

The logo consists of the lowercase letters 'rh' in white, set against a dark red square background. The square is slightly tilted to the right.A close-up photograph of two hands holding a strip of yellow paper. The paper has two simple red smiley faces drawn on it. The background is a blurred office environment with people in the distance.

IT'S TIME WE ALL  
WORK HAPPY.™

The secrets of the happiest  
companies and employees.

The logo features the lowercase letters 'rh' in white on a dark red square, followed by the text 'Robert Half' in a black sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the right.

**rh** Robert Half®

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# HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE BETTER EMPLOYEES

## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, workplace happiness can't be viewed as abstract, touchy-feely or nice-to-have for employers. Rather, there's a powerful business case for making employee happiness one of your top organisational priorities.

At Robert Half, we have long understood this. We've made it our mission to assist professionals in finding careers where they can thrive while helping companies build happier, more productive teams. We've been making matches designed to foster job satisfaction and productivity for nearly 70 years, and we have consistently found that employee engagement and organisational success are closely connected.

"Most business leaders acknowledge that workplace happiness has a tangible impact on productivity and profitability," said Phil Sheridan, senior managing director at Robert Half. "Happy employees tend to be more engaged, loyal, creative and productive

than their less-satisfied counterparts. Creating a positive culture that engages employees, boosts satisfaction levels, enables companies to remain competitive and directly impacts the bottom line."

"Job design aligned with human motivation principles, clear and transparent communication, a sense of belonging and pride in the company and alignment between the organisational and personal vision, are all factors that combine to build a more cohesive and contented team," said Ilona Boniwell, CEO at Positran and head of the MSc in Applied Positive Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University.

However, this is just the beginning. To help your company build a happier team and derive the benefits of a more satisfied workforce, Robert Half partnered with [Happiness Works](#) to conduct a research study.

# EMPLOYEES SAID ...

**Thinking about the last few weeks, when were you happiest at work and why?**

- "At the end of [a] project when I felt a sense of achievement."
- "When I really enjoyed a challenge – doing something different and with a lot of people."
- "I presented a big report to a big group of people and received a lot of positive feedback."



Together, we [evaluated](#) the happiness levels of more than 24,000 working professionals across eight countries, including 2,000 from the United Kingdom, who agreed to talk with us about their on-the-job satisfaction. Respondents spanned all age groups, experience levels and industries. We also interviewed leading experts<sup>1</sup> about what businesses with the happiest employees have in common.

The findings, and our analysis of them, provide a detailed look at what really matters to employees, the link between happiness and performance, and the specific steps employers can take to increase employee satisfaction.

On a happiness scale of 0-100, employees scored 67, highlighting there is room for improvement.

In our research, some groups of workers fall below that mark. Employees at companies with 10,000 or more staff members, for example, scored just 62.5.

What can you do to increase employee happiness at your firm? This report outlines the steps you can take to create conditions at work that allow happiness and positivity to flourish.



1. Refer to [Page 33](#) for information about these experts.



## WHICH EMPLOYEES ARE THE HAPPIEST?

According to Laurence Vanhée, Chief Happiness Officer at Happyformance, "Happiness is more about behaviour than gadgets. It all starts with a Happy Formula: Freedom + Responsibility = Happiness + Performance" and these are the employees who've benefitted.




Some industries/occupations covered by the research are not included in this graphic.



## WHAT DRIVES HAPPINESS?

Happiness at work means different things to different groups of people. Here are the top three drivers of happiness for the various groups we surveyed.

RANK	# 1	# 2	# 3
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COUNTRY				
U.K.		<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.

GENDER				
<b>MEN</b>		<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>
<b>WOMEN</b>		<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.

AGE				
<b>18-34</b>		<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	A sense of <b>ACCOMPLISHMENT.</b>
<b>35-54</b>		<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	A sense of <b>ACCOMPLISHMENT.</b>
<b>55+</b>		Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	Good <b>TEAM MANAGEMENT.</b>

Based on research with more than 2,000 randomly selected United Kingdom adults who are currently employed on a full or part-time basis.



## WHAT DRIVES HAPPINESS?

Rankings by profession

### RANK

### # 1

### # 2

### # 3

PROFESSION			
<b>ACCOUNTING</b>	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.
<b>FINANCE</b>	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	A sense of <b>ACCOMPLISHMENT</b> from their work.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>
<b>FINANCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b>	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.
<b>TECHNOLOGY</b>	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	A sense of <b>ACCOMPLISHMENT</b> from their work.
<b>LEGAL</b>	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.
<b>MARKETING AND CREATIVE</b>	<b>FEELING APPRECIATED</b> for the work they do.	Being treated with <b>FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.</b>	<b>PRIDE</b> in their organisation.

Based on research of more than 25,000 randomly selected adults from USA, Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia, France, the UK and Germany who are currently employed on a full or part-time basis. Some industries/occupations covered by the research are not included in this chart.



## SENIOR LEADERS LEAD THE PACK

Senior executives rank highest in happiness and interest in their jobs. They also experience higher than average levels of stress.

RANK	LEVEL OF HAPPINESS	LEVEL OF INTEREST IN WORK	LOWEST STRESS LEVELS
1	<b>SENIOR</b> Executives	<b>SENIOR</b> Executives	<b>SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</b> Workers
2	<b>STAFF-LEVEL</b> Professionals	<b>STAFF-LEVEL</b> Professionals	<b>SENIOR</b> Executives
3	<b>MANAGERS</b>	<b>MANAGERS</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b> and Secretarial Clerks
4	<b>SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</b> Workers	<b>SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE</b> Workers	<b>STAFF-LEVEL</b> Professionals
5	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b> and Secretarial Clerks	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b> and Secretarial Clerks	<b>MANAGERS</b>

Based on research with more than 2,000 randomly selected United Kingdom adults who are currently employed on a full or part-time basis.





## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Marketing and creative professionals report the highest levels of on-the-job happiness and interest in the work they do. Those in the technology field feel the least amount of work-related stress.

