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A 6-figure salary won't make you love your job—but these 'happiness hacks' might help

Published Tue, Aug 20 2019 11:52 AM EDT Updated Tue, Aug 20 2019 2:30 PM EDT
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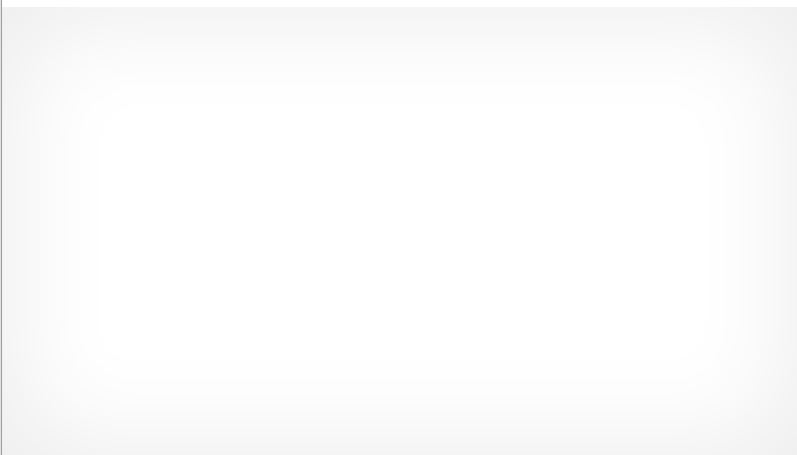
THE OFFICE: “Customer Survey”
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Unhappiness can be expensive. According to [Gallup's 2018 State of the Global Workplace report](#), 85% of employees are not engaged at work, and it's costing our economy approximately \$7 trillion in lost productivity each year.

While it's important for business leaders to take action, employees are also encouraged to seek out their own ways of boosting satisfaction at work. Why? A cheery disposition — and not a bigger paycheck — can actually make you better at your job and less likely to quit.

One [study](#) from the University of Warwick found that increased happiness in the workplace led to a 12% jump in productivity, while unhappy workers were 10% less productive. Sales? Thirty-seven percent higher from happy workers. Creativity? Three times higher.

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But finding happiness at work is easier said than done. Even if you start the day eager to dive into a project, you're likely struggling to stay focused by late afternoon. And maybe you're great at what you do, but there might still be a nagging voice in the back of your mind asking: "Wouldn't you be happier at another job?"

Whatever the reason, these research-backed happiness hacks might just tick up your level of on-the-job satisfaction:

1. Don't take a high-paying job you hate

Whatever meaning you're drawing from your job, one thing is for sure: Doing it for the money won't bring your happiness. [Numerous studies](#) have found no correlation between higher salaries and higher levels of happiness.

A good rule of thumb: \$80,000 is enough. [Researchers](#) have found that once a person earns an average of \$75,000 per year, they experience a happiness plateau. Those who earn six- or seven-figure income jobs might be able to buy nice things, but they don't enjoy a higher level of happiness commensurate with the higher salary, the study concluded.

[A pair of researchers](#) drawing on data from 5,000 British workers also found that while absolute pay didn't predict a person's sense of satisfaction, their education did — as in the higher their education level, the lower their sense of life satisfaction. Researchers suggested that this is because of the higher aspirations that education creates.

The takeaway? Stop putting so much importance on making more money at work. A bigger paycheck doesn't always guarantee a bigger smile.

2. Walk or bike to work

While some [researchers](#) have found that longer commutes tend to correlate with lower job satisfaction, a [study](#) of 3,400 participants by researchers at McGill University examined different modes of transportation for getting to work and respondents' relative satisfaction.

Subjects were interviewed in both the summer and winter to get an average satisfaction score that accounted for changing weather conditions.

They found that while the commute length did not correlate with satisfaction, the mode of transportation did. Specifically, the study returned the following percentages of satisfaction:

1. Walkers: 85%
2. Cyclists: 77%
3. Metro/subway riders: 76%
4. Bus riders: 75.5%

3. Craft your job

Don't just do your job, craft it. That's the insight from a [team of researchers](#) who urge employees to reframe their worklife in terms of their own personal strengths and passions.

Called "job crafting," the exercise directs a person to "visualize the job, map its elements and reorganize them to better suit you."

Drawing on their research with companies of a wide range of sizes, they found that employees who craft their jobs grow more engaged in their work and deliver stronger performance:

Job crafting involves a series of steps:

1. Create a "before diagram" of what your job consists of, with larger squares representing tasks that require the most time, and smaller squares for tasks that take less time.
2. Review the diagram and identify areas of greatest importance — professional development, revenue-generating tasks — where more time should be applied.
3. Identify your own motives, strengths and passions — the things that inspire you to work hard or get you excited about your work.
4. Use these motives, strengths and passions to create an "after diagram" with a new set of task blocks that align with these drives, and frame your roles in a way that's most meaningful to you.

4. Jazz up your personal workspace

While taking long personal calls at work might not be a great way to win over your boss, bringing your personal life into your workspace has been found to have very positive results.

[A pair of psychologists from the University of Exeter](#) found that workers were more productive when their desks were "decorated rather than lean" — that is, when their desks included additions such as plants or art.

In two experiments — one at a university psychology department, the other at a commercial city office — the psychologists examined the performance of employees (e.g., attention to detail, management, processing of information) in several different workplace conditions.

Results consistently showed that those with decorated spaces were more productive than those with lean (or undecorated) ones. When participants had input into the decoration of their spaces, the researchers noted, it "increased participants' feelings of autonomy and decisional involvement," which then led to increases in comfort, job satisfaction and job productivity.

This feeling of empowerment boosted productivity by 32%.

If your workspace feels bare, consider adding artwork, plants or some other addition that enhances the space in a way that feels personal for you. Throw in a lava lamp or disco ball if you're into that sort of thing.

5. Write down meaningful moments

In one experiment, researcher and happiness expert [Shawn Achor](#) found that when workers spent two minutes to take four quick actions, it improved their happiness over the long term.

Those four actions were:

- Writing down a meaningful experience they had in the past 24 hours.
- Writing down three things they're grateful for.
- Writing a positive message to someone — and then sending it to them via [Facebook](#) or another social media platform.

- Meditate.

Participants took a well-being survey before commencing the experiment, scoring an average of 22.96 on a 35-point scale. After three weeks of doing these actions every day, the score rose to 27.23.

A separate [Harvard study](#) found that workers who made daily notes of their successes from the day in a journal enjoyed a higher level of creativity and motivation.

[Alex Palmer](#) is a journalist and excavator of fascinating facts. He is the New York Times best-selling author of *“The Santa Claus Man.”* *“Happiness Hacks.”* published by [The Experiment](#), is his latest book. Alex’s writing has appeared in *Lifehacker, Best Life, Mental Floss, Slate, Esquire* and many others.

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