

# Laugh at Work?

by  
*Randall Munson*



Many think that people conducting serious business should always be serious. It seems logical. Happily, it is not true. Humor actually plays an important role in an effective organization.

Consider the case of Craig. (Not his real name. His real name is Roger Ladwig but I call him Craig to protect his privacy.)

Craig surprised everybody.

He laughed.

You see, Craig didn't usually laugh. He was a very serious, conscientious, hard-working employee. Everyone respected Craig. But when his officemates retold a joke from the previous night's TV monolog, he didn't laugh. He didn't share amusing stories with his co-workers at coffee. He didn't laugh or even smile very often.

## Ever happen to you?

Have you ever worked with someone like Craig who lacked a sense of humor? Someone who never smiled, never responded to a humorous remark, never laughed, and was always serious about everything? If so, how did people react to that person?

When I pose this question to a business audience, the answer is always the same: **people stay away** from a person who lacks a sense of humor. How effective is a member of a team when others try to minimize contact with them? The team is not productive! Communication is stifled. Others associate with them only when forced to. There is no free exchange of information or ideas; there is no collaboration.

## Use Humor Effectively

On the other hand, have you ever worked with someone who knew how to use humor effectively? Someone who could walk into a room full of angry people and release tension with the perfect quip? Someone with a great sense of humor who liked to joke and laugh and always had a smile? If so, how did people react to that person?

People love to be around someone with a smile and a great sense of humor!

The people in businesses I work with confirm my own business experiences: **people love to be around** someone with a smile and a great sense of humor! They easily play a central role in a team because others are naturally drawn to them. Information, conversation, and spontaneous ideas flow freely.

An environment perceived as serious and threatening is not conducive to a free flow of information. If everyone is cautiously teetering on pins & needles, the focus will be on not making mistakes and covering your back.

In contrast, if they are comfortable instead of worried, information is shared more freely; it is more candid, more valuable, more comprehensive, and more concise.

Humor doesn't waste time. It actually speeds things up!

### **Laugh Your Way to a Better Job**

Robert Half International surveyed Vice Presidents and Personnel Directors of 100 of America's largest corporations. They reported that **84%** of them thought employees with a sense of humor do a better job than people with little or no sense of humor

Humor can improve productivity; it is one of the powerful secrets of Business Magic!

The Director of Human Resources at a large computer company pays attention to humor in job interviews as indicator of success on the job. Picking up on her idea, I tried it when interviewing professionals

to work for me at IBM. I found it to be an effective screening tool. Note how long it takes for an interviewee to exhibit a sense of humor. That is, how long it takes for them to find something funny in the interview, tell you something funny or otherwise demonstrate a sense of humor. People

who can find humor in a difficult, stressful situation, such as a job interview, can probably handle challenging problems on the job without being overwhelmed by them.

**Randall Munson** will be the keynote speaker at the ***Dynamics Works Institute Workforce Summit 2005*** to be held October 10-12, 2005, at the Rosen Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida.

Randall will be presenting his international award-winning presentation ***The Serious Business of HUMOR™***.

For more information and to register for the summit. visit [www.dvnamicinstitute.com](http://www.dvnamicinstitute.com)

### **Keep Your Job**

Studies conducted to find out why people are fired from their jobs found that fifteen percent of the time people are dismissed because they don't have the skill to do the job. Surprisingly, eighty five percent of the time people are fired because they lack people skills and the ability to relate to others. Humor is an integral part of relating to others.

For years we've recognized that overall job satisfaction is strongly correlated to worker effectiveness. Satisfied workers are more effective workers. But findings in the mid 80's revealed that having fun was more important than overall satisfaction. Those workers who felt their work was fun – that is, it had elements of humor – performed better and got along better with co-workers than those who were simply satisfied with their jobs.

Humor improves employee performance.

## Humor Consultant

That's why major corporations such as 3M, Xerox, and IBM hire humor consultants like me to help them cultivate laughter at work. I've suggested creating humor rooms stocked with funny props, comic videos, and cartoons that employees can go to get a humor transfusion. Some of my clients have created humor bulletin boards, both physical and electronic, to post things that are funny to the people in the company. After delivering a keynote presentation called *The Serious Business of HUMOR!*™ at a conference of IBM executives, they created a humor newsletter and immediately integrated humor and laughter into their monthly business calls. It improved their teamwork, productivity, and customer service.

“You brought humor to IBM!

Before you spoke to our group, we had a vague awareness that humor may have some value in business. Now we genuinely understand how powerful humor can be as a tool to achieve serious business objectives. We immediately implemented some of your ideas to integrate humor and laughter into our business. You are right about bringing humor into the workplace; your ideas improve teamwork, productivity, and customer service.”

Baron Stewart  
Professional Development Manager, IBM

## Laugh at Work Week

Tangible results like this prompted me to establish **Laugh at Work Week** to help businesses and individuals recognize and capitalize on the power of laughter. This annual international event emphasizes that laughter and humor are an important part of the workplace. **Laugh at Work Week** promotes the benefits of laughing at work – including improved productivity, teamwork, communication, stress relief, job satisfaction, and employee retention. The week, which appropriately begins on April Fools Day, focuses on the very serious business of humor. It encourages every worker in every organization to laugh at work, enjoy the week, and experience the value of laughter.

## What About Craig?

Remember Craig, the guy who surprised everybody when he laughed? After his unexpected burst of humor, the people around Craig saw him differently. They realized that a real human being had been stuffed inside that stoic, somber body. Their attitudes shifted and people warmed up to Craig. He'll never be the office clown. He'll always be the conscientious, hard-working employee that holds the respect of his peers. But since he started sharing humor with others at work, he became a genuine part of the team that works effectively together accomplishing much more for the organization than they did when chilling seriousness shrouded the organization.

Do you want to improve productivity, teamwork, communication, stress relief, job satisfaction, and employee retention? Then join other organizations around the world that have discovered the value of humor and **LAUGH AT WORK!**

**Randall Munson** is president and founder of Creatively Speaking, based in Rochester, Minnesota. Named one of the world's greatest business mentors, Randall combines two decades with IBM and 25 years as a professional magician to create powerful programs to help improve the effectiveness of organizations around the world. Randall is a best-selling author and Certified Speaking Professional who presents international award-winning programs to audiences in more than 30 countries. For a free information kit or to hire Randall Munson to help your organization, please call 507-286-1331, e-mail [Randall@CreativelySpeaking.com](mailto:Randall@CreativelySpeaking.com), or visit [www.CreativelySpeaking.com](http://www.CreativelySpeaking.com).