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HAPPY TEAM, HAPPY DAYS: THE LATEST RESEARCH ON CRACKING THE CULTURE CODE



What if by making a Company a source of well-being for its people, positive business outcomes flowed?

And we're not talking fluffy, new-age stuff, we mean measurable improvements in things like profit, employee turnover, employee satisfaction and revenue growth. We've done some investigating into latest research, hoping to uncover and implement some of the best practices for our team at i2C.

Decades of study into positive psychology is revealing that when the interests of businesses and people come together, there are better outcomes for everyone.

“If we can get somebody to raise their levels of optimism or deepen their social connection, (and) raise happiness, it turns out that every single business and educational outcome we know how to test for, improves dramatically.”

Shawn Achor - Harvard University
Researcher; 2011 TED Talk (Top 20 most watched of all time)

So what makes people happy at work?

According to business thought-leader Dan Pink (Al Gore’s former chief speechwriter and author of “Drive: The Surprising Truth of What Motivates Us”), it boils down to three simple things; autonomy (wanting to direct our own lives), mastery (wanting to be good at something), and purpose (wanting to make a difference). This he says, is harnessed by things like feeling fulfilled, connecting, making a difference, being useful, belonging, gaining respect, and believing we have meaning.

People are intrinsically motivated by a job well done, says Pink¹, and work by eminent psychologist and author Martin Seligman²

shows that when engaged in work that draws on our strengths, we are happier. So people both want to work and be good at it!

Much of the new research illustrates there is a strong correlation between happiness and meaning. It turns out having a meaningful impact on the world around you is actually a better predictor of happiness than many other things you think will make you happy.

Jennifer Aaker, General Atlantic
Professor of Marketing at Stanford
Graduate School of Business says:

“When we can cultivate mindfulness and meaning in all that we do, including our work, we have the opportunity to influence not only our own well-being, but also the well-being of our family, friends, co-workers, and wider community.”

Seems to make sense to us.

What does this mean for business?

Crucial to building a happier, and therefore more successful business, is creating an exceptional culture. One that takes key motivators like autonomy, mastery and purpose into account and runs deeper than lunches and birthday cakes (although we'd argue those are still vital!).

We've been involved in the **Great Places to Work** study over the last few years, proudly ranking in the Top 100. Like many companies we are always trying to better our practices, improve our performance and create that winning culture. GPTW analyze survey data from companies and evaluate responses based on employees' perceptions of trust, respect, compensation, camaraderie, internal communication, training, and diversity efforts.

GPTW research has shown that with key happiness elements present, staff were 87% less likely to leave, which of course has a great impact on recruitment costs and also on productivity and growth.

Fast Company dug into what the US Top 100 GPTW Companies have been doing. They found many on the list had similar building blocks that contributed to creating an exceptional workplace culture:

1. They integrated their values into their culture, from recruiting to strategy, to setting up rewards and recognition programs.
2. They let ideas trump seniority. There was non-hierarchical interaction, egalitarian environment – working side by side.

When Fast Company analysed the results of the 50 Happiest Companies surveyed by CareerBliss, several keystones of happiness at work revealed themselves:

- There is a strong correlation between happiness and meaning
- Happy companies acknowledge and praise a job well done
- Employees are people first, workers second
- Work/life integration, over work/life balance

As an aside, we found it especially interesting to note that happiness increases creativity – important for everyone, not just us Architects. Have a look at a summary of Teresa Amabile's work on creativity at work [here](#).



INTEGRITY



ACCOUNTABILITY



PASSION



TEAMWORK



FUN



EXCELLENCE



BALANCE

How does that translate into the day to day?

A concerted effort over many years has seen some great wins for i2C in ever-improving our culture.

We are always guided by the 7 Points of Culture that our Team were hands on in creating. Here they are represented by these munny dolls to the left.

On a day to day basis we try to keep it fun with plenty of parties, lunches, team building events and fundraising initiatives like Movember.

We've seen that the right perks can keep you at your individual best (personal well-being co-payments, additional charity leave) and help integrate work and life (bonus leave for long service, flexi-time) allowing you to give your best at work and take the most out of it.

And, we recognise that the best work cultures are built on the kinds of fundamental human desires that Dan Pink spoke about. Initiatives like transparency from management, mentoring and continuing education, clear pathways for promotion and world-class facilities.

Conclusion

All businesses are looking for great initiatives to develop that winning culture. It's widely researched that the psychology of human behaviour plays an enormous role in how to get the best out of a Team. There is no doubt that culture takes time to build and become ingrained.

There is always more that businesses can do. Companies must live and breathe their values, and people will be drawn to those who keep reaching for higher meaning.

¹ *Pink, D 2009, Drive, Riverhead Books London.*

² *Seligman, M 2011, Flourish, Free Press, New York*



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