

WHEN THINGS GET SMALL

When Things Get Small is the first in the ‘When Things Get...’ series, produced for UCTV by Not Too Serious Labs, the creative collaboration of eminent solid-state physicist Ivan Schuller and award-winning science producer Rich Wargo, both from the University of California at San Diego. Not Too Serious Labs pursues new directions in making science for media, keeping the material funny and entertaining so you end up learning while you’re

laughing. The duo is currently planning its next production *When Things Get Big*, a comical exploration of the gigantic machines used to investigate matter.

“It’s just one word - entertainment,” says Schuller, who also stars in *When Things Get Small*. “That’s what it’s all about. If people aren’t entertained, they will just shut off.”

Though the name isn’t too serious, the intentions are. Schuller and Wargo are dedicated to communicating science to the public. In developing Not Too Serious Labs’ approach, the two found that people actually *learn better* when humor is used to convey concepts. They also discovered that even though people know it would be “good for them,” viewers *avoid* educational programs because they know, or think, that the program will be boring.

Says Wargo, “So there’s some method here, it’s not just madness. And besides, it’s a heckuva lot of fun to be entertaining, and if you can learn something and get a chuckle, then so much the better”.

“The name Not Too Serious Labs keeps us on our toes” adds Schuller. “Rich and I are serious enough, so if we try not to be serious then we end up being half-serious, which is just about right and maybe a little funny....” Added Schuller, “But seriously, if we can be more effective by being funny and entertaining, then that is a win-win for everyone. It’s what I do every day as a scientist. Really, I have fun, I love it, and I want to share that with people.”

