

Innovation at the *Speed* of Laughter: 8 Secrets to World Class Idea Generation

by John Sweeney and the Brave New Workshop

QUOTES

Until we receive more quotes about the book, we've included quotes from clients who have utilized the 8 Secrets in corporate training events to achieve business objectives.

CARLSON COMPANIES

"We all seek to employ the best minds in our businesses – but what good is it if we don't encourage those minds to fly to new places and create new and better ways of seeing things? 'Innovation at the Speed of Laughter' is a toolkit of techniques guaranteed to unleash new ideas, written by one of the most consistently creative teams in comedy theatre."

-Marilyn Nelson Carlson, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Carlson Companies

ALTRIA GROUP, INC.

"John Sweeney gets to the heart of what makes people work together effectively and uses improv exercises to teach those behaviors. John's approach is fun, but powerful -- it highlights what your team is doing right and what it needs to do better. We enjoyed working with John and highly recommend his program."

-William Ohlemeyer, Vice President and Associate General Counsel

GMAC-ERS

"John used humor and an innovative perspective to help us look at Risk Management from a different view. The new vocabulary and insight we gained propelled us into a new chapter in our organization's growth."

-Anurag Saxena, Vice President of Risk Management

UNITED PROPERTIES LLC

"John Sweeney helped us work through a very difficult session with one of our major customers. He led us (laughing) through several exercises that emphasized the message of accepting all styles. As the participants quickly grew to trust him they extended that trust to each other and allowed us to begin a new and productive dialogue."

-Jim Wadsworth, Director of Learning & Development

NBA's MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES

"The work that John Sweeney has done for us has benefited our entire organization. His unique approach and insight helped us to achieve a new level of productivity."

-Chris Wright, Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer

BOSTON SCIENTIFIC

"John's presentation was the highlight of the meeting! We are all back in the office today and talking what John presented."

- Beth Beutell, Senior Meeting Planner

CARGILL RECOGNITION PROJECT (LEADERVENTURE, LLC) BONNIE SCHOENFELDER

I really enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate with BNW on the Cargill recognition project. If there is any chance to work together again, I'd love to. The talent did a fabulous job, the concepts got across well to the audience, and best of all - they learned while they laughed. That's great!!

-Bonnie L. Schoenfelder, Ph.D., LeaderVenture, LLC

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3M PHARMACEUTICALS

A survey of attendees showed that [John was] consistently one of the top things that people enjoyed, if not the highest. When people filled in their own info on the survey, many loved the concept of creative safety and appreciated the concept of creating a safe environment in which ideas can be shared. Loved the interactive nature of your presentation -- was pleasantly surprised with the level of participation. People were willing to volunteer and she felt that the claims we made in advance of the session regarding participation were accurate. A few people volunteered that surprised her in the fact that they took the risk to get up in front of their peers. Again, this is a very positive phenomenon associated with our training. (I) would be very happy to recommend [the BNW] to other divisions within the company.

-Debra Kiehold

LAWSON SOFTWARE

I wanted to share the note sent out today by Lawson's CMO Scott Meyer (see below). This was a terrific event for Lawson and your contribution was significant. I have never seen our employees having so much fun and laughing so much! On behalf of Lawson, thank you!

-Terry Blake

NATIONAL CONCIERGE ASSOCIATION

I also wanted to thank you and John Sweeney for an outstanding workshop yesterday. He did a fantastic job. After doing improv for 13 years it is amazing how much of it I don't apply to work. I really liked his insights and observations. On top of it all it was just plain fun!

- Nancy McBride, Ticketing and Group Sales Manager, Triple Espresso Company

PRAGMATEK, FLIP CRUMMER

Please accept our thanks (again) and appreciation to the crew that spent Sunday and Monday with us in Brainerd. It was an unqualified out of the park grand slam home run. The exercises they did with us on Monday morning were being spontaneously re-enacted throughout the remainder of Monday and on Tuesday. They even showed up in our "stupid human tricks" at the always-raucous Monday night dinner.

I could go on and on but I'll just say it was even better than I hoped, and I'll be in touch with you for our future fun/training needs as they arise.

Flip Crummer, Client Relationship Executive

LSS DATA SYSTEMS

"Everything was extremely well done. Caleb [McEwen] was excellent to work with. Even at the last moment we threw him a curve and he was very gracious and saw to it that everything went well for us. We really enjoyed the presentation. Our clients were extremely happy. The feedback was extremely positive. Overall, just a wonderful experience working with you guys. Don't hesitate to have people call me for a referral."

- David Pettigell, Technical Advisor, Business Opportunities

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GENERAL MILLS

"The Brave New Workshop component of our Yoplait "off-site" was incredibly well-received. People thought it was really fun, and, more importantly, took away a lot from it.

