

Interview with Greg Schwem April 2, 2012

Success Profiles Radio with Brian K Wright



4/2/2012



This week's guest was Greg Schwem, who has built a successful career as a stand-up comedian in the corporate world. We discussed how he got started, and how he cultivated his clientele. We also talked about how to balance a great career with family life. Greg's book "*Text Me If You're Breathing*" takes a humorous look at raising kids in a generation that is more technologically savvy than we are as adults. Greg is also a syndicated columnist with Tribune Media Service.

Brian: Hello and welcome to Success Profiles Radio. I am your host Brian K. Wright and it is a pleasure to be with you here today. I'm honored that you chose to spend part of your day with me here and this is going to be a really fantastic show. I'll be introducing my guest shortly and I promise this will be a fun and informative hour. It's going to be terrific. I do want to take a minute or two to share some things I've been learning and thinking about lately and I'll do this every week.

If you've heard this show before, you know that Brian Tracy is one of my favorite authors. I've read a quote by him recently that I've read before and it's always a great reminder. "*If you swing hard enough and often enough, you must eventually hit a home run.*" There are two parts to that. Swinging hard means giving your best effort all the time. You can't hit a home run if you're swinging half-heartedly. Success requires your full effort all of the time. You must also swing often enough. It's pretty rare to have major success in anything the very first time you do something. It requires consistent effort. So many people give up early in the game when they don't see immediate success. You may have to try many things in order to find the thing you're ultimately destined to do in life. Swinging hard enough and often enough is the key to high achievement in any field.

With all of this in mind, I'd like to introduce my guest. My guest this week is Greg Schwem. He's a corporate stand-up comedian and humorous business speaker. He's performed for companies including Microsoft, Cisco Systems, United Airlines, Motorola, IBM and McDonald's. Greg has also appeared in concert with the likes of Jay Leno and Julio Iglesias. His comedy bits about business and technology can be heard regularly on XM Radio's *Laugh USA*. His TV appearances include stints on *VH-1 Stand-Up*, *A&E's Night at the Improv*, *A&E's Caroline's Comedy Hour*, *Comedy Central's Short Attention and Span Theater*. His book, *Text Me If You're Breathing*, was written after he struggled trying to master text messaging lingo, iPod transfers, Nintendo Wii and myriad other technologies that his children handle with ease. Greg shows readers that technology, while complicated, can be hilarious. Along the way he also aims his barbs at Tiger Woods, the Consumer Electronics Show, invitro fertilization, the National Spelling Bee, and the movie *Avatar*. Insightful, heartfelt, and always

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funny, *Text Me If You're Breathing* is proof that parenting will never come with technical support. With all this in mind, let me bring on my guest, Greg Schwem. Greg, are you there?

Greg: Yes. I am Brian. It's great to be here.

Brian: It's great to have you. Welcome to Success Profiles Radio. The first thing I'd like to do is to ask you a little bit about your background. How did you get started?

Greg: It's kind of an interesting transition. I obviously never imagined myself being a comedian full time. I was always a fan of comedy and I started doing stand-up when I was 16. But at the time I just figured it was just a hobby. I went to college and studied journalism. I always wanted to be a journalist. But I moved to Florida and started being a newspaper reporter and then became a television reporter. But I never stopped doing comedy and eventually decided I liked making people laugh more than I liked depressing them, which is what I felt like I was doing every single night being a news reporter. That was 20 years ago. Now it's even worse as far as what's out there and what passes for news these days.

I moved back to Chicago. I was down in Florida at the time and moved back to my home town in Chicago and started doing stand-up. If you remember back in the late 80s, early 90s comedy was huge. It was everywhere. There were comedy clubs everywhere; there was comedy on cable everywhere. I was looking for a way to stand out from the crowd. I kind of fell into doing stand-up at corporate events. I transitioned my whole act and that's really all I do now. You really can't find me at a comedy club. You can only find me doing shows at business events and sales kick-offs and those kinds of things. That's what I enjoy doing.

