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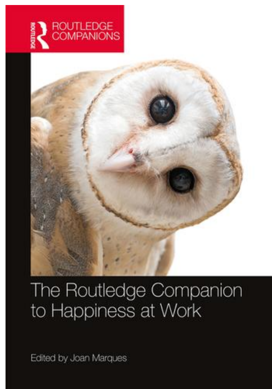


# The Routledge Companion to Happiness at Work

Joan Marques

# Leveraging Social Responsibility for Worker Engagement

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# 24

# LEVERAGING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORKER ENGAGEMENT

## From Recruitment to Productivity, Satisfaction, Longevity, and Happiness

*Morgan R. Clevenger*

### Introduction

*Happiness* is a general context for businesses or nonprofits to consider for organizational members (i.e., employees or volunteers). Attention to this focus occurs throughout the human resource stages for recruitment, on-going personal engagement, and devotion to an organization by aiding in high productivity and long-term commitment through individual identity affiliation (e.g., see Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2013; Edgar, Geare, Halhjem, Reese, & Thoresen, 2015; Mathieu & Farr, 1991; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Hence, appealing to and attracting the appropriate workers or volunteers promotes the ideal representation of an organization (Colby, Erlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). This matching creates potential for on-going, win-win individual and organization satisfaction and happiness.

The process of recruitment and onboarding takes time, money, and effort, but ultimately should attract and retain the best talent. Having the right fit promotes greater cause performance, creates a positive organizational image, establishes attachment, and aids in longevity and sustainability for both the organization and the workers (Goffman, 1961; Soujanen, 2017). These stages help to create an environment of 'happiness'. Fisher's (2010) seminal *Happiness at Work* eloquently outlines a typology for concepts of happiness. Basically, happiness is yielded from a weaving of personal level, unit level, and transient level constructs (Fisher, 2010). Generally, happiness originates from four intrinsic traits including "self-esteem, a sense of personal control, optimism, and extraversion" (Myers & Diener, 1995, p. 14). Then, happiness is generated through multi-layer positive reflection in several areas simultaneously from environmental and organizational factors, including (but not limited to): job performance and self-satisfaction, organizational commitment through routine processes, job involvement, engagement, thriving and vigor, and flow, reinforcing intrinsic motivation and affect at work (Eldor, 2016; Fisher, 2010; Meyer & Allen, 1991). (For a deeper review on happiness issues, see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) *Special Issue on Happiness, Excellence, and Optimal Human Functioning edition of American Psychologist*.)

## Background

Focusing on people in organizations includes the human resources function, which is founded on a combination of attachment theories including social identity theory, pro-social behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior. These concepts combine to help individuals self-select to accept jobs or volunteer positions with specific organizations that match personal interests and have organizational 'fit' based on values, mission, vision, and organizational behavior consistent with an individual's identification and tolerances. This 'attachment' condition is based on trust and mutual identification (Lin, 2010; Lin et al., 2012; Uslaner, 1999). Thus, organizations are defined as entities with a specific goal set and culture comprised of individuals espousing those goals and related behaviors (Lin, 2001). The following sections highlight social identity theory, pro-social behavior, and organizational citizenship behavior leading to positive involvement parlaying into social responsibility initiatives.

## Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory informs relationships between an individual and a given organization. *Social identity theory* classifies groups of people through common interests, goals, and activities (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Jenkins, 2014). Thus, individuals collectively create an organization, and organizational identification affects both the individual and establishes the ability and capacity for the effectiveness of an organization. *Organizational identification* is "the process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated and congruent" (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970, pp. 176–177). This self-selection and organizational affirmation creates a relationship bond. This bond provides identity cohesion and reciprocal bonding.

An individual's behavior "would have less effect on organizational outcomes than [it] would [on] an organization's context" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 9). As such, the selection processes for new hires impact the extent to which behaviors of individuals relate to organizational identities and are promulgated by current or future leaders. In many situations, individuals have limited discretionary decision-making; many issues affecting organizations are not controlled by individuals but, rather, by external ecological forces such as clients, governmental regulations, the economy, tax policies, and other organizations (Amburgey & Rao, 1996; Baum & Oliver, 1996). Both social identity theory and organizational identity theory claim that the distinctiveness of organizations promotes certain values and practices that relate best to those of comparable groups with similar values, practices, prestige, and goals (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Katz & Kahn, 2005; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006). Relating to social responsibility, organizations affiliate and partner with other institutions that embody their salient identities. Such affinity for one another's organizations promotes inter-organizational cohesion, cooperation, and positive interactions, and the reinforcement of these organizational characteristics creates long-lasting relationships. Thus, the extent to which an organization reflects individual behaviors is related to the extent to which the organization has capacity to engage in pro-social behaviors, including social responsibility opportunities.

