



# The Pursuit of Happiness

Nitya Krishna

Associate Professor, SIMS, Pune

## *Our Life is how we spend our time.....*

*At any hour of the day or night, when I am with myself completely,  
in perfect consonance of my body and mind, when I question to myself,  
Am I happy.....a series of defensive statements, counter questions, and doubts surround me  
and I find myself disillusioned.....  
I say to myself, Yes I think so, for see, I work so hard, I am always busy doing something or other,  
I use my time so wisely for I know my destination and the journey,  
I am proving it all the time.....  
Yes, someday for sure, I'll reach the helm that I have always dreamt of  
and then is when I'll truly be happy.....  
There are times in my day when I often feel so.....*

## An Ode to myself - Nitya Krishna

The pursuit of Happiness continues to be an exciting, and challenging task for any individual, at any point of time, at any place on this earth, in whatever form; it prevails. It doesn't stop when we leave our homes for our workplaces, it comes along with us dominating our minds, living within us, it transcends from the self to the collective as we find ourselves with people, amongst them. It impacts us greatly and to an even greater extent to the Organization in what we do both individually and collectively.

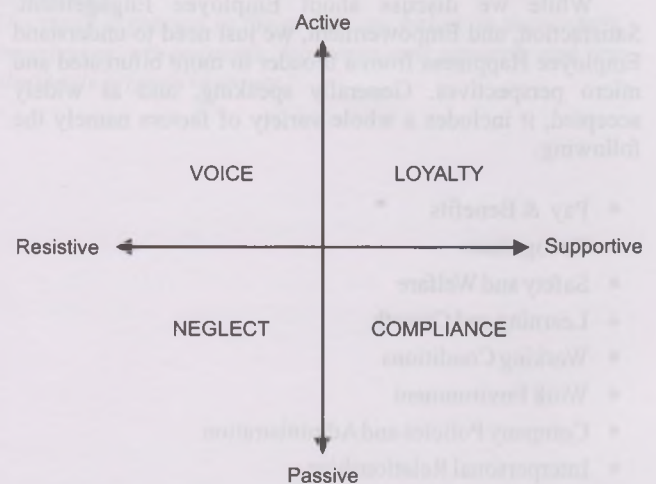
To a due realization now, Management Consultants, employment advisors, behavioural scientists, psychologists and researchers have been reckoning this time and again. In fact, over the last century, there has been a visible transition in the approach towards employees which is driven not always by choice but somehow as a reactive measure to globally changing economic scenario, changing labour demand and supply equations, shift in the focus and aspirations of employees of different generations, namely from baby boomers to Gen X to Gen Y at present.

Organizations especially those in the Service Sector, those employing Knowledge Workers and those facing employee issues pertaining especially to attrition pay a great heed to it. The reason if one may ponder is nothing but loss of revenue or value either by losing the critical talent or in attracting them. Another change is that fewer and fewer employees are wanting to stay with an Organization until retirement which explains why traditional methods of dealing with people and trying to keep them motivated will not help.

To quote writer Vicki Jayne in her article 'Don't worry, be happy', she says, "While economic productivity was once squeezed from workers largely at the expense of their health and happiness, now the flow is reversing and links are being made between employee satisfaction and a company's bottom-line success."

While the reasons mentioned above are true and applicable at large, there are many organizations in some sectors who seemingly feel it isn't important or doesn't affect them apart from some others who still lie in the zone of happy ignorance about it. They, unfortunately are unaware of the fact that the changing dynamism with increased globalization and more labour migration from the better to the best will not spare any and they will be forced to react as they feel the heat. Another, is this being a self destructive mentality as it is like ignoring the changes around, the end result of which will be being rendered off the market.

However, the realization and appreciation of this isn't still universally practised. Fear by and large still continues to be used as the powerful tool for motivation. Recent research suggests that it is the worst thing that an Organization can do for the employee morale in the long term. While people may comply because of fear of being punished or avenged upon in some way or the other, the compliance will remain so long as the threat and people may eventually choose to respond differently to this. The model mentioned below describes employee's different reactions to this. The model categorizes employees into four types namely Active, Supportive, Passive and Resistive and their reactions mentioned in the quadrants. Every organization will have all of these categories of individuals. However, their ratios might just differ. With Baby Boomers retiring and the major chunk of the workforce at the Execution level being majorly the Gen Y, most of them would find themselves as Active against Passive.