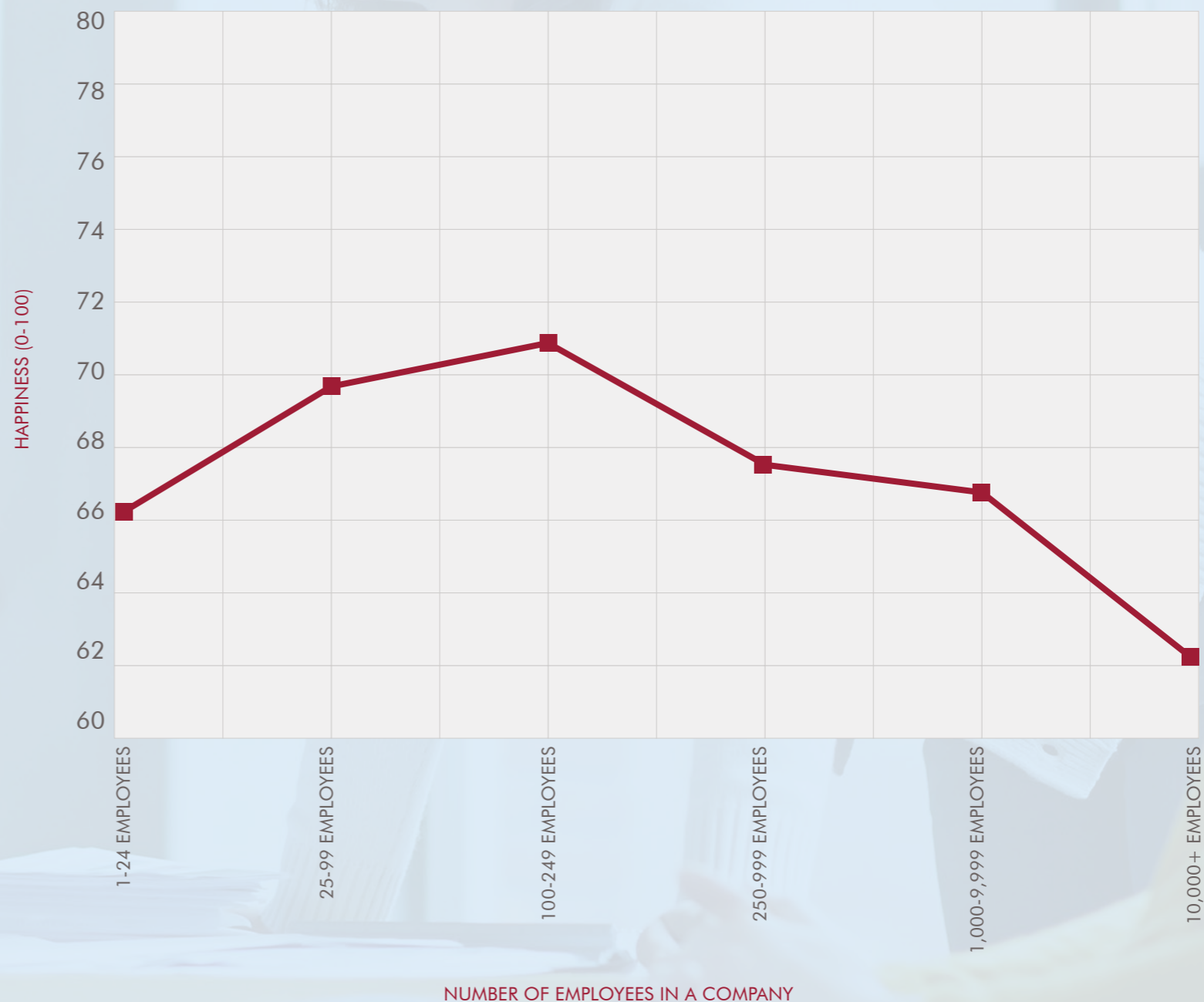
RANK	LEVEL OF HAPPINESS	LEVEL OF INTEREST IN WORK	LOWEST STRESS LEVELS
1	<b>MARKETING and CREATIVE</b>	<b>MARKETING and CREATIVE</b>	<b>TECHNOLOGY / IT</b>
2	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE and CLERICAL</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE and CLERICAL</b>	<b>FINANCE and FINANCIAL SERVICES</b>
3	<b>TECHNOLOGY / IT</b>	<b>TECHNOLOGY / IT</b>	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE and CLERICAL</b>
4	<b>ACCOUNTING</b>	<b>ACCOUNTING</b>	<b>MARKETING and CREATIVE</b>
5	<b>FINANCE and FINANCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>FINANCE and FINANCIAL SERVICES</b>	<b>ACCOUNTING</b>
6	<b>LEGAL</b>	<b>LEGAL</b>	<b>LEGAL</b>

Based on research with more than 2,000 randomly selected United Kingdom adults who are currently employed on a full or part-time basis. Some industries/occupations covered by our research are not included in this graphic.



## SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The happiest employees work at companies with 100-249 employees, with those respondents scoring 70.7 on a happiness scale of 0-100. The least happy workers are at organisations with 10,000 or more employees, where workers scored just 62.5.

