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Businesses turn to improv for help

By Carolyn Murray

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Improv has become a hot training tool for businesses in recent years.

For example, The Second City has a subsidiary called Second City Communications that has used improv techniques in training programs for such diverse clients as Major League Baseball, the Pepsi Bottling Group, Blue Cross, Blue Shield of North Carolina and the MGM Grand hotel in Las Vegas, according to the company's Web site.

"It's hard not to admire fast-thinking comedians who respond to unpredictable situations with creative and invariably funny retorts. How do they do that? For starters, so-called improv comics tap the resources of their entire brain instead of just residing in the left brain universe inhabited by many business people," T+D (Training and Development) magazine wrote in January 2008.

"The Second City, is so good at this technique that it maintains a separate business unit to provide its improv-based learning methods to people of all ages. Business is booming, and why not?" the article said. "The same skills acquired by its actors to work without scripts and create harmony on stage are enormously valuable in business."

Trimarco's company also provides corporate training and programs for schools. She calls it "entertaining training" and says she'll customize the program for individuals or companies.

"I have combined the things I love to do: training and mentoring and providing experiential entertainment," Trimarco said. "I've learned through the years that saying 'yes' and 'why not' is far more interesting and rewarding than saying 'no' and 'it'll never work.'"