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**Humor Trainer Yuks Up The Works**

**By James B. Meadow**

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You know humor is serious business when a professional association of clowns calls to request a training seminar about humor in the workplace.

“These people are clowns! What do they want me to tell *them* about humor?” recalls Karyn Ruth White, a Denver-based, National Humorist. White, a New Hampshire native who earned her comedy spurs (and scars) as a 15-year veteran of the stand-up circuit, didn’t do a seminar for the clowns, but she’s plied her trade for plenty of other clients.

During its 10-year history, her Denver-based Company, *Laugh and Learn Productions* has preached the gospel of humor in the corporate arena to national and local firms and institutions, including US West (Qwest), Microsoft, Ball Aerospace and The University of Colorado.

Along the way, White has encountered “terminally serious managers,” people who think humor in the workplace “makes your company seem less credible and productive.” The funny thing is that “humor can be a great tool,” she says. “There are a lot of benefits to using it in business.

“Humor has the power to help build consensus among teams in a company. It can be a great morale-lifter. Humor can also be the key to inspiring employees to think more creatively. I’m not talking about wearing a clown suit to a board meeting. But a lot of the time there is a stigma around humor; some managers think if there’s laughter in the halls, nothing is being done. But my theory is, if people are laughing, that means they *like* coming to work. And who’s going to be more productive—someone who likes their job or someone who shows up for work only because they *have* to?”

White isn’t standing alone on the pro-humor soapbox. “Humor is about balance, about not taking ourselves too seriously,” says Margie Mauldin, owner of Executive Forum, a Denver firm specializing in management and leadership education for senior executives. “When people are laughing, they’re relaxed, and that opens them up and allows them to be more flexible.” Mauldin recently invited White to be the “opening act” for her six training programs. “People responded in an overwhelmingly positive manner,” Mauldin says. “They thought Karyn’s presentation was a good way to get them warmed up and to get their brains jump-started.”

Karyn Ruth White is a National Humorist. Visit her at [www.karynruthwhite.com](http://www.karynruthwhite.com)