"You guys definitely did a great job on all fronts - just incorporating enough about Yoplait. People thought it was great that you got a pulse on what was going on in the division - but also had some unique ways to bring the more academic organizational behavior things to life -- in a much more relevant way than they had seen before.

"So, great work! I wouldn't hesitate to call you again... I hope we can keep in touch, and feel free to use me as a reference as well."

-Steve Young, Promotions Manager, Yoplait/Colombo Division

MINNESOTA TECHNOLOGY

"Our staff is still using techniques from our Brave New Workshop training months later. It has had a greater impact than any previous team-building efforts because it not only stays with you, but it brings a smile to everyone's face when the exercises are mentioned. We still have people walking around the office saying 'YES, and...' and laughing. It's been great.

"The rules of building good comedy are also the rules of building good business -- let creative people have a 'safe' place to explore, and they will impress you with the results!

"Our staff never expected to both laugh and learn at a staff retreat! We got great evaluations and great team results from working with BNW.

"While other training groups have good messages, none work as quickly or last as long as BNW's techniques. People learn while laughing, and it really helps to see your coworkers as people, not just as colleagues.

"The Brave New Workshop team provided outstanding collaboration, both within their troupe and with our staff. John Sweeney and crew did an excellent job of exploring some very specific workplace issues with our staff. Everyone had a great time and continues to talk about the techniques we discovered."

-Steve Boland, Manager, eBusiness Institute

RBC DAIN RAUSCHER

"It's ironic that I was the most skeptical one -- I've been to a hundred training workshops. But this was one of the BEST ones I've ever been to. Definitely use me as a reference."

-Kimberly Washington, Senior Design and Production Specialist

FAIRVIEW HEALTH SYSTEMS

"Brave New Workshop's improv training sessions at our Quality Leadership Conference demonstrated how valuable all ideas are in brainstorming and making decisions. All of the exercises encouraged people to drop their preconceived notions, validate others' contributions and tap into their own creativity.

"John Sweeney has a gift for understanding an organization's issues and applying improv techniques to improve work teams by encouraging trust, creativity and FUN! I would love to have the BNW come back to Fairview and 'play' with departments or work teams who are struggling to understand and trust each other."

-Luann Dammannm Program Coordinator

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WCCO RADIO

"Stepping into the world of improvisation as a training tool was a new experience for WCCO Radio. The results were quite impressive. Using Brave New Workshop for our opening training session on creativity and change management not only addressed those topics in a most informative and entertaining manner, but set the tone for our entire meeting. The response from our sales staff was very positive. We now have alternatives to PowerPoint, videos, lectures and other mundane training methods. The staff engaged in training both physically and mentally. Creativity in sales is a difficult subject to address. You made it come alive and broke new ground for many of our account executives.

"We have explored the concept of improvisation in our sales meetings since the retreat. Staff/management interaction in training and the use of role-playing in a more entertaining manner have become a bigger part of our focus for sales meetings. We can conduct business and have fun, too. In this economy, where sales are more difficult, we believe that if you can have some fun along the way, good morale will maximize sales.

"I have never been involved in a training program such as the one you used at our sales retreat. Improvisation is a valuable training tool. The keys are: 1) It is new and different. 2) It physically involves the staff and encourages their participation. 3) It is not the old-fashioned way of teaching (i.e., PowerPoint, overhead projection, handouts, lectures, etc.). 4) It is fun.

"You lead and manage the workshop with great skill, keeping all the attendees interested and involved, while helping them enjoy the process. Their reaction to the three-hour session was very positive. I probed later to see what they took away from the meeting. They definitely understood the basics of the mind expanding creative process; that it was not an intimidating exercise, but rather, something they were capable of doing. They also began to feel that the changes going on around them may be a good thing.

"Lastly, I think your Improv Comedy Show after dinner was a huge hit. Being able to laugh at ourselves, tailoring the presentation to our people and management set a tone for the last two days of meetings. A bonding occurred during that opening day that helped us overcome some of the tentativeness that accompanies all of the change that we have experienced in the past several months.

"Thank you for helping us move our sales effort to the next level. I would be happy to recommend your Improvisation Training to other Infinity Radio Stations."

-Dick Carlson, Vice President of Sales

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

"Brave New Workshop [actor/facilitators] are world class!"

-Mary Bosrock, Owner/Publisher

CAREPROVIDERS OF MINNESOTA

"Our staff loved the presentation by Brave New Workshop! They have said many times it was the best staff retreat ever! It really gave us a boost."

"BNW's improv training is really like no other. They are very skilled at applying comedic improv concepts and skills to the workplace. We didn't just listen or watch; we got to laugh, learn and practice together. It is very high-energy, filled with great methods, and all done with humor to make it memorable! It was fantastic!"

