

READY FOR INNOVATION? DO YOU BELIEVE THAT WORK AND HAPPINESS CAN GO TOGETHER?

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“Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

"Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work"

—Aristotle

“A merry heart goes all the day, Your sad tires in a mile-a.”

—William Shakespeare

“The joyfulness of a man prolongeth his days.”

—Sirach 30:22

“The days that make us happy make us wise.”

—John Masfield

Abstract

Countries are already using the UN-happiness index. What about companies?

“Happiness is a key factor for business success” according to Dr. Rao who is teaching at London and Berkeley Business Schools. A happy employee is good for the employee and for the business. According to research, happiness increases productivity by 12% and increases creativity, collaboration and innovation. Happiness should occur at every level and in every part of the company; as an intrinsic part of the culture. Increasing happiness is done by auditing and identifying obstacles. A practical methodology based on ways that facilitate well-being and “Tiny Habits” created by Dr Fogg from Stanford University is provided to employees, managers and teams. Quality managers are important partners in the process.

Introduction

According to a recent article in Forbes (Smith, J. The Happiest Jobs In America) concerning a Careerbliss.com survey that took place in the US, the happiest employee in a company is the software quality assurance engineer. Professionals with this job title are typically involved in the entire software development process to ensure the quality of the final product.

On the other hand, Professor Rao, guru of happiness at work, says "What do you have to get in order to be happy? There is nothing that you have to get/do or be in order to be happy. Your life is equally perfect but you do not accept it". With this point of view, a marketing manager working in an Israeli Hi-tech company may also be the happiest employee.

Research shows that happier employees are more productive, healthy and innovative. They also utilize less health care dollars and take less time off.

After reviewing existing research, we would like to present the “innovate happily inch by inch” methodology. Its aim is to help companies improve their bottom lines by increasing the amount of happiness and innovation among their employees and manager at every level. In this paper, we are going to present a way to increase happiness, productivity and innovation by implementing “Tiny Habits” connected to five ways to increase well being. These are based upon findings by mainly Dr. Fogg; teaching at Stanford University as well as from UK think tank New Economics Foundation.

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Some definitions

Happiness is also referred as Positive Well-Being or PWB.

New Economic Foundation (Measuring well-being hand book, nef) defines the concept of wellbeing as being comprised of “two main elements: feeling good and functioning well.

- Feelings of happiness, contentment, enjoyment, curiosity and engagement are characteristic of someone who has a positive experience to their life.
- Equally important for well-being is our functioning in the world. Experiencing positive relationships, having some control over one’s life and having a sense of purpose are all important attributes of well-being.”

Boehm and Lyubomirsky preliminarily define a happy person as someone who frequently experiences positive emotions like joy, satisfaction, contentment, enthusiasm and interest.

Seligman defines three different kinds of lives related to happiness:

- “The first is the pleasant life, which consists of having as many of the positive emotions as you can, and learning the skills that amplify them.”
- “The second one is eudaemonia, the good life, which is what Thomas Jefferson and Aristotle meant by the pursuit of happiness.”
- “There’s a third form of happiness that is ineluctably pursued by humans, and that’s the pursuit of meaning.[..]That meaning consists in attachment to something bigger than you are.”

Happiness index

Happiness at work is being more and more acceptable in organizations as a metric, since senior consultants and economists in the world are researching, recommending and implementing the principles of happiness index in companies, communities and, indeed, even countries.

In July 2011, based upon the happiness index developed by the Prime Minister of Bhutan, the UN has adopted the concept that the level of happiness in a country is an indicator of the development of this country. The UN has called upon the various country members to include in their development programs and in the public policies the happiness index as part of the holistic approach. Using this index, Denmark ranks first.

Note that the UK is very active in the science of happiness.

Apart from the UN happiness index, nef has developed a “happy planet index” that ranks countries on how many long and happy lives they produce per unit of environmental input. With this index, Latin America’s Costa Rica ranks first.

