

LIGHTENing Bolts  
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#### STANDARD WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to LIGHTENing Bolts, somewhat regular email newsletter to help you lighten up through the power of humor. Each edition includes articles and resources that will enhance your humor potential without sacrificing the integrity of your life or work.† I hope you enjoy this edition and that you will never lose your sense of humor.

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Note: Even though we love this technological tool, if you have received this newsletter through some error, please click unsubscribe at the bottom of this newsletter.

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#### HUMOR ME ñ MAJOR ANNOUNCEMENT

In just a couple of weeks Ron Culberson's first book "Is Your Glass LAUGH Full?" will be available.

Allen Klein, author of "The Healing Power of Humor" says, "This well-written book will show you how easy it is to find the lighter side of life. With amusing anecdotes, witty words, and wonderful wisdom, this is the perfect book for anyone seeking the gift of humor."

Stay tuned for more information!

To preorder your copy of "Is Your Glass LAUGH Full?" click here. (Products)

#### HUMOR AT WORK ñ AN "INTERVIEW" WITH SOUTHWEST AIRLINES

The walls in the waiting area were bright orange speckled with corporate posters and employees' photos. The name plate on the receptionist's desk said, "Director of First Impressions (DFI)." An airplane oxygen mask hung from the ceiling over the DFI's seat while a bobble head doll of the CEO

nodded at me from the counter surrounding her desk. Debbie, the DFI, came from behind the counter, hugged me and said, "We don't do handshakes here! You must be Ron, the FUN guy." I was speechless (no easy task). This was not your typical stuffy corporate office. This was the People Department of Southwest Airlines and I was important enough to be greeted by name and with a hug. Cool.

Mary McMurtry, the Regional Manager for Field Employment at Southwest's Baltimore office, had graciously agreed to "show me around" their office and talk to me about the culture of Southwest. For a humor professional, this was like finding the Holy Grail, meeting Bob Hope or receiving a gold-plated whoopee cushion. Southwest Airlines not only holds a place in the top five places to work in the U.S., it is one of the most FUN companies in the country.

The airline began service in 1971 and has more than 34,000 employees managing 2,800 flights a day. They carried over 65 million passengers in 2003 through 58 cities in 30 states. Last year they received over 200,000 resumes for 908 new employee positions. Southwest is ranked by the Department of Transportation as the airline having the fewest complaints for the thirteenth consecutive year and was rated the most admired airline for the past 7 years in "Fortune" magazine.

But back my visit. After DFI Debbie informed Mary that I was in a "holding pattern", Mary quickly appeared in the lobby to greet me. Hug number two. Then, she escorted me into her office which was decorated with dozens of Wizard of Oz photos, a framed copy of Southwest's anniversary poster, another bobble head doll of former CEO Herb Kelleher and a fluffy red boa strung around her desk. At any minute, I expected dancing flight attendants to take my drink order!

Over the course of the next two hours, Mary shared with me the unusual and amazingly relaxed atmosphere of employment at Southwest Airlines. I began to understand that "relaxed" does not refer to an attitude of indifference or apathy but instead refers to a way operating that supports results, customers and staff over restrictive policies and procedures. One of the most important groups responsible for maintaining that attitude is the Culture Committee, a locally staffed group of employees who are responsible for making sure the culture and the FUN stay intact.

The Culture Committee organizes fundraisers to pay for monthly parties and celebrations throughout the year. For instance, they might sell Mother's Day flowers to their employees for a nominal fee and use the proceeds to pay for a Monday Night Football party or Cinco de Mayo celebration. The biggest fundraiser is a golf tournament which supports Ronald McDonald Charities, Southwest's corporate charity. The airline has contributed more

than \$6 million to this charity over the past 18 years. FUN with a purpose ñ what a concept.

My favorite experience at Southwest was hearing about the practical jokes that are played on new and seasoned employees. Delta (an interesting name for someone working at Southwest, don't you think?), a new hire, had to complete and returned a multiple-page application form to the People Department prior to her start date. When she stopped by one day to drop off the forms, the lobby was full of job candidates waiting for interviews. The minute she came into the lobby, all of the candidates stood up and sang all of the verses to the song "Delta Dawn." The office broke out in hysterics!

Another time, a senior executive spent a day working at the ticket counter and with the ground crew to have a better understanding of their roles. While she was helping direct a plane to the gate using those long orange directional devices, one of the seasoned ground crew members told her to rotate her wrists in a circular manner. When she did this, the plane did a 360 degree turn! She began to scream thinking she had sent a confusing signal to the pilot. In reality, the ground crew had contacted the pilot and told them they had a "greeny" directing the plane and that they wanted to have some fun with her. The pilot enthusiastically agreed to play along. Very cool.

