

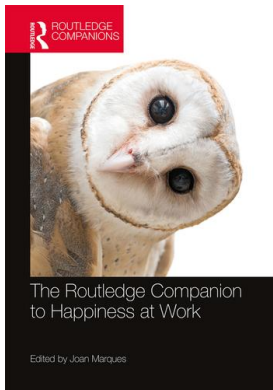
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The Routledge Companion to Happiness at Work

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Aristotle's Happiness Concept Applied at Work

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ARISTOTLE'S HAPPINESS CONCEPT APPLIED AT WORK

Some Qualitative and Quantitative Evidence in Australia

Roger John Hilton, Steve Perera, and Bruce Carroll

Introduction

This chapter deals with Happiness at Work with reference to a survey of colleagues and associates of the authors based in Australia. We examine the results of the survey using the definition by Aristotle regarding happiness. In the first section, we provide an overview of happiness and what happiness at work means. In the second section, we discuss how happiness, when used as a transformational strategy, can lead to increased business performance. In the third section we present findings of a survey on happiness at work recently undertaken in Australia. Finally, we provide some strategies about how to create happiness at work.

For the reader of this chapter, the author would like you to consider your own happiness at work. Think about your own definition of happiness at work, whether or not you are happy in your current role and why, whether or not you are happy at a deep level (your Self), whether or not you think happiness changes daily, and whether or not you were happy as a child and see if you can understand more about your overall happiness and why it is so.

Happiness Generally and Happiness at Work

Happiness Generally

According to the well-known actor Audrey Hepburn, the most important thing in your life is to enjoy life, be happy as it's all that matters. Similarly, the Dalai Lama suggested the purpose of our life is to be happy. The elements of happiness, as identified by scholars, vary greatly both in number and their combination. Some see happiness resulting from a combination of three or four basic factors. Annie McKee, the author of the popular book, *How to Be Happy at Work*, cites three components essential for happiness: a meaningful vision of the future, a sense of purpose, and great relationships at work. Other scholars include ten or more key factors, and a few produce an extensive list of dozens of factors contributing to happiness.

According to Aristotle, happiness consists in achieving, through the course of a whole lifetime, all the health, wealth, knowledge, friends, etc. that lead to the perfection of human nature and to the enrichment of human life. Aristotle enshrines happiness as a central purpose of human life and a goal in itself. He devoted more space to the topic of happiness than any other thinker prior to the

modern era, defined as a period beginning in the last quarter of the 20th century when information became easily accessible through publications and through the manipulation of information by computers and other networks.

The Greek word that usually gets translated as “happiness” is *eudaimonia*, and like most translations from ancient languages, this can be misleading. The main trouble is that happiness (especially in modern America) is often conceived of as a subjective state of mind, such as when one says one is happy when one is enjoying a cool beer on a hot day, or is out “having fun” with one’s friends. Today, one can even get a certificate in happiness studies from the Happiness Studies Academy (HSA, 2019).

For Aristotle, however, happiness is a final end or goal that encompasses the totality of one’s life. It is not something that can be gained or lost in a few hours, like pleasurable sensations. It is more like the ultimate value of your life as lived up to this moment, measuring how well you have lived up to your full potential as a human being. For this reason, one cannot really make any pronouncements about whether one has lived a happy life until it is over, just as we would not say of a football game that it was a “great game” at halftime. For the same reason we cannot say that children are happy, any more than we can say that an acorn is a tree, for the potential for a flourishing human life has not yet been realized. As Aristotle says, “for as it is not one swallow or one fine day that makes a spring, so it is not one day or a short time that makes a man blessed and happy” (Aristotle, 2003).

Researchers have certainly responded to the challenge to understand the concept of happiness. Today, scholars from multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, neuroscience, anthropology, management science, and even some esoteric meditative disciplines, are probing to understand the secrets of achieving happiness. In the process, they have collected significant volumes of empirical data, analyzed many questionnaires, and published numerous studies. They seem to have left no stone unturned. Yet despite all these efforts, are we any closer to answering the fundamental question, what makes people happy, than we were at the inception of happiness studies?