Brian: That's wonderful. So how did you really discover that comedy was what you wanted to do? Were you the class clown or were you the one that everyone thought "oh he thinks he's funny but he's really not?"

Greg: Kind of in between that. I always say I was the class wise guy. There's a difference between the class clown and the class wise guy in that the class clown makes the other students laugh. The class wise guy makes the teacher laugh. So the class wise guy never gets in trouble. I found that out very early. A teacher can't get mad at you when he or she is laughing. So that was always what I tried to do. You have to kind of pick your spots if you want to do that. I always enjoyed studied comedians. I listened to Steve Martin albums until they started to scratch. I just always thought it was a really interesting form of entertainment and something I liked to do. I like making people laugh. You always hear about comedians that have these really difficult upbringings and horrible home lives and all these different issues and so forth. That's not me. I just grew up in the suburbs in middle class and was the guy who liked making people laugh and wanted to do it for a living. That's what I'm doing.

Brian: That's wonderful. You listened to Steve Martin an awful lot. Back in the 70s when he was on *Saturday Night Live* and had that song *King Tut*, he was all over the place.

Greg: He was. I really think he brought comedy to the mainstream.

Brian: Besides him, who were some of your other role models in comedy?

Greg: I was a big Letterman fan early on. I used to watch Dave Letterman when he used to guest host *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson. He was almost a guest host every Monday night. I never heard of this guy but I happened to catch him one night and then always watch on Monday night when he was going to be on. There was something about the way that he did his monologue that I just thought was so much like the kind of comedy I was trying to write. I used to watch him and think I want to be this guy. I want to talk like this guy. As far as who I really enjoy today, I'm a Chris Rock fan. A lot of you may think that doesn't sound like me. Chris Rock works pretty blue and is raw sometimes. But I really like what he has to say. I think he's done a great job at mixing comedy with what's going on in the country, where everyone can kind of agree with him. I think comedians are getting away from what

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a comedian is supposed to do which is just to go out there and make people laugh. I think now a lot of comedians feel they have to make political statements or they have to be controversial. I think that's wrong. I know a lot of comedians disagree with me. But I think if you polled people standing outside a comedy and asked them, "What do you hope to get out of this tonight?" I think all of them would say, "I just want to laugh." I don't think anybody would say, "I really hope that someone spends 20 minutes talking about abortion or their views on abortion or their views on birth control..." I just don't think that's what people want. They want to get away. They want to be entertained and then they want to go home and say that was a fun evening.

Brian: I've seen a few stand-up comedians live. I thought Anthony Clark was hysterical. John Pinette I think is really funny.

Greg: Yes, very funny.

Brian: Ellen DeGeneres.

Greg: Ellen DeGeneres is great. All those people you named kind of stay away from controversy. They just make people laugh about real life subjects. I still think if you look at the comedians that really achieved longevity, Jerry Seinfeld, Bill Cosby – who's still going strong at 75, that's the kind of comedy they're doing. That kind of comedy will never go out of style. That's always the way I've tried to structure my show. Even though I do stand-up for business and look out at the audience, I try to think of what they think will be funny. They want something they can relate to: their ever present addiction to their Blackberry or smart phone, or have to sit in 17 different meetings in the course of a day and then get on four different conferences. At the end of the day they think I accomplished absolutely nothing today. I try to get into people's heads. What's going to make them laugh?

Brian: Do you draw any inspiration from cartoons like *Dilbert* and *Cathy*?

Greg: A little bit. Actually my favorite comic strip, I miss it every day, was *Calvin and Hobbes*. I think that was absolutely brilliant. *Dilbert* a little bit. A lot of people call me the Dilbert comedian because my show was called Comedy with a Byte and they think oh computer humor. *Dilbert* humor is a little bit even more high brow I think than what I do. He really gets into technology. I try to keep it a bit more general.

Brian: My favorite cartoon of all time is *Peanuts*. But I also really liked *The Far Side*. I thought that was hysterical.