## Pro-social Behavior

*Pro-social* behavior by individuals, as well as organizational behavior, is expressed through those actions that promote assisting others. Examples include "helping, sharing, donating, cooperating, and volunteering" (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 710). A main facet of pro-social behavior is that "the individual has the freedom to decide whether or not to help" (Bar-Tal, 1976, p. 5), and to what degree or time period. Pro-social behavior can take on various trust and commitment forms, such as altruistic, transactional, or reciprocal. *Altruistic* behavior is voluntary, benefits



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another, and does not include any expectation of reward. People learn such behavior through modeling and/or reinforcement of modeling. *Transactional* or exchange pro-social behavior—where express expectation of return action is required (Bromiley & Cummings, 1995)—still includes assisting another or an organization in some way, but also comes with non-material or intangible rewards, such as prestige, acceptance, euphoric feelings, and/or appreciation. *Reciprocal* pro-social behavior—such as the concept of *paying it forward*—is the presumption that helping someone else also allows a returned favor at some point in the future either by that person or by the larger karma of life (Bar-Tal, 1976).

Pro-social behavior is key to better understanding social responsibility. In American culture the socially accepted norm is to help others, which is a concept stemming from the story of the Good Samaritan. Variables in individuals' decisions leading to actions include personal background, situational circumstances, characteristics of the person in need, and one's culture. The transactional and reciprocal forms of pro-social behavior also include a cost-reward analysis for action (Bar-Tal, 1976). Thus, in an organizational setting,

> Pro-social organizational behavior is behavior which is (a) performed by a member of an organization, (b) directed toward an individual, group, or organization with whom he or she interacts while carrying out his or her organizational role, and (c) performed with the intention of promoting the welfare of the individual, group, or organization toward which it is directed.
>
> *(Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 711)*

This definition is intentionally broad to encompass many different behaviors. Managing both functional and dysfunctional pro-social behaviors adds to organizational effectiveness and is "vital for organizational survival" (Brief & Motowidlo, p. 710).

## Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Contributions on behalf of an organization are made by individuals and are labeled *organizational citizenship behavior*. Individuals within organizations ultimately create policies and make decisions. "Individual behavior is discretionary…and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ et al., 2006, p. 3). Therefore, individuals act collectively to consummately make decisions and act as agents for an organization—including those related to social responsibility. Thus, behaviors of individuals become synonymous with those of an organization and vice versa. Organizational behaviors include strategy, planning, resource prioritization, organizational learning, marketing and brand promotion, internal self-management, employee engagement, external organization representation, and community or society interface such as philanthropy, volunteerism, and social responsibility.

Organizations act in society. Organizations are the amalgamation of plans, thoughts, decisions, and actions of leaders, managers, workers, volunteers, and policies culminating into organizational behavior. Thus, organizations operate in society through on-going inter-organizational relationships with other entities. These networks rely on stable, conscientious actions and reactions to support mutual goals and agendas (Cook, Levi, & Hardin, 2009). Workers—employees or volunteers—are the key internal stakeholders who are the "glue" of an organization, yet little attention has been given regarding their direct need for engaging in social responsibility (De Roeck et al., 2014; Jones, 2010; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011), although some work has been done on worker attitudes and perceived utilization of social responsibility (see Brammer, Millington, & Rayton, 2007; Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990; Peterson, 2004; Shen & Jiuhua Zhu, 2011; and Turker, 2009). Peterson (2004) yielded an organization's ethical and discretionary initiatives boosted workers' attachment

and organizational commitment. Brammer et al. (2007) evidenced worker beliefs in organizational commitment to community increased individual organizational commitment. Finally, Shen and Jiuhua Zhu (2011) and Turker (2009) proport positive affective commitment through emphasized social responsibility activities.

In summary, these foundational concepts explain how individuals' thinking is shaped in U.S. American society, specifically in an organizational context. The individuals—then collectively as a group or representing the group—act on behalf of an organization. Thus, expectations of organizations and behaviors of the individual actors create cultural pressures on an organization to contribute in positive ways to society to help others, causes, or other organizations. This process supports engagement in social responsibility and, in turn, worker happiness.

