed Marlo, Michael Ammar, Harry Lorayne

Name your favorite coin trick.

The top 4 answers:

Coins Across, Hopping Halves (Sun & Moon), Matrix, Scotch & Soda

Name a packet trick.

The top 4 answers:

Color Monte, Wild Card, Twisting the Aces, B'Wave

Name a famous TV magician.

The top 4 answers:

David Copperfield, Mark Wilson, Doug Henning, Criss Angel

Complete the sentence, “Magic is better than...”

The top 4 answers:

A real job, Anything, Sex, Doing nothing