Greg: Yes and just twisted. One of my favorite comedians who unfortunately passed away a few years ago was Mitch Hedberg. For those who don't know who he is, YouTube him. If he drew a cartoon it would be like Gary Larson's *The Far Side* because of that same kind of mentality.

Brian: I'm totally with you there. Let me ask how did you know you wanted to make a career out of this? This is very competitive.

Greg: Yes, it is. I knew if I didn't try doing this for a living, if I didn't quit my job early and try it, I'd look back and say I wish I'd done that. I started to look at other comedians and see that they were making people laugh and making a living at it. I thought if they can do it, I can do it too.

Brian: How did you know that it was time for you to pursue comedy full-time? I'm sure it was a big leap of faith. How did you end up deciding that?

Greg: It was. When I was in Florida I used to hang out at a comedy club, a really good one. That was in West Palm Beach. I used to study some of the really good comics that came there. I was more interested in studying some of the guys who went on before the big stars; the ones that opened for Jerry Seinfeld or Bill Maher or some of those others like Jeff Foxworthy. I basically just looked at them and said they don't look like they're putting a whole lot of effort into what they're doing. I think that if I

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took it a little more seriously, I could really quickly get into those ranks. That's really what I did. I think one of the things that a lot of comedians don't realize is that comedy is a business. It needs to be treated like a business. People will say to me, "Greg, you only work about 45 minutes a day. That's a pretty easy job." Well, yes, I'm on stage for 45 minutes a day. But it's the rest of the day that's the tough part. I always say that's the easy part of my day – being up on stage in front of people, making them laugh. I take it very seriously. I started networking as much as I could. This was before Twitter and Facebook and the internet and so forth. If that meant sending out VHS tapes of my show all day long, that's what I did. I was just persistent until I got in with some of these clubs and some of the big chains that had 15 or 20 clubs around the country. Then I got in my car and drove to all of them. That was really the first couple of years. Not the most glamorous lifestyle but it was certainly a great school. A lot of times I'll go to New York City and I'll see comics that you can tell by their act they've never ever been out of New York City. Jokes about the Yankees are hilarious in New York City. But are they funny in Indiana? Are they funny in Indianapolis? Are they funny in Phoenix? Until you really work the country, you really don't have a sense of what people think is funny.

Brian: That's a really good point. The same things aren't funny to people everywhere. If it's funny in New York City, it may not be funny in Arkansas or Iowa or New Mexico. The whole thing about people thinking you only work 45 minutes a day, I can sort of relate to that a little bit. I did do stand-up comedy one time. I attempted it once. I was working with a friend who does comedy locally. I'd always mentioned I'd love to try it sometime. One day he surprised me and said he was hosting a showcase. One of his acts cancelled and he said, "Give me your best 5 to 7 minutes. Be there tonight." That was 3 hours away and I thought, oh boy. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. I did it and I put together 7 minutes. There were I think six or seven comedians and I think I was the fourth or fifth to perform. I was a little nervous. I was watching the people before me and thought some of these comedians, their humor was an acquired taste. I did my bit and it was kind of raw in the sense in that I'd never done it before, not raw in terms of the material. But I made it through and it actually went pretty well. I've not done it again. But I'm glad to say I did it once. It was on my bucket list of things to do and I did it. It does take more than just seven minutes. You have to prepare. It takes more than 45 minutes for you because you have to prepare.

Let's talk a little bit about your preparation and process as long as we're on that topic. When you work for various corporate entities doing comedy and being their keynote performer, what is that preparation process like for you?

Greg: It's very intense. One thing I notice very quickly about doing comedy in a business setting. First of all business people are not stupid. They know when you're phoning one in. They will tune you out if they feel that way. All keynote speakers in a business environment; you're basically on their turf. Their turf means you might be presenting during the work day. I don't necessarily do a lot of shows at night. I do a lot of shows mid-morning, early afternoon, in the middle of the week. So my biggest competition is I not only have to make an audience laugh, I have to get them to stop looking at their iPhones, iPads, in some cases their laptops. These corporate people want to be connected all the time. That being said, I need to make absolutely sure that very early on in my show I let them know that I know about them and that I'm doing a show specifically for them. So my preparation includes sending out a questionnaire to the big wigs at the company, the people that hired me, usually the marketing director or maybe an HR person. I ask what's going on in your company. Is there a new product out there you're really excited about? Is there something that hasn't worked that you might be willing to laugh at? I want to know if there's been anything horrible happen in the company. Did you have to lay off people? Were there salary freezes? Anything like that. The more I know about the organization, the easier it is and the quicker I can relate that to the audience. Once they realize that, people will stop and say I should listen to this guy because he knows me. That's my goal.

