

340 Ways

to Put **Humor** to **Work**

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340 Ways to Put Humor to Work

Humor in the workplace suggests a chicken (or, if you prefer, a rubber chicken) and egg style relationship—it's about using humor to create a more positive workplace environment, but it's also about recognizing that humor is the end result of working in a successful, inspiring workplace. To make sure adding more fun and humor into the workplace isn't just window dressing or a band-aid solution, truly inspiring workplaces need to focus on creating a positive culture where people are trusted and respected, where there is open and honest communication, and where people are treated humanely day in and day out.

Below is a list of 340 ways to put humor to work in the workplace. By putting the fun back into workplace fundamentals, you can increase productivity, spark creative thinking, build stronger teams, improve customer loyalty, reduce stress, communicate more effectively, and maybe even improve the taste of your office coffee!



Creating a Culture that Celebrates Work and Fun

Remember, it's the little things that often matter the most. Creating a positive workplace isn't about a one, ten, or even twenty times-a-year events; it's about how the work is done on an on-going basis. Actions speak louder than words. Thus, your real values don't hang on a wall on a cute poster, but they're reflected in the actions, behaviors, and attitudes of everyone on the team. So, start by thinking about the big picture, because life is just too short to live inside a *Dilbert* cartoon.

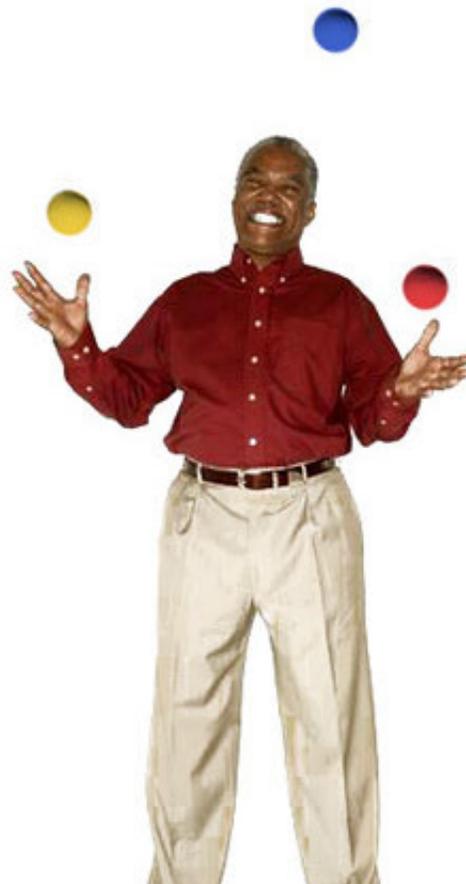
- 1** Create an inspiring workplace vision and mission. Make it something that people want to go to work for beyond just collecting a pay check!
- 2** Include the importance of fun and humor in your team/workplace vision and/or mission.
- 3** Include humor as one of your core workplace values.
- 4** Create a humor committee/squad/team. Have volunteers apply and compete for positions to make sure you get committed, dedicated folks and to demonstrate that you're serious about implementing more fun.
- 5** Create a fun "Humor Code of Conduct" which encourages the use of respectful humor in the workplace.
- 6** Set specific workplace/team level goals for fun initiatives just the way you would for any other important workplace activities. If you don't set goals, nothing will change!
- 7** Include humor and fun in employees' goals/objectives for the year. This will send the message that your workplace values fun, and that part of their job is to bring a fun attitude to the table and contribute to a positive workplace environment.
- 8** Measure it. Ask employees if they are having enough fun. Include fun and humor as another valid indicator of workplace/team success.

Creating a Fun Physical Work Environment

Research suggests that gerbils kept in stark, boring, gray, cubicle-like environments lose brain cells, while gerbils in stimulating environments actually grow more brain neuron connections! In the same way, a person's physical environment impacts their creativity, mood, and attitude, whereas a depressing, impersonal environment is often cited as a huge de-motivator for many people. So, create a fun, positive, humane workplace environment where people want to spend one third of their waking hours!

- 9** Don't just allow, but encourage people to personalize their work areas. Businesses that still discourage this are in the dark ages! With such a large amount of time spent at work, employees need to feel comforted by their surroundings.
- 10** Create a humor bulletin board.
- 11** Create a humorous "deep thought/quote of the day" board.
- 12** Create a "Wall of Fame" with employees' photos and brief, fun personal bios.
- 13** Create a "Wall of Fame" featuring caricatures drawn of employees.
- 14** Create a "Wall of Fame" highlighting employees' accomplishments.
- 15** Leave a disposable camera around the office and encourage staff to take random photos of each other. Then, create a montage board of fun photos which change every month. For more fun, add changeable thought/speech bubbles to the photos.
- 16** Create fun office directional signs or street signs for hallways.
- 17** Name your hallways, meeting rooms, and even stairwells fun, inspirational names.
- 18** Create a fun waiting/room reception area with fun photos or humorous books and with things to do to help clients pass the time.

- 19** Get a fun office mascot to remind people to lighten up.
- 20** Create (or dedicate) an official “Lighten Up!” room with fun props, books, DVDs, and audio CDs to either help people de-stress or to help them spark their creativity.
- 21** Allow employees to work to music. However, also set guidelines for employees who prefer to work in quiet!
- 22** Have a contest for the best decorated cubicle or office.
- 23** Post humorous signs/posters throughout the office.



Hiring and Wiring Employees

According to one U.S. study, 1/3 of all new employees begin looking for another job immediately after starting a new one! So, it's critical to start off on the right foot and make new employees feel like they're a part of the team right away.

