

Happiness Increases Productivity

Common sense? You would think so, but we are often so driven by targets and output, we tend to overlook staff satisfaction.

After family, work is the second most important factor affecting people's happiness. A major slice of the average full time employee's waking life is spent at work – if you are not in the office, you are often thinking about projects, situations or problems connected with your job. Many managers can be 'too busy' to regularly enquire or care whether their employees are actually enjoying their role within the business, but happiness affects productivity, so ignoring the issue is at a cost to the business.

Richard Reeves, described by The Guardian as 'Britain's leading expert on workplace trends', and author of the much-publicised "Happy Mondays – putting pleasure back into work", explains his new charter to improve happiness at work:

- Autonomy – offering employees greater power at work
- Community – partaking in social activities in the workplace
- Purpose – understanding how their job fits into the bigger picture
- Learning – developing new knowledge
- Time sovereignty – managing their own time
- Voice – feeling involved

Motivation is also key to happiness and thus productivity. Examine your own motivational drivers as a basis to understanding others. Only by understanding the mindset of others can you unlock what actually motivates them. Managers do indeed have time pressures and may not always be equipped to provide the advice and support that their team needs. A team is made up of people with different emotional and learning needs – what is important is that the manager has the support from the business so that he or she can get assistance when it's required.

Being a socially responsible company makes good business sense. Companies are beginning to respond to the growing social and environmental challenges facing society. An important element of this is the way managers and leaders are developed.

Peter Lewis of LeaderShape regularly footnotes his e-mails with the words: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care". If you genuinely care for the happiness and wellbeing of your staff, their development as people as well as their role within the business, contributions and productivity will increase as result. Coaching is important in an overall strategy for developing people that are happy in their work.

Martin Seligman, Director of the Univ of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center puts "Happiness" into three categories. The first and most superficial is from a "pleasurable" life, the second and slightly deeper is from an "engaged" life and the third and most powerful is from a "meaningful" life. He has conducted numerous studies that show that in general a deep level of happiness produces greater productivity and creativity.

Happiness has not, however, been proven to increase the productivity of mundane jobs. This suggests we should minimise the number of mundane jobs by making them meaningful (eg: The cleaner at Cape Canaveral who "sends man to the moon" rather than "cleaning floors"). According to Alexander Kjerulf, the Author of "Happy Hour is 9 to 5", happy people work better with others, are more creative, fix problems instead of complaining about them, have more energy, are more optimistic, are more motivated, get sick less often, learn faster, worry less about making mistakes - and consequently make fewer mistakes and finally, make better decisions.

As Adam Smith said, "Isn't it interesting that people are at their happiest helping another person?". Building this into the company culture could have a huge impact.