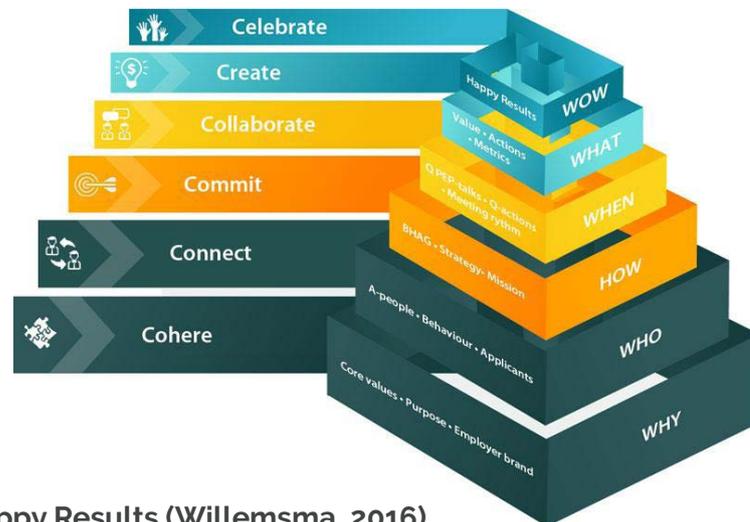


How to bring THE HEARTBEAT back in business

Sybrich Willemsma



6C model for Happy Results (Willemsma, 2016).

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF HR IN BRINGING THE HEARTBEAT BACK INTO BUSINESS

There is considerable evidence that happy employees can make a tangible difference to the success of an organization. Happy employees innovate 300% more (HBR), are more productive (+ 43%, Hay Group) and are more enthusiastic which results in increased customer satisfaction, better sales results (+37% Shawn Actor) and higher profits (+33%, Gallup). At the same time, the costs of absenteeism drop (-66%, Forbes), staff turnover decreases (-51%, Gallup) and the chances of a burn-out are significantly reduced (-125%, HBR). Yet the vast majority of people - up to 87% according to Gallup research - are not truly engaged at work. Disengaged employees have a low sense of involvement with the company or organization and do not go the extra mile that makes a real difference to an organization or company.

THE 'DRIVERS' OF HAPPINESS AT WORK

Happiness is subjective. Every person experiences happiness in a different and unique way. The determining factors are different for each person, but based on the work of Tony Hsieh (Delivering Happiness), Dan Ariely (Predictably Irrational) Shawn Achor (The Happiness Advantage), and Alexander Kjerulf (Woohoo inc.) there are several ingredients that contribute to increasing happiness at work:

- Clarity: what is expected of me? When am I doing it right or wrong?
- Fulfillment / purpose: do I experience a sense of meaning in my work?
- Alignment: what is the company's goal and what is my contribution to that goal?

- Autonomy: can I decide for myself how certain results can be achieved?
- Security: is it safe enough to express my ideas?
- Appreciation: am I doing it well?
- Growth: are there possibilities to grow and develop myself?
- Fun: can we laugh and have fun together?
- Celebrate: are successes communally celebrated?
- Health & energy: do I feel energized and healthy at my work?
- Relationships: do I have good and lasting relationships at my work?

COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

Clearly, the behavior of the leaders is a dominant factor in employee happiness. "People don't quit their jobs, they quit their bosses", is a frequent heard saying. The opposite is also true: an inspiring manager creates a more engaged employee and a more engaged team. According to research by leadership development experts Dr. Brad Shuck and Maryanne Honeycutt-Elliott "higher levels of engagement come from employees who work for a compassionate leader - one who is authentic, present, has a sense of dignity, holds others accountable, leads with integrity and shares empathy"¹. Leaders are key in delivering those employee experiences that drive employee happiness and employee engagement.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ALSO NEEDS AN HR FUNCTION "WITH A CONSUMER LENS"

I would argue that there is an equally important role for HR to play in creating happiness at work - by offering the best possible employee experiences and holding leaders accountable for the level of employee happiness and engagement. Whilst the "hard" part of HR (policies, processes, systems and tools) is essential and should be well structured, many HR processes (e.g. performance and assessment systems) are often complex, not particularly stimulating for employees and leaders and frankly even counterproductive as they do not lead to higher engagement and performance. To enable happiness at work the focus of HR activities needs to be more on the heart of the business - people rather than processes. The HR function needs to apply a consumer lens to its contribution, creating an employee experience that mirrors the best customer experience.

THE FUTURE OF HR: CREATE A COMPELLING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

The HR function of the future should focus on creating a stimulating and engaging working environment. HR needs to focus on delivering an employee experience that is human centered, personalized and memorable, supported and enabled by the latest technologies. It's about co-creating an attractive employer brand with a clear purpose that touches humans. It's about supporting leaders in the delivering

¹ Shuck & Honeycutt-Elliott, *Trends in Employee Engagement* (2016).

that brand promise to their employees. Its about creating the best recruiting experiences for potential employees and creating the best employee experiences in day-to-day actions for your employees. Turning (prospective) employees into brand/organisation advocates. Its about helping leaders creating alignment between organisations goals and their people/teams growth and performance. Its about helping leaders create a work environment where people and teams are challenged to deliver the best results but also feel safe so that they can learn and grow every day. Its about supporting the executive team in designing agile organisations where people are empowered to take decisions, where they can team-up easily with colleagues and develop solutions to deliver the best value for their customers.

I am convinced that by focusing on the 'happiness' of its employees through an employee-centric design, creating a compelling work experience and creating more strategic and inspiring alignment with the business strategy, HR can genuinely bring the Heartbeat back in business and create more value for organizations. Let's make it HRs mission to make people smile on Monday morning!

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