- 24** Hire first and foremost for a positive attitude and healthy sense of humor.
- 25** When doing reference checks, ask extensively about the person's attitude and sense of humor. Also, ask for specific examples and stories that reflect and demonstrate their humor attitude.
- 26** Use humor in your help wanted ads. This will help your ads stand out, and it will help you attract the right kind of people.
- 27** Use humor in your employee orientation materials.
- 28** Create a fun trivia quiz for new employees to help familiarize themselves with your organization.
- 29** Create a "scavenger list" of different, fun, obscure facts about employees that new hires must complete within a month. This will help them connect with all of the employees.
- 30** Have all employees wear a "Hello, My Name is _____" or a "Hey, I'm New Here!" tag for one week when someone new is hired.
- 31** Hold a welcome to the team party/social event. If you hire lots of people, plan a "Welcome" party for everyone new once a month.
- 32** Create a humorous survival kit for new employees.
- 33** Match new employees with a mentor.
- 34** Create a humorous, upbeat employee orientation video that will introduce new hires to the values, vision, and team.

- 35** Hold a parody of “Jeopardy” or “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” in training sessions to help orientate new employees.
- 36** Offer training workshops in humor in the workplace.
- 37** Offer training sessions in stress management to all employees.
- 38** Offer training sessions in creativity in the workplace.
- 39** Create a humor library of humor resources including books, CDs, and DVDs. (For lots of great resources, check out www.mikekerr.com.)
- 40** Have a humorous card and fun gift waiting for new employees on their first day of work.
- 41** Hold weekly/daily/monthly work-related trivia contests with prizes to encourage people to learn more about your organization; hold team and individual contests.
- 42** Use a software program like “Game Show Presenter” (available through www.mikekerr.com) to create a customized, interactive question and answer game show.
- 43** Hold a spoof of “The Price is Right” to educate employees on the costs of products or services and, also, on the costs of things that mysteriously go missing in workplaces or hidden items that suck up your organization’s budget.
- 44** Use role plays, cartoons, fun videos, and props to liven up training sessions.
- 45** Have door prizes in all training sessions that relate to your workplace. Recommended books that you would encourage all employees to read make a great, relevant prize.

Meetings

for the Seriously Challenged

Too often, employees report that meetings seem like places where people go to get their soul sucked out of them! According to one Californian study, 50% of all workplace meetings were “bad” in some way. So, if meetings are stressing you out, don’t despair. It really is possible to have fun and have an effective meeting at the same time.

- 46** Create fun agendas by putting funny quotes, catchy titles, cartoons, or jokes in them. A fun agenda might help people actually want to be at the meeting and will send the message that it’s *not* going to be the equivalent of watching paint dry!
- 47** Create “theme” agendas. For example, use movie titles to describe each agenda item.
- 48** Purposely put a “bloop” or “word of the week” in your agenda. Then, award a prize to the first person who finds it. (This can help encourage people to actually read the suckers.)
- 49** Name your meeting room something fun and inspiring. (Who wants to spend hours in a “BOREDroom”?)
- 50** Try meeting sometimes in different locations, such as: Have a breakfast meeting in a coffee shop, a picnic lunch in a park, or an afternoon break at the zoo.
- 51** Create an official “Meeting Jester” position. This person is responsible for bringing a little levity to meetings.
- 52** Start off a meeting by blowing bubbles (or have a bubble break part way through).
- 53** Have a B.Y.O.F.S. meeting where everyone must Bring Your Own Funny Story.
- 54** Icebreaker idea: Have a “question hat” where everyone must draw an unusual question out of a hat and answer the question.

- 55** Icebreaker idea: Start a meeting with a funny story, high energy video clip (for suggestions, see www.mikekerr.com), or funny quote of the day to launch things on a positive note.
- 56** Icebreaker idea: Play the game “Two Truths and One Lie”. Each employee tells two quick truths and one lie about themselves. Then, the other team members have to guess which statement is the lie.
- 57** Icebreaker idea: Go to www.popstarname.com, www.rockstarname.com, or www.countrystarname.com to create your alter ego star names for a meeting.
- 58** Icebreaker idea: Have people create alter ego name tags for themselves, coming up with their names by using this formula: Take the person’s first pet’s name and add their mother’s maiden name OR the first street name that they lived on.
- 59** Create humorous name tags for meeting participants, or order some wacky name tags from www.pcnametags.com. They have tags that say things, such as: PLAYS WELL WITH OTHERS, BORED MEMBER, RUNS WITH SCISSORS, BIG CHEESE, COMPUTER GEEK, etc.
- 60** Icebreaker idea: Have a resource scavenger hunt where people have to match different characteristics on a list with people in the room.
- 61** Give out door prizes at meetings. They can be random draw prizes, prizes to encourage positive behavior, and fun, inexpensive prizes to discourage negative behavior.
- 62** Create fun penalties for negative meeting behaviors, such as: showing up late or blocking ideas.
- 63** Use office toys and props to keep people loose and in a playful spirit.
- 64** When brainstorming, brainstorm something silly to warm people up to the process. For example, brainstorm as many uses for a paper clip as you possibly can.
- 65** Play an icebreaking game before brainstorming. Some great games to play are charades, *Pictionary*, or theatre improvisation.
- 66** Arm people with Nerf balls or water pistols, and anyone who utters an idea-squashing phrase will get fired upon. Another great idea is to make them pay 25 cents to the social fund for each idea-squasher.