## Social Responsibility and Organizations

Modern organizations—both for-profit and nonprofit—are expected to function in society as good organizational citizens with emphasis areas beyond program or business focus into social engagement through community engagement, volunteerism, philanthropy or other resource provisions, and compassion (Benioff & Southwick, 2004; De los Salmones, Crespo, & del Bosque, 2005; Eldor, 2016). Thus, social responsibility has become a tool and positive agenda for organizations to recruit and retain talent (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008; De Roeck et al., 2014). [Note that many different terms are also used to refer to 'social responsibility' by organizations and subsequent value and strategic usefulness depending on context such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate social performance (CSP), corporate citizenship, community citizenship, corporate engagement, corporate community involvement, organizational justice, etc. (see Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Clevenger & MacGregor, 2019; Evans, Davis, & Frink, 2011; Freeman & Hasnaoui, 2011 Kotler & Lee, 2004; Lakin & Scheubel, 2010; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010; Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2010; Maxfield, 2008; Rupp, Ganapathi, Aguilera, & Williams, 2006; Turban & Greening, 1997; Wilson, 2011). For simplicity in this chapter, *social responsibility* is used generically for this discussion for both businesses or nonprofits as the emphasis is on the human capital and happiness in vocation or avocation.]

Basically, *social responsibility* is the goal of applied ethical action and promoting good causes (De Roeck et al., 2014). Social responsibility promotes organization cultures creating a positive emphasis on economic, social, and ecological initiatives (Jacques, 2010). (Two helpful books detailing programming for community engagement and social responsibility include Lakin & Scheubel's (2010) *Corporate Community Involvement: The Definitive Guide to Maximizing Your Business' Societal Engagement*, and Stangis & Smith's (2017). *The Executive's Guide to 21st Century Corporate Citizenship: How Your Company Can Win the Battle for Reputation and Impact*. While designed for corporate focus, they are still broad enough for any type of organization.)

Positive social responsibility by organizations attracts like-minded workers (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002; Hiltrop, 1999). Likewise, negative social responsibility or neglect creates challenging worker attraction or opens the possibility for emphasis on irresponsibility or bad behaviors (Lange & Washburn, 2012). Thus, leaders try to focus on valuable strategies to emphasize positive behaviors that reflect an organization's culture, purpose, and goals to create productivity and success.

Employees expect an organization to encourage pride in involvement externally, to allow volunteer opportunities, and to offer funds or other resources in support of important initiatives (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010, p. 17). Many benefits exist for strong social responsibility. Workers can impart new ideas or gain important skills, experiences, and social competencies; benefit from team building; improve personal satisfaction; or convey important talents thus creating impact (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). For the organization, added credibility and reputation emerge. Additionally, strengthening teamwork and positive culture and developing networks are important (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010).



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Finally, recipients of social responsibility develop committed relationships and resources and potentially stable validation (Lakin & Scheubel, 2010). Workers therefore maintain a long-term focus and ongoing happiness promoting a cycle of well-being through positive social responsibility opportunities (Ahuvia et al., 2015; Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011; Lee, Ho, Wu, & Kao, 2008). Several meta-analyses using 'people analytics data' have produced concrete evidence on the factors for satisfaction in work or volunteer efforts yielding positive employee engagement (see Bowling, Beehr, & Lepis, 2006; Dormann & Zapf, 2001; Fried & Ferris, 1987; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Kahn, 1990).

## Employee Engagement

Pro-social behavior on behalf of an organization provokes individuals into "cooperating with coworkers, taking action when necessary to protect the organization from unexpected danger, suggesting ways to improve the organization, deliberate self-development and preparation for higher levels of organizational responsibility, and speaking favorably about the organization to outsiders" (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 710). Employees are the stakeholder who have "the potential to have by far the greatest influence" on "customers…their neighbors and family" (McIntire, 2012, p. 1). It is important for organizations to harness the energy and sphere of influence of employees or volunteers, thus allowing ownership and creating appropriate independence contributing to happiness (Benz & Frey, 2004; Edgar et al., 2015).

Workers must be enculturated from the first day regarding "values about integrity, personal responsibility, community service, environmental stewardship, and customer service" (McIntire, 2012, p. 1). Authenticity is important because behavior has to match an organization's assertions, and workers are the first stakeholders to notice incongruence or to challenge inauthenticity. "Credibility means taking a measured and quantifiable approach" (McIntire, 2012, p. 2). Activation is the key to motivating employees and volunteers into action. Oftentimes goal setting, rewards, and recognition are required to activate workers to create passion and commitment.

Personal engagement (which becomes employee engagement when aggregated) "refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269). Engagement ideally must be enriching instead of depleting (Rothbard, 2001). The enrichment process yields positive benefits instead of depleting or draining behaviors that lead to burn out (Rothbard, 2001). The psychological dimensions to support personal or employee engagement include meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). *Meaningfulness* is the "sense of return on investments of self in role performance"; *safety* is a "sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career;" and *availability* is a "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing in role performances" (Kahn, 1990 p. 705). Examples of personal or employee engagement include involvement in volunteer and nonprofit relationships, review of proposals or opportunities, leadership development roles in key external partnerships, developing new skills, and coordination of policies and interface with other organizations or initiatives.

