

TEAM BUILDING | 'Strive mightily – but eat and drink as friends'

BY LINDA BRYANT

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William Shakespeare's quick-witted insights into human nature can help solve tough workplace challenges.

That's the premise of The Nashville Shakespeare Festival's newly-adopted program that hosts business workshops based on the playwright's penetrating portrayals of the human condition.

The famous Elizabethan bard's solutions can apply to all sorts of dilemmas at work or in the corporate boardroom. A bedraggled workforce, an ineffective team, an unreasonable boss, failed leadership and the importance of negotiation are among them.

The workshops draw out the wisdom, humor and intelligence from the plays and help participants apply the qualities to their problems.

Here are some examples:

• **What if your company isn't doing well?**

"In Shakespeare's play, companies are kingdoms," says Denice Hicks, creative director of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival. "So every history play is a great analogy for business."

• **What if you aren't working well together as a team?**

"Shakespeare repeatedly warns that rebellion and anarchy are endemic if leaders don't maintain a peaceful team," Hicks says. "When a team is in need of improvement or motivation, a great rallying speech from a leader with united cause can do the trick."

5 TIPS FOR PUTTING WORDS OF SHAKESPEARE TO WORK

1. **Finances:** "Neither a borrower nor lender be."
2. **Time management:** "'Tis better to be brief than tedious."
3. **Discernment and trust:** "Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice."
4. **Ethics:** "Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none."
5. **Career choice:** "To business that we love we rise betime and go to it with delight."

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• **How about a sudden change of leadership at the top?**

“Proceed with caution and care,” Hicks says. “In Shakespeare’s plays, when a leader — or king — is suddenly removed, it is usually caused by strife within. A great leader will find the strengths of each faction and use speech and communication to unify his team.”

“Generous rewards of land and goods is also helpful,” she adds with a laugh.

• **Is company morale low? Need to have more fun?** Morale-boosters and fun aren’t hard to find in Shakespeare.

“When Shakespeare’s witches need to make a change, they break out the cauldron and throw in some eye of newt and toe of frog,”

Hicks says. “A staff in need of boosting might brew their own ‘double, double toil and trouble’ by creating a cauldron of office annoyances: spent cartridge of a copy machine, cold coffee and hundreds of inane e-mails.”

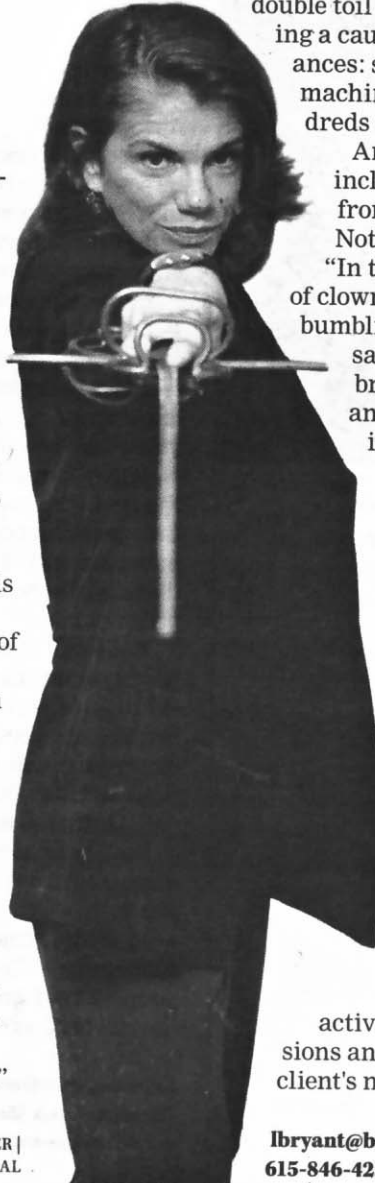
Another solution could include playing out a scene from “Much Ado About Nothing,” Hicks adds.

“In that play, there is a band of clowns led by the blustery, bumbling Dogberry,” Hicks says. “Reflecting on the brotherhood they share and identifying personality” could really help a corporate team that needs a morale boost.

The troupe’s workshops often focus on the power of negotiation because it’s a skill vital to human interaction.

The festival’s training activities encourage participants to engage in creative thinking and new communication practices, all sparked by Shakespeare’s genius.

The workshops range from hour-long activities to full-day sessions and are customized to a client’s needs.



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