-Pam Guyer, Director of Quality Improvement and Regulatory Affairs

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COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS

"I am writing to thank you for the amazing workshop! The students from the College of Visual Arts had a wonderful time. I was impressed with both the improv exercises and the discussion that followed. They were extremely valuable to understanding the process of creativity. You created a relaxed and safe environment for my students to explore and express themselves. You are a talented instructor (Jenni Lilledahl), full of insight and creativity! I will recommend your workshop to other instructors at the college. Thank you again for such an extraordinary afternoon."

-Rachel Fine, Design Instructor

MORGAN & MYERS

"Everything came together very smoothly. Reaction from the crowd was great. Audience picked up on the key parts of the performance and used some of the key elements and ideas throughout the rest of the conference. Client (Novartis) was absolutely delighted. All in all, fantastic!" (Mike) was particularly pleased, as was the client, that so many people took to heart the messages from our performances...those messages resonated throughout the conference."

-Mike Minford

MFN FACILITATORS SHOWCASE 2003

Session Comments"

"Excellent! Really spoke the truth! Very enjoyable"

"He was amazing and gave great insight

"John created a safe and creative space for improvisation"

MUSICLAND GROUP

"Just a note to say what an ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS job the entire Brave New Workshop did at our recent National Conference. They took basic information about our company and our everyday tasks and turned our mundane into a hilarious improv...Our regional managers and directors LOVED it. The audience was literally falling off their chairs with laughter. I very highly recommend the Brave New Workshop for any corporate event. Brave New Workshop's emcee, Caleb McEwen, was such a hit, that by the 4th day of the conference people were asking for his autograph, his photo and demanding him back for next year. Thank you and we will be doing business again."

-Marcia Sample, Creative Director

AUGUSTINE MEDICAL

"On behalf of Augustine Medical, thank you for the excellent performance the Brave New Workshop actors gave at our recent National Sales and Marketing meeting. The feedback I received has been fantastic. Everyone loved it and expressed that it was a perfect way to end the evening...Most impressive was how the ensemble personalized their performance. From the limited information I provided the creative director, came show that the audience believed had been custom-designed. Please express our gratitude to the actors who performed the show. They were professional, fun, quick-witted and a joy to watch...Perhaps the biggest compliment that I can provide is the number of people who asked if we were going to book you next years as well."

-Ken Ericson, Training Manager



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GREATER MANKATO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

"Thank you for organizing the great entertainment at our Employee Appreciation/Customer Service Awards luncheon last week! The improv performance was energetic, humorous and very captivating. From the feedback we received, it sounds like everyone enjoyed the performance and the actors did a great job of interacting with the audience and relating some of the content to Greater Mankato and the workplace. It was a pleasure to meet and work with the Brave New Workshop. Please pass on our many thanks to Caleb and the other actors! We hope to work with you again the future, and I have heard one of our attendees have already contacted you for a possible future performance. Thanks again!"

-Kaaren Keohane, Director, Membership & Events

SCHWANS, KELLY HILGERT

"I just wanted to write you a quick note to thank you and your entire staff for an AWESOME performance on Thursday night. The group absolutely loved your skits and thought you did a wonderful job. They were still laughing Friday morning at breakfast. That's definitely a good sign!! :) The customized skit was perfect...you really nailed the information that we passed along to you. Thanks for all of your hardwork and for making our Sales & Marketing Meeting a memorable experience for everyone!"

-Kelly Hilgert

GOVERNMENT TRAINING SERVICE, RICH SPENCER

"You guys EXCEEDED my expectations. And I was already excited and couldn't wait to see you perform because I was familiar with you -- but it was even way BETTER than I expected. We couldn't believe how you took our information and customized it and made it work. And that's very, VERY impressive!

"It was far and away the best conference we've put on due in large part to adding humor and Brave New Workshop. We brought it up a level. Don't know how we're going to top it next year.

-Rich Spencer, Project Leader

TDS METROCOM – AUDIENCE COMMENTS

What a nice, fresh approach in looking @ sales training. Great way to kick off the conference. Also, would be good to put motivational speaker at end.

I felt impressed with how to get activities and tie it to sales.

John's presentation was fast paced and kept us involved.

Very entertaining and uplifting.

Very good speaker, very insightful!

I was impressed with the use of very simple techniques to stimulate team work

Excellent opener. I gained a great deal of insight.

Very entertaining and great training. John had good ideas.

John had an interesting view on how to do business and interact with people.

Great speaker. Very entertaining!

What a great way to start and get everybody fired up.

Great approach to corporate training. Hope that sales managers will heed this advice. Most of the time we hear no, when trying something new.

Consistent with the philosophy of F.I.S.H. Good food for growth.

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