



ORGANIZATIONAL HAPPINESS

THE MISGUIDED RELATIONSHIP OF HAPPINESS IN
COMPANIES

MARCELLO DE SOUZA, PH.D

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With an enlightening and thought-provoking approach, "Organizational Happiness: The Misguided Relationship in Companies" delves deep into the complex dynamics of pursuing happiness in the workplace. This book challenges preconceived notions, uncovering the pitfalls of a superficial approach and critically examining organizational practices and policies that truly foster a happy and productive work environment.

Dr. Marcello de Souza



About the Author

I am Marcello de Souza, a restless mind with a journey of over 27 years dedicated to unraveling the mysteries of the human psyche and catalyzing growth in individuals and organizations. My mission is clear: to transcend the boundaries of cognitive behavioral development and foster human excellence.

FROM IT AND TELECOM TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

My professional journey began in the dynamic fields of IT and Telecom, a solid foundation that paved the way for my future explorations into the human territory. Here, I discovered that true leadership thrives at the intersection of operational efficiency and a deep understanding of human needs.

UA PASSION TRANSFORMED INTO PURPOSE

The passion for cognitive behavioral development not only refines my professional essence; it redefines it. Today, I operate beyond traditional technical capabilities, emerging as a visionary who inspires profound and lasting change. My holistic approach combines Management, Leadership, and the most advanced Behavioral Sciences and Neurosciences, establishing a new frontier of excellence and well-being for individuals and organizations.

A MOSAIC OF TRANSFORMATIVE COMPETENCIES

At the forefront of my mission, I highlight my main roles:

- Cognitive Behavioral and Human Organizational Development
- Senior Master Coach & Trainer
- Chief Happiness Officer
- Leader Coach Trainer
- Expert in Language & Behavioral Development
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapist (CBT/ACT)
- Hypnotherapist and Systemic Psychic Constellator
- Lecturer, Speaker, Professor, Writer, and Researcher
- Consultant & Mentor
- Organizational Environment Designer

A LEGACY OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRANSFORMATION

In addition to qualifications that include four post-graduate degrees, a doctorate, and a myriad of international certifications, I have been shaping the landscape of human development with every lecture, book, training, and coaching session I conduct. I share innovative insights that not only illuminate but also transform.

BOOKS THAT INSPIRE GENERATIONS

Author of several influential eBooks and books such as "The Secret of Coaching," "The Map Is Not the Territory, You Are the Territory," and the anticipated "The Society of Diet," my writing seeks to challenge the status quo and equip people with the tools needed to lead their lives with purpose and passion.

AN INVITATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Come with me to explore the unlimited possibilities that human behavioral development offers. Whether to evolve in your career, enhance your leadership, or transform your organization, I am here to guide you on this path to fulfillment and success.

INDEX



1. INTRODUCTION	09
2. A PREVIEW	11
3. HAPPINESS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH PRODUCTIVITY	24
4. ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE	26
5. THE HIDDEN WEIGHT OF HAPPINESS	30
6. THE SPECTACLE OF HAPPINESS	35
7. AGAINST THE OBVIOUS	36
8. THE HAPPINESS PARADOX	38
9. HIDDEN BLINDNESS	42
10. THE NOISE IN HUMAN RELATIONS	44
11. THE CHALLENGES OF PURSUING HAPPINESS IN THE WORKPLACE: A REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE	47
12. WHICH HAPPINESS DO EMPLOYEES VALUE MOST?	53
13. THE DILEMMA: "BEING HAPPY IN YOUR LIFE" OR "BEING HAPPY ABOUT YOUR LIFE"	54
14. THE CHOICES OF HAPPINESS: SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM	55
15. THE CHOICE DILEMMA: EXPERIENCING THE PRESENT OR PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE	56
16. THE CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON HAPPINESS CHOICES	56

INDEX



17. LESSONS FOR THE CHO AND REFLECTIONS FOR EVERYONE	57
18. THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON HAPPINESS CHOICES	58
19. THE VERSATILITY OF HAPPINESS CHOICES	58
20. REFLECTIONS ON THE COMPLEXITY OF HAPPINESS AT WORK AND THE ROLE OF THE CHO	59
21. HUMAN RELATIONS	69
22. BUILDING HAPPINESS	74
23. WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT	75
24. HOW TO CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE	77
25. IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE CAUSES	78
26. STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	79
27. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL HARMONY	81
28. FINALLY	82



"Man is guided in his pursuit of happiness not by reason, but by illusion. Instead of seeing reality, he prefers to embrace fantasy; rather than facing the truth, he prefers a comforting lie. Deluded, he wanders through life, always seeking something that will bring him lasting satisfaction, without realizing that true happiness lies in the acceptance of the present and in the understanding of oneself." -
Arthur Schopenhauer

INTRODUCTION

I will never forget an experience that vividly exemplifies the human pursuit of happiness. After conducting a workshop on Organizational Climate, I was invited by the company to participate in a motivational talk with its employees. Little did I know that I would witness a battle of who could shout the loudest, in an atmosphere that seemed more like preaching the gospel of happiness. Have you ever been to one of those gatherings where people seem to believe that God is deaf? Well, there they were, probably testing the auditory capacity of their own colleagues.

This situation made me reflect on the words of Schopenhauer, who so adeptly points out that the pursuit of happiness is often guided by illusion. This reflection resonates deeply with my own experience, especially as I recall the phrase that echoed in my mind during that motivational training: '...it is HAPPINESS that gives us power, makes us feel good, allows us to relate better, and even increases our chances of promotion.' A statement that, although it may seem utopian, reveals a belief present in many companies.

This experience inspired me to deepen my understanding of so-called 'Organizational Happiness,' a theme that reemerges strongly in current debates. Amidst the pressures for productivity and the concern for employee well-being, the figure of the 'Chief Happiness Officer' (CHO) emerges, tasked with promoting a happier and healthier work environment. However, I question: What is the true role of this professional?

In this ebook, I invite you on a journey beyond the superficial conceptions of happiness in companies. Starting from the complexity of human emotions, we will investigate whether happiness is a destination or a journey in itself. More than numbers and metrics, we will explore the nuances of this pursuit, where the true human essence reveals itself in the intricacies of existence.

Join me in unraveling these intricate layers, on a journey that promises to demystify concepts, inspire reflections, and perhaps, redefine our understanding of happiness in the organizational context.

Moreover, in the margins of the pursuit of happiness, we unravel together a labyrinth of emotions and feelings, where numbers and metrics dare not enter. Amid this complex dance described here, we will find at the end of this journey: is happiness the destination or the journey? I invite you to explore with me the intricate layers of this pursuit, where the human essence transcends measures and reveals itself in the intricacies of existence.

CHAPTER 1

A PREVIEW

Have you ever heard of the Western Electric industry in Hawthorne, California? If not, know that it was part of the history of organizational behavioral development. The Western Electric factory is famous for being the site where the Hawthorne experiments took place in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Hawthorne experiments refer to a series of studies conducted to investigate how environmental and work factors affected workers' productivity and satisfaction. These studies had a significant impact on the field of industrial psychology and management theories, contributing to the understanding of the importance of social relationships, motivation, and the work environment in employee productivity and well-being. Behind these studies was George Elton Mayo, considered the main reference of the Human Relations School – one of the classical schools of management. However, Mayo became the target of numerous criticisms during that period for being accused of manipulating his studies and forcing the result that his theory would be successful.

The fact is that regardless of the criticisms, it represented a paradigm shift in management, emphasizing the importance of human and social dimensions in the workplace and providing the basis and foundation for the following five classical management schools: Behavioral Theory, Bureaucratic Theory, Contingency Theory, Systems Theory, and Structural Theory.

The fact is that the Human Relations School contributed to shaping contemporary management theories, emphasizing that satisfaction, motivation, and interpersonal relationships are fundamental factors for organizational success, such as: Emphasis on social relations, Focus on the worker as an individual, Emphasis on motivation and satisfaction, Importance of the group, and of course, Participative leadership.

Since then, the motivational behavioral proposal emerged. Scholars and executives became obsessed with increasing employee productivity, and the classical schools were responsible for numerous studies on human behavior. While on one hand, they intrinsically helped improve the studies of behavioral and social psychology, on the other hand, they provided arguments for opportunists who began to distort behavioral sciences to offer quick fixes and ready-made answers. Who doesn't remember "How to Win Friends and Influence People", "Reengineering" or "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", or worse, the "Eighth Habit of Highly Effective People"? Anyway, the list goes on and on, just as there is no shortage of gurus to tell us what to do. There is no shortage of examples of reheated and outdated pseudoscientific theories to deceive the unwary. Until we reach the Chief Happiness Officers (CHOs) - those same Happiness Directors - who began to emerge as a position in companies from the 2000s.

Since then, their popularity and recognition have significantly increased over the last decade. It's all over the media. With the growing focus on organizational cultures, employee well-being, and productivity, many companies began to believe that there is real importance in promoting a positive and healthy work environment where the secret is to keep people happy.

Not surprisingly, the creation of the Chief Happiness Officer position becomes the centerpiece for leading initiatives related to employee satisfaction, engagement, and well-being within the company.

But the term CHO really gained prominence after the creation of a course called "The Chief Happiness Officer" at Harvard University. The course was developed by Professor Tal Ben-Shahar, an American and Israeli, a professor and writer in the areas of positive psychology and leadership. It was in 2007 that he promoted his first course on happiness in companies and focused fundamentally on positive psychology, leadership, and workplace well-being. From this course, the concept of having a happiness officer in companies really gained traction and began to spread and gain more attention. But what are we really talking about? What happiness?

In the first few minutes of the course, Tal Ben-Shahar says something very similar to: "If you haven't been disappointed, you probably can't be happy. Disappoint, once, twice, ten times, as many times as necessary to find happiness." Possibly, in other words, Tal Ben-Shahar is really interested in instigating his students to understand that the ability to experience happiness is somehow related to the ability to face disappointments and challenges. That is, first, we can understand that disappointments and challenges are inevitable in the trajectory of any individual. The essence behind this statement is that, by facing and overcoming these difficult moments, people develop resilience and learn to value moments of joy and satisfaction more deeply.

Furthermore, the comparison between moments of disappointment and happiness is a central idea of the course. The idea is that by contrasting these opposite emotional states, we are able to more fully appreciate the positive moments in our lives. Additionally, there is personal growth that derives from experiences of disappointment, and they are fundamental to a contemplative life.

Through internal reflection and overcoming challenges, people can develop greater self-awareness and a deeper appreciation for life, resulting in a more authentic sense of happiness.

