

Happy people achieve better results

I had the pleasure this month of attending the IWLA Annual Meeting.

Shawn Achor, our keynote speaker on Day 1, gave a brilliant presentation on cultivating a positive workplace. Shawn's presentation revolved around his research finding that there is a direct correlation between individual happiness and organizational success. Happy people have an unfair advantage over unhappy people: better deploy their intelligence at work; higher energy, accuracy, productivity; more resilient, less burnout; lower turnover; higher sales.

Happiness is the precursor to success, as it elevates results. Shawn went on to cite several examples:

- ▶ Olympic bronze medalists are typically much happier than silver medalists, and often outperform silver medalists in following competitions. The silver medalist can get caught up in the narrow margin of defeat, dwelling on what she could have done differently to win the gold. Bronze medalists are grateful that they finished just ahead of the 4th place finisher, and got a medal.
- ▶ As CEOs become more and more successful, they tend to become jealous of peers who are more successful than they, instead of looking back and being grateful for all they accomplished in their recent successful run. This self-imposed stress is unhealthy, and often leads to poor decision making.
- ▶ Volkswagen commissioned a study to prove that the easiest way to change people's behavior for the better is by making it fun. They converted a staircase in a subway station to a "step on" piano to prove that they could compel people to take the stairs in favor of the escalator

by making the stairs more fun. See for yourself at www.thefuntheory.com.

Shawn went on to talk about the Tetris effect on the brain, and revealed that it is possible to introduce "gratitude training" to your organization to improve results. **Happiness is a work ethic—you have to work at it—and some have to work harder than others.** Some examples:

- ▶ Tax auditors who look for errors all day at work tend to go home and find fault with their spouse and children. Lawyers go home and continue to think in terms of incremental units of time.
- ▶ Pessimists are born this way, and will always be pessimists unless they work hard to overcome the trait. Gratitude can neutralize the pessimism. **By writing down 3 things for which you are grateful, every day for 21 consecutive days, a pessimist can become a moderate optimist.**
- ▶ If your brain looks for mistakes, errors, and inefficiencies first, you lose the creative thought process that can actually help you drive improvement in your operation. Set an Outlook alert every day at a set time to stop your work and write down 3 things for which you are grateful. **When you are conscious about being grateful, you become even more positive.**
- ▶ You are more successful and productive at work when you have a positive outlook. In one study maids who were told that their work was actually exercise lost significantly more weight than did the control group.
- ▶ Every day tell your spouse 3 things about him/her for which you are grateful, and you will find your spouse is more attractive in 6 months!

Shawn concluded his presentation with a list of additional **ideas for embarking on a more positive outlook:**

Journaling—stop and write how you feel, with details. As your brain starts to connect the dots about what makes your life more meaningful, you raise your charisma and become a more positive leader.

Eat healthier—put healthy food at eye-level and unhealthy snacks out of reach.

Morning Exercise—increases your IQ for the first 2 hours you are at work.

Email—keeping email up on your screen while doing unrelated work actually lowers your IQ 10 points.

Email—let Outlook prompt you daily to send a kind email to a coworker or family member; will give you more energy to deal with the rest of your Inbox.

Job Satisfaction—level in the U.S. is down not due to the number of hours worked, but due instead to the number of tasks we are balancing at one time. Performance increases when we focus on one task at a time.

Every year the IWLA delivers extraordinary educational content, and the 2010 Annual Meeting was one of the best of the 20+ (gulp!) I have attended. I am grateful for the leadership of Joel Anderson and the staff of IWLA for putting together a great program. I am grateful that I was able to take my family to San Diego for a memorable trip. **Most importantly, I am grateful for the terrific team of employees at Barrett Distribution Centers who work hard every day to support our customers.** 🙌

—Arthur Barrett, President

—Reprinted from The Barrett Bugle, May 2010