## Employee Volunteerism

A key behavior in an organization's culture and its ability to be socially responsive is employee volunteerism. *Employee volunteerism* increases productivity, encourages team building, improves interpersonal communications, broadens skill bases, enhances workers' understanding of a broader culture, and shows an organization's commitment to a community (Brockner, Senior, & Welch, 2014; Freeman, 1991; Sheldon, 2000). "Organizations that have service as a core value of their culture will see both intrinsic and extrinsic returns. …the opportunity will find that it energizes employees and executives" (Benioff & Southwick, 2004, p. 17). Shaw and Post (1993) indicated that

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volunteer engagement "contributes to employee morale" and "loyalty" (p. 747). Additionally, Vitaliano (2010) said "adopting socially responsible policies…can reduce turnover" (p. 569).

Individuals who embrace volunteerism are likely exemplary with pro-social behavior. Such factors contributing to this behavior include "empathy, extraversion, social responsibility, neuroticism, educational level, age, achievement motivation, the protestant work ethics, and mood" (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 720). Volunteerism has become a central component of organizational culture. In 2016, 61% of all U.S. employees volunteered at least one hour on company time (Solórzano, 2017). Volunteerism is done on an organization's time and even on employees' own time. Some companies offer special grant money on top of employees' time. "The current generation of employees wants an employer that shares their values and that they can trust" (Wilson, 2011, p. 14). Brief and Motowidlo (1986) indicated,

> Several aspects of the organizational context and work environment likely determine or, at least, covary with expressions of pro-social organizational behavior. They include factors such as reciprocity norms, group cohesiveness, role models, reinforcement contingencies, leadership style, organizational climate, stressors, contextual determinants of organizational commitment, and anything else that might affect moods and feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
>
> *(p. 718)*

Time contributed by volunteers on behalf of organizations represent a significant impact in society.

## Work-Life Balance

Organizations in the 21st Century have a greater understanding of work-life balance and create agendas and support mechanisms for satisfaction to the workers (whether employees or volunteers), as well as simultaneously supporting a positive image and productivity for the organization (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Clark, 2002). Considerations of work-life balance aid in fulfilling multiple roles simultaneously (Rothbard, 2001).

A work-life or life-work balance stems from having a "sense of personal control" (Myers & Diener, 1995, p. 14). This personal control helps to set personal and professional goals simultaneously with flexibility in meeting both. Examples of organizational support mechanisms include flex time, working remotely (e.g. at home or a business-centered environment such as a coffee shop), and compressed schedules, as well as funding for important enhancements such as continuing education, professional credentialing maintenance, daycare, fitness programs, opportunity for achievement recognition and advancement, bonuses, and career ladders.

Life-work balance centers on a holistic approach to well-being. Depending on stage of career and personal responsibility status, giving priority may include flexibility for parenting responsibility, honoring religious holiday schedules, worker health and nutrition, leaves of absence for family care, and organizational resources to equip external partnerships through social responsibility opportunities.

## Organizational Commitment

Long-term satisfaction is produced by a complex layering of internal drivers, external stimuli and reinforcements, and ultimately interactionism—based on "individual, interpersonal, group, intergroup, and organizational dynamics" (Kahn, 1990, p. 719). Organizational commitment stems from attitudes, environmental organizational conditions, and behaviors (Meyer & Allen, 1991). These dynamics are comprised of organizational as well as community factors such as interdependence, complexity, dynamics, feedbacks, holism, and context-sensitivity (Ahuvia, Thin, Haybron, Biswas-Diener, Ricard, & Timsit, 2015). Additionally, a given organization with an agenda of positive *social responsibility* helps to support the objective relating to employee engagement, a higher value of ongoing personal development

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through formal and informal education, community volunteerism, and support of life-work balance (Clevenger & MacGregor, 2019; Córdoba & Campbell, 2007; Kahn, 1990).

An important facet of engaging and promoting *happiness* of workers is an organization's ability to instill long-term organizational commitment and healthy productivity using an agenda of social responsibility. Workers and volunteers today have a self-imposed awareness, expectation, and understanding of organizations' social agendas, which create win-win-win scenarios for workers, the organization, and community partners. Organizations therefore strategically attract personnel desiring pro-social activities through planned social responsibility priorities and initiatives. Thus, having the right people in place creates stability and a positive relational performance. This attachment and reinforcement creates a positive, on-going cycle of commitment, growth, and mutual satisfaction. As such, social responsibility extends an individual's interests and talents into areas of importance and validation beyond their everyday obligations.

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