Happiness is our true nature and state of being, however many of us keep searching outside. There is evidence that if you have an unhappy childhood which may result in sadness, trauma, and deep wounds, happy memories later in life are difficult to recall and further result in the form of self-rejection, non-acceptance, a feeling of not wanting to be here, and a deep inner emptiness.

It is clear that true happiness can only be achieved through self-discovery, by retrospection and reconnecting with yourself, facing and healing your deeper wounds, and filling that missing gap with self-love and forgiveness.

Happiness at Work

Organizational culture is defined as the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values, and ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization. It can also represent how employees are treated by their bosses and peers. Bhatti & Quershi (2007) suggest that an effective organization should have a culture that takes into account employee’s happiness and encourages employee satisfaction.

Research has found that although individuals have unique talents and personal preferences, the behaviors and beliefs of the people in the same organizations show common properties (Schneider & Snyder, 1975).

For a long time, work and happiness weren’t really strongly associated with each other. Work was where you went to do something then go home. Happiness was about your free time. There has been a significant change and there is now an association. Some research has concluded that:

- Happy employees stay with their companies four times longer than their unhappy counterparts
- Employees that are happy in their organization commit twice as much time to their tasks than those that aren’t happy

- Happy team members have 65 per cent more energy than unhappy employees

Simon-Thomas (2019) suggests that evidence from psychology, leadership and management studies, and even neuroscience supports a different view: that not only is it possible to find happiness at work, but that doing so is unambiguously good. Happier employees do better on all fronts.

Happiness as a Transformational Strategy

Study after study has emphasized the important connection between happiness and productive employees. Workplace happiness has successfully become a significant predictor towards affective commitment. Research findings have also proved that workplace happiness is able to act as a significant mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and affective commitment (Abdullah, Ling & Peng, 2016).

A University of Warwick study showed that happy employees were more productive: approximately 12% more productive on the average. Similarly, happy workers make company stock prices grow on the average 19%, as opposed to a mere 10% for companies with low morale. A Gallup State of the American Workplace study published in 2012 revealed that employees with high overall wellbeing had 41% lower health-related costs in comparison with employees who were struggling, and 62% lower costs compared with employees who were “suffering”.

Happiness at work has traditionally been seen as a potential by-product of positive outcomes at work rather than a pathway to business success, despite a large body of positive psychological research into the relationship between happiness and productivity (Carr, 2004; Isen, 2000; Buss, 2000).

During the past two decades, maintaining a level of happiness at work has become more significant and relevant due to the intensification of work caused by uncertainty and increased competition. Nowadays, happiness is viewed by a growing number of scholars and senior executives as one of the major sources of positive outcomes in the workplace (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). In fact, companies with higher than average employee happiness exhibit better financial performance and customer satisfaction (Warr, 2009). It is thus beneficial for companies to create and maintain positive work environments and leadership that will contribute to the happiness of their employees (Morrow, 2011).

Workplace happiness is not fundamentally rooted in obtaining sensual pleasures and money, but those factors can influence the well-being of an individual at the workplace (The Virtuous Organization, 2004). However, extensive research has revealed that freedom and autonomy at a workplace have the most effect on the employee's level of happiness (The Virtuous Organization, 2004) with other important factors being the gaining of knowledge and the ability to influence the self's working hours.

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Using Aristotle's definition of happiness, we surveyed employees and consultants across a range of disciplines in Australia. There were 49 responses from a survey of 180 people representing approximately a 27% response rate.

Respondents were asked to rank, on a five-point Likert scale from Totally Agree to Totally Disagree, their assessment of various constructs that have been selected to define the factors presented by Aristotle, namely Creating Wealth, Keeping One's Mind in a Health State, Developing Knowledge, Creating Friendships, and a General factor (for everything else).