I recall that Herb Kelleher once said, "If work was more fun, it would feel less like work." In a nutshell, that's what it's like to work for Southwest Airlines. It's about working hard and serving others. It's about hugs and humor for the new kid on the block. It's about creating a culture that means something. It's all about focusing on the most important asset they have ñ people. I guess that's why their company logo says "LUV".

Click here for more information about Southwest Airlines: [http://www.southwest.com/about\\_swa/](http://www.southwest.com/about_swa/)

#### HUMOR RESOURCES ñ NUTS!

One of the best books on business success is Kevin and Jackie Freiberg's book "Nuts" about the history of Southwest Airlines. With a foreword by Tom Peters, this book will change the way you look at work.

Here are a couple of others:

"The Southwest Airlines Way : Using the Power of Relationships to Achieve

High Performance by Jody Hoffer Gittel (Author)

Southwest Passage: The Inside Story of Southwest Airlines' Formative Years  
by Lamar Muse

[Click here to look for other FUN books at Amazon.com.](#)

HUMOR IN REAL LIFE ñ FUN IN THE SKY

IT REALLY HAPPENED

On a recent flight, I noticed in the emergency instruction booklet that I was not allowed to sit in an exit row seat if I have a "non-discernable" condition. Baffled by this, I looked it up in the dictionary. Turns out, if I have a "non-discernable" condition, I don't know about it!

IT'S NEWS

Last year, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of flight, the University of Dayton's Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop created a contest for the funniest, true stories about flying. Tim Bete, director of the workshop created a website where people could submit their stories. More than 16,000 people visited the site and judges chose winning entries. The website was named a top ten "indispensable Web site for travelers" by [www.SmarterLiving.com](http://www.SmarterLiving.com) and by the Houston Chronicle as "100 favorite travel web sites". Obviously Southwest Airlines does not have the only funny view of flying!

Here's an example of the winning entry for true passenger stories:

On a flight from Anchorage to Tokyo, the flight engineer went back into the passenger cabin. An elderly woman passenger stopped him and asked him what the temperature was. "It's 70 degrees, madam," he replied, adding, "But outside it's 30 degrees below zero." "Young man," the woman demanded, "What were you doing outside?" - Jim Murray, Saint Paul, MN.

Visit the University of Dayton's "light flight site" at [www.flythumor.org](http://www.flythumor.org).

JUST HUMOR ñ "UP" LIFTING HUMOR

A friend sent me the following. I cannot verify if it's true but I can certainly verify that it's funny!

After every flight, pilots fill out a form called a gripe sheet, which conveys to the mechanics problems encountered with the aircraft during the flight that need repair or correction. The mechanics read and correct the problem, and then respond in writing on the lower half of the form what remedial action was taken, and the pilot reviews the gripe sheets before the next flight.

Here are some actual logged maintenance complaints and problems as submitted by Qantas pilots and the solution recorded by maintenance engineers. By the way, Qantas is the only major airline that has never had an accident.

Pilot: † Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.

Mechanic: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

Pilot: Something loose in cockpit.

Mechanic: Something tightened in cockpit.

Pilot: DME volume unbelievably loud.

Mechanic: DME volume set to more †believable level.

Pilot: Suspected crack in windshield.

Mechanic: Suspect †you're right.

Pilot: Aircraft handles funny.

Mechanic: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right, and be serious.

[Click here for resources to other humor sites \(links\).](#)

#### HUMOR USA ñ RONALD REAGAN'S HUMOR

When asked if he was too old to be President, Ronald Reagan told a reporter, "I like what Thomas Jefferson said, "Do not judge a President by his age but by his work." And when he told me that"ö"i

Ronald Reagan was a master at humor. It was always delivered with just the right message at just the right time. I don't believe any President used humor more effectively for making a point or connecting to the people.

George W. Bush said of Reagan, "He had the humor that comes with wisdom."

Ronald Reagan's humor will be missed.

If you're interested in hearing how Reagan and other Presidents used humor in their speeches, please check out the "Leading with Laughter" audiotapes from Malcolm Kushner. Click here: (products)

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Ronald P. Culberson, MSW, CSP, Director of Everything! at FUNsulting, etc., works with organizations that want their people to lighten up by using humor as a way to manage stress and become more effective. He is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), the highest earned award from the National Speakers Association, and is one of less than 450 individuals worldwide who have received this designation. He is a humor expert and has provided entertaining and informative programs to over 50,000 people in more than 500 associations, government agencies, non-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies. To find out more about programs, services and products visit our website at [www.FUNsulting.com](http://www.FUNsulting.com) or call (703) 742-8812.

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