

FOUR EASY WAYS TO BUILD A BETTER WORKPLACE WITH HUMOR
Part of the Humor Hint Series
by Patt Schwab, Ph.D.

Work is not God's way of punishing us for failing to marry rich! We spend too much time at work to ignore the potential for creating a positive supportive environment. Here are some ideas that can build a more fun-loving, productive workplace.

1. Put up a Humor Bulletin Board.

Invite staff, clients, folks from other departments to contribute to it. Change the cartoons frequently. This keeps the board fresh and it also diminishes the impact of the negative cartoon or joke that inevitably gets posted.

2. Share the funny things that happen in the office.

One sophisticated group with whom I consulted assured me, "This is the corporate headquarters. Nothing funny ever happens here." A few minutes of questioning revealed an elaborate hoax in which Wilber, a teddy bear mascot, had been stolen from the accounting office. A ransom note was left demanding that four dozen homemade cookies be delivered to the men's room at a certain time and day or "un-BEARable things will happen to Wilber!"

The cookies were delivered and the bathroom elaborately staked out. A variety of men, including the oh-so-solemn CEO, used the facility under the suspicious eyes of women trying to look like they had a reason to loiter outside the executive washroom. The bear, indeed, was returned, but no one emerged with the cookies. The staff later discovered that the bear napper had entered the men's room and hidden the cookies in the room's false ceiling, to be retrieved in safety at the end of the day!

This episode played out over a week and no one in the adjoining offices knew it was happening! By not including their neighbors in the fun, the organization lost a chance to increase interdepartmental communication and teamwork, and maybe even solve the mystery!

3. Create Humorous Events.

Have an award ceremony for the best, "Sorry I'm Late to Work but. . ." excuse of the year, or to celebrate getting the budget in or passing the audit or presenting the annual report. Events can be elaborate festivities or simply ringing a gong or passing out candy when a production quota is met.

4. Change your problem customers from abusing to amusing.

Do you have a client who is condescending or chronically late, or so out of it he thinks soap-on-a-rope is jewelry? One company I work with developed a dual file system. One file was titled "Letters we sent" and another, "Letters we wanted to send!" The group effort devoted to creating the "Letter we wanted to send" often left them in a good mood for weeks.

A hospital changed the entire staff's approach to difficult patients from avoiding them to seeking them out simply by allowing the receptionist who successfully handled the most difficult patient of the week to go home early on Friday. Suddenly difficult people were a desired commodity!

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Dr. Patt Schwab speaks internationally on the topics of managing change and using humor to enhance the workplace environment. She would enjoy hearing your ideas for building a better workplace. Please write her at: 9401- 45th Ave. NE • Seattle, WA 98115 or e-mail pattschwab@aol.com

WORKPLACE WITH HUMOR