Of course, Tal Ben-Shahar shows us how important it is to emphasize that dealing with disappointments can contribute to a more realistic acceptance of reality. Recognizing that disappointments are a natural part of human existence can prevent the relentless pursuit of an idealized happiness and allow us to find contentment in the small things of everyday life. But this is not exactly what has been circulating among the roles of CHOs.

This also reminds me of a book I read some time ago called "The Happiness Industry" by Will Davies. This author offers a valuable and critical perspective on the emergence and function of the Chief Happiness Officer (CHO) position. Through the grounded critique presented by Davies, it is possible to examine the role of the CHO in a deeper and more contextualized way, considering the nuances and complexities involved in promoting happiness in the workplace. From his reading, it is possible to reflect on the idea of designating a specific position to promote happiness. It helps raise questions about whether this is an authentic approach or an attempt to control employees' perceptions and feelings.

As Davies said: how would it be possible to measure happiness? What are the metrics of happiness that are not susceptible to manipulation and used as tools of influence? In the case of the CHO, it would not be possible to say that a happiness manager would not measure employee satisfaction based on organizational interests, instead of genuinely prioritizing the well-being of employees. In other words, this instigates reflection on the extent to which the CHO's actions are influenced by institutional agendas, rather than meeting the true needs of employees..

Moreover, behind this, what is the impact of happiness marketing on individual choices and perceptions of value? This has direct implications for the role of the CHO, as they may be at the center of initiatives that promote a culture of well-being and happiness, isn't it?

The critical exploration of these strategies can raise concerns about creating an idealized image of the workplace, masking deeper issues and potential challenges faced by employees. In this sense, it is necessary to encourage questioning the authenticity, motivations, and impacts of this role. The critical exploration of these aspects contributes to a more complete understanding of the role of the CHO in modern organizations and opens up space for an informed discussion about the true purpose behind promoting happiness in the workplace.

When delving into studies and research on the impact of happiness in companies, what is found is an abyss with no possibility of measurement. It is still not clear whether encouraging happiness at work is always a good idea. Of course, there is ample evidence suggesting that when an employee feels good in their workplace, they are indeed less likely to leave their job, tend to better satisfy the customer, are more reliable, and usually embrace the company's goals. However, there are real questions that demonstrate the importance of happiness, and everything may be just myths. I invite you from now on and throughout the articles to reflect on some of them:



- **HOW TO MEASURE HAPPINESS**

Particularly, this may be the part I like the most, and soon you'll understand why. The fact is that measuring happiness is almost impossible because people are unique, and happiness is entirely subjective. The complexity of translating emotions, feelings, and internal states into numbers or objective scales is a challenge that science and psychology have sought to address, resulting in a variety of approaches and metrics. However, the multifaceted nature of happiness, influenced by cultural factors, personal experiences, and unique moments, makes this process a continuous and, in many ways, individualized journey.

Once, I was in the dentist's waiting room and saw one of those highly "sanitized" magazines that aim to show how the wealthy live. On the cover was highlighted "Happiness - Take the test and measure your happiness." Being the curious person I am, I took the test, and it almost depressed me. According to the magazine, my result was somewhere between deep depression and an imminent candidate for suicide. How is that possible? I didn't even know I was doing so poorly.

The fact is that for the magazine, questions like whether I have the house of my dreams, the car of my dreams, the spouse with the aesthetic beauty I dream of, the trips I dream of, in short, whether I "Have" what I want is the great reference to know if I am really happy or not. But what caught my attention is that there wasn't a single question about my Self. My "Being".

Moreover, I honestly confess that I have no idea if having a Rolls-Royce Boat Tail, a house with more rooms than friends, or a trip to stay at the "Burj Al Arab" will really change my life to the point of making me a person who exudes happiness. Now, I confess I'm kind of a nerd, and spending hours talking to Antonio Damasio or Suzana Herculano-Houzel, having the opportunity to attend classes by Clovis Barros or Marilena Chaui, or perhaps being present in the front row of a lecture by Luc Ferry or Byung-Chul HAN, maybe at this moment I would find the pinnacle of my pleasure, and probably this "Self" would indeed be happy.

• THE NEUROSCIENCE OF HAPPINESS

In this same sense, it is true that neuroscience has evolved a lot. Today we are able to see even a neuron being born and connecting to so many others. Yes! It has contributed greatly to the understanding of happiness through studies that explore the neural bases of emotions, feelings, and well-being and mental health. Advances in neuroscience have allowed the identification of brain patterns and chemical reactions associated with positive emotional states that a decade ago were still unknown. However, it is a field in evolution, and the discoveries themselves have been shown to be still unable to interpret when it comes to happiness. Some approaches such as:

- **Brain Activity:** Through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and electroencephalography (EEG), researchers have mapped patterns of brain activity associated with positive emotions. For example, activity in areas such as the prefrontal cortex and the limbic system, including the nucleus accumbens (associated with reward), has been correlated with feelings of happiness.
- **Neurotransmitters and Hormones:** Neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin are associated with positive emotional states and well-being. Through biochemical tests, scientists can measure levels of these substances and relate them to subjective experiences of happiness.
- **Emotional Responses:** Studies have examined how the brain responds to positive stimuli, such as images or music that evoke feelings of joy. Variations in brain responses to these stimuli can be indicative of the degree of happiness experienced.
- **Brain Connectivity:** Connectivity between different brain areas can also provide insights into emotional well-being. Communication networks between the prefrontal cortex and other regions can be mapped to understand how happiness is processed by the brain.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Observing individuals' brains over time, especially after significant events or interventions, allows for an understanding of how brain changes are related to lasting happiness.

But despite all this, it is not known what the neural relationships between past and present experiences are that are capable of triggering such activities. We don't even have an idea of how our history relates to the creation of our reality. Everything is still very abstract.

Happiness is a subjective and multifaceted experience, and neural responses can vary from person to person, situation, moment, environment, meaning, motive, perspective, among so many other possibilities involved in the present moment. Additionally, cultural, contextual, and psychological aspects also strongly influence how people experience happiness. Therefore, although neuroscience offers valuable insights, a comprehensive understanding of happiness requires a multidisciplinary approach that includes both subjective and objective aspects that are not measured in spreadsheets and tests.

Yes! I know you might now say that there are several tests and questionnaires that have been developed to measure people's happiness and subjective well-being. And that these tools are used in academic research, psychological studies, and also in clinical contexts. For example:

- **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS):** This is one of the most widely used instruments to assess overall life satisfaction. Participants are asked to rate how much they agree with statements related to their life and their level of satisfaction.
- **Gross National Happiness (GNH):** This is an indicator developed by the Kingdom of Bhutan to measure the well-being of its citizens. It takes into account nine dimensions, including health, education, culture, governance, among others.

- **Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS):** This scale assesses both positive and negative feelings experienced by a person at a given moment. It is often used to evaluate current emotional state.
- **World Happiness Report:** Although not an individual test, the World Happiness Report ranks countries based on various factors contributing to happiness, such as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and corruption.
- **Subjective Well-Being Scale (SWLS):** This scale assesses an individual's subjective well-being, combining both life satisfaction and the presence of positive emotions.
- **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire:** This questionnaire assesses individuals' psychological well-being, focusing on areas of affect, satisfaction, and eudaimonia (meaning and purpose in life).
- **Authentic Happiness Inventory:** Developed by Martin Seligman, this scale assesses authentic happiness, which is based on engagement, accomplishment, and meaningful relationships.
- **Biological Measurements:** Some research investigates biological reactions, such as levels of stress-related hormones and well-being, to assess happiness.

After so much time studying this subject, I can say that all, absolutely all, despite the representative approaches, do not necessarily indicate a person's happiness from the perspective of "Being." After all, even though there are several tests and questionnaires developed to measure people's happiness and subjective well-being, these tools are highly subjective and easily influenced by specific circumstances. They translate an emotional state of "Being." But they do not translate the feeling of "Being." Moreover, a measure that works in one context may not be as relevant in another. The complexity of translating emotions and internal states into numbers or objective scales is a challenge that science and psychology have sought to address, resulting in a variety of approaches and metrics.

Here it is worth making a parenthesis to remember Friedrich Nietzsche again. This philosopher had an approach to happiness that contrasted with many traditional and optimistic perspectives on the subject, which are still so relevant today. Nietzsche saw the pursuit of happiness as a futile and often illusory endeavor. He believed that society, especially modern society, was rooted in values that he considered harmful, such as morality inherited from religion, which preached renunciation of the world and the pursuit of happiness in the afterlife. Nietzsche saw this perspective as a denial of life and a source of suffering.

For Nietzsche, the pursuit of happiness often led to "resentment," a feeling of bitterness and envy towards those who seemed to be happier. He argued that traditional morality promoted resentment, as it encouraged the rejection of natural impulses and the suppression of desires and instincts.

Nietzsche introduced the idea of "amor fati," which means "love of fate." He proposed the unconditional acceptance of life, including its difficulties and sufferings, rather than seeking happiness as a primary goal. For Nietzsche, life is composed of a complex interaction of contradictory forces, and true fulfillment comes from embracing all these forces, including the dark ones. He was not against happiness; on the contrary, he opposed the simplistic and superficial idea of happiness as a primary goal of life. His ideas against conventional notions of morality propose a more complex perspective, which involved accepting life in its entirety, including its pains and challenges, rather than seeking an illusory happiness based on society's imposed standards. It's worth noting that he once said that happiness is "the feeling that power increases, that a resistance is overcome."

What I hope you understand is that happiness is a subjective and multifaceted experience, and neural responses can vary from person to person, situation, moment, environment, meaning, motive, perspective, among many other possibilities involved in the present moment. Additionally, cultural, contextual, and psychological aspects also strongly influence how people experience happiness. Therefore, while neurosciences offers valuable insights, a comprehensive understanding of happiness requires a multidisciplinary approach that includes both subjective and objective aspects that cannot be measured in spreadsheets and tests.

In the end, and even if it's repetitive, I say clearly here that the pursuit of understanding the nature of happiness is a journey that transcends metrics and numbers. It leads us to explore the depths of the human experience, to dive into the complexity of emotions, and to embrace the richness of individual interpretations. Happiness, after all, is a subject that challenges rigid definitions and invites us to reflect on what really matters in our lives, beyond quantifiable surfaces. It is, ultimately, an invitation to explore ourselves, our relationships with the world, and the meaning we attribute to every moment lived.

