

The relationship between Happiness at work and Organizational Innovation

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Abstract

Continuous innovation is an imperative for the survival of all organizations in the fast-changing world of today. This in turn requires that the organization is able to tap into the unique potential of every employee and organize them effectively towards the greater good of the organization and the stakeholders it seeks to serve. Key determinants in galvanizing the inspired contribution of employees are decidedly the levels of job satisfaction and the engagement they experience. These are in turn a function of the level of happiness employees experience at work. In this context, the current paper notes the pivotal importance of workplace happiness and of happy employees in creating an organization that has a sustainable competitive advantage. It is observed that a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators is required to be employed by organizations which wish to lead their industries. What are the various ways in which organizations promote both organizational innovation and workplace happiness? It is believed that an exploration of this question is vital to ensuring the multidimensional bottom-line of the 21st century organization, in preserving their vitality and sustainable performance, while providing a platform for their employees to give full and free expression to their creative potential as inspired human beings.

KEYWORDS: Innovation, Happiness at Work

INTRODUCTION

Happiness at work is correlated positively with organizational innovation. The efficiency or productivity of happier workers is certainly much higher than their unhappy peers, and there is a huge impact of organizational innovation in determining this. Every organization or corporate must find innovative ways of doing things which improve the job satisfaction of their employees and keep them loyal to their employer.

Objectives

- 1) To ensure that employees are happy during working hours.
- 2) To understand how bringing innovation in organizations will help create happier employees.
- 3) To find out new methods of achieving innovation in organizations.

The Need for Innovation

It is now widely recognized that innovation is a fundamental and universal organizational imperative; for continuous improvement, learning and rapid adaptation; in an external environment that is changing at lightning speed; in an age of ever-increasing uncertainty. The Innovator's Toolkit [Harvard Business Review Press, 2009] lays out various practical strategies to help managers develop and implement innovation in their organizations. Innovation has been a buzzword in the business world for quite a while now; academic thought leaders such as Clayton Christensen, Peter Drucker, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, C. K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel, as well as innovative organizations and individuals have offered ideas and insights for superior innovation performance. These include elements of organizational design, incentive systems, strategic planning processes and the dichotomy between strategy formulation and execution.

The Importance of Workplace Happiness

The concept of happiness is different for different people. Attempts at measuring happiness are often elusive as well. Nevertheless, it can be safely stated that most, if not all, people want to be happy in their lives, though the sources of happiness and the means by which different people pursue happiness vary significantly.

One dimension of this variation is the expectation that people harbour towards work and the workplace. For many, work is only a necessary means to accomplish more important goals outside work, and not necessarily a domain where one seeks to find any source of happiness or fulfilment. For many others, work is as integral a part of life as any other endeavour; for these latter people, it is important that work is fulfilling and a source of meaning and happiness, and many of them believe that this is possible.

Despite the differing attitudes one may have towards work as a source of happiness, it cannot be denied that workplace happiness can have a reasonable or even significant effect on the overall degree of life happiness experienced by a person. Moreover, various studies have shown the strong positive relationship between workplace happiness and employee productivity. The opportunities a workplace provides for pursuit and realization of happiness can also have a strong bearing on the ability of the organization to attract talent. In view of the above, it is posited that happiness at work is an important variable that organizations need to pay attention to, in order to attain and maintain high levels of performance.

Happiness: The Ultimate Motive of Everyone

The ultimate motive or objective, for all the actions and decisions taken by human beings, across the world, is not to amass wealth or get recognition, or to get salary hike or promotion. The final motive is to be 'happy'. The only thing is that people are finding different ways and means, to achieve this final goal. Take the case of a mother educating her child, by taking tremendous effort, time and pain. She wants her child to study well, score high grades in exams, become a topper in the class or school, graduate from a top-notch university, and land a six-figure salaried job and become a rich man, marry a good and beautiful girl, establish a family and take good care of his ageing parents. The mother dreams about this, only because she wants her son to be happy and in turn, she also will be happy when her son is happy.

Now, take the case of a rickshaw puller. He works hard day in and day out, to make both ends meet. He just wants his wife and children to have good food to eat, nice clothes to wear, and a roof over the bed. In short, he wants to see his family happy, which of course will make him too happy, content and satisfied.