Brian: That's awesome. So Greg it does sound like your preparation approach is unique to each of the companies you're working with. It's not cookie cutter or one speech everywhere you go. I think that's fantastic. I want to talk a little bit about the differences between corporate comedy and club comedy. You've done both and already gone over a little bit what corporate comedy is like in terms of their expectations of you. What do you think are some of the primary differences and why did you lean

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toward corporate comedy?

Greg: In club comedy you can pretty much say anything. I don't think it used to be that way. But I think with what is on cable television and so forth there are really no ground rules. If I had to boil it down to one word, it would be "rules". There are rules in doing corporate comedy. You need to be politically correct. Your show has to be free of profanity. You are basically representing this company. Even though I am an outside speaker that comes in, I feel like I'm a representative of them. I think you have to know that and be willing to play by those rules. I think there are comedians who say, "You can tell me what I can and can't do; but I'm the guy and I'll just do what I darn well please." I think for that reason there are a lot of corporations that have unfortunately shied away from putting humor into their meetings, into their live events. I think that's a shame because I think in the business world laughter is needed now more than ever, particularly as we claw our way out of this recession. I've heard stories from businesses that say we had a guy two years ago and it was really embarrassing and we had to pull him off stage. We specifically told him not to say this and gosh darn it if he didn't go ahead and say it anyway. Then we had to email an apology to everybody. I used to hear stories like that and I would think that's one less guy in the corporate comedy pool I have to worry about. But really it just makes us all look bad and I hate hearing stuff like that because we're not like that. It's really very easy to not be like that if you do your homework and if you're willing to write material about the group.

Brian: That's an excellent point. One bad apple can spoil it for everybody else. It is competitive but at the same time you want to prop up the industry. If something goes terribly wrong, like you said, corporations will shy away from the kind of work that you do. It dries things up for you. Hopefully that doesn't ever happen.

Greg: If I can make one more point about that. There's a fine line between poking fun at somebody or something and mocking them. In club comedy you can really stretch the boundaries and just rip on whatever subject you want. In corporate comedy there has to be limits. I'll give you an example. I did a show for McDonald's several years ago. Maybe you remember right after they came out of the Arch Deluxe campaign. Arch Deluxe was a really colossal flop. It still goes down as one of the biggest advertising failures, right below New Coke, as far as it just didn't work. The McDonald's people basically said to me, "Look, we can take a joke. Don't push it." In other words, a couple of lines here or there is fine but don't do ten minutes about the Arch Deluxe because it's not going to be funny anymore to us. Those are the kinds of things I want to know. Ultimately I want to be the company's biggest cheerleader.

Brian: There is a big difference between making fun of something and mocking something. I know that some comedians, talking primarily club comedians, they make their living making fun of certain things. Kathy Griffin's angle is that she makes fun of celebrities. People like that because celebrities, a lot of them, seem like "we're here and you're down there". I think there's something about society that says that they would like to build people up and then rip them down however they want. It's fun to listen to stories about people that you're supposed to look up to for whatever reason. Some people are just famous for doing absolutely nothing at all.

What's next for you? I know your gigs are for corporations so they are private events. Do you have a full schedule coming up?