Want to understand better? Then, in five lines, describe: what is happiness for you? Then, ask ten colleagues to do the same. What are the chances of them arriving at the same conclusion? Didn't understand? If you are interested in finding specific studies that follow the approach I just mentioned, I suggest searching in academic databases, such as PubMed, PsycINFO, Google Scholar, among others, using keywords like "subjective nature of happiness," "individual differences in happiness perception," "cross-cultural happiness definitions," and similar. I'm sure this will help you find articles and studies that align with the perspective that we know little or almost nothing about happiness.

Not even the combination of various approaches and consideration of context are essential to obtain a more complete understanding of happiness.

I'll make a hypothetical provocation here: You wake up feeling great about life. You leave home feeling fulfilled. Then, at the first corner, you get cut off by a car, or a mugger steals your cell phone, or even when you get to work, the internet goes down just when you're about to have that decisive meeting with your boss about your promotion. What changed? These are pretty "light" examples for life's reality!

HAPPINESS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH PRODUCTIVITY

In the book "Psychodynamics of Work: Analysis of the Relationship Pleasure, Suffering, and Work: Contributions of the Dejourian School to the Analysis of the Relationship Pleasure, Suffering, and Work" by Elisabeth Abdoucheli, Christophe Dejours, and Christian Jayet, there is a very interesting study about work productivity. Released in 1994, the authors describe an inconsistency that has been established in the market, referring mainly to quality of life and satisfaction in society, which increasingly shifts towards a collapse.

Their research, which began in the 1980s, related suffering to production capacity in contemporary times. In their studies, they propose that, faced with the modern capitalist immediacy, where the number of responsibilities, the accumulation of work, and the intensity of demands constantly increase, people's suffering clearly intensified. The great contradiction is that they demonstrated that suffering causes people to produce more and more, exponentially, and this was exactly what the corporate economic world, after the second industrial revolution, had already realized.

Dejours and his colleagues found that, in the right dose and for a determined period, it is possible to create controlled environments to explore this suffering, resulting in growth in individual production. In other words, according to psychology, suffering generates an unconscious blockage of consciousness, in which the individual enters into a constant repetitive cycle: need, action, and suffering. This cycle is established when the person stops thinking and starts occupying themselves (to avoid thinking), since thinking then causes them suffering.

This cycle is established when the person stops thinking and starts occupying themselves (to avoid thinking), since thinking then causes them suffering. It's like a kind of anesthesia. By becoming robotic, they allow themselves to live completely on autopilot, as described by Kahneman, unable to perceive their own environment and the survival conditions to which they are exposed, exactly as described in the myth of Sisyphus, in the philosophical work of the writer Albert Camus.

Not surprisingly, there are certain lines of research that demonstrate contradictory results regarding the relationship between happiness – typically defined as "job satisfaction" – and productivity. There are several studies that suggest, in fact, a negative correlation between job satisfaction and business productivity: the unhappier the employees were, the higher the profit. Of course, this does not mean the opposite, that happiness does not increase productivity or the quality of employees' output.

What is intended to be said up to this point is that the existence of a connection between emotional content and work and productivity are highly debatable issues, especially if the focus is on results. After all, this complex interaction between emotions, feelings, motivation, and performance challenges us to recognize that, at times, the balance between personal well-being and productivity can be more subtle and intricate than we imagine at first glance.

In this journey of exploration, we encounter an intriguing duality: happiness as a driver for productivity and, at the same time, suffering as an unexpected catalyst for an exponential increase in production. This intersection between the individual's emotional aspects and their professional performance invites us to question the nature of the relationship between personal satisfaction and the delivery of tangible results.

The conventional idea that a happy work environment automatically translates into higher productivity is challenged by these and many other studies. After all, when we consider the pressure and demands of the modern business world, human reactions can become complex and sometimes even contradictory. The pursuit of a deeper understanding of these mechanisms leads us to a provocative conclusion: the obsessive pursuit of happiness may not be the path to unlocking the maximum potential of your employees and is far from being a guarantee of a healthy environment and an organizational climate worthy of excellence.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

When we investigate this dichotomy, crucial elements come into play: organizational climate and organizational culture. These factors are the foundations that shape how individual emotions intertwine with the goals and expectations of the company. A healthy organizational climate, based on trust, support, and collaboration, goes beyond merely fostering happiness. It creates a space where relationships are nurtured, engagement is promoted, and where people feel a sense of belonging, recognition, and respect. It is intrinsically linked to values that transcend ephemeral happiness and embrace the substance of human meaning.

Conversely, an organizational culture overly focused on the pursuit of happiness can inadvertently pave the way for a toxic environment, despite apparent moments of joy, such as when generous bonuses are received after goal achievement. The relentless pursuit of happiness, when devoid of genuine consideration for the well-being of employees, can lead to the creation of a scenario where constant pressure and exhaustion become the norm. In this reality, productivity may stumble upon emotional demands, corroding the potential for individual performance.

This reflection leads us to the complex intersection between happiness, productivity, organizational climate, and culture, revealing a network of influences that do not follow a linear trajectory. It is, essentially, an intricate web of interconnections, where each element triggers a synergistic effect on the others. Creating an environment conducive to personal and professional flourishing requires a delicate balance and a deep understanding of these intertwined dynamics.

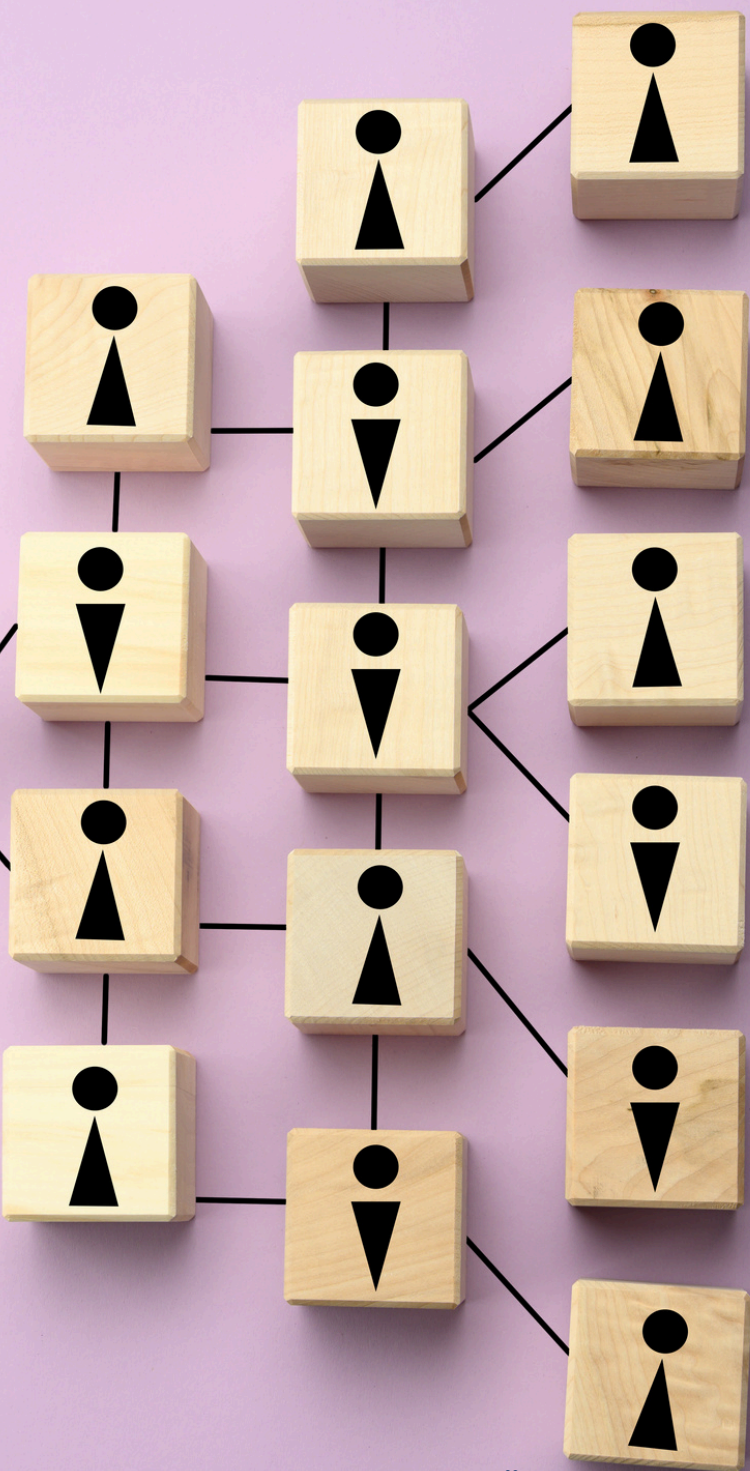
As we aim for the maximum optimization of our employees and the organization as a whole, we are called to explore these nuances with sensitivity and to chart a path that places human essence at the heart of the business landscape. Finding harmony between the pursuit of meaning, genuine engagement, and productivity requires a conscious approach, shaped by respect for the diversity of human experiences and the pursuit of holistic well-being.

Moreover, speaking practically once again, having observed behavioral development in companies for years, I affirm without any doubt: measuring happiness in companies using tests and metrics poses several risks and challenges. Simplifying the complex human experience into numbers or scales can lead to misleading conclusions, ignoring nuances. Furthermore, there is the risk of pressure on employees to report higher levels of happiness, especially if metrics influence performance evaluations. This can distort results and fail to reflect true satisfaction.



The emphasis on measurement is likely to create a culture of pretense, where employees feel they need to demonstrate constant happiness, masking genuine emotions. Furthermore, the complexity of happiness is not adequately captured by tests, which fail to consider personal, cultural, and situational contexts. The lack of contextualization can lead to misconceptions.

Other risks include unintended effects, such as fostering competition among employees to appear happier, as well as potentially generating resistance to change. Therefore, when adopting these metrics, it is essential to balance concerns and ensure that the approach is sensitive to the uniqueness of employees, values their experiences, and does not subject them to unnecessary pressures.



CHAPTER 2

THE HIDDEN WEIGHT OF HAPPINESS

"Among the complexities of the world lies the insatiable desire to discover the answer to how to be happy, a dizzying race in which only the clear-minded, after a while, perceive its futility. This relentless pursuit keeps us distant from our essence, busy and exhausted, while the emptiness persists. However, the real question may be simpler than we imagine. All we really need to do is stop, breathe, and appreciate each present moment in all its fullness for existing, and then ask ourselves, why?" - Marcello de Souza

If you read the first chapter, which deals precisely with the role of happiness in companies, you already realized that the subject is much more complex than expected, isn't it! There is no line of defense capable of explaining happiness and its role in life other than its pursuit within oneself. The understanding of happiness throughout history is a complex and multifaceted narrative that encompasses a variety of cultures and philosophies. From ancient times to the present day, different concepts of happiness have been developed and explored in the same way that a single conclusion has never been reached.