- 67** Add a “humor break” into the middle of a long meeting. During this break, everyone must go around the table and tell a clean joke or funny story.
- 68** Add a “whine and cheese” section to the agenda to encourage people to “whine” about something not working at work in a fun, silly manner. This can make it safe for people to air their frustrations in a lighter context.
- 69** Add a “rumor mill” section to allow people to safely bring up work-related rumors.
- 70** Bring food to your meetings, especially fun food, such as: cookies, popcorn for watching videos, or marshmallows.
- 71** Give people a standing ovation when they have done something noteworthy or simply for arriving at the meeting!
- 72** Create fun signs that meeting participants can hold up during meetings. Some great examples would be signs such as: “WOW!”, “Is it just me or is anyone else hungry?”, or “What a great idea!”
- 73** Have a small award/prize for the best work-related funny story, clean joke, or blooper of the meeting.
- 74** Hold a meeting without chairs to see how much faster (and more fun) they can be.
- 75** End meetings with a “one great thing that happened since the last time we met” story, a “one exciting thing I’m working on right now” story, or any funny story. Anything that ensures you end the meeting on a high note!

Say What?

Communicating with Humor

It's not what you say that often matters, but how you say it. According to one study, 71% of workplace conflicts are based not on what people say, but on how they say it! As Kathy Hirsh once said, "Humor is like a rubber sword—it allows you to make a point without drawing blood."

- 76** Use Top-10 lists to communicate broad workplace messages in a fun way.
- 77** Do a spoof of a TV talk show, complete with a desk, TV host, and guests from management that will gladly answer all your pertinent questions.
- 78** Add a humorous quote or funny deep thought to your e-mail signature.
- 79** Instead of the usual, boring e-mail auto-reply, add a wacky, creative auto-reply.
- 80** Add a humorous option to your voicemail. For example, have it say, "Press #2 to hear the funny thought of the day!"
- 81** Create a humorous voicemail message.
- 82** One study suggests that there are ten negative comments for every one positive comment in the workplace! Spend one day tabulating the number of negative comments you hear vs. positive comments. This may not sound like fun, but it sure might raise some awareness.
- 83** Look for opportunities to add some humor to signs around the office to communicate any messages in a friendlier manner.
- 84** Since buzzword speak is a common source of stress and demoralization, assign a buzzword buster committee to seek out and eliminate overused, meaningless jargon from the workplace.
- 85** Always ask people if they want to receive those sometimes tiresome, humorous e-mail forwards.
- 86** Regularly ask people what their top "communication pet peeves" are. You'll be amazed by the overwhelming response you get and by the simple things that are often sucking the fun out of your team.

Speaking of Humor

Do you want to keep people awake during your next presentation, be more effective, calm your nerves, and build trust with your audience? Then, add some humor!

- 87** Start a humor file related to the topics you regularly speak on. Then, collect amusing stories, jokes, funny trivia, and news items related to that topic.
- 88** Tap into your sense of humor before a talk. Studies suggest people who just watched *Seinfeld* before speaking lowered their heartbeats by 20-40 beats per minute!
- 89** Add some humor to your introduction.
- 90** Laugh at your own bloopers throughout your talk and even prepare some funny comebacks. For example: If no one laughs at a joke, tell the audience your competitor wrote it for you or that your Mom really liked it.
- 91** Tell stories. They're the most powerful and effective way to get any message across, they're easy to remember (especially your own stories), they help make a point and an emotional connection, and they help you come across as being more personable.
- 92** Add some funny cartoons or photos to your PowerPoint presentations.
- 93** Collect and incorporate fun facts that are related to your topic, such as: obscure, but true and relevant trivia, surveys, statistics, terms, etc.
- 94** Come up with alternative meanings for common workplace acronyms that your team uses.
- 95** Use props to make a creative point in your presentations.
- 96** Use jokes that are safe and relevant to a point that you are making.
- 97** Use funny video clips.

- 98** Parody a famous book or movie.
- 99** Make use of your body language and facial expressions to add some humor.
- 100** Create a funny Top-10 list related to your topic or message.
- 101** Incorporate role plays.
- 102** Incorporate audience interaction through surveys or game show style
- 103** Create a “what’s in” and “what’s out” list connected to your topic.
- 104** Use participant’s names in handouts, stories, and jokes.
- 105** Incorporate some magic tricks.
- 106** Plant some funny questions in the audience.
- 107** Give out fun door prizes.
- 108** Give out a fun reminder giveaway related to your message.

** For free articles on presentation skills, managing nerves, and adding humor to presentations, surf on over to:
www.mikekerr.com/cms/index.php/humour-resources/*



Laughing for the Health of It: Stress Busting With Humor

When people laugh and tap into their sense of humor, there is a physiological, emotional, and cognitive response, so it's no wonder humor is thought to be one of the most powerful stress busters available to us. Your sense of humor helps you to focus your brain on possibilities in the face of conflict and helps you to, at least temporarily, rise above a crisis. Studies show that laughter helps you relax tense muscles, lower blood pressure, increase oxygen flow to the body, increase the flow of blood in the body, increase your tolerance for pain, and increase salivary immunoglobulin A (which helps fight respiratory infections). So, perhaps Darwin had it wrong; it's not survival of the fittest, but it's survival of the funniest.

- 109** Create an at home fun or relaxing ritual to start your day on the right attitudinal foot before you've even left for work.
- 110** Smile. Force yourself to just smile. Simply smiling more often can change our body's physiology.
- 111** Laugh. Just start laughing. Even fake laughter has some of the physical benefits of real laughter, so just fake it 'til you make it!
- 112** Make goofy faces. It's an easy way to relax your muscles, lighten your mood, and change your internal physiology all at once.
- 113** Find a co-worker, and ask them to make you laugh. People are typically more than happy to respond.
- 114** Attach positive rewards to stressors. For example, at one company, every time an annoying nearby train rumbles by the office, employees earn a chocolate treat from a central barrel.
- 115** Create an "I've Had the Day from Heck" award to reward someone who's had a particularly stressful day.
- 116** Create a "Worse Day at Work" prize per month or year.
- 117** Plan a celebration when things go bad to "pull people from the dungeon".

