



7 Steps to Creating a Happier Workplace

by Mary Kelly

Your job is to be the best leader you possible so your company can make a profit. Wouldn't it be great if you generate profits and happy employees? Making employees happy at work is one of the biggest achievements for a leader, and a reliable way to increase productivity. Unhappy employees, estimates show, cost the American economy as much as \$400 billion per year in lost productivity.

What Identifies a Happy Workplace?

CareerBliss released findings on the 40 happiest companies to work for in America. The results are based on reviews submitted by employees evaluating key happiness factors such as relationships, lifestyle, work pressure from coworkers and managers, available job resources, opportunities for growth, work culture, compensation, company reputation, daily tasks, and how much control employees have over their jobs. Innovative companies, those that rely on creativity, are often known for encouraging flexible work schedules, inventive workspaces, and collaborative teamwork.

An ideal company has the perfect balance of all the happiness factors. However, this does not mean that companies perceived to be innovative will consistently hold the top spot. Highly imaginative companies like Google and Apple dropped from being in the top 10 spots to numbers 18 and 42, while pharmaceutical company, Pfizer climbed to the #11 position. How? They focus on some of these practices to create happy workplaces.

What Are Happy Workplaces Doing Differently?

1. Employee development. A happy workplace is one that is committed to continuous employee development. Pfizer supports workers who want to take risks by allowing them try, occasionally fail, and learn from the process.

2. Flexibility and understanding. Smart employees need flexibility as well as work challenges to stimulate new ideas. Research by the Wharton School of Business finds what great leaders already know – that employees are happier when they are allowed latitude in their jobs and flexibility from their supervisors. Employees also appreciate companies that are more willing to take risks and be lenient in allowing their employees to learn from their mistakes. Most employees are more inclined to be creative, explore more solutions, and work harder when they have more freedom.

3. Avoiding work burnout. A common complaint of work burnout is not just about too many hours employees spent at work, but how they feel while they are on the job. If they feel are appreciated they do not mind spending more time and energy on a project or a task. Conversely, if people feel as though what they do does not matter, they resent time, especially extra time at work.

4. Getting rid of obstacles. Pfizer surveys their workers to find out if there are obstacles that get in the way of productivity and the resulting job satisfaction. The company does not wait for an exit interview to find problems, but acts proactively to analyze and assess their workers.

5. Resolving conflict. A happy workplace isn't necessarily free from conflict, but in productive companies, management works to constructively resolve conflict. Using differences to find new solutions is what imaginative companies do best.

6. Meaningful work. Cultivating an ambiance of mindfulness and meaning at work is an important factor in encouraging a happy workplace. According to research conducted by Stanford Graduate School of Business, there is a huge relation between happiness and meaning, and feeling as though our work contributes to a greater cause is extremely gratifying.

7. Being appreciated. Few people confess to feeling over appreciated at work. Globoforce, a software manufacturing company found that 80% of their employees said that being appropriately recognized makes them feel more satisfied with their job. A workplace is likely to be a much happier place when there are a policy and practices to make sure that people are regularly appreciated and acknowledged for the job they do. When employees feel that their happiness matters at their workplace, they tend to be more productive.

We spend a lot of our time at work, so let's work happy!

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