

## WORKPLACE HAPPINESS: EIGHT FACTORS THAT CAN IMPROVE YOUR WORKPLACE

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What's happiness got to do with customer loyalty and improved business resilience? Everything. The level of happiness you feel is largely in your control. When you're happy, it's much easier to create happiness for the customer. According to Martin Seligman, the founder of "positive psychology", there's plenty of evidence being happy has far reaching business benefits.

Research proves that positive feelings reduce stress, build up the immune system and even enable people to think more holistically - to be open to new ideas and solve problems more quickly, efficiently and intelligently. Happy employees have a broader range of options to draw from; they are more creative and helpful. They are better equipped emotionally to create happy, loyal, referral generating customers. Ultimately, happy employees are more resilient. They help create resilient companies - ones that can withstand the challenges of an ever changing, increasingly competitive marketplace.

To get started at adding happiness to your customer care tool kit, it helps to practice eight happiness factors that are in your control. No matter what personality you were born with, no matter what your circumstances are, you can boost your feelings of happiness by taking charge of these eight factors:

### 1) Optimism.

Despite what people say, optimism can be learned. It's about perspective, how a person chooses to interpret and explain what he experiences during the day. We're continuously making choices about how we explain the world to ourselves. If something challenging occurs and you think, "Just my luck. Bad things always happen to me," you are reducing your happiness. You can increase your happiness simply by choosing to think, "Hmmm. There must be something good about this situation - what could it be?" The power of optimism is not to be minimized - evidence shows that optimists live nine to ten years longer than people who are not optimistic.

### 2) Gratitude.

Consciously, willingly and deliberately take moments throughout the day to feel gratitude, and to express it to others. To get businesses on board with this idea, I've advised them to start an "employee gratitude journal" in which everyone is encouraged to write down something for which they're grateful every day. They're always amazed at how powerful this inexpensive, quick and easy exercise is in creating a positive work environment and helping to transform the culture.

### 3) **Forgiveness.**

Letting go of ill will toward others and oneself, surrendering resentments and regrets, and making peace with the past clears the way for happiness to be felt more often and more deeply.

### 4) **Improve your self-talk.**

It's important to transform your self-talk from negative and punishing to positive and energizing. When you make a mistake and find yourself thinking, "You idiot," you know it's time to take a deep breath, and ask yourself a question like, "How can I use my smarts to make this better?" Positive self-talk diffuses stressful situations, and when the brain relaxes it is more creative and better at problem solving.

### 5) **"Flow."**

Is there any activity, interest or hobby you enjoy so much that you lose all track of time when you're engaged in it? That state of being where you forget about everything else is called "flow." Being in a state of flow actually increases your happiness.

### 6) **Savour.**

Savouring is about being "in the moment." The great thing about savouring is that you can do it before an activity by happily anticipating what's to come. You can do it while you're enjoying the activity, and you can savour your memories afterward. Savouring is a powerful tool!

### 7) **Reframe.**

This is another tool for shifting your perspective. Look at a stressful situation as if it were an actual photograph, and think about the dozens of ways you could reframe it. You can crop it, enlarge it, and make it smaller. Whatever you do, you're creating a different view and perspective of the same picture, which can help you to transform negative feelings and responses to a situation into positive, happier ones.

### 8) **Build on Strengths.**

Research shows that enduring happiness comes from spending time in one's strengths - having the opportunity to do the things one does well even better. Identify your strengths, then deliberately and creatively build on them. Evidence shows that over time, this skill works better at creating lasting happiness than antidepressants.

When you choose to be happy you're choosing to create and work with a powerful business tool. Happiness restores humanity to the workplace so that everyone thrives in every way. The emotional well-being of employees and customers is directly linked to a company's profitability and resilience. Be happy and enjoy the rewards!

*JoAnna Brandi is Publisher of JoAnna Brandi's Customer Care Coach, a weekly training program designed to teach managers "The Art and Science of Exquisite Customer Care".*