- 118** Plan a fun, mock funeral to mourn an old way of doing something, an old computer system, or an old policy before the new changes are implemented.
- 119** Humorously reframe stressors by wildly exaggerating how the situation “could have been worse”.
- 120** Reframe stressors by looking at the situation through the eyes of a child, an alien, a comedian, or a superhero.
- 121** Reframe stressors by creating a funny mantra to recount each time the stressful event occurs.
- 122** Reframe stressors by asking for a standing ovation when something bad happens.
- 123** Reframe stressors by forcing yourself to look at the upside. In fact, force yourself to create a Top-10 list of the “Top-10 GREAT Things About _____”.
- 124** Take a five-minute humor time-out by reading a funny book or by listening to a comedy CD.
- 125** Imagine a funny newspaper headline that would perfectly capture the situation.
- 126** Every time you get stressed, stop and think about the 3R's:
How am I going to REWARD myself for this stress?
How can I REFRAME this stressful situation, so it doesn't seem as bad? What can I do right now to RELAX?
- 127** Hold a “Whine and Cheese” party where people are allowed to whine about some aspect of a new program in a fun way!
- 128** Create funny code labels to describe things that stress you out. For example, a “22” might be a particularly high maintenance customer.
- 129** Do something outrageous to tap into your sense of humor. Get up and do a fun dance or phone up someone and say, “Hi, it's me. Sorry, I'm too busy to talk right now.” Then, hang up.
- 130** Create a “Silly Hour” the way one company has. For five minutes, at the same time, every day (in their case, 3:00 p.m.), everyone does something silly to break up the day.

- 131** Create an individual or team “humor first-aid kit”, and stockpile it with things that will help people tap into their sense of humor, such as: books, CDs, funny photos, fun office toys, wacky props, wacky costume parts, clown noses, or silly putty.
- 132** Have a “humor buddy”. This is a go to person who can offer a humorous perspective when things get stressful.
- 133** Create a “stress busting squad”. This is a team of committed volunteers who seek out workplace stressors and “jobstacles” that are getting in the way of people having fun and doing their work.
- 134** Take breaks that get you away from what you were working on. If you’ve been standing all day, sit; if you’ve been sitting at the computer, go for a walk.
- 135** Wear something fun under your work clothes to remind yourself not to take things, or yourself, too seriously.
- 136** Find a quiet space and simply take the time to recall a funny event in your life. Transporting yourself to a humorous time is an effective way to calm your nerves and lower your heartbeat
- 137** Create a fun ritual or activity for Sunday evenings, a time many workers report feeling stressed about with the “back to work blahs”.
- 138** Instead of a “Code Red”, come up with some funny codes to lighten the mood. For example: CODE BLUE (I need coffee - STAT!), CODE GREEN (I jammed the photocopier again!), or CODE PINK (Someone make me laugh, quickly!).
- 139** Have a “bonehead play of the month” award where people nominate themselves. This is a great way to help people manage their stress when they mess up, and a great way to help everyone admit their bloopers and learn from them at the same time.
- 140** Keep a blooper book where people can record their bloopers. This will help to encourage people to lighten up on small every day blunders and not take themselves so seriously.
- 141** Try what’s known as “cartooning”. Imagine a cartoon strip or thought bubble that would put a humorous slant on the stressful situation.

- 142** Need a break, but can't get away? Try a "staycation" by taking a holiday but staying at home.
- 143** When returning from holidays, tell people you are returning a day later than your actual return date. This gives you a breather day to relax without being harassed!
- 144** Have a "stress party" to help people celebrate and lift their spirits during a time of big change or stressful work.
- 145** Have a funny mantra or goofy song you can recall every time you need to remind yourself to lighten up.
- 146** Put on a funny hat or clown nose to force yourself to lighten up in a difficult time.
- 147** Count to ten, and imagine how funny it will seem a year from now. Remember, Comedy = Tragedy + Time.
- 148** Finish the following: The bad news is _____, but the GREAT news is _____. Force yourself to come up with some funny answers to how this bad situation will end up being GREAT!
- 149** Create some standard blooper recovery lines, so you are ready the next time things go awry. For example: "I think my train of thought just derailed!", "Houston, we have a problem!", or "Oops. There goes my chance at the Nobel peace prize."
- 150** Create your own wacky Top-10 "Ways to Deal with My Stress" list.
- 151** Create your own wacky Top-10 "Signs I'm Too Stressed" list.
- 152** Create a fun, end-of-the-workday ritual to leave the office on a positive note and, hopefully, leave any stressors behind. In one company, for example, all employees don clown noses and have made a pact to keep them on until they walk through their front door.
- 153** On the commute to and from work, look for and collect funny bumper stickers.
- 154** Have a technology-free zone (no cell phones allowed!) on your commute.
- 155** Listen to comedy/humor tapes during your work commute.
- 156** Have a "lighten up!" reminder symbol/mascot hanging from your mirror or somewhere visible in your car to remind you to relax during the commute.

Sparking Creative Thinking

Humor is one of the best catalysts for thinking creatively. (Yes, Ha + Ha = AHA!) Humor helps move people into lateral thinking and divergent thinking modes, and a relaxed, fun workplace atmosphere makes it psychologically safe for people to share creative ideas on an ongoing basis.

