

Picture this

BY PHIL FOGARTY

A new employee shows up on a Monday in May. Everyone is running around like maniacs trying to shake the weekend and deal with the list of folks who called off work that morning. The supervisor brings the new person into a back room and positions him or her in front of a 13-inch television/VCR.

"Watch this. I'll be back in . . . a little while," he says.

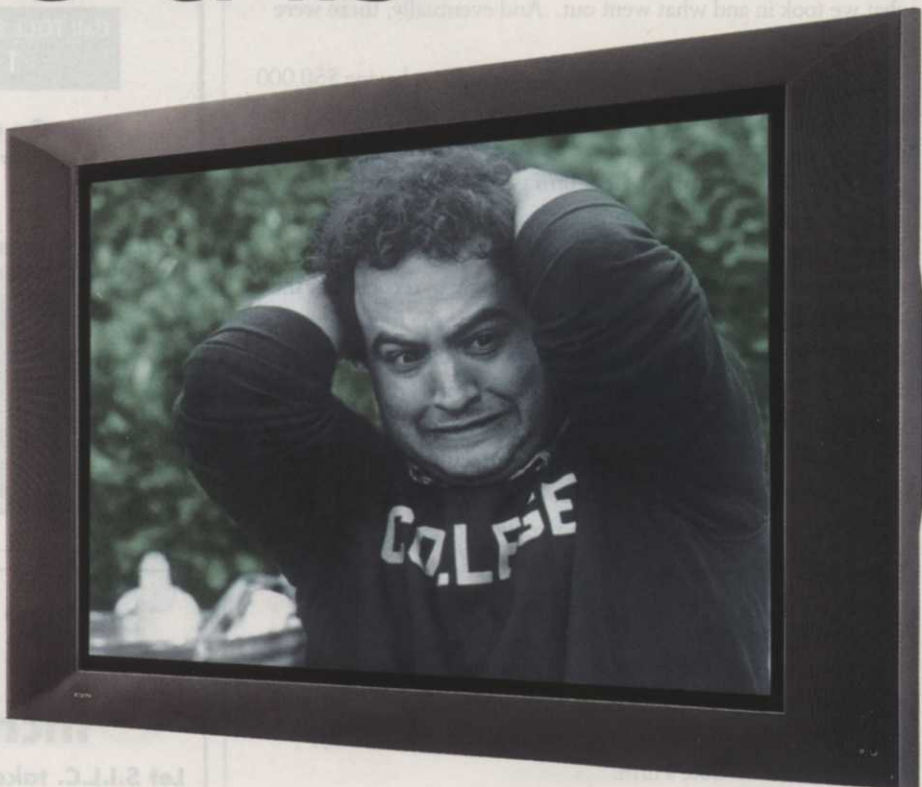
And as a generic training video on safety standards begins playing, the interest in a fresh face changes into a glazed and dazed look.

New twist, old idea

Let's try that again with a little twist. This time, the new employee reports on the day of your weekly training session. He participates in a review of your mission and even offers a suggestion on how to become a better leader for the company.

In this session, the instructor turns everyone's attention to the TV for a video "moment." The tape runs and the group moves out of the work context as they watch an excerpt from "Animal House." As John Belushi charges across the screen, their smiles turn into thoughts of how that movie clip pertains to the topic of the day.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a well-timed and focused video clip is worth at least one chapter in the company manual. Here are a few ways you can use your VCR to keep people interested and having fun:



JOHN BELUSHI: CORBIS IMAGES

You don't have to be an A/V nerd to spice up training. Movies or video clips can make your sessions fun and interesting

- ▶ Use video to emphasize an idea. By using film combined with a live presentation, you get the best of both worlds.
- ▶ Screen your video clips beforehand for inappropriate footage. There is a fine line between humor and vulgarity. When in doubt, ask yourself how theaters would rate it and stay away from anything rated "R."
- ▶ Keep it short — less than five minutes if possible. If an average audience can only pay full attention to a human in person for eight minutes without being involved, imagine their short attention span watching a screen.
- ▶ Set the stage for the video and have questions ready for review right after the viewing.
- ▶ Use all kinds of sources. Motion pictures, TV reruns, professional training tapes and even home movies can work.
- ▶ Consider using a digital camera for instant PowerPoint displays.

— *The author leads the Skills Development Series training system, sponsored by American Cyanamid and Landscape Management. For more information, call JP Horizons at 440/254-8211 or email pfogarty@stratos.net.*