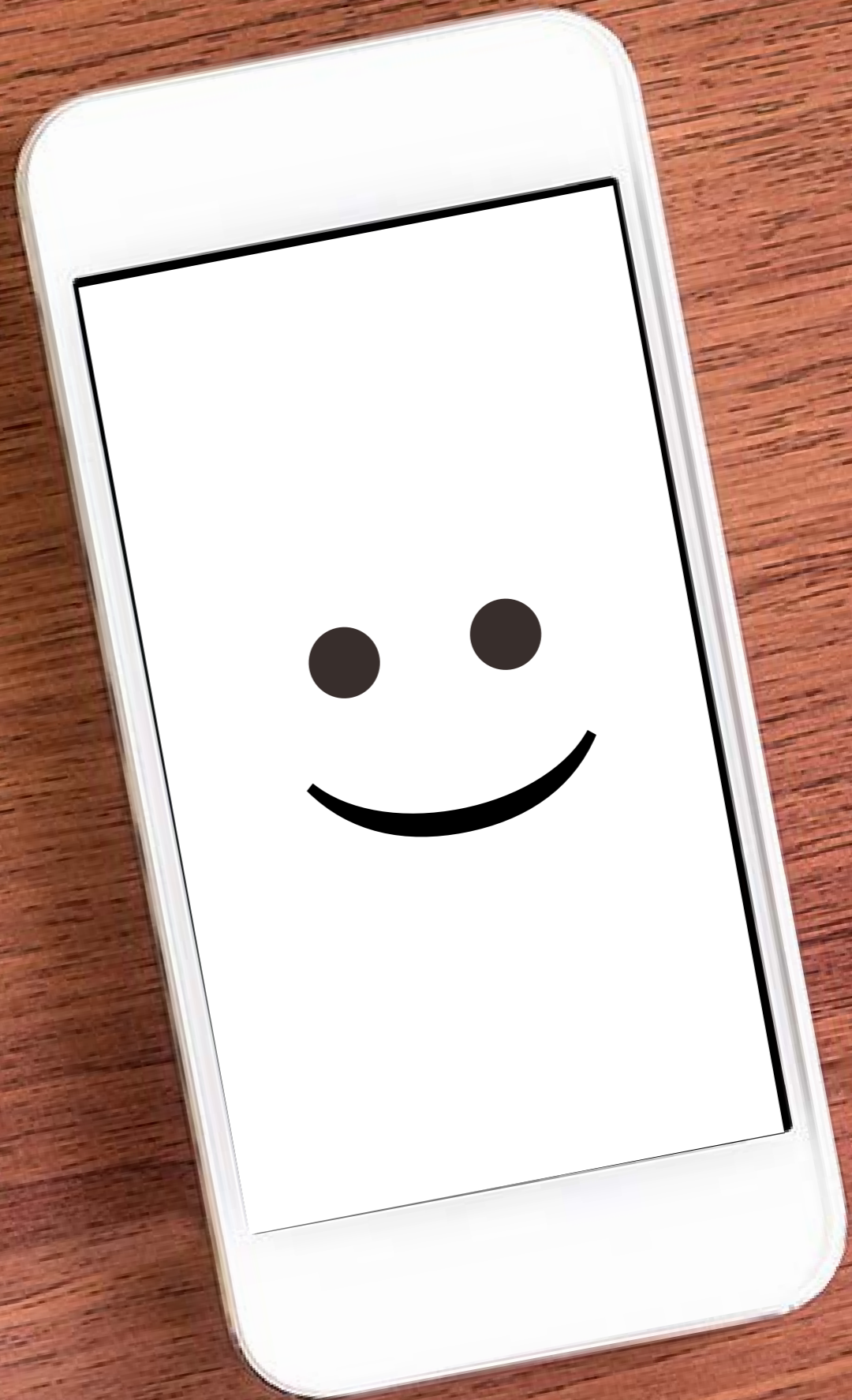


Based on research with more than 2,000 randomly selected United Kingdom adults who are currently employed on a full or part-time basis.

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# HAPPINESS DEFINED

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## HAPPINESS DEFINED

Getting to the root of what happiness means is essential to promoting it among your workforce. But what exactly is happiness?

“Happiness is shorthand for a great experience,” said Nic Marks, one of the world’s leading happiness experts and CEO and founder of Happiness Works. “It’s an emotional word we use to summarise the quality of experiences in our everyday work — essentially, whether we are feeling good and doing well.”

Dr. Christine Carter, author of *The sweet spot: how to find your groove at home and work*, added that people often conflate happiness with enjoyable-but-fleeting moments of gratification. Happiness at work, however, involves so much more than that.

“When we are talking about happiness — and why happy workers are more productive, engaged and better for your bottom line — we’re using happiness as an umbrella term for something much larger,” explained Carter, senior fellow at the Greater Good Science Centre at the University of California, Berkeley.

Boniwell explained that when you feel valued, you will feel and make a host of positive contributions, beyond expectations, in the short and the long term. “You’ll feel more motivated and energised, help others more, set more challenging goals and want to stay in your job longer.”

“Managers who provide frequent recognition and encouragement have significantly higher project performance from their team. By providing recognition, managers satisfy two human needs – for competence (signalling that someone is doing well) and connection (there is a fellow human being taking an interest in you).”

For his part, Marks boils happiness at work down to three core positive emotions:

- **Enthusiasm** — Enthusiasm is an intense state that helps people create and seize opportunities. It’s a way to mobilise our efforts, as well as other people’s.
- **Interest** — Interest can be understood as a focusing energy. It helps us commit to tasks that are perhaps challenging in the short term but have medium-term or long-term benefits.

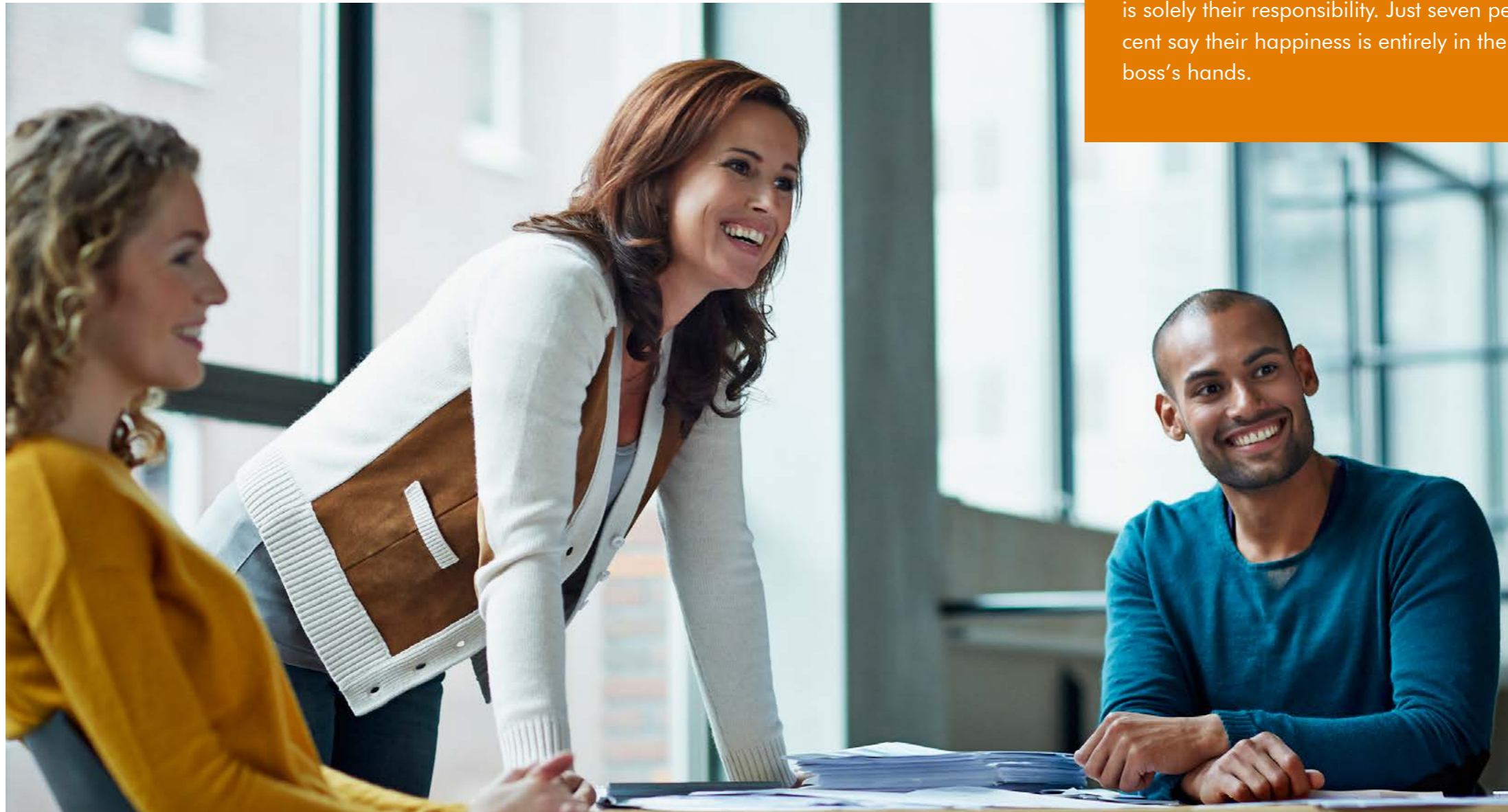
- **Contentment** — Contentment is a reflective, lower-energy emotion. Think of the satisfaction of having achieved something. Contentment helps us reflect on what went well and how the same type of success can be replicated.