- 157** Create a “Dilbert Committee” to identify Dilbert-type behaviors and policies in your workplace.
- 158** To spark new ideas, brainstorm in an offsite location, such as: a coffee shop, a park, or the zoo.
- 159** Before brainstorming, play a fun game to loosen people up and get the juices flowing. Some great games for this are *Pictionary*, charades, theater improvisational games, or brainstorming something silly.
- 160** Brainstorm the opposite of a problem or issue to force a change of perspective on a problem.
- 161** Ask a five-year old for ideas, or, better yet, as some companies have actually done, bring in a group of kids to consult with for fresh and wacky ideas!
- 162** Randomly pick an occupation from the Yellow Pages directory. Then, brainstorm how your problem would be solved looking at it from their perspective.
- 163** Toss a foam ball around, prompting people to blurt out spontaneous suggestions as soon as they catch the ball.
- 164** Line an entire wall in a meeting room or along a hallway with “inspiration” or “idea” whiteboards. Then, encourage people to doodle and jot down suggestions for ideas to particular issues. (Walt Disney used this technique with great success.)
- 165** Ban idea-squashing language from your meetings. For example, “We tried that before in 1947”.

- 166** Take the team and go on an “idea safari” by visiting a museum, a zoo, or another business in search of ideas you can use.
- 167** Hold a contest for employees to come up with the most creative slogan for your company. Some real life examples are the following: a company called Dave’s Drilling and Blasting: “We Don’t Stand Behind Our Work – We Stand Behind a Tree”, or optometrists’ office in California: “If You Can’t Read This, You’ve Come to the Right Place!”
- 168** One company sends employees crayons and blank paper every six months and asks them to draw their impressions of the company. This is a great way to spark creativity and a fun way to gauge people’s emotional connection to the workplace.
- 169** Hold creative brainstorming meetings where instead of focusing on “problems” or “issues”, you purposely remain focused on the positive by talking ONLY about “possibilities”.

** For more free articles and ideas on putting creativity to work in your workplace, surf on over to www.mikekerr.com/cms/index.php/humour-resources/.*



Inspiring Customer Service with a Laugh

Who wants to do business with a grouch? And whoever sold anything to anyone by boring them to death? No matter what business you are in, whether you have external or internal clients, humor is a simple way to add a personable touch to your client service. Remember, doing all those nifty “good customer service” things you’re supposed to do just means you’re meeting expectations. To exceed expectations, you need to look for simple ways to go beyond the norm, and encouraging employees to tap into their sense of humor is an easy way to make them—and your clients—happier.

- 170** Reward customers for their stress with a fun, offbeat award. For example, Barney’s Motel offers a 10 cent bounty for flies, dead or alive, retrieved from guest’s motel rooms.
- 171** Give out prizes to customers in line-ups or in waiting areas to help them pass the time and reward them for their patience. For example, give a small prize for whoever has the oldest dated penny or a hole in their sock.
- 172** Look for opportunities to use humor in all your customer service signs. For example, one sign at a vet clinic reads: No Parking Here. Violators Will Be Neutered.
- 173** Add some humor to your company’s automated voicemail. For example, a brokerage firm added this to their voicemail: “And for the sound of a quacking duck (their mascot), press 7 now.”
- 174** Rotate the job around of “playing customer” for a day to help employees see your organization through the customer’s eyes. It’s not only fun for employees, but it’s typically very enlightening.
- 175** Offer special wacky deals, discounts, or prizes to garner free publicity and generate some buzz. For example, every Wednesday, a bald restaurant owner in California charges customers based on how much hair they have!

- 176** Keep a file or book of unusual client requests or questions.
- 177** Create a special fund that is used just for ideas that engage the customer in fun and meaningful ways.
- 178** Create a fun waiting room or reception area. Stockpile it with humorous books and magazines to read, fun posters, etc.
- 179** Encourage all front line employees to create a unique personal signature of something they say or do that's a little different to make an impression with customers in a fun, memorable way. For example, one grocery bagger has done this by writing little "thoughts of the day" and slipping them into customer's grocery bags.
- 180** Hold a contest and award a prize for the most creative photo or video of someone using one of your products or services in a creative way.
- 181** Put funny quotes or "thoughts of the day" on customer's bills or invoices.
- 182** Collect and display great client testimonials to continually encourage front line employees to be at their best.
- 183** Look for simple ways to go beyond the expected. Actually brainstorm this with your team on a regular basis.
- 184** Create a humorous service slogan that describes your commitment to the customer.
- 185** Add humor to any instructions you give out.
- 186** Include customers in contests.
- 187** Include customers in some of your brainstorming sessions.
- 188** Create a funny "thought of the day" board or humor board for customers.
- 189** Hold annual, offbeat/wacky customer appreciation days.
- 190** Create a public display of customers' photos showing off your products from their travels around the globe.

Motivating the Troops with Laughter

Remember, ultimately, there's nothing more motivating than success. And, also remember, that money is a lousy motivator. To create a positive work environment, you need to create a "want to" kind of a workplace vs. a "have to" workplace. Tapping into people's sense of pride, recognizing people, praising people, celebrating successes, completing meaningful work where you see the end results, feeling connected to a team and to an organization's vision and goals, communicating in an honest and open manner, and treating people humanely, with respect and dignity, is what truly motivates people.

But, of course, who says you can't have a little fun along the way? Like in an ecosystem, everything in the workplace is interconnected, so when you do things to improve morale, chances are, you're also lowering stress levels, sparking more creativity, improving communication, and inspiring greater customer service ALL at the same time! Wow! How can you not get excited?

Thanks a lot!