The same is the case with all the human beings in this world, whether they are doctors, engineers, academicians, politicians, priests, nuns, drivers, management professionals, etc. They just want to see their near and dear ones happy, which in turn will make them also happy. This is a universal law of nature.

There is a dark side to this story. Robbers, thieves and criminals adopt negative means to achieve the positive ends. They indulge in all types of criminal activities, robbery, theft, deception and all other illegal activities, just to make money, which in turn will make them happy.

But, to be really happy, a person should not only seek good ends but also adopt good/divine/noble means to achieve them. Happiness is a state of mind. Real happiness can be attained, only by doing one's work with 100% sincerity, commitment and dedication, and with expectations of noble results. Happiness is the gift that is given to those who work with the maximum of his abilities. The parable of

talents in the Bible reminds us of this idea. In the Bhagavat Gita, a lot is told about the importance of 'Karma' or Work. The dictum "Work is Worship" speaks volumes about this concept.

True worship is not spending hours praying inside the church or temple, or donating money, food and clothes to poor, but doing the work assigned to one with utmost sincerity. Only a person, who does his work well, with the maximum of his abilities, can be really happy. Such a person makes oneself more receptive to the blessings that Life has to offer. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet".

Workplace Happiness: A Driver of Organizational Innovation

In the world of today, organizations increasingly need people who are committed, dedicated and sincere to their work or duty. Employees should be able to derive happiness from doing their work. This will in turn lead to innovation, creativity and growth of the organization as a whole, and the society at large. Today's corporate world is very rough, tough and competitive and so, only the fittest can survive. The Darwin's principle of 'survival of the fittest' holds well in this scenario. Organizations with happy and committed employees can survive in the long-run and they will not be easily withered down or uprooted by the storm of global economic, political, socio-cultural and technological changes. So, people who are 'happy at work', are the need of the hour, and they can help the organization reap huge dividends, profits and success. This will in turn make all the internal and external stakeholders of the company happy, satisfied and content.

To achieve real happiness, one must not only work well, but also develop a positive attitude and psychology towards life in general. We should always look at a half-filled glass of water as half-full rather than half-empty. The next step to real happiness is to develop a positive psychology purposefully. The noted author, Mr Shiv Khera, speaks about the importance of developing the practice of giving auto-suggestions, in his best-selling book "You Can Win". He exhorts all to develop a positive approach and positive thinking towards each and every adversity. Remember, "Every cloud has a silver lining". Also, every night is followed by a day. The renowned author and counsellor, Mr Norman Vincent Peale, in his best-selling book "The Power of Positive Thinking" tells us that, "there is a strong tendency in human nature to become precisely like that which you habitually imagine yourself to be". "A man is what he thinks about all day long".

To be happy, we also need to have a strong body and a strong mind. Both mind and body are very much inter-related. A sound mind rests in a sound body. That is, body and mind are positively correlated. The body can be made strong by regular exercise. The mind can be made strong by doing yoga, meditation and prayer. Prayer creates positive vibrations in the human brain, which trigger the production of positivity hormones, which in turn make us happier than before. Scientists worldwide have tested and certified the 'power of prayer'. Prayer can heal the wounds of the mind, just like a Band-Aid can heal the wounds and abrasions on the body. Prayer helps us to perform better in our work, and can make us happier than before, and gives us physical, emotional and mental control over our thoughts, words and actions.

All the aforesaid features, will enhance the employee's efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, and will help him to be happy at work and think out-of-the-box, which in turn will help the organization to be innovative and creative. An innovative and creative organisation will be able to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and can sustain their leadership position and become a big success. Happy employees tend to be more creative, innovative, and they exhibit higher skills of verbal and non-verbal logic and reasoning, and sound judgment which will in turn

help the organization to be more innovative. Research has time and again proved that, happy employees are more able to secure trademarks, patents and copyrights for newer technologies and inventions, than their unhappy colleagues. This speaks volumes about the need and importance of being happy at work. All happy employees can assimilate, organise and communicate their thoughts, ideas and decisions better than their unhappy partners. The happiness index or the happiness level of an employee, at any time, is positively correlated to creative ideas. Happy employees are better able to leverage the spark within.