Constructs for each factor were determined in a brainstorming session between a number of colleagues who have had experience in leading organizations across various industry sectors. They are not exhaustive but provide an indication of the impact for each factor on Happiness.

The factors and constructs are shown in Table 22.1.

Various qualitative comments relating to demographics and personal data and possible inputs to happiness were also collected from the respondents and key descriptors are shown in Table 22.2. These descriptors are chosen for a number of reasons from a literature review of happiness and include:

- Happiness is our true nature and state of being, however many of us keep searching outside
- Happiness could be a by-product of joy, which is a state of being, quantitative by a conscious decision by the heart and spirit within us all whereas happiness may be just dependent on circumstances
- An unhappy childhood creates deep wounds and happy memories later in life are difficult to see
- True happiness can only be achieved through self-discovery, by going inside and reconnecting with yourself
- Freedom and autonomy at a workplace have the most effect on the employee's level of happiness

Table 22.1 Factors and Constructs

Factor #	Factor	Constructs
1	Creating Wealth	Remuneration/rewards Recognition Incentives Opportunities for promotion
2	Keeping one's mind active in a healthy state	Being creative Working with others Improving self-esteem Being valued
3	Developing knowledge	Learning new things Testing your innovation ideas Applying your qualification Comparing ideas
4	Creating friendships	Developing authentic relationships Connecting with like-minded people Working in a great culture Love teamwork
5	General	Close to home Allows a work/life balance Allows you to be yourself Nice environment

Table 22.2 Key descriptors as possible qualitative inputs

Number	Descriptor
1	whether or not there may be more autonomy for different job types with self-working hours (employee or consultant)
2	whether or not they are happy in their current roles and why?
3	what events or situations would result in being happy at work?
4	whether or not they were happy in Self?
5	Whether or not happiness changes from day to day?
6	whether they were happy as a child?

Tests for Constructs

Constructs were checked for each factor using the Cronbach Alpha statistic. The results are shown in Table 22.3. All constructs were valid as they are greater than 0.7 except for the two as noted (Cronbach, 1967). Cronbach alpha values improve when certain constructs are eliminated. For example, for the Creating Wealth factor, if remuneration and rewards were deleted then the Cronbach alpha for the factors improves marginally, indicating that this construct was interpreted differently to the other three constructs.

The constructs for Active Health, Developing Knowledge, Creating Friendships, and General Factors are valid.

Cronbach alpha, using all constructs as possible measures of happiness was 0.8796, which indicates a good selection of constructs across all factors.

A statistical summary of the results for each of the factors are shown in Table 22.4 and for a graphical display, shown in Figure 22.1. It is interesting to see that there is strong statistical evidence that all these four factors of Aristotle have been recorded by the respondents as important to ensure happiness in the workplace.

The last factor—General—was a collection of other constructs representing ideas that didn't fit into one of the previous four factor categories.

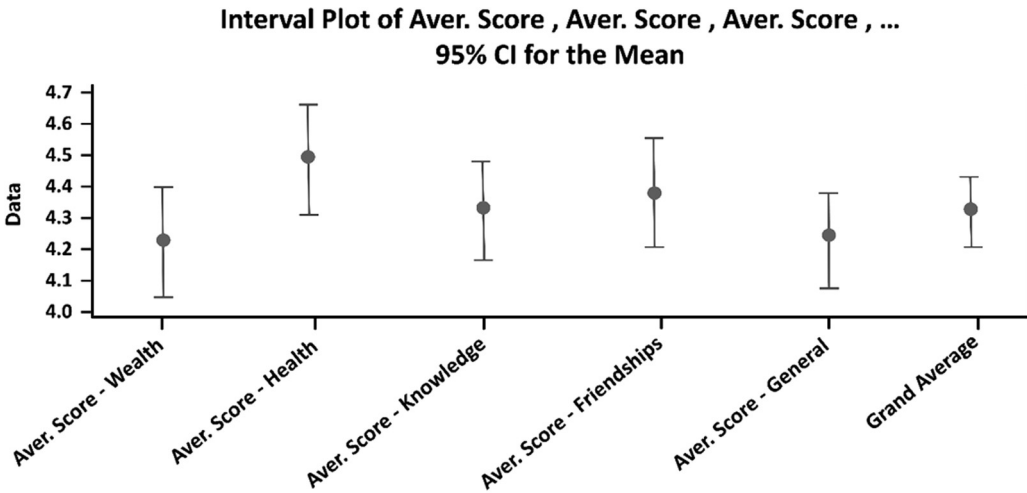
Using paired samples there is statistical evidence that the rank for the need to Keep One's Mind in a Healthy state is higher than the ranking of the Wealth factor, the Knowledge factor in the