Happiness doesn't mean feeling great every moment of the day. We're all aware of how our feelings can fluctuate over the course of the workweek or workday. An employee who's frustrated by the lack of progress on a current project can still be extremely happy on the job as long as that feeling of dissatisfaction is relatively short-lived.

Happiness, then, is more than a mood. It's a deep feeling of satisfaction and meaning generated by doing a good job, helping a colleague, receiving recognition for your work and other similar everyday actions.

## A TEAM EFFORT

Employees realise that it requires a shared responsibility to job satisfaction and their efforts play a key role. Only one in seven employees said their happiness at work is solely their responsibility. Just seven per cent say their happiness is entirely in the boss's hands.



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# THE BENEFITS OF HAVING HAPPY EMPLOYEES

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## THE BENEFITS OF HAVING HAPPY EMPLOYEES

Companies do not need to make the choice between a happy, satisfied workforce and a profitable company. In fact, they can have both. Happy employees are an essential component of any thriving business.

How does focusing on employee happiness help your company? Read on.

**HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE MORE RESILIENT AND LOYAL**  
Happy employees stay for the long term. Reduced turnover means you retain more institutional knowledge and spend less time and money on hiring and training. As Marks pointed out: "Why would someone search for another job when they enjoy the one they have?"

Moreover, we've found time and again that happy employees are the most vocal and most persuasive advocates for their organisations. Beyond spreading optimism and goodwill within the company, happy employees create a good impression externally and deliver better client service. These enthusiastic endorsements enhance your firm's reputation and can bolster recruitment efforts.



Learn how happy employees can benefit your firm's bottom line.



Learn how to connect the dots between the happiness and health of your workers.

### HAPPY EMPLOYEES DO BETTER WORK

Many studies show that happiness positively impacts the quality and quantity of work at both the individual and team level.

For instance:

- Research from the University of Warwick found that happy employees are up to 12 per cent more productive.<sup>1</sup>
- According to Towers Watson's Global Benefits Attitudes survey, employees who claimed to be experiencing high stress levels, over half (57%) reported to be disengaged.<sup>2</sup>
- Gallup has found that engaged employees are 21 per cent more productive than their non-engaged counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

Marks explained: "Happier people tend to care more about their work, so they put in greater effort. This also means they are quicker to notice when things are not going right and take action to prevent negative outcomes."

Also, happier employees tend to be more innovative and creative. Boniwell added that "positive relationships within a workplace generate enrichment, vitality and learning for indi-

viduals and organisations" and, therefore, positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and interest. This helps to broaden thinking, awareness, and the tendency to explore novel pathways and approaches. Beyond this, "positive interactions have also been shown to cultivate higher levels of mutual benefits, foster healthy team functioning, raise levels of commitment to the organisation, create higher levels of energy, support cost reduction, time saving and project performance."

### HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE HEALTHIER

In contrast, stress is a drain not only on the immune system but also your organisation. Employees who are burned out or chronically frustrated are more prone to illness and absenteeism.

On the other hand, engaged employees also experience fewer chronic health problems, eat a healthier diet and exercise more frequently than their less-engaged counterparts, according to Gallup.<sup>4</sup> As a result, they miss less work due to sickness — and recover faster when they do fall ill."

1. University of Warwick, "Happiness and Productivity," 2014
2. Willis Towers Watson, "Global Benefits Attitudes Survey," 2014
3. Gallup, "State of the Global Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for Business Leaders Worldwide," 2013.
4. Ibid.



## THE SCIENCE OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Stress and burnout can inhibit performance at work, while happiness can boost it.

But why is that?

Dr. Christine Carter said that employees who experience a lot of positive emotions have critical resources that unhappy workers don't. "You have greater access to the parts of the brain that you need to innovate, to be creative and to be more empathetic. And you're going to function much better in a team environment because your social intelligence will go way, way up."

She continued, "managers need to realise that if they want their direct reports to fulfill their potential, it won't be possible if they are stressed. And the way to reverse a stress response is to help induce positive emotions."



## THE HAPPINESS TRAJECTORY

Sadly, happiness and interest at work decline with age, while stress increases. The good news is that some of this loss is reversed once workers reach about 55 years old. Workers above that age are happier and more interested than those aged between 35 and 54.

## EMPLOYEES SAID ...

**Looking back, when was the happiest point in your career and why?**

- "When I felt appreciated and was doing lots of varied work."
- "Over 20 years ago working in a job that I truly loved and with a fantastic manager that I'm still in contact with."