Imagine that even in the 17th century B.C., Zoroaster mentioned the pursuit of happiness as the search for a safe haven, involving elements such as family and cattle. In 6th century B.C. China, Laozi emphasized harmony with nature, while Confucius highlighted values such as duty, courtesy, wisdom, and generosity as fundamental to a happy existence.

Buddhism, originating from Siddhartha Gautama in the 6th century B.C., teaches that happiness is achieved through the liberation from suffering, a state obtained through the Noble Eightfold Path and the overcoming of desire.

Aristippus of Cyrene, a contemporary of Plato, distinguished two states of the human soul: pleasure (gentle movement of love) and pain (rough movement of love). Hence arises an approach known as hedonism, where happiness is seen as the incessant pursuit of pleasure and the minimization of pain. This view places sensory and emotional pleasure at the center of the pursuit of happiness, raising questions about the balance between immediate and long-term pleasure, as well as the pursuit of pleasures that do not harm oneself or others. Still in the 4th century B.C., Aristotle viewed happiness as an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue, relating it to satisfaction and personal fulfillment, known as Eudaimonia, rooted in the development of virtues and personal flourishing. For him, it involves the pursuit of a meaningful life purpose, the realization of human potential, and the practice of virtues such as courage, wisdom, and generosity. Happiness here is linked to authenticity and personal growth.

In Epicureanism, a philosophy advocated by Epicurus, the ancient Greek philosopher, happiness is conceived as the result of seeking a tranquil pleasure based on friendship, wisdom, and moderation. Epicurus valued ataraxia, the tranquility of the mind, as a desirable state to achieve happiness.

Then came the Stoics, who believed that tranquility (ataraxia) was the path to happiness, emphasizing control over things that could not be changed. For Christianity, through the teachings of Jesus Christ, love was highlighted as the key to harmony and happiness.

Epictetus goes further, addressing happiness by focusing on control over our lives. He argued that true happiness emerges when we accept that we only have control over our actions and choices, but never over chance. Instead of seeking wealth, fame, or pleasure, he emphasized the development of moral virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and moderation. He believed that unhappiness stemmed from the pursuit of external things beyond our control.

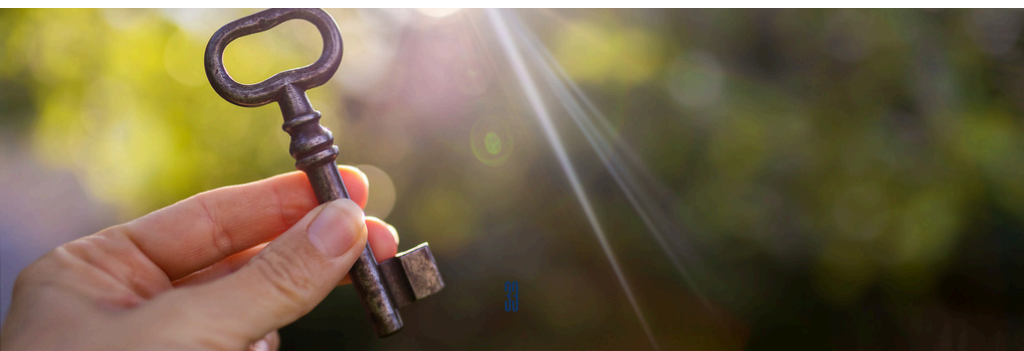
Saint Augustine, one of Christianity's fundamentalists, viewed happiness as the result of seeking God and conforming to His will. Thomas Aquinas, another Christian theologian, argued that happiness was achieved through seeking God and human flourishing, through the development of virtues. Each of these perspectives offers a unique and distinctive view of what constitutes true happiness and how to achieve it in their respective philosophical or religious traditions.

In the 7th century, Muhammad emphasized charity and hope in the afterlife as essential elements for eternal happiness. Baruch Spinoza argued that true happiness was intrinsically linked to knowledge and understanding of the nature of things, along with acceptance of our position in the universe. He saw the pursuit of understanding as a fundamental path to happiness.

On the other hand, Arthur Schopenhauer had a pessimistic view of life and happiness. He believed that happiness consisted of the absence of suffering and suggested that the best way to achieve it was to minimize desire and will.

Immanuel Kant maintained that the pursuit of happiness should be guided by morality and duty. He believed that true happiness was aligned with reason and the fulfillment of moral duty. Karl Marx, on the other hand, advocated for an egalitarian society as a path to human happiness. In the late 19th century, Sigmund Freud explored the pursuit of happiness through the "pleasure principle" and "reality principle," with their inherent limitations. Jean-Paul Sartre, an existentialist philosopher, argued that happiness was linked to authenticity and personal freedom. For him, true happiness emerged when we took responsibility for our choices and created our own meaning in life.

Viktor Frankl emphasized that the pursuit of happiness alone can often be frustrating and elusive. Instead, he highlights the importance of finding purpose or meaning in life as a more enduring source of satisfaction. He believed that when people find genuine meaning in their lives, even in the most difficult situations, they can experience a deeper form of contentment and well-being. In other words, for Frankl, the joy of living is related to the pursuit of meaning and purpose in life, rather than a direct and selfish pursuit of happiness as an end goal. By finding meaningful purpose, people can experience a deeper and more lasting kind of contentment, even amidst hardships and challenges.



In recent decades, positive psychology, developed by Martin Seligman and others, has explored happiness as a field of scientific research. Positive psychology examines factors such as gratitude, optimism, resilience, and engagement as important components of happiness. This approach emphasizes the importance of psychological well-being and personal development in the pursuit of happiness.

We have reached the point of wanting to link happiness with genetics. Yes! According to some scientists, genetic studies suggest that happiness also has a hereditary component. Nowadays, the conception of happiness is intrinsically linked to the "cult of the individual," relating it to quality of life and self-esteem. Depression is seen as a "performative failure of the subject," and subjective well-being depends on a series of factors such as autonomy, relationships, and self-confidence.

Not to mention the happiness of self-help, which highlights "Having" at the expense of "Being," and often promotes simplistic and generic solutions, against the understanding of happiness as complex and as singular as multifaceted in a plural universe. The frantic race for happiness, which moves from the realm of understanding to the stage of spectacle, is a bizarre and unsettling spectacle that we witness today. Modern society pushes us into an abyss of having, showing, and proving our happiness at any cost.

THE SPECTACLE OF HAPPINESS

In this spectacle scenario, happiness is no longer an inner quest; it shifts from "Being" to "Having," becoming an external imposition. It's as if we're told: "You must be happy, or something is wrong with you." This "exploratory" and imperative happiness has become a necessity, a command imposed upon us. Those who dare not to follow this dictate are labeled as demented and devalued. It's no wonder the growing number of people suffering from depression, anxiety, and loneliness in our individualized and frightened society. The relentless pursuit of happiness distances us from ourselves, making us strangers in our own skin. We are forced to live artificial lives, shaped by others' expectations, instead of allowing ourselves to be authentic.

I believe you must have already understood that today it is precisely from this perspective that I want to generate reflection to deeply understand the role of the "Chief Happiness Officer." I want to explore a less optimistic view of happiness in the corporate context. Not that the intention is to depress you, on the contrary, to break the status quo of the simplistic view and understand how we should actually see the happiness versus company relationship. In other words, the idea today is to provoke and make you question this imposition of happiness, allowing us to explore the complexity of our emotions and experiences.

The idea is to help decipher the true happiness that cannot be packaged and sold. When we understand the perspective of happiness in human evolution, it becomes clear that somehow, deep down, everyone seeks to demonstrate that it resides in the acceptance of our imperfect humanity and in the pursuit of meaning rather than empty pleasure.

Perhaps that's why the main idea of a CHO isn't to tell people what happiness is and how to be happy; instead, it's to be open for each individual to discover for themselves, even if it means challenging norms and imposed expectations. After all, genuine happiness isn't a spectacle for others, but an internal journey of self-awareness and authenticity.

AGAINST THE GRAIN OF THE OBVIOUS

The fact is, regardless of whether we're talking about the Western or Eastern perspective, where Eastern and Western perspectives differ in many aspects. While the West tends to seek happiness externally, through achievements and material pleasures, the East directs the search inward, emphasizing spirituality and inner peace. Whereas the West sees happiness as an achievement, the East sees it as a state of being. I hope it's already clear that since the dawn of philosophy, the pursuit of happiness has been considered a noble aspiration and an inalienable right of the human condition.

However, when we talk about the workplace, over the centuries, what began as a libertarian ideal in the Enlightenment of the 18th century seems to have acquired a sinister shadow of unreal expectations and incessant duty.

At the height of the Enlightenment, thinkers like John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, and Jeremy Bentham proclaimed the pursuit of happiness as a natural right, a fundamental principle that should be protected by governments. It was a call to individual freedom and personal fulfillment. However, this noble view of happiness has transformed over time.

Today, the pursuit of happiness often unfolds before us as a relentless demand. Social media and the media bombard us with images of perfect lives, leading us to believe that happiness is constant and that any deviation from this ideal is a personal failure. The social pressure to be happy all the time has become overwhelming.

Furthermore, the pursuit of happiness has evolved from an aspiration to a duty. The phrase "I declare these rights to be unalienable: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" now seems like a constant reminder that we must relentlessly pursue happiness, as if it were a goal to be achieved. Of course, this relentless obligation becomes exhausting, resulting in anxiety, dissatisfaction, and even a sense of failure when we fail to meet the unattainable standards that modern society imposes on us, leading people to develop previously unimaginable mental disorders.

The hidden weight of the pursuit of happiness lies in the pressure to be happy, the shame of not living up to expectations, and the feeling that happiness is an obligation. Instead of bringing us satisfaction, this relentless pursuit can push us further away from it, leaving us anxious and unhappy, which cannot in any way inhabit a work environment, quite the opposite.

If you want a CHO in your company, then perhaps it is the right time to rethink the approach to happiness. First, it must be clear that in the contemporary world, globalization and the interaction between cultures are shaping the way we view happiness. People are increasingly exposed to different perspectives and are beginning to adopt elements of both traditions in their pursuit of happiness.

Instead of pursuing constant and unattainable happiness, it may be wiser to focus on cultivating a sense of contentment, appreciation, and meaning in life. This way, we can find a more enduring sense of well-being without the oppressive weight of the relentless pursuit of perfect happiness.

