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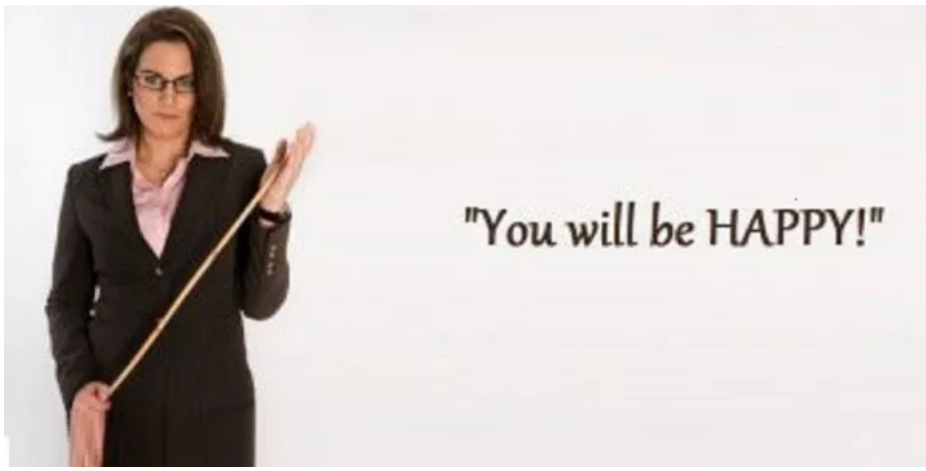
BY CHRISTINA LATTIMER (HTTPS://PEOPLEDEVELOPMENTMAGAZINE.COM/AUTHOR/CHRISTINAPD/) /

HOW LEADERS CAN ENCOURAGE HAPPINESS AT WORK



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Happiness at work has many great benefits

Creating happiness at work seems like the holy grail of leadership objectives. Wouldn't it be great if all the team demonstrated happiness at work? What a brilliant environment to work in. One of the most frustrating problems I found when I led and managed teams was my inability to make all of my team members happy. Despite my best efforts. Of course, the frustration was misguided. In those early days, I didn't actually realise happiness was an internal choice. So no matter what I did if someone chose to be unhappy then I was quite frankly stymied in my futile attempts.

A happy team

In my first management role at age 22, I didn't realise why having a happy team was important. I knew it felt much better to work in a happy environment. The understanding came much later on. It was a no-

brainer really from an experiential point of view. Members of my team, who were happy, were engaged, motivated, purposeful and optimistic. They were prepared to go the extra mile. Team members were more authentic and open. They simply recognised the importance of team cohesion.

So does that mean everyone who is happy is a good team player? No, although it seemed to increase the odds. Also what comes first? Does a motivated team lead to happier employees? Or do happy employees lead to a motivated team?

Happiness comes first

Shaun Achor author of The Happiness Advantage(https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work) contends that happiness does indeed come first. It is happiness that fuels success and not the other way around. Shaun is one of my favourite researchers and business psychologists. When I found his conclusions I was relieved because my intuition was always telling me that happiness was indeed a choice. That it was being happy which created my world of happiness, not the other way around.

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More and more studies are showing that employee happiness is important in the workplace. At Warwick University, research showed(http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/staff/academic/sgroi/papers/manuscriptandappendix.pdf) a definite causal link between human happiness and productivity at work. Professor Satya Paul or the University of Western Australia conducted research(http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life/money-cant-buy-happiness-but-being-happy-pays-20130917-2tx7o.html) where he concluded that "happy people are more active, more productive and get less upset by the work". Significantly he found happy people also earned more.

So what are leaders to do?

If they can't make employees happy, and happiness is, in fact, an individual choice, yet the success of their business relies on people being happy with all the benefits the business derives from that positive state? Furthermore, even the most optimistic, happy people go through periods of unhappiness when life throws a curve ball at them.

Every leader worth their salt understands that motivated(https://peopledevelopmentmagazine.com/motivation-engaged-workers/) and engaged teams(https://peopledevelopmentmagazine.com/human-resources/employee-engagement/) are crucial to the success of their business. It's becoming clear that they will more likely succeed in achieving such teams if their employees are those who choose to be happy.

Although a leader can't literally make someone choose to be happy, they can help them to make that choice, and here are some ways they can help.

1. Hire people with "can do" attitudes

Right at the outset, hire people who demonstrate "can do" attitudes and have displayed resilience in adverse circumstances. Find out about attitude and if they can turn seemingly negative situations into positive successes.

2. Get people to talk about what makes them happy

Encourage people to talk about what helps them maintain a happy state at work and do what you can to create that environment.

3. Help people develop

Help people develop self-awareness; self-responsibility and an understanding they do have the ability to choose happiness or not.

4. Give appropriate support

Where life's trials befall them, have the right kind of support, counselling, therapy or team support, with the focus being on helping people to get back into a happy state.

5. Support Wellbeing

If they suffer ill-health, take measures to support them back to well-being and, therefore, a happier state.

6. Help people express criticism constructively

Where negativity exists(https://peopledevelopmentmagazine.com/2016/04/24/habitual-negativity/), then don't ignore, or condemn, but help employees realise there are other ways to look at situations which are more productive.

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Original article updated in 2019

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Chris Thomas • 5 years ago
One more thing - I remember a workshop in London, where the workshop leader exhorted everyone to light a candle for peace and happiness. A voice behind me growled "Don't light a candle - be the f****** candle!"

I didn't turn around, so I don't know who this man was, maybe it was one of you - but I suspect he was a born leader.

Happy new year, you candles.
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Christina Lattimer Chris Thomas • 5 years ago
Thanks Chris. Happy New Year to you, and you are definitely a candle! Love that... be the candle!
• Reply • Share ›

Bob Mason • 5 years ago
I still think it's a chicken and egg question. You can have the happiest team member in the world and a bad team will bring them down. Likewise, even the most positive and successful team will not turn around an employee who is unhappy with