A very interesting feature that differentiates the Gen Y from the others is that this breed of people is not committed to any organization per se, they are committed to their profession and that is how they identify themselves as. They exercise more control over their careers as compared to those otherwise. This is one of the reasons which explains the phenomenon of people not sticking to jobs any more than 5 years on an average. In fact this duration is even shorter for those who are





in the initial stages of their careers. Needless to say, this breed of people is more talented, more dynamic, more tech savvy, more vibrant, a lot impatient and more volatile as compared to those of previous generations.

This explains why the engagement model for them needs to undergo a change. Even for the other generations, the baby boomers to some extent and the Gen Xers, happiness continues to be a major driving factor for better engagement and enhanced productivity. The premise here being, a more engaged employee is more productive.

It is noteworthy that companies wanting to attract and retain the best talent now have started talking about measuring Employee Satisfaction through Employee Satisfaction Surveys, building their Brand Image as Best Employer or being identified and propagated as one of the Great Places to Work.

Traditionally, most organizations and most bosses have been operating from the Theory X mentality which is primarily based on the assumption that people dislike work, they exercise every possibility to avoid it, they need to be coerced hard using the Cane Approach to work especially and what they are concerned with is just job security. This is actually one of the cornerstones that supports the Controlling and Authoritative style of people management. The philosophy of Management per se has undergone tremendous change in itself from the extremely restrictive style of People Management in the Armed Forces to the present day style practiced in the Corporate Houses. It is important to understand that for any Employee Engagement Model to be successful, there has to be a shift in the mentality about people, from Theory X to Theory Y. Theory Y essentially states that people are willing to work, they like work as much as play, it comes very natural to them, they exercise their own creativity to excel because they derive a sense of satisfaction out of it which is fulfilling. Hence they need not be coerced, they just need to be empowered.

As rightly pointed out by Dale Carnegie, "There is only one way... to get anybody to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it."

While we discuss about Employee Engagement, Satisfaction, and Empowerment, we just need to understand Employee Happiness from a broader to more bifurcated and micro perspectives. Generally speaking, and as widely accepted, it includes a whole variety of factors namely the following:

- Pay & Benefits
- Recognition
- Safety and Welfare
- Learning and Growth
- Working Conditions
- Work Environment
- Company Policies and Administration
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Achievement
- Supervision
- Status
- Responsibility
- Work Itself
- Promotion
- Personal Life

Although the above list comprises of many factors, it isn't comprehensive and exhaustive and there is scope for few additions depending on the Sector, Industry and the type of workforce. While the fulfilment of all these factors will to some extent ensure satisfaction, however, there could still be a gap. Frederick Herzberg's Two Factor Theory of Motivation and Hygiene differentiates between the zones of satisfaction and dissatisfaction to two more being 'no satisfaction and no dissatisfaction'. Hygiene factors are the ones which are concerned with the factors leading to dissatisfaction and no dissatisfaction. These factors if fulfilled positively will just ensure that people don't whine but will not be able to act as a driver to motivate them more. Motivational Factors are different from Hygiene Factors. It is the positive fulfilment of the motivational factors which puts people in the zone of satisfaction thus driving them more. Below is a list of Hygiene & Motivational factors.

#### Hygiene Factors

- Pay and Benefits
- Company Policy and Administration
- Relationships with co-workers
- Physical Environment
- Supervision
- Status
- Job Security
- Salary
- Working Conditions
- Personal life

#### Motivational Factors

- Achievement
- Recognition
- Work Itself
- Responsibility
- Promotion
- Growth

It is actually the motivational factors that lead to persevering individuals and thus to a large extent determines happiness. However, the happiness that we are talking of is transient which means the state of mind exists only as long as the life and nature of the factors. There is this next level of high engagement which essentially transcends from finding one's role that defines value in the entire structure and thus puts the wheel of passion going. This is when people see what role they play in the big picture. The more valued the role, the more is the passion. It is this passion which goes beyond the factors listed as motivational and contributes to something called as the 'enjoyment element'.