Some research results

Professors Robertson and Cooper write (Robertson & Cooper, Well-Being: Productivity and Happiness at Work) that high levels of psychological well-being amongst employees translate into good news for the organization - including lower sickness-absence levels, better attraction and retention of talented people and more satisfied customers, clients or service users. Organizations that enhance the engagement (Robertson what is employee engagement?) and well-being of their employees will benefit, says Professor Ivan Robertson.

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But, he warns, that engagement has to be something that is fully embedded into the way we work, rather than being 'done to' employees. It needs to be a part of the workplace culture.

According to the research paper (Oswald, A. Happiness and Productivity) by Professor Andrew J. Oswald [and Drs. Proto and SgROI](#) from the University of Warwick and the Institute for the Study of Labor (Bonn, Germany), "there is evidence that happiness raises productivity. In Experiment 1, a randomized trial design, some subjects had their happiness levels increased which translated to a 12% greater productivity than the control group. Another consideration [...] is that happiness could act to increase cognitive flexibility. It seems plausible to hypothesize that happiness could have a similar effect on a broader canvas, where labor productivity benefits from the individual worker being encouraged to try out hitherto neglected strategies." Others sources mention a higher productivity rate such as 30% however Oswald's work provides a scientific evidence.

According to UK based iOpener Institute which is not an academic institute, as compared with their least happy colleagues, the happiest employees spend 40% more time focused on task, spend 65% more time feeling energized and believe they achieve their potential 155% more. Increasing time on task alone equates to an additional half day of work per week per employee. And that time produces higher quality work because employees approach it with more energy and achieve more fulfilling results. Happiness at work also increases employees' ability for innovative, creative and collaborative work. The happiest employees enjoy challenges 15% more, feel 66% more strongly that they use their strengths at work and feel 129% more confident raising issues and ideas within their company. This can lead to better employee retention as well.

By drawing on both longitudinal and experimental studies, Boehm and Lyubomirsky (Boehm and Lyubomirsky Does happiness lead to career success?) show that happy people are more likely to be successful in their careers.

In addition, Amabile et al. (Amabile et al. 2005. Affect and creativity at work) uncovers evidence that happiness produces greater creativity.

"Innovate happily inch by inch" Methodology

Overview

We have developed a methodology especially aimed at increasing happiness, productivity and innovation in hi-tech environment based upon work on "tiny habits"© by Dr. Fogg teaching at Stanford University, happiness research conducted by nef UK think tank, work from by Professor Rao (Rao Institute), concepts from positive psychology. We also bring in insights from personal research & consulting practices in hi-tech companies and start-ups in Israel, Europe and the USA for the last twenty years.

The main concept is to:

- Focus on a topic such as innovation, teamwork, globalisation, stress management, time management or similar
- Emphasize the following five ways that facilitate happiness: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give

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- Create simple & tiny behaviors/habits related along existing and reliable habits (anchors)
- Celebrate the tiny behaviors
- Make them grow

An example of a tiny behavior would be:

After you end a meeting, you give nice words to at least one participant.

Methods coming from the East

There are various methods coming essentially from the East to raise happiness. They deal mostly with some internal work starting with meditation techniques to awareness and introspection exercises. Happiness training via yoga or chi kung sessions at work are also used.

Eastern theories focus mostly on introspection and much less on external factors.

We will mention those methods when providing details on the five activities that are meant to increase well-being as well as in the following paragraph dealing with processes.

Process

Professor Rao recommends not to invest in the outcome but to invest in the process. He says in a TED talk: “Actions are within your control, the outcome is completely outside your control. When it's over, and you look in the mirror, did you do the best you were capable of? if you did the best you were capable of, the score does not matter”(Prof Rao – TED talk) .

It is important to consider using a questionnaire measuring well-being several times a year, auditing the main processes in the company and using additional methods to pinpoint the areas and obstacles that need to be tackled. See papers written by the author Philippe Scheimann and presented at the International Conference of the Israel Society for Quality on Transaction Costs (Scheimann, P. 1996. Business framework for simultaneous engineering using transaction cost theory and the concept of intranet) (Scheimann, P. 1994. Improving the quality of the processes toward a learning organization) and Conflict Resolutions (Scheimann P, & O. 2002. WWW: Win Win with the Wind). Efforts should be made to improve the process of the learning organization, dealing with defensive routines as defined by C. Argyris (Argyris, C. 1990. Overcoming Organizational Defenses: Facilitating Organizational Learning).