Table 22.3 Cronbach Alpha Values and Values when construct eliminated

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha</i>	<i>Cronbach Alpha if construct deleted</i>
Creating Wealth		0.6576	
	Remuneration/rewards		0.7192
	Recognition		
	Incentives		
	Opportunities for promotion		
Keeping one's mind active in a healthy state		0.7002	
	Being creative		
	Working with others		
	Improving self-esteem		
	Being valued		
Developing knowledge		0.7523	
	Learning new things		
	Testing your innovation ideas		
	Applying your qualification		
	Comparing ideas		
Creating friendships		0.8334	
	Developing authentic relationships		
	Connecting with like-minded people		
	Working in a great culture		
	Love teamwork		
General		0.7197	
	Close to home		
	Allows a work/life balance		
	Allows you to be yourself		
	Nice environment		

Table 22.4 Significant levels of Factors for average ranks

	<i>Aver. Score - Wealth</i>	<i>Aver. Score - Health</i>	<i>Aver. Score - Knowledge</i>	<i>Aver. Score - Friendships</i>	<i>Aver. Score - General</i>	<i>Grand Average</i>
Average	4.214	4.485	4.306	4.362	4.245	4.322
Std Dev	0.573	0.511	0.589	0.685	0.607	0.436
Std Error	0.082	0.073	0.084	0.098	0.087	0.062
UCL - 95%	4.375	4.628	4.471	4.554	4.415	4.445
LCL - 95%	4.054	4.342	4.141	4.171	4.075	4.200
P value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000



Individual standard deviations are used to calculate the intervals

Figure 22.1 A comparison of average scores across the Factors.

Workplace, and the General Factors at 5% significance level, see Table 22.5. This indicates the importance of the need to Keep One’s Mind Active to ensure happiness.

Qualitative Comments

There are a number of other definitions suggested by various respondents for happiness at work. These include:

- a. Living one’s purpose
- b. Leaving a legacy
- c. The organization impacting on the local community
- d. Getting positive feedback
- e. Being part of decision making
- f. Being valued
- g. Leaders creating a trusting, challenging, good and happy environment
- h. Need to keep mind active

Table 22.5 Paired sample Comparison of Factors

Paired test between Factors	p value	Significant level
Test 2 < 1	0.004	5%
Test 1 < 3	0.341	
Test 1 < 4	0.146	
Test 1 < 5	0.722	
Test 2 > 3	0.040	5%
Test 2 > 4	0.129	
Test 2 > 5	0.013	5%
Test 3 < 4	0.545	
Test 3 > 5	0.496	
Test 4 > 5	0.272	