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# SIX FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS

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It's clear that happiness is an individual experience. No two employees have the same needs, goals, preferences and personalities. There are, however, some universal factors that directly affect employee happiness. Understanding those factors and adapting your leadership approach to address them won't just increase employee engagement, it will also boost the quality of your team's work and significantly aid your recruitment and retention efforts.

Review six key ingredients to job satisfaction below.

## RIGHT FIT FOR THE JOB AND COMPANY

Creating conditions for employee happiness begins before you even bring someone on board. When you hire people who mesh well with your workplace culture, they acclimatise with greater ease and begin making substantive contributions quickly.

On the other hand, a poor fit can dampen the morale of the entire team. And when you look for a replacement and still don't get the [right fit](#), you'll have the same problem all over again.

### LETTING THEM KNOW WHAT THEY'RE IN FOR

A good fit entails both skills and temperament. Painting an accurate picture of the role and the organisational culture when hiring is a safeguard that can help you avoid skills alignment issues. When you set expectations by clearly communicating to prospective candidates what an open position entails, you greatly reduce the risk that they end up feeling surprised, unchallenged or disappointed once on the job.

"Practicing diligence in each step of the hiring process — from crafting detailed job postings

to conducting in-depth interviews, skills-testing candidates, thoroughly checking references and giving them an opportunity to meet different people within the firm. This process sets the stage for both employee and employer happiness," said Phil Sheridan.

### THE SOFTER SIDE OF HIRING

Judging a person's experience is key to ensuring your new hire will be engaged in the work and likely to stay over the long-term. According to the Robert Half and Happiness Works research, those who feel that their skills and experience are not well matched to their current job, are most likely to leave.

Explain why, based on the employee's skills and experience, you choose them to join your team and provide clarity on how they will be contributing to the overall success of the company. Organisations also need to consider how they can continue developing an employee's skills over time.

Boniwell added "Enhancing variety and challenge have been shown to make a real difference to happiness and engagement in the long term.

Every 18 months or so, Facebook engineers rotate and work on something different. This requirement constantly brings new perspectives and experience to the teams and ignites new ideas." The benefits of autonomy are also undeniable, "the more control you have over your situation, the better your overall well-being and energy will be." Also, what about the fun factor? Businesses must remember "fun is not fun when it is repetitive and non-creative". These are all factors of job design that have been shown to make a real difference to happiness and engagement.

### FINE-TUNING FIT

As important as it is to hire people who are a good fit with your workplace to begin with, ensuring they remain compatible is just as key. Think of it as "re-recruiting" your employees.

"Career goals are not static," Sheridan said. "Support employees career progression by regularly checking-in to talk about the evolution of their objectives and potential avenues to help them get there. By providing constructive feedback and showing an interest, employees will be happier, more productive and far more appreciated."

Periodically step back to think about fit across your team. Have discussions with your direct reports about their connection to the company. Do they still feel challenged in the role? What do they enjoy most about their job? Do they feel their skills are being fully utilised?

Realise that re-recruiting your employees does not have to be a solo endeavour. Make use of your more tenured staff by ensuring they don't feel their learning decreases as time goes on and recognise that their skills more closely match the requirements of the position as time goes on.

## ONE BAD APPLE CAN SPOIL THE BUNCH

Adding to your team? It pays to be highly involved in the hiring process because nobody understands the job or the people the new employee will work with better than you do.

In terms of evaluating fit, devote particular attention to [interpersonal abilities](#) during the interview process.

A candidate who seems perfect on paper won't add to the happiness of your workplace if his or her soft skills are lacking. Attitudes are contagious, and one bad apple can indeed spoil your happy bunch.

"We've all had experiences with toxic employees," Marks says. "If someone is brilliant, but they're going to irritate the people around them, they are likely to cost you more than they add."





2.

## A SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowering your staff to make decisions on their own, or with minimal direction from you, improves employee happiness in multiple ways:

- Empowerment helps staff develop critical skills they can use to advance their careers and make greater, more meaningful contributions to the company.
- Letting go of the reins also helps team members build confidence as they realise they are able to make the right decisions.
- Empowered employees feel more comfortable questioning the status quo and suggesting new ideas. Large organisational changes or disruptions, like a staff restructuring, are less likely to knock these workers down.

Unfortunately, many companies miss out on these benefits.

According to our research, a sizable number of workers feel unable to influence important decisions in their jobs. In fact, 55 per cent of respondents say they wield little or no control over their work; 58 per cent feel they have few opportunities to be creative.

Influence, which comes with empowerment, does increase the longer people are on the job. However, in our research, it was lowest among professionals who had been on the job for a year or less and generally increased as workers gained tenure, decreasing again after 10 years in a job.

To keep new hires and less-tenured staff from becoming disengaged and dispirited, make a point of seeking their input and feedback regularly. Beyond making these employees feel valued, your efforts will likely lead to new perspectives and fresh solutions.

### OFFER SUPPORT, NOT MICROMANAGEMENT

Considering the weight of their responsibilities, some leaders feel compelled to keep a controlling hand on projects big and small. But doing so comes at a cost. It robs employees of the chance to grow, and it keeps managers from focusing on bigger-picture business objectives. Our research shows that people who feel free at work are 2.7 times more likely to be happy than those who don't.

Vanhée said that happiness can be determined by levels of freedom. "Giving freedom to organise one's job in terms of time, place, role and tools is a good start towards workplace empowerment."

Robert Half's Sheridan said that empowerment also requires balance. "Create a culture where team members are encouraged to stretch their problem-solving skills by taking smart, strategic risks and provide them with the opportunity to contribute new creative ideas," Sheridan says. "But also make it known that you are available to offer support and guidance so that they don't find themselves floundering alone."

Marks notes that a sense of autonomy and freedom is a fundamental need for people. "Feeling that we can make our own decisions is a critical part of being human. Respect that employees are going to have their own way of doing things and be willing to offer praise when they come up with something you never thought of."

### TAKE A SMART RISK BY REWARDING SMART RISKS

"Some managers pay lip service to the idea of creative risk-taking, but quickly pull an employee back in line whenever the person actually takes a chance," said author Todd Henry, who

speaks frequently about productivity, creativity, and passion for work and leadership. "If your words and actions are not aligned, it creates dissonance and dissatisfaction. Instead, reward what you say you want. When someone strategically tries something that doesn't work, capture what was learned through the failure and celebrate the risk."