Greg: I do. There is really no particular industry that I focus on. Technology is kind of my hook. My next show is for a hospital group. My show after that is for an electronics distributor. I've worked in hospitality, insurance, real estate, automotive, restaurants. The only group I don't think I've ever worked for is lawyers. I have my theory about that. I think lawyers feel like they get made fun of enough and why do we want to hire an outside guy? Plus I think lawyers want to hear from other lawyers. I think that's a really exciting day for them if at their meetings they can hear another lawyer breaking down a case or new law. I think it gets their adrenaline flowing. At the same time I have a great time with insurance people. They also get poked fun at all the time. They are great audiences. Probably my favorite audiences, and this sounds weird, are engineers. I don't have an engineering background. I don't know anything about engineering. But just the way they talk. They are so technical

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and the great thing is they know it. They know they are geeks, for lack of a better word. They know people consider them geeks. But they have excellent senses of humor about that very topic. They really love to laugh at themselves. So I enjoy working for them.

Brian: Can you tell us how someone can look up more information about you if they want to hire you or know more about what you do? What is your website?

Greg: It's www.comdedywithabyte.com. I'm also all over YouTube. Just type Greg Schwem in YouTube. Corporate comedy you might be asked to do a keynote or an emcee for a multi-day event and sometimes I'm asked to moderate a panel discussion but make it very improvisational and put some humor in there off the top of my head – keep things lively, keep the audience engaged.

Brian: Obviously you do a lot of work in the corporate environment which means you're on the road an awful lot. I'm sure you have a lot of great stories about life on the road.

Greg: It's not as glamorous as you think – a lot of hotels and airports. I could tell you stories about working the clubs and one-nighters in the Deep South. I could tell you stories of some of the more interesting corporate events I have. As far as corporate, I've done shows on boats and yachts. I've done shows bordering the 18th hole of a golf course. I did a show at an IMAX. I had one company that rented out the Beetle Juice exhibit at Universal Studios. That was kind of a fun one.

I've done a club show in Florida after the first Gulf War in the early 90s, right after the soldiers started to return home after three months of being in the desert without liquor or female companionship. So they were a little bit wound up. Needless to say, once they started passing the microphone around and telling their own jokes right before I was supposed to go on, I knew this was not going to be a really good show. It wasn't. Not one of the highlights of my career. Those are the kind of stories I'll tell forever. When you tell them with a bunch of comedians they just keep getting funnier. How did I live through that and how am I still doing this after having to endure that? It toughens you up.

Brian: Sometimes you have to go through some of those difficult times in order to realize this is where I'm at now and it helped me grow and built me up to who I am now. Since you have spent so much time on the road, how do you balance your work life and your family life? Sometimes that can be a difficult balance to strike, especially when you're traveling a lot.

Greg: It is tough. I'm lucky in the fact that I am one of the few comedians that work businessmen's hours – meaning that when I am gone it's usually during the week. I'm very fortunate to have most of my weekends free. I rarely, as weird as it sounds being in show business, I rarely work weekends. That allows me time to coach little league for my daughters and get to a lot of their events. When I'm home, I'm home during the day. So I try to be very active in school and be available to go to school and volunteer when I can. They realize that like millions of kids out there and millions of spouses, that dad has to get on a plane every now and then to make money. I think once they realize that then it becomes better. The longest I think I've ever been away is seven days. That was horrible. I had to do it. It's not something I want to do. I meet people on planes that travel way more than I do. They basically leave on Monday and get home Friday and then get up and do it all over again. I guarantee you they're not having as much fun as I'm having, that's for sure.

Brian: Do your kids ever take you to school for show and tell?

Greg: Yes. Actually they have. Try to make an audience of second graders laugh. Pretty much they'll laugh at anything. The teachers always want to know, can you tell a joke that seven years old will like? I have to think about that and sometimes I draw a blank.

Brian: It's always nice to have a few really clean silly jokes in your back pocket because you never know.

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Greg: Absolutely! You never know, their parents might run multi-national corporations and might want to hire me.

Brian: You also do a lot of writing in addition to your speaking and performing. You have a blog. Tell us a bit about that.