THE PARADOX OF HAPPINESS

I know that you may still find seeking happiness not entirely clear or perhaps not really effective, but it doesn't hurt, right? Wrong.

There is a contradictory or seemingly ironic idea related to the pursuit of happiness. This paradox precisely means that often, people who actively seek happiness may end up feeling less happy than those who couldn't care less about it. The idea is that when someone strives too hard to be happy all the time, it can create unrealistic expectations and increase pressure on oneself to constantly feel happy. This, in turn, can lead to anxiety, frustration, and even unhappiness because life is naturally full of ups and downs, and no one can maintain a constant state of happiness.

Instead of pursuing happiness as a final goal, a CHO must focus on meaningful experiences, interpersonal connections, personal growth, and acceptance of normal human emotions, including moments of sadness, anger, or frustration. By doing so, happiness can become a natural byproduct of life, rather than an obsessive goal.

The irony that, in trying to be happy all the time, we may end up being less happy, and that happiness may be better found when it is not pursued so intensely.

Since the 18th century, with the industrial revolution and thanks to the great geniuses of the management schools, there has indeed been a transformation regarding human values. But, mistakenly, at some point post-World War II, the emphasis on claiming happiness has brought a great burden, a duty that can never be perfectly fulfilled. The fact is:

"The relentless pursuit of happiness can, ironically, distance us from it, as the pressure to be happy all the time can lead to anxiety and dissatisfaction, revealing the paradox that true happiness often lies in accepting the complexities of life."

There is no shortage of studies within social and behavioral psychology that demonstrate this. For example, in the field of behavioral psychology, it sheds light on an intriguing phenomenon related to the pursuit of happiness. In the experiment, participants were asked to watch a video designed to induce feelings of happiness, in this case, several of them referring to athletes' hard-won victories in various fields. However, before watching the video, half of the group was instructed to read a statement emphasizing the importance of happiness in their lives, while the other half did not receive such instruction.

Contrary to what many expected, the surprising result of the research was that those who had read the statement about the importance of happiness actually experienced less happiness after watching the video. I hope you understand that the idea here is to show you that when happiness becomes a duty, a moral obligation that needs to be fulfilled, people tend to always find themselves in a paradoxical situation. Conscious effort to be happy often leads to unhappiness.

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What I intend to say is that the role of the CHO cannot be confused within this toxic environment where we are constantly inundated with messages urging us to be happy, as if it were an obligation. This imposition of happiness as a duty can create significant psychological pressure. When we fail to meet this expectation, we may feel even worse, as if we are failing a moral obligation.

"Unhappiness transcends its own meaning, reflecting, more sharply, the inability to find happiness." With this statement, I do want to provoke how this dynamic incisively points out that true happiness cannot be imposed or demanded but should be allowed to grow naturally, without external pressures. This reflection leads us to consider that, instead of trying to force happiness as a duty, we can find a more authentic and satisfying path by cultivating authenticity, acceptance of our emotions, and the pursuit of meaning in our lives.

The pursuit of happiness should not be an obligation but rather a personal journey that varies from individual to individual, often including challenges, ups and downs, and moments of deep introspection.

Thus, instead of imposing happiness as a duty, we can embrace the complexity of our emotions and understand that true happiness often lies in authenticity and the freedom to be ourselves, regardless of external expectations. This allows us to seek happiness in a more genuine and meaningful way, rather than falling into the trap of the incessant and stressful pursuit of an often unattainable ideal.

THE HIDDEN BLINDNESS

I invite you now to imagine a highly regarded technology company that, after various internal discussions about employees' absenteeism due to mental health issues, motivated its leaders to create an environment where joy and relaxation are prioritized. They encourage motivational events, have built recreational rooms and spaces, and always encourage their employees to smile, participate in recreational activities during working hours, and maintain a constant level of enthusiasm. The idea is to make this truly part of the company's culture because, after an external consultation, they understood that a happy environment needed a CHO to increase productivity and employee satisfaction.

It may sound like a fantasy, but it's not. This story is real, and it's not just any company. One day, I was invited to a meeting where its directors presented me with an internal study revealing that, due to pressure to maintain constant happiness, employees were increasingly reluctant to raise legitimate concerns about the quality of new projects under development. In a confidential internal survey, both leaders and employees described fear as the main reason for their decline in productivity. They didn't want to expose themselves by appearing negative or pessimistic within an environment so focused on positivity.

As a result, eight months after the proposal to implement a "happiness environment," critical problems began to emerge in various projects because many of the issues were no longer being discussed in time, and the projects eventually faced serious obstacles that could have been avoided.

Furthermore, the level of stress has increased significantly. This became very evident in the meetings I had with the team leaders. During our conversations, some became extremely irritated when describing their behavior in response to the company's excessive demands. According to some of them, they did try to maintain a smile on their faces and a positive attitude, following the company's culture. As a result, they didn't express their dissatisfaction and ended up involved in activities and deadlines that were almost impossible to meet.

I hope you realize that instead of promoting a work environment where emotions are authentic and varied according to the situation, the pressure for such happiness can hinder problem detection, informed decision-making, and effective negotiation, which was what happened as a consequence of infringing on their employees' alterity.

The fact is that various behavioral studies make it clear that cheerful people have more difficulty identifying lies and frauds than those who are not in a good mood. Moreover, people who act naturally in their work tend to negotiate better than those who are happy. There is no doubt in behavioral psychology that forcing happiness may not be beneficial in all professional aspects, or in jobs that require certain skills, especially at the management and leadership levels. In practice, happiness can often even worsen performance. After all, when you're happy, you never want to stop being happy.



THE NOISES IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

If you've made it this far, you likely already understand that there are fundamental issues to be reflected upon when the aim is to pursue happiness within organizations. Unlike a universal aspiration, which tends to make people believe that finding happiness at work, in friendships, or in personal relationships is essential for a fulfilling life. Here, I want to provoke the idea of understanding that happiness cannot simply be imposed or expected from others, and this expectation can have significant implications in human relationships.

In this sense, one of the classic problems lies in emotional dependence and pressure at work. Once, during a cognitive behavioral development process with one of my clients, I decided to include a set of individual and group interviews to understand to what extent happiness was part of the environment they worked in. That's when something caught my attention. Many of the collaborators confided in me that for them, happiness at work had to come from their leaders or other colleagues from other departments in order for them to feel happy.

In fact, you may not have noticed, but there's an important issue here, as this kind of thinking can lead to a form of emotional dependency. Let me explain further. In a work environment, this tends to translate into employees who constantly seek recognition and validation from their superiors. When they don't receive the desired response, they may feel neglected, leading to conflicts and resentments in the workplace. Additionally, an employee who expects constant praise from their boss, when they don't receive it, often begins to feel undervalued and anxious, which negatively affects their relationship with the boss and their productivity. This type of condition is a major factor in the development of Burnout Syndrome.

It's worth mentioning the book "The End of Love: A Sociology of Negative Relations" by Eva Illouz, who observed a strange side effect of trying to be more affectionate in the workplace: people began to view their personal lives as a professional task. In her text, there are interviews that categorically demonstrate that individuals saw their personal lives as aspects that should be carefully managed through a wide range of tools and techniques obtained from their professional lives. As a result, life at home had become increasingly cold and calculated. It's no wonder that many preferred to spend more time at work than at home.

As a therapist, I've had the opportunity to counsel people who ended up bringing the imperative of happiness proposal to their own homes. Last year, I worked with a flight attendant who was constantly concerned with maintaining a "happy" atmosphere at home, avoiding difficult conversations or conflicts, which gradually led to superficial conversations in their relationship until it resulted in divorce.

Therefore, I affirm here that the pressure to be happy all the time can also affect personal relationships. People may start to view personal life as a professional task that must be managed effectively. This can result in a calculated and even distant approach to family and affectionate relationships.

Don't be surprised! But another point worth noting is that behavioral studies show that people in good humor may be less generous in certain situations. In other words, this means that the relentless pursuit of happiness can lead to an excessive focus on oneself, rather than on the needs and feelings of others, making them selfish. This tends to always impair the quality of social interactions and negatively affect human relationships, potentially even making them toxic.

The research concluded that individuals who are constantly seeking their own happiness tend to be less inclined to help others in times of need, which can adversely affect social bonds. This, in turn, can lead to emotional isolation. People who are too dedicated to the pursuit of happiness may feel that they cannot express sadness, anger, or other emotions considered "negative." This can create a lack of authenticity in human relationships, as people do not feel free to share their true feelings.

Does being happy make us better people, right? Not exactly, according to another interesting study. Participants were given prize coupons and had to choose how many coupons they would give to others and how many they wanted to keep for themselves. Those in a good mood ended up with more tickets in their pocket. Therefore, at least in certain contexts, being happy may not mean being more generous. In fact, it can mean the opposite.

In another study, after asking participants to keep a detailed diary for two weeks, psychologists found that those who valued happiness the most also felt lonelier. It seems that being overly dedicated to the pursuit of happiness can lead to a feeling of disconnect from others.

THE CHALLENGES OF PURSUING HAPPINESS IN THE WORKPLACE: A REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE

"True happiness is one that does not depend on anything outside of ourselves." - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The truth is that there is no shortage of research to tell us that organizational happiness is more about appearances and ideology. Happiness is a convenient concept that looks great on paper, but it's also an idea that helps to deflect from more serious issues in the workplace.

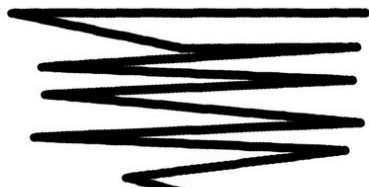
Often, happiness has been used as a shiny facade that organizations display to the outside world. They promote the idea that all their employees are happy and satisfied, creating a positive public image. However, this hides the other side, where this excessive pursuit of happiness at work may be merely superficial, masking real problems that occur behind the scenes. Employees may be portrayed as smiling in corporate photos, but they may face unresolved conflicts, harmful policies, and even discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, this emphasis on happiness may serve as a convenient way to avoid serious and uncomfortable issues.

Throughout these years working with companies, there's been no shortage of examples where the pursuit of happiness is used as an evasion tactic to avoid dealing with issues like internal conflicts, communication problems, and other legitimate concerns. This creates a culture where problems are ignored rather than addressed, undermining the long-term health of the organizational culture. Many toxic environments stem from movements like this. Hence, I assert here that this trend towards happiness may have a negative impact on workplace culture. It can lead to an environment where concerns aren't shared, and as a result, problems persist and worsen. Moreover, this emphasis on happiness can lead to a disregard for employees' authentic emotions, making them less likely to express their concerns and challenges.