For instance, the launch of the new version of a product involves a number of people with much uncertainty and potential conflicts. If people can change some of their behaviors, even in a tiny way, there will be meaningful improvements in terms of employee acceptance and stress levels.

The question whether this approach is closed to Kaizen methodology of continuous improvement has been raised to us and it will be dealt elsewhere.

Questionnaire – Measuring level of happiness

Optimally, measure the level of happiness before and after interventions and along a time line.

Interestingly enough, there is much to learn from the British who have developed a whole set of questionnaires related to well-being at work such as Happinessatworksurvey.com that provides feedback and recommendations based upon the answers.

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Five ways that facilitate happiness

This is based upon:

- UK research of nef (the New Economics Foundation), which is an independent think-and-do tank that inspires and demonstrates real economic well-being
- South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trusts that provides the widest range of NHS mental health services in the UK.

The five ways to well-being are a set of positive actions that have been developed to help people get started on their way to a happier life.

Here is a short overview of those five ways and how to adapt them to the workplace:

Connect

Engage with your friends, family, make time to be with people you like, don't neglect quality time with people you like aside because you "don't have time".

"Connect" does not mean that you need to be connected on-line all the time. This activity deals with your active role in connecting with your peers and with yourself.

Connecting with yourself deals with the Eastern way of introspection and awareness growth whereas connecting with your peers deals with initiating some communication, finding some common ground, understanding the other...

In terms of the Web, we recommend reaching out and joining (public) hangouts from Google+ which allows up to 10 people to organize a video conference, sharing documents, clips and more.

Be active

There is a need to take a break from work and go for a walk, turn on the radio and dance... anything to loosen up and increase blood flow to your muscles and your brain. It is important to initiate some physical activities at work: e.g. yoga, tai-chi, playing basketball with peers during breaks, cycling to work, walking after lunch, etc.

In terms of the Web, it is important not to procrastinate and surf endlessly or continuously check your email.

There are self help sites providing ways to exercise while sitting in front of your work station.

Take notice

Pay attention to what is going on in the world. Link the knowledge you acquire and make conclusions based on your observations. Celebrate your successes, see above section dealing with the importance of celebrating when acquiring "Tiny Habits". It is also a good idea to write stories about failures, mistakes and contemplate on how to learn from them.

Seligman (Seligman M. EUDAEMONIA, THE GOOD LIFE 2012) suggests making a gratitude exercise where you write a gratitude 300 word note about a person: "You think of someone in your life who made an enormous positive difference, who's still alive, whom you never properly thanked. [...]First you'd write a 300-word testimonial to that person; concrete, well-written, telling the story of what they did, how it made a difference, and where you are in life now as a result. Then you'd call him up and say, "I want to come visit you." And he'd ask you why, and you'd say, "I don't want to tell you. It's a surprise." And you'd show up at his door, sit down, and read the testimonial — it turns out everyone weeps when this happens — and then a week later, a month

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later, three months later, and a year later, we give you the battery of tests, and ask the question relative to placebo controls, "Are you happier? Are you less depressed?" It turns out the gratitude visit is one of the exercises which, to my surprise, makes people lastingly less depressed and happier than the placebo."

This gratitude exercise is also part of the "connect" activity.

In terms of the Web, there are a number of features, applications that can help such as diigo (social bookmarking service www.diigo.com) allowing specific parts of a web page to be highlighted and writing notes that can be shared with your peers.

Keep learning

Watch and learn your entire life. The more you know, the better you feel about yourself.

When dealing with companies, it is thus useful to introduce the notion of the learning organization and action learning developed by C.Argyris. C.Argyris introduces the notions of single loop and double loop learning as well as the defensive routines that are barriers for effectively learning.