Greg: My blog is basically an extension of my newspaper column that I write. I do write a nationally syndicated column for Tribune Media Services. That's something I've been doing about a year now. My background is in journalism and I think it's important, for me, to write every day. That's part of the discipline of being a comedian: you have to get up and write something. Even if you just write one funny thought; at least you're writing something. There was a lot of material that wasn't making it into my standup act. Maybe it was too long, too involved or detailed. That's one of the things about doing live comedy these days. We want that instant gratification. Things like Twitter have made it so we have to get our point across very, very quickly. That made it very tough to do comedy now because you have to figure out how to get people's attention fast and keep it. I can't be going and telling a 15-minute story. Those are the kinds of things I started to write about. I just approached the Tribune Media here in Chicago which is the syndicated arm of the Chicago Tribune and said I'd be interested in writing for you and sent them some samples. As luck would have it, they have a segment called Humor Hotel, which is comprised of three writers. They happened to have an opening so I jumped in. I was in the right place at the right time. There are no rules on what I can write about. I write on pop culture, technology, parents, sometimes a combination of all three of those.

Brian: So basically you reached out to them and they said yes?

Greg: Yes, I did. I feel like that's how I run my business. You have to be very proactive. Sometimes you have to actually hit people over the head and say look here is what I can do for you. I want to do this for you. What is it going to take to let me do it for you?

Brian: Doing something like that is a great way to promote your business. I'm sure you have a byline when you blog that lets people know how to get a hold of you. Was this an extensive negotiation with them or did they basically respond when you reached out to them?

Greg: It was about a month of ongoing. My first one in they said they liked my stuff. I showed them my book. They said we don't have any openings right now. They said they liked my style and they'd stay in touch. That's when somebody dropped out. So again, being in the right place at the right time was good. I just kind of kept in touch with them. Not the hard sell; just every now and then I'd email and say, "How's it going? Still interested. Don't forget about me." That's it. I really think that's the way to do it. I think people get bombarded so much today with emails and so forth that overkill is never a good thing.

Brian: No. We're constantly bombarded. People need to know you're still there. But at the same time you don't want them to feel like they're being intruded on. When you had enough blog entries, did you decide that would become the book you ended up writing?

Greg: No, actually the book came long before. The seeds of the book started germinating long before the blog. Here's my thing about blogs. I feel like the rise in blogs directly correspond directly correspond to the rise in unemployment. When everybody was out of work, I think the number of blogs quintupled. So did the number of self-published books for that matter because everybody had all this time on their hands and started writing just to have something to do. I started to think about this book when we had our first child. I'll tell you what really did it. Our kids were both born with a little help from technology – a little medical help. One child was born through fertility drugs and another through invitro fertilization. That's not a real humorous topic when you're going through it. But I always told my wife, partly to cheer her up, when this is all done and we've succeeded, we're going to laugh about this. We can now. I started writing about that and then I started thinking about how this is a weird world we live in. It's full of technology. Little by little as my kids got older there were events that happened in their lives and us as parenting that all had a technology hook to them. I started writing about them and

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that's what the book became. Grappling as a parent with all this technology being thrust at you and more at your kids. They're the ones who are going to be carrying this stuff through. There is a chapter in the book about buying my oldest one her first cell phone and what was involved with that and what I had to learn to do as a parent after she got the phone. Once your kid gets a cell phone, that's the end of face-to-face verbal communication with them, whether you like to or not. So you have to learn the text messaging and the lingo and be able to communicate with them. That can be very humorous. It's also very frustrating. I think the funniest topics out there are the things that frustrate people. To me technology coupled with parenting, put together, you've got a book. There was a chapter about me trying to learn how to play Nintendo Wii because my kids that's all they wanted for Christmas. I didn't know what a Wii game was. It had a funny title but I thought okay, what's so great about this? So after we got the Wii, I thought I should probably find a game I'm good at. Any parent that plays video games knows that no matter how good you are at something in real life, you're that bad at it in video games. I was a state ranked tennis player in high school. I can't hit a Nintendo Wii backhand to save my butt. But that works in reverse too. I had no idea until we got Nintendo in the house I had no idea how awesome a Ninja swordfighter I was. I am amazing at that.