- 191** Practice positive praise. Be 100% positive, specific, timely, and sincere!
- 192** Hold a "Thank God It's Monday!" morning "rally" to launch the week on a positive note and to help people get rid of the dreaded "Sunday night blahs".
- 193** Give people standing ovations for coming into work each morning (or, at least, every Monday morning).
- 194** During a particularly nice day of weather, take the team out for an impromptu trip to a nearby city park, zoo, aquarium, or beach.
- 195** Go to the airport, and welcome a colleague back from a long work trip.
- 196** Post a fun message of "Thanks!" in unusual places, such as: the back of a washroom stall's door, on wastebaskets, on the coffee pot, etc.

- 197** Kidnap a co-worker in need of a break or deserving of a reward with the “humor police”, and whisk them off somewhere fun.
- 198** Start a file of each employee’s “favorites”, such as: favorite ways to be thanked, gifts, hobbies, food, etc. That way, when it comes time to send them something special, to celebrate their birthday, or to offer an incentive, you’ll know exactly what to get them!
- 199** Have a rotating bouquet of flowers that gets passed from one person to another.
- 200** Send gifts and thank-you cards to the families of employees when the employee has done something noteworthy. They’re a part of the support team, and it’s the most powerful way to tap into someone’s sense of pride.
- 201** Identify easily quantifiable milestones, and, then, attach celebratory events or perks to each level.
- 202** Have a fun ritual or signal for every time someone makes a significant sale or lands a major contract.
- 203** Call spouses to find out creative ways to thank employees.
- 204** Keep a supply of inexpensive gift items and funny thank-you cards on hand so that it’s easy to thank people on a regular basis.
- 205** Get offbeat and wacky with your gifts and incentives. Some great examples are a music lesson, free pet grooming, having their house cleaned for a year, pedicures, family memberships to a museum or zoo, or having their portrait painted.
- 206** Hold a weekly raffle for small prizes, but instead of people buying tickets, they earn them from their coworkers for being so nice and helpful!
- 207** Have a “Manager of Mirth” award that recognizes the manager who most successfully instills a sense of pride, recognition, and fun in his or her team.
- 208** Name hallways, stairwells, or meeting rooms after employees to honor them (since all the mountains are likely taken). You can also do this on a rotating basis to make sure everyone gets a turn.
- 209** Hold a “limo lottery” where the winner gets driven to and from work in a limousine.

- 210** Have managers serve coffee, drinks, and treats during a particularly busy time or simply as an impromptu way to say thanks.
- 211** Deliver an unusual food item to everyone. Some great treats are popsicles, M & Ms, or popcorn.
- 212** Bring in a team of masseuses and offer everyone a chance at a shoulder or foot massage.
- 213** Wash employees' cars as an offbeat thank-you.
- 214** Hold a regular "employee appreciation day" in the same way as customer appreciation days.
- 215** Give out fun awards that encourage positive behaviors. Some examples are: Best Sense of Humor, Nicest Smile, Most Fun Department, Most Likely to Be Adopted by a Customer, etc.
- 216** Create team awards in addition to individual awards.
- 217** Create a menu/shopping list of reward perks from which people can choose. That way, people get what they really want.
- 218** Name menu items in the company cafeteria after employees.
- 219** Hold a mock Oscars ceremony and dole out fun awards ("Person Most Likely to O.D. on Caffeine", "Person Least Likely to be Voted Off the Island", or "Person Most Likely to Jam the Photocopier" award.)

Happy days are here again . . .

- 220** Hold an annual "nerd day" event where everyone dresses up like nerds.
- 221** Celebrate the anniversary of your company's founding.
- 222** Celebrate the anniversary date of when people started working for your organization.
- 223** Once a week, say Friday mornings, have a "pass-the-joke" relay around the office. People are obliged to pass, by phone or in person, the same, clean joke to another person until everyone has heard it.
- 224** Create a fun start of the day team ritual to set the tone for the day.
- 225** Create a fun calendar that highlights employees' birthdays, significant organization dates, holidays, and social events.

- 226** Phone someone celebrating a birthday and play “Happy Birthday” to them using the musical tones from the phone (#112, 163, 112, 196, 110, 8521, 008, 121). 11
- 227** Have a “Word or Phrase of the Day”. This can be something a bit wacky where everyone is encouraged to say it as many times in conversation throughout the day.
- 228** Have a “dress your boss or coworker” day.
- 229** Hold an annual 50’s dress up day.
- 230** Have a prize for the best costume on Halloween, and hold a Halloween fashion show. Then, encourage people to go trick or treating down the hallways.
- 231** Hold a “beach party” in the middle of winter.
- 232** Celebrate obscure and unusual holidays, such as: Groundhog Day (February 2) or Talk Like a Pirate Day (September 19).
- 233** Celebrate Make Up Your Own Holiday (every March 26th) by making up your very own holiday appropriate to your team or workplace.
- 234** Instead of a “casual Friday” hold a “formal Friday”.
- 235** Hold a family open house once a year.
- 236** Create a fun, wacky, or offbeat tradition to match each day of the workweek. For example: M & M Mondays, Take-Out Tuesdays, or Fun Dance Fridays.
- 237** Celebrate “Wacky Wednesdays” as a way to celebrate hump day.
- 238** If your profession doesn’t have an official “X” day of celebration, then create one!
- 239** Give everyone on your team a special day when it is their holiday. For example: “Official Bob Day!”
- 240** Bring the beach to the office during the summer by having an indoor beach party complete with pink flamingoes, Hawaiian leis, fake palm trees, and lawn chairs.
- 241** Hold a Hawaiian shirt theme day.