One mistake managers make is not allowing everyone on the team to flex his or her creative muscles. Seventy-six per cent of the marketing and creative professionals we surveyed say they are frequently able to be creative on the job. But they're the ex-

ception. Only 35 per cent of administrative workers and 34 per cent of accounting professionals agree.

When brainstorming new ideas and approaches, include your entire workforce, not just those on the creative side of the house. Innovative ideas can come from anyone in any department.

## ISSUES WITH INFLUENCE

Influence is one area where employees across many groups feel unsatisfied. Consider the following:

- Only 40 per cent of women say they exert influence on the job, compared to nearly half of men who say the same.
- Workers 55 and up also struggle in this area, with just 34 per cent saying they are able to influence important decisions.





3.

## FEELING APPRECIATED

It doesn't have to break the bank to instill loyalty, establish a positive working environment and generally make your employees happier. Simply show your staff that you appreciate their hard work and dedication. Offering a sincere thank you for a job well done has much greater motivational impact than many people realise.

"Fostering positive emotions through gratitude is easy and powerful," Carter said. "The science on this is blazingly clear. There are loads of research studies that show how much higher functioning people are when they feel appreciated by their teams and their manager."

### THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRAISE

When it comes to offering appreciation, sincerity, specificity and timeliness make all the difference. Attempts at recognising employees can backfire if the praise is vague ("you're such a hard worker") or delivered late ("nice work the other day").

"People have an intrinsic need for recognition for their efforts, competences and accomplishments," said Vanhée. "Signs of recognition – coming from managers, but also colleagues, peers or customers – nourish motivation and self-esteem."

Be careful not to overdo it, though. Praise that is delivered in response to even the smallest achievements quickly loses its impact.

Also, remember that your entire team needs to hear from you frequently. The tendency is often to focus feedback on less-experienced workers who may still be learning the ins-and-outs of the job and workplace. Fifty-three per cent of workers between the ages of 18 and 34 say they receive constructive feedback often; just 42 per cent of those aged 35 or above agree.

### MANAGERS' MOODS ARE CONTAGIOUS

Marks said it's important for leaders to remind themselves regularly of the pivotal role they play in how their employees feel. "If your manager says one bad thing to you, it can dampen your motivation for days, even weeks," he said. "Similarly, when a manager says something great to you, it can expand your positive feelings and make you feel good about yourself for quite a while."

"We're so quick to point out problems, but we need to share when things are going well," Marks continued. "Managers should aim to catch employees doing something right rather than wrong. These positive micro-moments are very important and salient. Believe it or not, a bonus is nice, but a kind word can go even further with employees."

# DANIEL PINK ON THE HALLMARKS OF HAPPINESS

Author Daniel Pink knows a thing or two about how to bring out the best in ourselves — and others. We asked him to weigh in on the commonalities of happy workers, the dangers of micromanagement and what managers can do today to elevate their team’s happiness.

**Are there any common factors you see in the people you meet who are happiest in their jobs?**

Daniel Pink: It varies from person to person, but the list includes:

- Having some control over the work you do, when you do it, how you do it and who you do it with.
- Having great colleagues who you both like and trust.
- Feeling like what you’re doing makes a difference in the world.
- Being able to make progress on meaningful work.

**Why are autonomy and self-direction so intertwined with happiness and job satisfaction for so many people?**

DP: One way to think about this is to consider the opposite. The opposite of self-direction is control. Human beings have only two reactions to control. We comply, or we defy. Compliant behaviour doesn’t lead to satisfaction; neither does defiant behaviour. The only way humans engage is by having some — not necessarily total, but some — sovereignty over their work.

**What is an easy step a manager could take to help his or her employees feel happier?**

DP: I can’t resist giving more than one suggestion



because the particular technique depends on the person, the situation and the goals. So, here are three:

- Have very short (maybe five-minute) weekly one-to-one meetings with each team member to ask these questions: are you making progress in your work? And, if not, what can I do to help?
- Encourage all employees to collaborate once a week. Have everyone spend one hour, unencumbered from their regular duties, thinking about something new the organisation could be doing, something stupid it should stop doing, a process that needs improvement or simply a better way to run the place.
- This week, have two fewer conversations with your team about how to do a particular task — and two more about why they’re doing the task in the first place.



Find out how you can create a culture of happiness at work.

## AN HONEST THANKS GOES A LONG WAY

Feeling appreciated is one of the top drivers of happiness in the UK, alongside pride and being treated with fairness and respect. Feeling appreciated is particularly important to younger employees and it is the strongest determinant of happiness for workers aged under 35.





4.

## INTERESTING AND MEANINGFUL WORK

For the vast majority of people, work isn't just about pay. As Confucius once said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life."

Employees who say the work they do is worthwhile are 3.2 times more likely to be happy than those who feel the job they do is "just work."

"We are a people driven business and regularly remind our employees that, through our recruiting and placement efforts, we are changing people's lives for the better by helping them find employment," Sheridan said. "Through this vision, we instill a sense of purpose in our employees and ensure that everyone contributes in some way."

### SHARE THE VISION

"Happiness in the workplace is further entrenched with a 'flat organisational structure and employee participation in decision-making," said Boniwell. "Such involvement lowers feelings of unfairness and boosts engagement as teams work towards a shared goal."

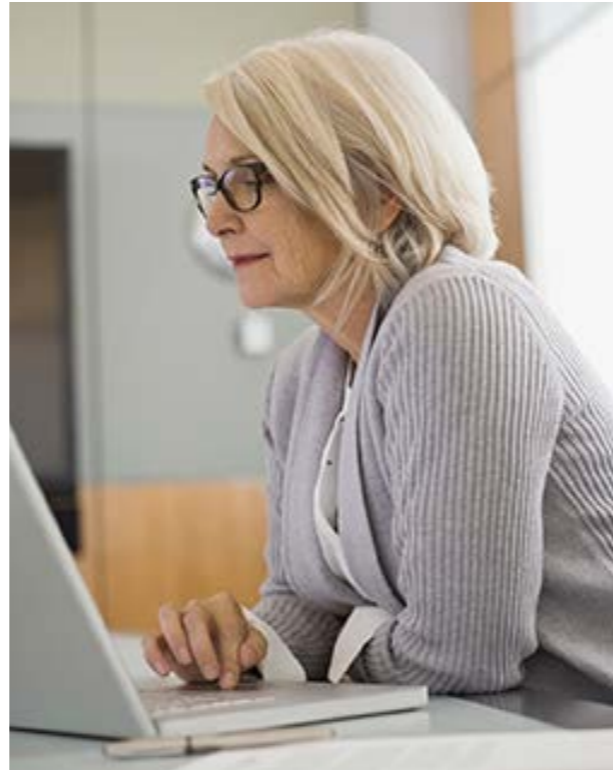
According to the research Robert Half conducted with Happiness Works, a sense of pride and accomplishment are among the strongest drivers of happiness.