Ultimately, balance is key. While it's important to strive for a work environment where employees feel valued and satisfied, this pursuit shouldn't be used as a smokescreen to hide underlying issues. Workplace happiness should be genuine and based on resolving real issues, rather than just a superficial idea to impress. Recognizing imperfections and proactively addressing them is essential for building a truly healthy and fulfilling work culture.

This point underscores how the notion that happy employees are more productive can lead to avoidance of difficult issues. However, it's crucial to remember that workplace happiness isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, and legitimate concerns should be properly addressed rather than ignored.

future
industry ideas
occupation jobs
business network work
target customer
strategy promotion
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marketing branding
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management
concept success
innovation factory
company growth
process goals
office vision



Appealing to happiness, with all its ambiguity, is an excellent way to avoid controversial decisions, such as layoffs. As highlighted by Barbara Ehrenreich in the book "Bright-sided," positive messages about happiness have proven to be especially popular in times of crisis and mass layoffs. This author describes how the pursuit of happiness can be used as an evasive tactic in crisis situations, such as mass layoffs. This approach can be seen as insensitive and inappropriate, especially when tough decisions, like layoffs, need to be made with transparency and empathy.

Unintentionally being repetitive, the fact is that the CHO must understand that besides being exhausting, causing exaggerated reactions, diminishing the importance of personal life, increasing vulnerability, and making us more naive, selfish, and lonely. What's even more alarming is that deliberately seeking happiness can end up robbing us of even the joy we feel from the truly good things in life.

In reality, work, like all other elements of life, can evoke a variety of emotions in us. If you find your work depressing and meaningless, perhaps it truly is. Pretending otherwise may only worsen things. Obviously, happiness is a wonderful thing, but it cannot be conjured up by our simple desire. And perhaps, the less we actively seek happiness at work, the more joy we may find in it: a spontaneous and gratifying joy, and not an artificial and oppressive one. And, even better, we'll have more wisdom to deal with work. To see it as it truly is, and not as we – executives, employees, or masters of motivational dance – pretend it to be.

So, how can we apply these insights to our pursuit of happiness in companies? The answer is not simple, as companies are complex organizations composed of individuals with different perspectives and goals. However, some lessons can be drawn from this exploration of happiness throughout history:

- **Happiness is a personal concept:** Just as there is no single definition of happiness that applies to everyone, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to promoting happiness in companies. It's important to recognize that people have different values, goals, and sources of happiness, and companies should be flexible enough to accommodate this diversity.

- **Happiness is linked to authenticity and purpose:** Many philosophies and approaches to happiness emphasize the importance of living an authentic life and seeking meaningful purpose. Companies can promote employee happiness by creating an environment that allows them to be authentic and find meaning in their work.

- **Psychological well-being is fundamental:** Positive psychology identifies factors such as gratitude, resilience, and engagement as important components of happiness. Companies can promote employees' psychological well-being by providing emotional support, personal development opportunities, and a healthy work environment.

- **Balance between immediate pleasure and long-term goals is important:** While some approaches to happiness emphasize the pursuit of immediate pleasure, others highlight the importance of considering the long-term consequences of our choices. Companies can help employees find a healthy balance between immediate gratification and achieving long-term goals.

- **The pursuit of happiness should not harm others:** Some approaches to happiness emphasize the importance of not harming others in the pursuit of our own happiness. Companies can promote a culture of social responsibility and ethics, where success is not achieved at the expense of others.

I hope that by reaching this point in your reading, it is already clear that the role of a CHO goes far beyond the obvious. The pursuit of happiness in companies is a complex and multifaceted challenge. However, by recognizing the personal nature of happiness, promoting authenticity and purpose, supporting psychological well-being, balancing immediate and long-term pleasure, and fostering social responsibility, companies can create an environment where employees have more opportunities to find happiness in their work and lives.

In this sense, happiness in companies is not just a goal to be achieved, but a continuous process of seeking and personal and organizational growth. Indeed, the real question may be less about how to be happy and more about how to live with purpose, authenticity, and gratitude. Perhaps happiness is not a destination to reach, but rather a travel companion that accompanies us on our journey through life. After all, as I suggest at the beginning: "All we really need to do is stop, breathe, and appreciate each present moment in all its fullness simply for existing and then ask ourselves, why?"

CHAPTER 3

WHAT KIND OF HAPPINESS DO EMPLOYEES VALUE MOST?

Entering the corporate world is like stepping into a minefield of emotions and expectations. What employees seek in terms of happiness is a question that, though seemingly simple, is fraught with complexity. Imagine embarking on a journey through the world of organizations, where each individual is a world of experiences, values, and aspirations. In this scenario, the pursuit of happiness at work becomes an endless challenge.

Today, I want to delve deeper into understanding that the quest for happiness at work is a matter filled with complexity, where each employee represents a unique world of experiences, values, and aspirations. In this text, we will explore the complexity of happiness in the workplace and the crucial role of the Chief Happiness Officer (CHO) in this journey. Throughout this article, we will delve into two fundamental perspectives: "Being Happy In Your Life" and "Being Happy About Your Life," highlighting how these views intertwine and influence employees' pursuit of happiness. Additionally, we will examine short-term versus long-term happiness choices, as well as the cultural influence on these decisions. We will reflect on the importance of organizational culture and climate in promoting employees' well-being and discuss the CHO's role in creating an environment conducive to flourishing. By the end of this text, it will be evident that the pursuit of happiness at work is a journey full of nuances, deserving of thorough and ongoing analysis, with a focus on sustainable well-being as the central goal.

To do this, let's recall the practical example of the company mentioned in "chapter 2". It heavily invested in wellness programs, believing that by providing services such as gyms, relaxation spaces, and mindfulness training, it would ensure the happiness of its employees. However, despite all these initiatives, the company faces stagnant engagement levels and high employee turnover. What went wrong?

As mentioned in previous parts of this article series, happiness is not something that can be easily fitted into spreadsheets or accurately measured through numbers and graphs. It is a deeply subjective state rooted in our personal experiences, influenced by a myriad of factors, from interpersonal relationships to sense of purpose and fulfillment. This is why when questioning employees about their perceptions of happiness in the workplace, we are greeted with a diversity of responses. Each individual brings their own experiences, values, goals, and aspirations, making it virtually impossible to catalog all these responses into a single definition of happiness.

THE DILEMMA: "BEING HAPPY IN YOUR LIFE" OR "BEING HAPPY ABOUT YOUR LIFE"

At this point, I want to turn to Daniel Kahneman's provocation: "Being Happy In Your Life" or "Being Happy About Your Life"? Although, at first glance, these two perspectives may seem interchangeable and often confused, the depth of their implications leads us to a territory of reflection and discernment. We are not referring to the happiness felt at a barbecue with college friends or the satisfaction of completing a challenging project; we are exploring the pursuit of a happiness that transcends the ephemeral moment and extends throughout the journey.

What I intend to help you understand here is that "Being Happy In Your Life" or "Being Happy About Your Life" don't always go hand in hand, and every CHO should seek to find behavioral tools to achieve this convergence. In other words, more than the sense of happiness, the perspective of instigating employees to recognize their own values is crucial for a healthy environment. Put another way, while CHOs have long been trying to understand what form of happiness they should promote in companies, they almost never ask which version of happiness employees are after. If we want to find ways to stimulate happiness among employees, perhaps it is easier to try to understand which one we truly want.

HAPPINESS CHOICES: SHORT TERM VS. LONG TERM

There are some very interesting studies on the subject that are worth highlighting in this context within companies worldwide. It is quite noticeable that among the thousands of professionals surveyed aged 21 to 65, there is a similarity in the choices they would make between lived happiness and experienced happiness (life history). One of the conclusions is that choices varied according to the period they remembered - and according to culture.

For example, for American professionals, the happiness they wished for the next day was different from the happiness they said they wanted for the rest of their lives, even though the next day is part of life. What is more interesting is to realize that people make decisions on an hourly basis, tend to experience different types of happiness from what they want for a lifetime, and with this, they distance themselves more and more from the happiness they seek.

THE DILEMMA OF CHOICE: EXPERIENCING THE PRESENT OR PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In a study conducted with American companies, employees from different hierarchical levels were asked to choose between experienced happiness ("the moment when you feel happiness") and remembered happiness ("when you recall moments in life and feel happy") — over a longer period (for life or next year) or a shorter period (the next day or hour). The results showed that the majority preferred experienced happiness when choosing for life (82%) or the next year (69%). In contrast, there was a technical tie among participants who chose both experienced and remembered happiness when asked what they would like to have in the next hour. These results were not influenced by factors such as position, age, family income, marital status, or whether they have children or not.

CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON HAPPINESS CHOICES

In this study, after they reported their choices, they were asked to write a few lines explaining their decision. For those who chose experienced happiness, the most convergent reason is that they adopt an ideology of living in the present, as for them the present moment is more important, since the future is uncertain and life is short. On the other hand, the explanations given by those who chose remembered happiness varied from the desire to have a more meaningful and lasting happiness to the feeling of building a life of good memories to the motivation to be achieved, to feel useful, engaged, productive, and proud of what they do.

In this same study, a new provocation was made where people became more reflective when they had to think about longer periods, such as life until retirement — at this moment, the vast majority responded that they would like to experience the happiness of the moment. However, what drew more attention is that when thinking about the next day or hour, it became clear that an "ethic" took over most people, which at that moment made these surveyed workers demonstrate a willingness to set aside moments of happiness, and give more attention and value to current work in order to, in the future, be able to look back and be proud of their own trajectory.

LESSONS FOR THE CHO AND REFLECTIONS FOR ALL

In this part of the research, it is worth noting for the CHO, since the idea of postponing happiness is necessary, of course, during certain moments in life. However, making this a strategy for life, whether personal or professional, tends to result in the inability to perceive opportunities in the present that are also important for life and are worthy of being joyful. These moments, if discarded, will transform, and when seen on the timeline, it is realized that not being able to recognize one's own feelings is also a state of unhappiness.

This cited study was presented from various perspectives and robustness to ensure that there was no distortion in the results. For example, there was concern that participants received various definitions of experienced happiness to see if any peculiarity was manipulating the result. The perspective of the times that participants were considering ("an hour today" versus "an hour at the end of life") was also considered to see if imminence or even impatience was influencing choices.

Fact is, when considering life, these workers chose the lived experience, whereas, when it comes to the next hour, half of them chose the experienced happiness.