- 242** Create a fun slogan to kick off each month.
- 243** Have a “wackiest tie” day.
- 244** Have a wackiest sock or mismatched sock day.
- 245** Have a “bring your pet to work” day.
- 246** Have a “bring your grandparents” or “parents” to work day.
- 247** Hold an ice cream sundae social.

Let the games begin . . .

- 248** Hold a “rock-paper-scissors” contest.
- 249** Have a “Word or Phrase that Pays” contest. Whoever first hears the phrase from someone out of the loop, or a customer, wins a small prize.
- 250** Include families in company contests. For example, have them participate in contests to come up with a name for a new project or product.
- 251** Hold a contest for people to write the funniest work-related joke.
- 252** Hold a “match the employee to the baby photo” contest.
- 253** Hold a “match the employee to the high school grad photo” contest.
- 254** Hold a “match the employee to the pet” contest.
- 255** Have a “match the foot to the employee” contest. (Yes, one company actually did this.)
- 256** Hold a contest for the best work-related excuse by an employee.
- 257** Hold an employee talent contest.
- 258** Have a mini-golf match in your office, creating work-related obstacles and holes.
- 259** Hold a contest in which teams create fun, one-minute ads for your company’s products and services.
- 260** Hold your own customized Olympic games.
- 261** Create your own “Guinness book” of wacky, work-related records, such as: longest number of days the boss has gone without saying a certain phrase, maximum number of cups of coffee drank by an employee in a single day, or longest office commute.

- 262** Hold a paper airplane making contest and reward prizes for creative design, flight distance, and flight duration.
- 263** Hold a celebrity look-alike and/or impersonation contest with employees.
- 264** Hold a contest to complete the following line the best:
“You know you’re a- YOUR PROFESSION HERE-
when _____.”
- 265** Download office bingo cards from www.jobacle.com, or create your own customized bingo cards featuring random events suitable for your workplace that people must collect throughout a day or week. Some examples of these events would be: a jammed copier, the boss saying a certain buzzword, or a customer wearing a green tie.

A team that laughs together, stays together . . .

- 266** Make sure everyone has a business card. It’s hard to feel connected to the team or organization if you don’t.
- 267** Create fun, offbeat, colorful job titles for people, or, at least, let folks come up with alter-ego job titles that capture the true essence of their work.
- 268** Tell a “joke-of-the-day”, each day, at the same time, over the P.A. system, or post it on your website or bulletin board.
- 269** Put a funny quote on your business card.
- 270** Create an official “Corporate Jester” role that rotates around the company every three months.
- 271** Create a “Joy Grant” in the same way that Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream supports project/ideas that will bring more joy and fun to the workplace.
- 272** Start a Laughter Club at your workplace.
(For information, go to www.worldlaughter.com.)
- 273** Start a humor file to collect on-going, relevant workplace humor.
- 274** Volunteer to support a local charity.
- 275** Use baby photos on the company’s organization charts.
- 276** Add some fun, personal information on your organization charts.

- 277** Survey people on a regular basis, asking them these simple questions: “What motivates you?” and “What de-motivates you?” (You may be surprised by the results.)
- 278** Create a code, phrase, or signal that employees can use when they’re having a bad day and need some extra support from colleagues.
- 279** Every now and then, create a totally wacky policy. For example, every third Thursday of September, employees are forbidden to wear brown socks.
- 280** Start a “Meet _____”. This is a fun, weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly e-mail posting that introduces a new (or not so new) employee to everyone with some fun, personal information and a fun photo.
- 281** Create a company song, cheer, or “company anthem” that you can sing at annual get-togethers.
- 282** Create your own set of customized “Murphy’s Law” rules that would pertain to your specific work situation.
- 283** Get an office aquarium.
- 284** Create a work-related trivia file to collect fun trivia.
- 285** Wear a humorous bumper sticker on your back.
- 286** Have an indoor office picnic... without the ants.
- 287** Hold a “How I spent my summer vacation” luncheon, where people share slides, photos, or stories from their summer.
- 288** Give cool, exciting, James Bondish sounding titles to your mundane workplace projects and processes.
- 289** Wear a “Hello my name is _____” name tag all day and see what the response is.
- 290** Conduct a “humor raid” on another team, department, or co-worker in need of a fun break.
- 291** Create an annual yearbook of fun photos and accomplishments to highlight the past year’s successes.
- 292** Create a team/company photo album into which people can contribute fun, work-related photos.

- 293** Put on a humorous skit in early January to review the past year and to talk about the year ahead.
- 294** Assign a rotating workplace “paparazzi” to take candid, fun, spontaneous photos of people in action.
- 295** Participate in a little stealth disco. This craze, started by a Chicago ad firm, involves sneaking up behind someone who is hard at work and then disco dancing behind them. For bonus points, get yourself video taped. Then, send a copy to the hard-working, oblivious employee who missed out on the whole thing!
- 296** Hold an office garage sale where people get to swap different office equipment and supplies.
- 297** Set up a lemonade stand in the hallway or elevator, and raise money for your favorite charity or social committee.
- 298** Create a dictionary of work-related terms that apply to your workplace with invented words.
- 299** Grab a video camera and create a fun spoof of a reality TV show based in your very workplace, complete with “person on the street” interviews, off the cuff comments, and watching in on an employee meeting.
- 300** Create your own fortune cookies and slip in work-related fortunes. (Surprisingly, the cookies are quite easy to bake.)
- 301** Hire a cartoonist to draw fun caricatures of everyone on your team.
- 302** Create fun office postcards. Then, send them to people who are away on vacation to remind them of what they’re missing being away from work!
- 303** Have a weekly joke lunch where participants must supply three new jokes to the luncheon as admission in.
- 304** Don’t just have a sign with someone’s name on it, especially when it’s in the public eye. Include a fun, personable photo, and list a few fun bio facts about the person.
- 305** Create a fun sticker, badge, or slogan to remind people to lighten up.
- 306** Give people an actual license to laugh. This is a certificate that lets them know your workplace allows humor and doesn’t want people to take themselves too seriously.