Workers at the largest organisations, those with 1,000 or more employees, feel the lowest sense of accomplishment. That's not necessarily surprising. It can be difficult to ensure the company's vision — and the role employees play in achieving it — reaches each and every person in a large company. For managers, this is a reminder that they can't assume workers have this information. Communication through multiple channels is the key.

## LET HAPPINESS FLOW

Flow is the feeling of intense focus and happiness you experience when you are fully absorbed in something. When in a state of flow, a term coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, time seems to fade away as you become completely immersed in using your skills to complete a project or solve a problem. You're in the zone.

Dr. Christine Carter of the Greater Good Science Centre said managers should make a concerted effort to provide employees the opportunity to do uninterrupted in-depth work. "There is a really deep sense of fulfilment and meaning that comes when we can dig into a project and do our best work," she said. "And most workplaces make it very hard for that to happen now. The expectation is that employees will be available all the time by phone, email, IM or when someone stops by their desk. Most people's brains today don't trust that they're going to be allowed to focus. So reset the expectation that people can do deep focus work."



## A MATTER OF PRIDE

Pride in one's organisation and being treated with fairness and respect are the strongest drivers of happiness for employees in the UK. In short, feeling good about the company you work for is a big deal to employees.

What's more, workers who feel proud of their organisations are nearly three times more likely to be happy at work compared to those who don't.

## EMPLOYEES SAID ...

**If you could change anything about your workplace, what would it be?**

- "A more of a firm but fair approach."
- "Better communication with management."





# 5.

## A SENSE OF FAIRNESS

Fairness matters deeply to employees. So deeply, in fact, that a single instance of unfair treatment — whether actual or perceived — is often enough to turn a happy, satisfied employee into one who is cynical and sceptical of the company.

It's worth noting that fairness and respect are together the second major drivers of happiness and the strongest for those aged 55+, according to the Robert Half and Happiness Works research.

### WHAT IT MEANS TO PLAY FAIR

What can managers do to improve fairness in the workplace? Several simple steps can have a meaningful impact.

- First, strive to be transparent in your decision making. Be sure policies around pay, promotions and projects are clear. Every member of your team should know what they must do to earn a new title or a higher salary.
- Give employees a chance to alert you when they feel a sense of inequality. Often, employees just want to be heard and know that their concerns are being taken into account. Cut an employee off mid-sentence, and he or she may wonder why you let others express their opinions uninterrupted. Forget to invite a member of your team to an important meeting, and that person may feel his or her ideas matter less than those of others in the group. Keep in mind that, when it comes to fairness, even the smallest infraction can be seen as a sign that favouritism is at play.

Boniwell added, "what can help is to ensure that performance indicators and their relationship with pay are clear, comprehensible and communicated."

### WHERE FAIRNESS MATTERS MOST

A sense of fairness is crucial when it comes to remuneration. It is important for employees to feel that their pay is equitable compared to others performing a similar role.

This is why it's so essential for employers to offer remuneration that is better than or at least on par with that of companies in their region and industry. "Professionals with the right combination of skills and personality are in short supply, while demand keeps rising. So employers must get into the habit of regularly benchmarking salaries to ensure that they're offering competitive pay and benefits," Sheridan said. "Knowing the market rate is vital to recruiting and [retaining top talent](#), particularly in a candidate-driven market where attractive remuneration packages help keep employees happier and more interested in their jobs."

How can you find out if your salary ranges are keeping pace? Review industry [salary guides](#), connect with recruitment consultants specialising in your industry, and communicate with your employees to see if they are happy with the salary and benefits you provide.

## THE BENEFITS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE



Striking an equitable balance between professional and personal responsibilities is a common struggle. Many employees are trying to keep up with hefty workloads while also managing pressing personal issues. It's a challenging juggling act that can leave staff feeling sapped and stressed.

Managers should encourage workers to take advantage of work-life balance options when available and especially during slow periods.

Offering empathy and support goes a long way as well. "If you respect that employees have a life outside of the job, they will respect you much more and become more loyal," Marks said. "If people have bad work-life balance, they might still love their work. But if it's causing them problems at home, they will get jaded over time, they will tire and they will leave you. Supporting work-life balance is about managing risk for the organisation, as well as just being the right thing to do."

It's also important to lead by example. Your employees take their cues from their leaders. So show them it's OK to have [a healthy work-life balance](#). Try to leave the office at a decent hour and avoid the temptation to keep answering emails late into the night.

Take your annual leave, and unplug while you're on holiday. Don't come to work when you're sick. If you set appropriate boundaries and protect your downtime, your employees will follow your lead.

## RESPECT THE NEED TO FEEL RESPECTED

Feeling treated with fairness and respect at work is one of the top three ingredients for happiness.

Nearly one in five (21 per cent) of UK workers who say they are treated with little or no respect admit they are likely to leave their jobs in the next year.

6.



## POSITIVE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

Employees across the board say they have good team relationships at work, none of the recipients reported significant dissatisfaction in this area.

This is good news for employers: those who say they have good relationships with others on their team are 2.7 times more likely to be happy on the job than those who do not get along well with colleagues.

### THE GLUE OF AN ORGANISATION

Maintaining healthy, supportive workplace relationships is an important source of enjoyment for employees. It also helps them to better manage stress and the demands of the job.

“Good relationships are the glue of an organisation,” Marks said. “For managers, it’s all about encouraging relationships for reasons beyond narrow business needs. When employees have friends at work, it has a broad impact on happiness.”

Managers can promote a positive workplace culture by creating opportunities for employees to forge and strengthen bonds with colleagues. Think across teams as well. In today’s workplace, your staff will likely have to work with colleagues in many other departments.

### DON’T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR INFLUENCE

Boniwell said emotional agility is imperative to a workplace. “Emotions are a driving force... they activate necessary behavioural responses, tune our decision making, enhance memory for important events and facilitate interpersonal interactions.”