A great way to achieve this is through teaching since that requires continual learning, connecting with others and giving which is the next activity described below.

In terms of the Web, there are many different ways to learn ranging from taking on-line courses from major universities to learning from your peers by sharing knowledge and more.

Give

Give to others, give advice that does not cost, help.

Teach others things about a field that is not in the area of the company (solutions sometimes may come from other fields). Rao suggests to people to help five persons they admire without any expectation of repayment. In terms of the Web, people may create a blog, write about their field of expertise and thus spread their knowledge with others. Giving of yourself as in a volunteer has been shown to increase happiness.

Tiny Habits

This is based upon the work of Dr. Fogg who is teaching at Stanford University and consulting to the industry. Over the last nine months, Dr. Fogg has been teaching a free, weekly online, five day course which is open to the public. People can train and acquire new habits. According to Dr. Fogg, the results have been tremendous: "Over 5,700 people have since joined in. The results are the best I've ever seen in any program."

In order to acquire a new tiny habit, use the following format:

"After I [existing habit/anchor], **I will** [new tiny behavior]"

Dr. Fogg adds: "There is a need to identify a tiny behavior you want to acquire and you must then find where it fits in your life. People need to list a series of existing habits that will be used as anchors. Plan to do the new tiny behavior **after an extremely reliable habit** you have, what I call an "anchor. Matching the new tiny behavior to an anchor is vital."

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Linking those five ways to tiny habits

Based upon the above research, we argue that it is possible to link activities that increase well-being to tiny habits that can be acquired easily. In other words, take one of the five activities, decide upon a new behavior you wish to acquire in the scope of this activity, acquire this tiny habit, celebrate the acquisition and make it grow. If the habit does not fit, modify it until it fits.

For instance, if you wish to keep learning, it is preferable that you select a tiny habit such as “after I drink a glass of water, I will read two lines of the article YYY”. After reading those two lines, it is time to celebrate. See for more examples what Dr. Fogg suggests in his presentation in Slideshare. With time and celebration, those tiny habits can grow into automatic behaviors, helping increase productivity, innovation as well as well-being.

Who should be responsible?

While HR managers are the natural partners for such a methodology, it is a good idea to involve quality managers for the implementation of this method. Indeed, personnel management is one of the three main keys along product and process that quality managers are taking care of.

Limitations of the methodology

In order to implement tiny habits and sustain happiness, there are a number of key issues identified by Lyubomirsky (Lyubomirsky *The How of Happiness: A Scientific Approach to Getting the Life You Want.*) that need to be used appropriately. These include: Steady Doses of Positive Emotion, Variety and Optimal Timing, Social Support, Motivation, Effort, and Commitment.

In addition, the methodology explained above does not promise to provide a happiness state to people who need professional help from psychologists and other health professionals.

Innovation and happiness at work

After this overview of the methodology, we can then look back at the question we raised in the title of this paper and check what it takes to increase innovation in an organization. Using the right context, it is then possible to implement tiny behaviors at the personal and department level that will facilitate innovation as well as happiness. Here is for instance a series of possible tiny behaviors around the meeting sessions:

- **Connect:** After you start a meeting, every participant will close their cell phones and greet each other.
- **Be active:** After you finished one topic in a meeting, everyone may take a 30 sec break for some exercise
- **Take notice:** After one person describes a controversial topic, you take a deep breath and smile before speaking
- **Keep learning:** After the meeting ended, participants open a file named “what have I learned from this meeting?”
- **Give:** After the formal meeting ends, one participant will give a couple of minutes talk about a topic of interest to him that is not part of the main activity of the company

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Conclusion

This original approach is practical and can be easily implemented. It combines the Western approach of focusing on the outputs of tiny habits and the Eastern approach of working on tiny parts of existing and new processes that can improve the productivity and the innovation of the workers. A direction that needs to be taken is to gather the various tiny habits and work on the best practices as Dr. Fogg suggested to us. These tiny habits can then be implemented not only at the individual level but also at the level of a department, the whole company and beyond.

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