- 307** Hire a comedian, magician, improvisational troupe, or hypnotist for a networking event. Nothing encourages networking like some hearty laughter.
- 308** Create a theme song (or pick an already existing one) that suits your workplace.
- 309** Workplaces often have baseball teams, so why not create a workplace book club, chess club, gardening club, tennis club, or yoga club?
- 310** Find creative ways to let employees bring their personal talents and passions into the workplace. For example, if someone is an artist, encourage them to participate in designing posters or doing sketches of coworkers; if someone plays an instrument, have them play in the lobby one lunch hour a week.
- 311** Create your own offbeat “merit badges” in the same way the Science Creative Quarterly has done with badges, such as “I’m Pretty Confident Around an Open Flame.”
- 312** Consider getting an “office dog”. Several companies have them, complete with their own employee I.D. badges.
- 313** Compile an office cookbook with everyone’s favorite recipes.
- 314** Hold job swap days where folks get to try each other’s jobs or, at least, shadow them for a day.
- 315** Perform random acts of humor on fellow coworkers.
- 316** Create nicknames based on the last four digits of your work phone number’s corresponding letters.
- 317** Create your own version of “recess” once a week. This can be a fun break that promotes networking and teambuilding through fun and games.

Finding the Funny in Everyday Life: Tips on the Care and Feeding of Your Sense of Humor

It really is possible to develop both your *appreciation* of humor and your ability to *generate* humor. Below, I've listed a few simple ways you can strengthen your funny bone.

- 318** Carry a notebook to record those great, clean jokes you hear (that you know you'll forget the next day!).
- 319** Scan newspapers for funny stories, wacky facts, and trivia.
- 320** Finish the newspaper with your favorite comics.
- 321** Read more humor, and read it with a critical eye. Make it a goal to read more funny novels or humorous books.
- 322** Watch more humor. Watch more sitcoms, less grisly crime scene shows; watch more comedies, less horror flicks.
- 323** Change the references in clean jokes so that they refer to work-related issues.
- 324** Instead of asking the same old questions, tap into people's natural sense of humor by asking offbeat questions, such as: "How are you on a scale of 1 to 10?" or "What's the strangest thing that's happened to you in the last month?" or "Would you consider yourself a cat or hamster person?".
- 325** Keep a humor file or book and carry it wherever you go. Forcing yourself to look for funny things in the world will help you find them easier over time.
- 326** Sign up for a theater improvisation class.
- 327** Practice writing your own Top-10 lists for any and all occasions.

- 328** Practice writing your own jokes. Think about the choice of specific words which can make all the difference. Words with a hard “g” or “k” sound, for example, are thought to be funnier. Be specific with your language to paint a picture. For example, instead of saying, “car”, say, “red, Volkswagen Beetle”. Practice your timing, and edit, edit, edit. Brevity is levity.
- 329** Practice the “rule of 3’s” when writing a joke. This is where the third item in a list breaks the serious logic of the prior two. For example, “When hiking in bear country, always bring along bear spray, a noisemaker... and someone you can outrun!”
- 330** Practice telling jokes. They truly are an art form, so practice by slipping more jokes into everyday conversation with “safe” audience members, like your family.
- 331** Keep a file of humorous quotes you come across, including funny quotes from family, friends, or fictitious movie and TV characters.
- 332** Practice looking for the “accidentally” funny in the world. Watch for signs such as, “Today only! Bras Half Off!” or newspaper headlines that say, “Children Make Nutritious Snacks”. Keep a list of them.
- 333** Sign up for an amateur comedy class. Many big cities hold them regularly.
- 334** Take a stroll through a costume store, magic shop, or prop store to look for inspiration and pick up a few wacky items to help you tap into your sense of ha-ha.
- 335** Rewrite stressful events into funny parodies or spoofs.
- 336** Practice looking at everyday situations from the opposite perspective. (For example, what does your dog think about when you yell at him, or what if your kids went to your office and you went to daycare?)
- 337** Practice asking more questions. So much of humor comes out of simply being observant, paying attention, and asking those standard questions, such as: “Why is it that...”, “What’s up with...”, and “What if...”

- 338** Practice creating metaphors, such as: How is parenting similar to cooking? How does selling widgets compare to hunting ducks?
- 339** Tell more funny stories. Stories are the most powerful forms of communicating, and improving your ability to tell stories is a great way to have more fun, tap into your sense of humor, and build stronger relationships with the people around you.
- 340** Laugh at yourself. This, above all else in this entire list, is the most important rule to follow if you want to live a less stressful, more productive, happier, and more fun-filled existence. Laugh at yourself, and find the funny in your every day bloopers and blunders to remind yourself that you're human. By laughing at yourself, you take away anyone's ability to laugh at you because you'll beat them to the punch line, and you'll never run out of things to laugh at!

Thanks for reading this.

If you got this far, hopefully you'll be inspired to try at least a few ideas in your workplace. And if you have any ideas to share about how you add fun to your workplace, I'd love to hear from you (e-mail us at info@mikekerr.com).

For more resources and ideas, including books, audio CDs, DVDs, and tele-seminars, or to bring Michael Kerr to your workplace for a presentation or training workshop, cruise on over to www.mikekerr.com.

In good humor,

Michael Kerr