She added a cautionary note that “emotions, left unchecked, also have the ability to overwhelm, dent confidence in decision making and negatively affect the overall dynamics of a team.”



See how good working relationships lead to higher levels of workplace happiness, innovation and collaboration.

## GO TEAM!

According to the research by Robert Half and Happiness Works:

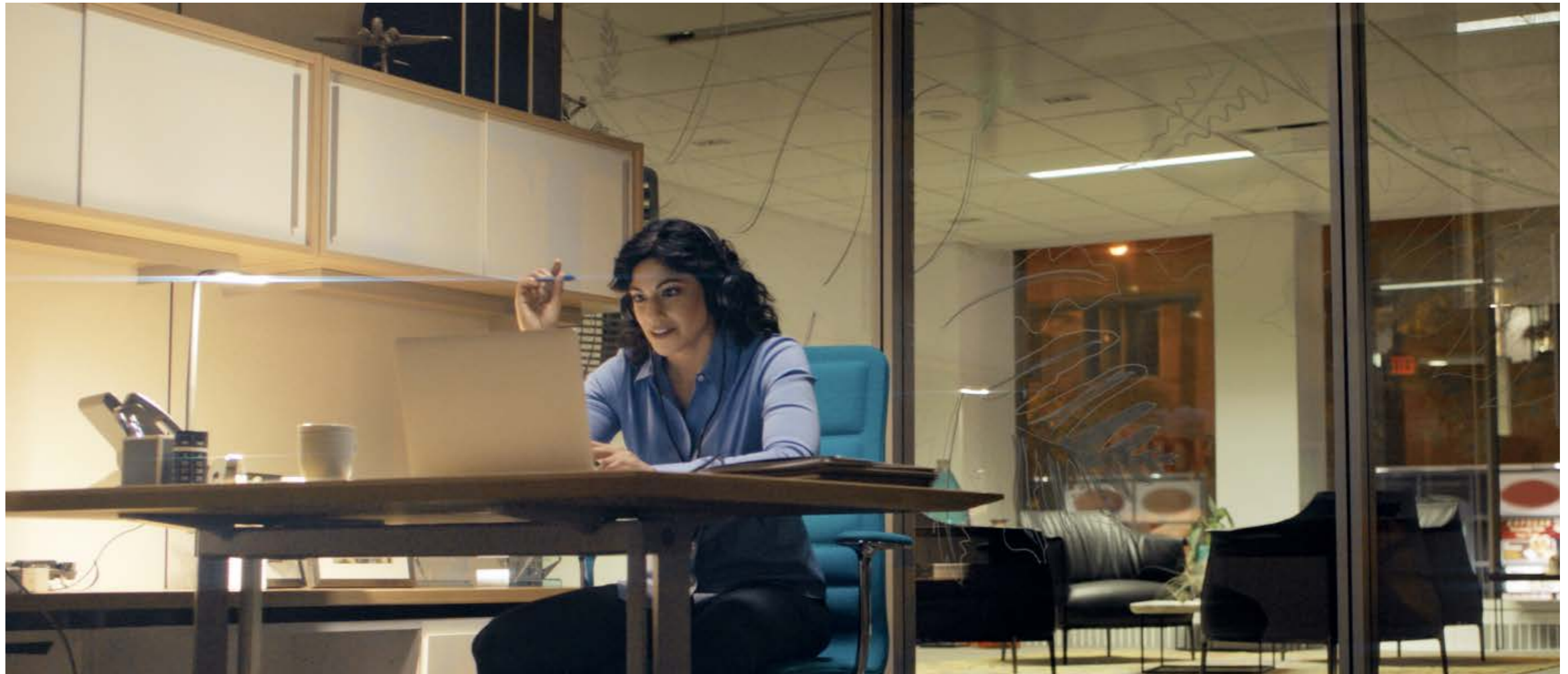
- 81%: Get along with people on their immediate team
- 68%: Feel that teams within their organisation generally work well together
- 62%: Have good friends at work

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# THE BOTTOM LINE

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## THE BOTTOM LINE

Is employee happiness pivotal to organisational success? Yes.

Is there a one-size-fits-all approach to fuelling happiness at work? No, as there are simply too many factors that influence each person's happiness for such a guarantee.

But understanding the significant role that satisfaction and engagement levels play in your company's success — and being willing to alter your approach to increase them — is a great start. Your efforts will have an effect. And you're likely to see benefits across several fronts, including productivity, recruitment and retention.

The bottom line is this: workplace happiness truly matters to your employees and to the long-term health of your organisation. And, most importantly, you have the power to directly influence it.

*Good luck on your journey.*



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Robert Half would like to recognise and thank the following people for their contributions to this report. Your expertise, insights and opinions have been invaluable.

We owe special thanks to Nic Marks, Saamah Abdallah and the entire team at Happiness Works. Nic is one of the world's foremost experts on workplace happiness and was instrumental in guiding Robert Half's research into this area. We've long known the importance that satisfaction and engagement play in the success of people's careers and companies' fortunes. Nic and Saamah helped us quantify this effect and delve into the unique factors that influence happiness among various groups of workers.

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# ABOUT ROBERT HALF

Founded in 1948, Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised recruitment firm. We believe working happy is the only way to work. We've made it our mission to help people find fulfilling jobs and companies build happy, productive teams.

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# ABOUT HAPPINESS WORKS

## ABOUT HAPPINESS WORKS

[Happiness Works](#) provides powerful measurement tools that enable performance-driven organisations to identify, measure and manage employee happiness. The team at Happiness Works is made up of passionate people who believe employee experience data is crucial to effective business decision making.

Organisations that consider employee happiness as a fundamental performance objective consistently unlock greater innovation and long-term financial success. Founded by Nic Marks, the creator of The Happy Planet Index, the world's first measure of sustainable well-being, Happiness Works is based in London and has a growing global portfolio of forward-thinking clients.



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## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Data referenced throughout the secrets of the happiest companies and employees is based on the results of an online survey of more than 2,000 workers in the United Kingdom conducted in the third quarter of 2016 by an independent research firm. Respondents were asked 30 questions about how happy they feel at work and what they attribute those feelings to. To allow comparisons among professional fields, our sampling placed an emphasis on workers employed in professional

settings. Some industries and roles covered by the research are not included in this report.

In analysing the data, a post-sample weighting methodology was used to match respondents by age, gender, education level, occupation/role and job sector.



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