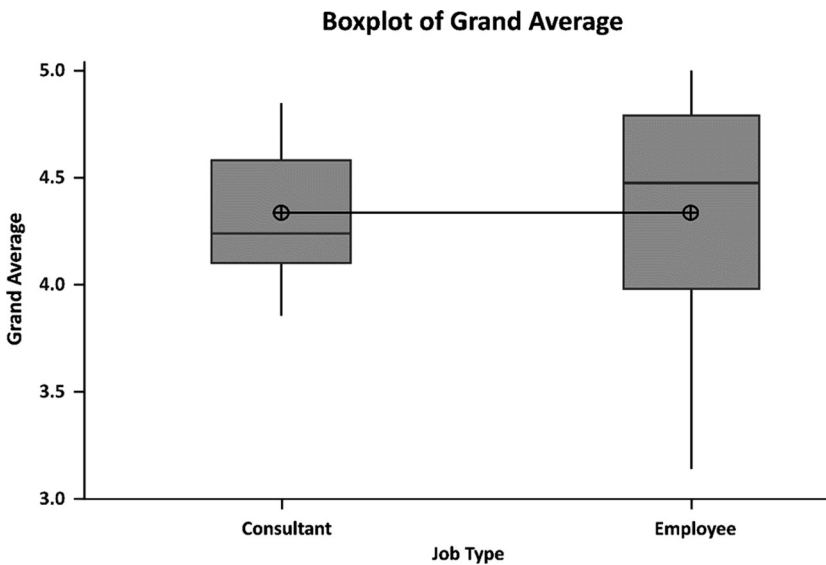


Figure 22.2 Average rank across Job Type.

- i. Working in a positive environment that encourages honest communication and teamwork, whilst it discourages “exclusive clicks” and “gossip”

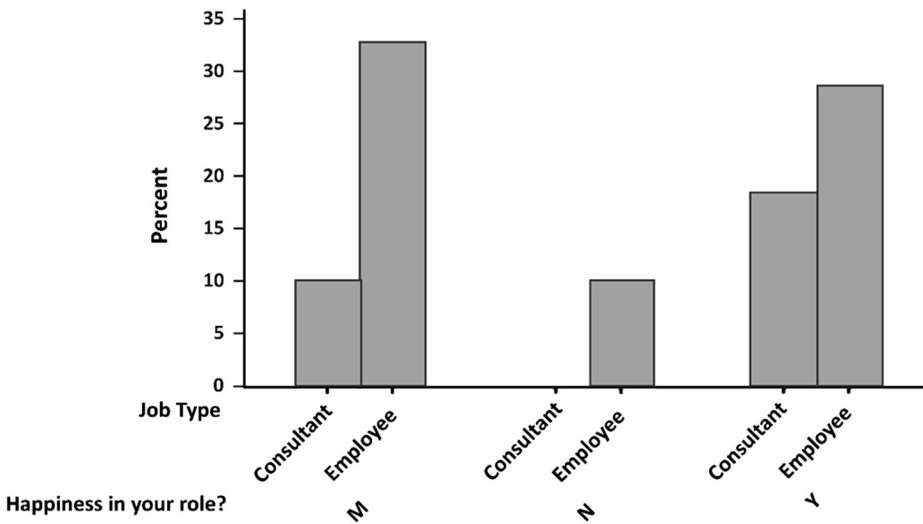
Data on job type was collected—either employees or consultants. There is no significant difference in terms of the respondents ranking of Aristotle’s factors between employees and consultants—see Figure 22.2. There was also no difference for each of the five Factors.

Respondents were asked if they were happy in their current roles for each of the job types—Employee and Consultant. The results appear in Figure 22.3 where Y = Yes, M = Mixed and N = No.

All consultants were either happy in their roles or had mixed feelings, not one consultant was unhappy in their roles.

For the respondents who are happy in their roles, some key requirements for either employees or consultants included:

Chart of Happiness in your role?, Job Type



Percent is calculated within all data

Figure 22.3 Happiness percentages in respondent’s current role by Job Type.

- Steady income, varied work, appreciative clients, great support from home
- Reputable business, able to help customers and develop existing staff within our business, problem solving, and seeing the benefits to each customer connection
- Freedom to do things I want
- Support and autonomy and able to make a contribution across the business
- My job is my passion
- Treated well and not being micro-managed
- Varied and diverse work in an inclusive team
- Being allowed to be innovative even in the event of financial instability
- Being in control to make choices
- Able to test existing knowledge
- Global recognition for performance
- Able to make a difference

For those respondents (mostly employees) with mixed feelings of happiness or not happy at all, some points raised included the following:

- Poor treatment by management
- Inability to utilize the skills and knowledge effectively
- Leadership setting tasks that do not add value and lack direction
- Poor work-life balance
- Lack of job security, clarity, and support
- Being under-valued and lack of recognition
- Continual restructuring
- Lack of policies and procedures that create negative cultural norms
- Changing priorities of management
- Overwhelmed

- Too long in the one role

A question in the survey was asked to note the events or situations that would result in happiness at work and for respondents these include the following.