Enjoyment refers to the good feelings people experience when they break through the limits of homeostasis--when they do something that stretches them beyond what they were, for example, in an athletic event, an artistic performance, a good deed, a stimulating conversation etc. This state of happiness is more stable than the others wherein people get transformed into highly self driven individuals who churn the engine of growth.





While we say all of these, we can't undermine the fact that any of these will not work if taken up as a piecemeal approach. In fact, Abraham Maslow's Theory of Needs Hierarchy deserves a mention here. According to this Theory, there are five categories of needs that have been identified and put in strata as per the importance. The first and the most basic being Physiological needs followed by Safety Needs, Social Needs, Need for Self Esteem and finally the Need for Self Actualization. Each of these needs become dominant as the need just below becomes satisfied to some extent.

Hence, an Organization which doesn't pay enough to help employees take care of their basic needs and maintain their efficiency will not be successful if it talks high and mighty about the Organization's Vision, the great Mission and distributes just dry appreciation.

While one may argue that the Business of Business is to generate Business, one needs to understand the purpose of an Organization is to generate value for its stakeholders and employees undoubtedly are of them. Value for them is better quality of life which gets ensured by way of many of those factors enlisted above and some more and rather lot of others being those soft ones which play a more impactful role when it come to affecting people's motivation levels. Examples of the same are the way Bosses, peers / colleagues talk and interact, the treatment of respect rather than slavery from the Organization, concern and due respect to people's family responsibilities, helping employees to maintain a healthy work life balance etc.

It is also about creating an enjoyable workplace experience something similar to an enjoyable shopping experience for the customers. However, the factors and the mode of conduct may differ. Service Organizations especially IT Giants keep experimenting with lots of those. One needs to realize that an individual spends half of a day at least at the workplace and therefore through simple calculations nearly half the life at office. It is like a second home for him / her. So is it not important for this second home to be equally enjoyable for the individual if not more ?

Talking of the ways that can be used to measure employee engagement, worth mentioning here is the Gallup Q12 Survey. The instrument was the result of hundreds of focus groups and interviews. Researchers found that there were 12 key expectations, that when satisfied, form the foundation of strong feelings of engagement. The instrument is mentioned below:

**Gallup's Q12 Questionnaire**

- 1) Do you know what is expected of you at work?
- 2) Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?
- 3) At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
- 4) In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
- 5) Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
- 6) Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
- 7) At work, do your opinions seem to count?
- 8) Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
- 9) Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
- 10) Do you have a best friend at work?

- 11) In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
- 12) In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

NicMarks of the New Economics Foundation has come up with four points to encourage happiness in the workplace, as mentioned below:

- 1) Organisations should identify current good practice within the organisation, building on the culture that already exists, and appreciating the quality of existing employees.
- 2) Team leaders should foster an atmosphere in teams that blends support with appropriate levels of challenge. If this is done authentically, the team as a whole is likely to be more creative and resourceful.
- 3) Line managers should support their staff to identify their own personal strengths, interests and skills and seek to enhance their opportunities to use them at work. This will promote a virtuous cycle of positive emotions that broaden and build their capabilities.
- 4) Individuals should seek out work and workplaces that they find interesting and enjoyable. They should foster good relationships and challenge themselves.

To make any of these come true, Organizations first need to awaken their conscience, understand, accept and buy this before moving on to it.

As Joanna Brandi rightly pointed out in her article "Workplace Happiness: Eight Factors That Can Improve Your Workplace", happiness restores humanity to the workplace so that everyone thrives in every way. The emotional well being of employees and customers is directly linked to a company's profitability and resilience. Be happy and enjoy the rewards!

**Disclaimer:**

*The views expressed in the article are based on the writer's experiences, observations, learnings and research and are absolutely original in nature.*