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON HAPPINESS CHOICES

Another very important point is that they extended to other cultures. Under the same perspective — between lived happiness and experienced happiness — for the next hour or for their life, with almost 500 people in other European countries and the same number in Eastern countries, such as China and Japan. Just like Americans, when choosing happiness for life, most European workers (69%) preferred lived happiness to experienced happiness; however, when choosing happiness for the next hour, the ethical aspect also emerged much more prominently, with the majority (65%) opting for experienced happiness. In contrast, Easterners would prefer happiness to permeate for decades. Most Easterners preferred to choose lived happiness over experienced happiness regardless of whether the choice was for a lifetime (89%) or for the next hour (80%). It is believed that Easterners have more conviction in choosing the lived experience due to the long cultural religious history that is so present in these countries, teaching the value of meditation and the appreciation for the present moment.

THE VERSATILITY OF HAPPINESS CHOICES

Fact is, the responses depended on whether people chose the small moments of life or life as a whole, and their place of origin. Although the pursuit of happiness is so essential as to be called an inalienable right, the type of happiness people choose is and always will be surprisingly malleable.

The fact is that the pursuit of happiness in the workplace is a complex and multifaceted challenge, reflecting the diversity of people and their cultures.

Perceptions of happiness vary among individuals, influenced by factors such as personal values, cultural perspectives, and the duration of the time horizon. However, the key to success in the corporate environment lies in recognizing that these perspectives are not mutually exclusive. They can be integrated to create a healthy and motivating environment. Instead of imposing a single definition of happiness, creating an environment that values and integrates both perspectives is fundamental.

REFLECTIONS ON THE COMPLEXITY OF HAPPINESS AT WORK AND THE ROLE OF THE CHO

Acting as a Chief Happiness Officer (CHO) means entering a labyrinth of emotions and feelings in the organizational world. The pursuit of employee happiness is a journey that challenges us to explore the depths of human experiences, a plural enigma that deserves careful analysis. In other words, imagine yourself in an organizational world where each individual is a unique universe of experiences, values, and aspirations. In this scenario, the pursuit of happiness at work becomes a journey full of mysteries, a quest that leads us through winding paths and challenges our understanding.

As mentioned in earlier chapters of this ebook, happiness cannot be confined to spreadsheets or measured with numbers, nor can it be easily explained or defined. It is a deeply personal experience, rooted in a web of factors ranging from interpersonal relationships to a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

So, when we question employees about their perception of happiness in the workplace, we encounter a rich tangle of responses, each reflecting the uniqueness of their experiences.

Let's reflect on the example of the company mentioned earlier, which heavily invested in wellness programs in hopes of ensuring the happiness of its employees. Despite its efforts, the company found itself facing a dilemma: stagnant engagement levels and high employee turnover. I ask again: What went wrong?

If you believe there is a simple and universal answer to the pursuit of happiness in the workplace, you are completely mistaken. The complexity of happiness in the organizational context transcends the idea of a ready-made formula or a shortcut to complete satisfaction. It is an intricate journey, deeply rooted in individual perspectives and influenced by the cultural nuances that shape the company's identity. In organizations, happiness is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a reflection of the organizational culture that permeates its reality. It is intertwined with attitudes and values that extend from the highest executive level to leadership in the most basic echelons of the company. Happiness at work is about valuing each employee, recognizing their contributions, and providing a genuine sense of belonging.

In this sense, it is worth understanding the difference between emphasis on happiness and emphasis on well-being, and this is crucial to deeply explore the complexities of the workplace and individual experiences. Where the company mentioned probably went wrong. Since these two perspectives offer distinct yet interconnected approaches to the pursuit of a more meaningful and fulfilled life.

In the case of the mentioned company, it becomes clear that the emphasis on happiness often revolves around the pursuit of positive emotions, moments of joy, and immediate contentment. It's a perspective that values instant gratification, maximizing pleasant experiences, and minimizing discomfort. It's akin to chasing the feeling of happiness that arises from savoring a delicious meal, spending time with loved ones, or achieving a personal goal. However, from what I've witnessed, this approach has its limitations. It overlooked the importance of long-term balance and cultivating a deeper sense of meaning and purpose in life. The relentless pursuit of momentary happiness can sometimes lead to impulsive decisions or avoiding challenging situations that, in the long run, could be beneficial for personal growth.

On the other hand, the emphasis on well-being is a more holistic and comprehensive perspective. It acknowledges that well-being extends beyond just the pursuit of momentary happiness but involves caring for all aspects of life, including physical, emotional, mental, and social health. It's an approach that considers balance as fundamental. Well-being involves taking care of mental health, adopting a healthy lifestyle, investing in self-development, and building meaningful relationships. It entails recognizing that life is a journey that includes both moments of happiness and challenges. Developing emotional resilience and the ability to face these challenges is an essential part of well-being.

One of the key distinctions between the emphasis on happiness and the emphasis on well-being is that the latter considers a sense of purpose and fulfillment as fundamental elements. This means that well-being goes beyond the pursuit of positive emotions in the present moment and extends to cultivating a life that has meaning and contribution.

Integrating both perspectives can be highly beneficial. This implies recognizing the importance of momentary happiness but also investing in the development of internal resources that promote resilience and the ability to face challenges. It means seeking a balance between the pursuit of immediate gratification and the cultivation of a deeper purpose.

For companies, this translates into creating work environments that promote a sense of belonging as well as employee well-being. This may include wellness programs, support for mental health, learning and development opportunities, and the promotion of a culture that values both happiness in the moment and long-term growth.

I want you to understand that integrating these perspectives can lead to a richer, more balanced, and more meaningful life (of Being), where the pursuit of happiness is not the focus and becomes only a complement to the development of sustainable well-being. It is a journey that recognizes the complexity of human experiences and seeks to create an environment where people can chart their own path towards personal fulfillment and flourishing.

This is why healthy work environments are intrinsically related to collaboration and respect for the uniqueness of each individual in a truly diverse environment. Integrity plays a vital role, as mutual trust is the foundation upon which healthy relationships are built. It is important to recognize that the pursuit of happiness at work is not limited to a single perspective.

This implies a clear and objective differentiation between "Being Happy In Your Life" and "Being Happy About Your Life". While these perspectives may seem interchangeable, as previously seen, they carry deep and distinct implications.

It's worth remembering that "Being Happy In Your Life" refers to seeking happiness in the present moment, valuing everyday experiences and immediate satisfaction. On the other hand, "Being Happy About Your Life" encompasses a broader search that extends throughout one's professional journey, incorporating a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and significant contribution. Understanding and integrating both perspectives are essential for creating a healthy and motivating work environment. This means that companies should foster a culture that allows employees to pursue happiness on a daily basis while also encouraging them to consider the meaning of their contributions in the long run.

Ultimately, happiness in the workplace is not a final destination but rather a continuous journey. It is shaped by the complex interplay of values, human relationships, organizational culture, leadership, and management. Therefore, Chief Happiness Officers (CHOs) play a crucial role in leading this journey, creating an environment where people can chart their own path in pursuit of their uniqueness at work, thereby contributing to the lasting success of the organization. However, this does not mean that the responsibility for promoting the happiness and well-being of employees should not be shared by all levels of leadership and only by the CHO, quite the contrary.

Therefore, it is important to recognize that the CHO plays a fundamental role in seeking to integrate these perspectives. More than imposing a model for the pursuit of happiness, the CHO should promote an environment where employees can explore and express their own versions of the feeling.

This requires a deep understanding of the choices each person has in the short and long term, as well as the cultural influence on those choices, but at the same time, everyone is a stakeholder in this journey.

Recalling that in the study presented, professionals from different cultures were questioned about their happiness choices. The results revealed surprising complexity. Americans often prioritized momentary happiness, while others preferred a more lasting and meaningful happiness. These choices varied based on culture, but also on short and long-term perspectives.

Furthermore, the research showed that people tend to postpone happiness for future goals. Although this is necessary at certain times in life, it is vital to recognize that chronically postponing happiness can cause us to miss important opportunities that are also sources of joy and fulfillment. These reflections remind us that the pursuit of happiness at work is an intricate and multifaceted challenge, reflecting the diversity of people and cultures. The key to success lies in recognizing that these perspectives are not mutually exclusive. They can be integrated to create a healthy and motivating environment.

The CHO, in this context, should promote a culture of flexibility, recognizing that each employee is unique and has their own needs and aspirations. Encourage open communication and support the balance between professional and personal demands. After all we've seen so far, let it be clear that the pursuit of happiness at work is the least important thing. What I intend to make clear is that employees should see themselves within a dynamic journey of a healthy organizational climate that evolves over time.

The CHO plays a fundamental role in building a work environment where the focus is on a genuine and meaningful mission. After all, workplace happiness transcends motivational slogans and superficial smiles.

It's a quest that challenges us to understand the complexities of human experiences and deep-seated values. Therefore, the CHO serves as a guide on this journey, fostering an environment where individuals can forge their own path in pursuit of their uniqueness at work, recognizing that this is more than just a corporate ideal—it's a true quest for well-being and personal fulfillment.

Understanding the impact of happiness in companies is a journey that leads us through a series of complex, interconnected, and profound questions. Stepping into the corporate world is like venturing into a multifaceted territory, where each employee is a universe of experiences, values, and aspirations. That's why organizational culture must never be forgotten. It's the primary pillar of this journey, playing a fundamental role. It shapes not only the company's identity but also what each employee can expect from it. A culture that promotes transparency, open communication, and mutual respect creates fertile ground for happiness to flourish.



However, when the culture is permeated by rigid hierarchies and lacks inclusion, happiness will only serve to further generate a toxic environment.

That's why organizational climate, a momentary reflection of culture, also comes into play. It manifests in the attitudes and satisfaction of employees. A positive climate, characterized by trust and cooperation, contributes to happiness at work. On the other hand, a toxic climate, marked by constant conflicts, undermines happiness.

Emotional freedom and emotional intelligence are essential skills in this journey. When employees feel free to express their emotions and develop the ability to manage them, it strengthens their happiness at work. Additionally, human relationships play a crucial role. Authentic and positive connections with colleagues create a sense of belonging and support, nurturing the best in each individual.

Now, attempting to impose false happiness, ignoring problems or needs of employees, creates relationships that undermine trust. Leadership and management play critical roles in promoting this environment. Leaders who demonstrate empathy and emotional intelligence skills have a direct impact on employee happiness.


In concluding today's reflection on "What happiness do employees value most?" it becomes clear that the complexity of happiness in the workplace and the fundamental role of the Chief Happiness Officer (CHO) are evident. The pursuit of happiness is a secondary journey compared to the complexity that shapes the well-being of employees, molded by individual and cultural perspectives.

