



POSITIVE WORKPLACE ALLIANCE

Feeling Good at Work Matters

David E. C. Huggins

For centuries, philosophers and social thinkers have postulated that the highest goal of human existence is to be happy. Many great thinkers have suggested that human happiness includes elements such as self respect, material well-being, good health, meaningful work and supportive families and communities.

Until recently, research on happiness and well-being has mainly been the bailiwick of psychologists and social scientists. Thanks to the pioneering work of researchers like Daniel Kahneman, professor of psychology and public affairs at Princeton University and winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize in economics, economists are becoming increasingly interested in the question of happiness and how it affects business performance. Kahneman says, *"Business is more about emotions than most business people care to admit"*.

Other research on happiness in the workplace suggests that worker well-being plays a major role in organizational performance. In a survey conducted by the American Psychological Association in 2004, nearly two-thirds of all respondents indicated that their work lives had a significant impact on their stress levels, while one-in-four had called in sick or taken a 'mental health day' as the result of stress at work. What's more, health care expenditures are nearly fifty percent greater for workers who report high stress levels, according to the "Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine".

Organizations that understand the connections between health and well-being and worker stress can help their employees manage stress and find balance in their work and personal lives. When they do, productivity and engagement improve.

The Gallup Organization has studied this issue in depth. Between 2000 and 2005, interviews were conducted with about 1000 employed adults aged eighteen years and older. The findings are written up in an informative article by Jerry Krueger and Emily Killham in their recent Journal (*GMJ*). The results are impressive and the numbers will stimulate action in all right thinking business leaders.

There is now substantial proof that positive emotions make good business sense. ... How can we use the information to our advantage?

What strategies will you use to make a positive difference in your organization?

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