So one of the chapters is me renting in the privacy of my own home one day when I was all alone Tiger Woods' Pro PGA Tour Golf, or something like that. I was trying to master this and it was a comedy of errors. As I was playing it I was writing down a blow-by-blow description of me trying to play this game. I never did get any better at it. Those are the kind of things that make it into the book.

Brian: What is the writing process for you like? Is it at the computer? Do you do dictation?

Greg: It's at the computer and basically I just take a topic. That's one of the great things about writing this column. A lot of times I can take a topic that I *think* could be funny and just flesh it out a bit. I'll give you an example. A couple of weeks ago I wrote a column on where do those storage lids for food disappear to? I don't know why but we can never find the lids. I posted something about it on Facebook and people started responding to that so I knew I was on to something. Then I just started writing it long form. As a humor writer you've got to go back and see where you can put some jokes in. I ask is this column funny enough? Are people going to laugh at it? I will toss out a lot of ideas on Facebook. The column I've got running tomorrow – I was emailed an audition for the Oklahoma City water department. My audition was to play the part of water. It was the lead. The whole column is about how does one go in and be water?

Brian: That reminds me. I don't know if you ever used to watch *Mad About You*. It reminds me of the episode that Yoko Ono was on. She asked Paul Reisner to draw the wind or paint it or something like that. It had to do with capturing the essence of the wind. Paul Reisner was like how do you do that? It was a pretty funny episode.

Greg: A real actor, which I'm not one of, would probably have a great response on how to portray water. I have no idea but got a lot of funny responses from my post on Facebook.

Brian: Testing material on social media is a brilliant idea. You get responses to some things and you don't get responses to other things and you know pretty quickly what people are responding to.

Greg: I think everybody is a comedian or wants to be one. One of the great things about social media is normal people can be very funny in a very small space. I think it's been great for that.

Brian: If someone wanted to get your book, how can they do that?

Greg: My book can be found in bookstores, in Barnes & Noble. Your best bet would be to find it online at Amazon. You can search Greg Schwem or *Text Me If You're Breathing*. I really hope people will buy the paperback because I spent a lot of time on the cover. The cover is actually me and my kids. You don't see their faces because they are looking down at cell phones. The cover has really gotten a lot of publicity because you just look at it and if you're a parent, you say, "Oh my god. Those are my kids!"

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Those aren't your kids; those are my children. Actually they are everybody's children burying their faces in their electronic gizmos.

Brian: Some of the TV commercials capture that really well. So the book is about technology and parenting?

Greg: Yes. Parenting and technology and realizing you have to step back and laugh at this. It is a scary world that kids are growing up in now. I can't even have conversations with my parents when they say, "Here's how we did it." I just say, stop right there. I cannot compare what I'm going through with what you went through. Thirty years ago we could have done that. But you can't even begin to start a conversation with "Here's how we did it" and expect me to say, "That's a good idea. Maybe I should let them walk five miles to school."

Brian: So let me ask this. What are you reading these days? What inspires you?

Greg: I go in spurts. I like to read books that make you laugh. One of my favorites is Tom Wolfe. His humor is very biting. I think he's one of the most brilliant writers out there. Another one is Carl Hiaasen, former columnist for the *Miami Herald*. Born and raised in Florida, he writes about Florida and all the wackos that live in Florida. I really enjoy his work. Then I'm a big legal thriller guy. I like David Baldacci. I like biographies every now and then. Here's my thing about biographies. I want to read one chapter. I thought it was funny. Remember the guy who landed the plane in the Hudson? A biography was written about him within the year after he landed the plane. I remember thinking I just want to read the one part where he landed the plane. I don't want to read about him playing little league. I don't think that had anything to do with him landing the plane.

Brian: We're coming up on the end of the show. So once again, how can someone get a hold of you?

Greg: Go to my website at www.comedywithabyte.com. There's information about the book and lots of clips so you can see what I do in the world of comedy.

Brian: It's a great website. Thank you for joining us on Success Profiles Radio.