For consultants:

- Recognition from clients, peers, and leaders that a difference has been made
- Being valued
- Successful outcomes for clients
- Authentic communication and seeing people grow

For employees:

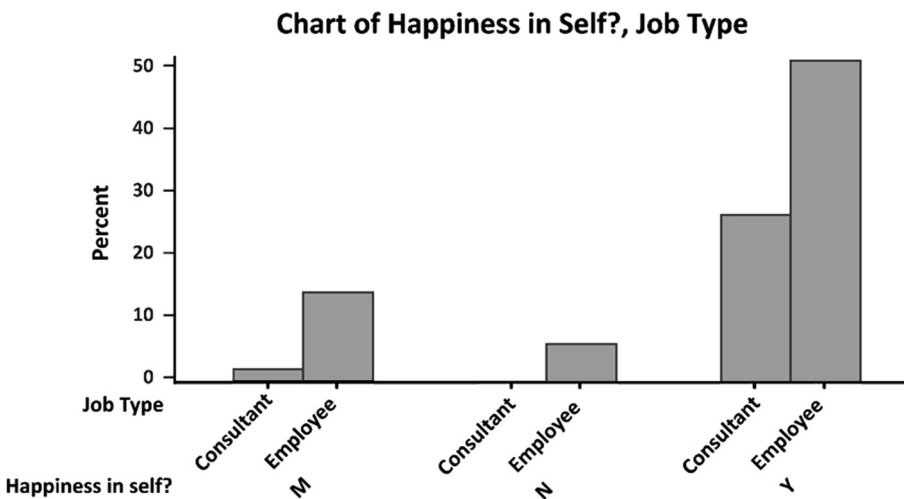
- Feeling valued
- Less pressure from deadlines
- Trust from colleagues
- Cultural awareness and social celebrations
- Collaboration with like-minded individuals
- Clear and honest communications from leadership and across the business during change
- Achieving goals
- Security

Respondents recorded if they were happy in themselves and Figure 22.4 indicates some clear evidence that a large proportion were happy no matter what.

However, most respondents note that happiness does change from day to day, see Figure 22.5. This may indicate that happiness at the core does not change, but daily emotions and external events or situations tend to change the level of happiness for most people.

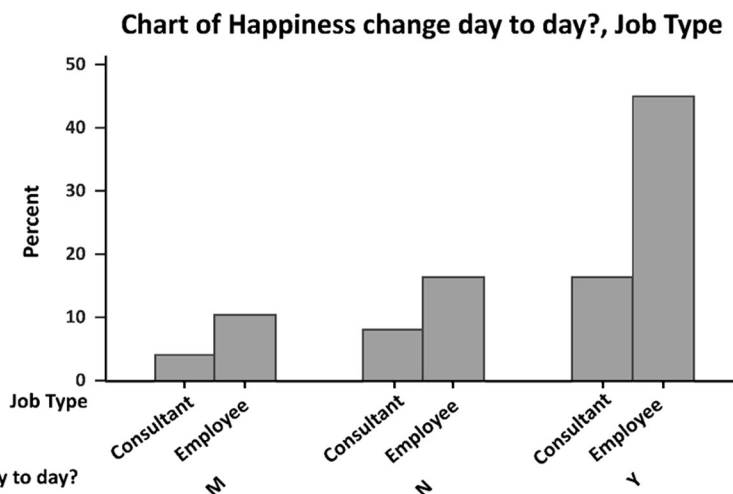
Some reasons why respondents reported happiness changes daily in the workplace include:

- Personal relationship pressures



Percent is calculated within all data

Figure 22.4 Happiness in Self by Job type.