History is replete with scientific inventions attained during the moments of intense happiness and excitement. This should not be mistaken with hysteria or bipolar disorder or neurotic mental disorders. Happy employees are able to use their brain more creatively and wisely. Happy mind is the springboard of creativity.

Fostering Workplace Happiness

Now, let us discuss how the organizations can innovate, so as to keep the employees happy always. Some methods, through which organizations can innovate so as to keep the employees happy, are outlined below:

- Provide bonus salary, according to the quality of performance of the employees.
- Provide crèche facilities for the kids of employees.
- Provide tour packages annually, for the family members of the employees.
- Provide free breakfast for the employees reaching the office early morning, and free dinner for the employees working overtime in the night.
- Provide free cab pick-up and drop-off from/to the airport, during vacation.
- Provide allowances and gift exchange programme, during the celebrations of festivals like Christmas, Diwali and Ramzan.
- Organise stress-buster sessions, for say 30 minutes, during the office hours, at least once a month.
- Provide ample time as maternity leave, for the ladies who are carrying.
- Reward the employees (monetary and non-monetary rewards) for a selected few employees, who perform exceptionally, well.
- Provide cab facilities for employees, who does not have own transport, at least during odd hours.
- Provide salary hikes frequently.
- Organise free team dinner sessions and team lunch sessions, for the members of the best-performing team, at least once a month.
- Organise tours to exotic locations, for all the employees, annually.
- Provide free coffee, tea, cool drinks and snacks, through the stores operated by the firm.
- Provide baby feeding rooms, for the ladies with small kids.
- Provide a prayer room.
- Provide a sound-proof reading room.
- Allow the close family members of the employees, to visit the company, enter inside the premises of the office, once a while.
- Provide yoga and meditation classes free of cost, to all willing employees.
- Provide pay packages according to the amount of work finished by the employee.
- Provide free hospital treatment, and check-up for accidents and similar diseases.
- Provide book-exchange programme, between the employees, free of cost.

- Provide incentives to employees who have referred his/her friend for the job in their company, if the candidate was selected.
- Allow employees to use the internet café attached to their office building, free of cost, and without blocking any website, like Gmail, before going home after the day's work is over.
- If the services of an employee have to be terminated, it should be done in such a way that the morale of the remaining existing employees is not affected in any negative way.
- The employees who work overtime should be adequately compensated.
- Provide a round-the-clock gym with all modern equipments.
- Provide facilities for playing games like table-tennis, badminton, caroms etc. round the clock.

Methodology

For the study, data was collected from around 280 faculty members of the Department of Management Studies, of different colleges in Bangalore and Ernakulam, by means of a questionnaire (survey), administered online. The findings and results of the survey conducted, is given below by means of a table and a graph.

Table 1: How innovative is your organization?

Response	Number of Respondents
Highly Innovative	80
Innovative	120
Neutral	40
Not Innovative	40
Not at all Innovative	0



Table 2: Do you think there is any positive relationship between your happiness at work and the level of innovation of your organization?

Response	Number of Respondents
Strongly Agree	120
Agree	80
Neutral	40
Disagree	40
Strongly Disagree	0

Analysis and Findings

After analysing the data collected from 280 respondents, we find that around 43% (42.85%) of respondents believe that there is a positive correlation between happiness at work and organizational innovation, while only around 29% (28.57%) agree with the same. Not even a single respondent strongly disagree with the statement.

Similarly, 29% of the respondents are of the opinion that their organization is highly innovative while 43% believe that it is only a bit innovative.

On analysing the above data, we can interpret that there do exist a strong positive correlation between happiness at work and organizational innovation. So, the employers should ensure that their employees are kept happy most of the time (both on and off the work) which will help the organization to be more innovative. On the same page, all employees look forward to more and more innovations by the organizations, which will in turn make the employees happier.

CONCLUSION

Given the importance of workplace happiness to organizational innovation, organizations need to adopt a suitable mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to increase employee happiness. To be successful, the management needs to be wise and should have the discernment to employ the motivators to the right degree, in the right form and context. Such a judicious mix would lead to a workplace culture that is founded on trust, collaboration and growth. It would increase employee productivity and organizational performance and create a virtuous cyclic relationship between organizational innovation and workplace happiness.

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