Percent is calculated within all data

Figure 22.5 Happiness changes daily.

- Extended periods away from family
- Lack of respect and recognition and integrity
- Challenges creating distractions resulting in drained energy
- You just overthink
- Cannot predict what happens
- Being around toxic people
- Poor client feedback
- A function of the emotional load existing
- Cloudiness of everything else
- The environment
- Mood swings
- Uncontrollable situations
- It is a minute by minute variation

Some reported that happiness changes at work but not at home. Others said happiness is deep-rooted and any challenges, problems, and stress are short-lived.

Predictions for Happiness at Work

The data was collected for respondents on whether or not they were happy in their current role, whether or not they are happy in their Self (at a deep level), whether or not they think happiness changes daily and whether or not they were happy as a child.

Using ordinal regression between the predictors for happiness at work, there is evidence that Happiness in Self is a significant predictor for happiness in a role at the 5% level.

Discussion: Key Findings

There are a number of key findings emerging from this research and worthy of further examination.

Application of Aristotle's Happiness Definition for Work

Aristotle's happiness factors are only one example of measures of happiness. They are viewed as important by the respondents in this survey, as all average ranks across the five factors are significantly greater than three. Interestingly, there is evidence that the rank for the second factor, Keeping One's Mind Active, is significantly higher than the rank for all other factors except the need to Create Friendships at the 5% level.

Friendship may be an increasing significant factor in today's workforce where the employee/workplace profile is changing to reflect:

- multi-culture, age, and gender
- diverse workplace practices, including technology and working remotely
- changing social relations, including isolation and loneliness

Happiness at Work Changes Daily

Even though most respondents recorded that they were happy in themselves, most recorded that happiness changes daily. This suggests that happiness is not at a deep level for most respondents but rather is affected by external events outside the control of the respondent.

A number of employees reported that more autonomy at work would improve their happiness where it seemingly did not exist in the workplace. Consultants tend to be freer and autonomous. Nevertheless, it is possible that freedom and autonomy for both work types are now becoming the norm. Happiness changing daily implies that it is an emotion rather than a state of being at a deep level.

Predictor of Happiness at Work

Happiness as a child seems to determine the happiness in the respondent's current role, although their happiness can change significantly on a daily basis.

Happiness and Productivity

A good organizational culture which includes happy employees can impact on the operational efficiency and effectiveness of an organization. Happy consultants can probably provide better advice.

Strategies for Happiness at Work?

Keeping One's Mind in a Healthy State

A healthy mind can be created by people doing personal work so that their self-esteem and value is clearly known. Strategies to incentivize Wellness with a sense of fun are critical to deploy.

Develop an Understanding of Happiness at Your Deepest Level

Develop an understanding of why you react externally to events or situations subconsciously so that you are not distracted from your life's journey. See the work of Dr Darren Weismann (Weismann, 2005) to understand how to process your emotions and set about a strategy to link them to the workplace.

This will allow a balance between work and life so that happiness is a constant and any changes are reduced daily.

Ask Leaders to Create Policies on Happiness Together with the Organizations other Policies on Safety, Quality, Environment, Ethics, etc.

While the individual is responsible for their personal happiness, workplace happiness is contextual and leaders must support the process to create a happy workplace. There is a need to address gender, culture, age, loneliness, and bullying to establish and promote positive behaviors that support and encourage personal strengths, confidence, and success.

Reflections

Researchers seem to suggest that happiness should be the final pinnacle of life or the holy grail. We search for it, we want it, and we try to hold on to it, we often cannot see it, it's fleeting but we never notice it because we seem to run our thinking from the past.

As Aristotle dismissed, happiness is not pleasure seeking but finding out what is your journey, giving it your best shot, and being happy in the process. Aristotle held the view that the Greek word *Eudaimonia* really translates to human flourishing. He said it is a human thought attached to an action which involves activity with virtue. The critical strategy is to ensure we deploy this in the workplace.

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