Furthermore, it involves the differentiation between "Being Happy In Your Life" and "Being Happy About Your Life," two perspectives that may seem interchangeable but carry profound implications.

Well-being encompasses not only momentary happiness but also the sense of purpose, meaning, and fulfillment, bringing along the continuous feeling that the pursued path makes sense, has value. Therefore, companies that prioritize the well-being of their employees, allowing them to engage in meaningful activities, identify with the organization, and feel part of something larger, are more likely to create work environments where well-being is an intrinsic part of the organizational DNA.

This approach not only promotes short-term well-being but also contributes to building a solid and sustainable organizational culture. It recognizes the importance of creating an environment where employees feel valued, respected, and part of something significant.

Thus, the pursuit of happiness at work becomes a genuine and meaningful mission that truly makes sense, where the CHO plays a fundamental role in building a work environment where people can chart their own path in search of their uniqueness at work. This goes beyond motivational slogans and superficial smiles; it is a quest for well-being, personal fulfillment, and a purpose that transcends everyday corporate life.



**WORK
HARD
DREAM
BIG**

A rectangular wooden sign with a black border is mounted on a brick wall. The sign is divided into three vertical sections by two thin wooden strips. The text 'WORK HARD DREAM BIG' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered on the sign. The words are arranged in four lines: 'WORK', 'HARD', 'DREAM', and 'BIG'. The background of the sign is a light-colored, textured material, possibly paper or fabric, with some darker, rectangular patches visible behind the text.

CHAPTER 4

HUMAN RELATIONS

"In our tireless pursuit of happiness, at some point we will discover that as we unravel the mysteries of existence, the simplest answers are the most relevant, and often reside in the human connections we cultivate, the relationships we build, and the harmony we find in the balance between what we do that is useful and what we become responsible for. But in the end, the true wealth of a life lies in the quality of the bonds we weave, because, after all, and without any doubt, we are beings defined by the connections we form." (Marcello de Souza)

Before we delve into this final chapter of the four-part series on "Happiness in Organizations," it is worth remembering that the first one begins precisely with an understanding of the CHO (Chief Happiness Officer) within organizations, and clearly understanding that, contrary to popular belief, happiness is not, or at least should not be, the primary focus of a CHO. In the second part, I seek to clarify the "Hidden Weight of Happiness," where I provide a reflective approach to the meaning of happiness, leading to the understanding that happiness in companies is not just a goal to be achieved, but a continuous process of personal and organizational growth and that, indeed, a healthy environment can be less about how to be happy and more about how to live with purpose, authenticity, and gratitude.

In the third part, I seek to provoke your reflection on "What Happiness Do Employees Value Most?" Here, I explore the complexity of happiness in the workplace and the crucial role of the Chief Happiness Officer (CHO) in this journey.

Throughout it, I delve into two fundamental perspectives: Being Happy In Your Life and Being Happy About Your Life, highlighting how these views intertwine and influence employees' pursuit of happiness. Finally, today I want to wrap up this entire journey in a very objective manner and make it clear that it all boils down to something as trivial, yet as forgotten, as can be.

In this final chapter, I want to make you understand that yes, the pursuit of happiness is a journey that permeates our existence, and its influence on organizations is a central theme today for the vital health of a company. However, now I want to provoke insights from a study that spans decades and generations of researchers: the Harvard Study of Adult Development.

In this extensive and structured study, which is still ongoing, it was initiated in 1938 under the leadership of four different directors and continues to shed light on fundamental issues related to well-being, development, and happiness. Currently, the research is in its second generation, following the children of the original participants. The study emphasizes that the key to a happier and healthier life is not a complex secret but something deeply rooted in our daily experience.

Dr. Robert Waldinger, a renowned professor of psychiatry at Harvard University, compiled these findings in his book, "The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness." In it, the author highlights the importance of healthy interpersonal relationships and their direct influence on life satisfaction.

For 85 years, researchers at Harvard University in the United States have been seeking an answer. The Study of Adult Development began in 1938, analyzing 700 young men, including students from the prestigious university and residents of poor neighborhoods in Boston.

The research followed these young men throughout their lives, monitoring their mental, physical, and emotional states. The study now continues with over a thousand men and women, the children of the original participants. The current director of the study, the fourth since its inception, is American psychiatrist Robert Waldinger, who is also a Zen priest. His TED talk "What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness" went viral on the internet. The conference video has been downloaded over 45 million times.

"There are many conclusions from this study," Waldinger said in an interview. "But the fundamental one, which we hear time and time again, is that what matters to keep us happy and healthy throughout life is the quality of our relationships."

Notably, it becomes clear that cultivating reciprocal relationships, where there are sincere exchanges, instinctively generates in us, humans, a need for mutual support and space for behavioral growth.

Neuroscientifically speaking, this process contributes to the production of certain neurotransmitters fundamental to building the feeling of happiness, helps build a solid foundation for facing challenges and crises, and maintaining a healthy balance between professional and personal life.



Additionally, good relationships not only increase our emotional well-being but also reduce stress levels in our lives. They provide us with the necessary support to face difficulties and challenging situations with more resilience.

"What we found is that, in the case of people who are most satisfied in their relationships, more connected to others, their bodies and brains stay healthier for longer" (Robert Waldinger).

This increase in life satisfaction demonstrates that contrary to conventional assumptions, wealth and fame are not the primary drivers of happiness, but rather the quality of the relationships we cultivate. Based on concrete data and real stories from study participants, Dr. Waldinger offers valuable insights to rethink our priorities and adopt a more mindful approach to seeking a fulfilling and meaningful life. It is worth noting that the conclusions of the "Harvard Study of Adult Development" are supported by a series of additional studies.

These studies, along with many other scientific disciplines such as social psychology, cognitive behavioral therapy, and neuroscience, confirm that people who enjoy healthy interpersonal relationships tend to report greater satisfaction with their lives. This link between relationships and happiness is universal, transcending cultures and ages, and provides a clear view of the undeniable power of interpersonal bonds.

In this final article, we will delve deeper into the fundamental role of interpersonal relationships in determining happiness and highlight the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life. After all, the key to a happier and healthier life lies in the human connections we cultivate.

BUILDING HAPPINESS

How many times in life have we heard that "money doesn't buy happiness"? It's a cliché from any self-help book. However, with this study and the advancement of behavioral research, it has been shown that there is more than just a justification for the complacent; there is some truth in that statement. Whether in studies of social psychology, behavioral psychology, or neuroscience, today we can say categorically that money, while playing a role in our well-being, is not the only determining factor.

Having a substantial amount of money or fame does not have a direct correlation with happiness, but it is important to note that poverty can negatively affect satisfaction with life. While someone's basic needs are not met, finding happiness and fulfillment in life can be a difficult task.

However, once essential needs such as food, housing, and education are met, the pursuit of earning more money does not significantly contribute to a happier life. Herein lies the importance of nurturing and cultivating meaningful relationships, from personal ones to more superficial ones with colleagues. It is these connections that provide the emotional support and meaning we often seek in life.

In fact, one of the great lessons from the "Harvard Study of Adult Development" is that the true wealth of a life lies in the quality of the relationships we build, in the balance between work and leisure, and in understanding that money, while important for meeting basic needs, is not the only factor that influences our happiness and well-being.

As we continue our quest for a more meaningful life, these conclusions remind us, or should remind us, to value what truly matters: our connections with others.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

When we bring these studies into organizations, we can understand the importance of the workspace and how it impacts our lives. The corporate world is often described as a complex ecosystem, with numerous variables influencing performance, employee satisfaction, and talent retention. One of these factors, often underestimated, is the impact of interpersonal relationships in the workplace. As we explore this topic, it becomes clear that connections between employees play an essential role in establishing a healthy organizational climate, which, in turn, is crucial for effective productivity and corporate goal achievement.

As seen in the last three articles I published on "Organizational Happiness," the organizational climate of a company refers to the emotional atmosphere that permeates the workplace. This climate is influenced by various factors, such as leadership, communication, corporate culture, and, as we will highlight, interpersonal relationships. A healthy climate is a springboard for employee satisfaction. Employees who feel supported, valued, and connected to their coworkers are more likely to perform their duties with enthusiasm and commitment. This, in turn, has a direct impact on productivity and the quality of work.

It's no wonder that much more than satisfaction, talent retention is a critical concern for any company. Employees who have healthy relationships at work and feel part of a cohesive team are less likely to seek opportunities elsewhere. This reduces turnover and saves valuable resources in training and recruiting new hires. Investing in building strong interpersonal relationships, therefore, can have a significant impact on the stability of a company's workforce.

The fact is that the results presented by this extensive study on happiness have real importance in alerting us that positive interpersonal relationships are the essence of life, and in the workplace, it couldn't be different, as they also promote collaboration and productivity. When employees feel comfortable sharing ideas, working as a team, and supporting each other, the environment becomes conducive to innovation and efficiency. This results in more creative solutions, more effective problem-solving, and a more harmonious teamwork.



HOW TO CULTIVATE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE

"A good life is not the destination, but the journey and with whom you walk... And by doing this, second by second, you can decide who and what you give your attention to" (Robert Waldinger)

So, how can companies promote healthy interpersonal relationships in the workplace? Perhaps the first question to ask is how would your life be if that coworker didn't do those things or if that person wasn't in your life? This is what I mean when I ask my clients about "acknowledging someone for doing something good," for doing something that, if they weren't in your life, would make you feel unhappy.

Let's explore some profound ideas that not only highlight the importance of relationships and their impact on companies but also demonstrate that it is possible to elevate the climate and organizational culture to a level of harmony in relationships.

For this, it is crucial to understand that a workplace is much more than just the place where tasks are performed; it is an ever-evolving ecosystem. It is the space where people spend most of their time, performing their duties, and, equally important, building human connections. Healthy work environments not only drive employee success and satisfaction but also have a positive impact on their lives, contributing to their well-being. On the other hand, toxic environments have a negative impact on both the quality of life and well-being of employees and on the final results of companies.

We began, since the first article in this series, acknowledging that it all starts with leadership. Therefore, I reinforce here that leaders and managers play a critical role in setting the tone and shaping an environment that reflects the company's culture. As discussed, in healthy environments, communication is open, and corporate goals and values are based on principles of respect, empathy, and inclusion. On the other hand, toxic environments cast a shadow over employees, manifesting in various ways, from chronic stress to job dissatisfaction, and even impacting mental health.

Toxicity in the workplace is associated with high levels of employee turnover. This compromises productivity, affects team morale, and hampers the ability to attract and retain quality talent, resulting in financial costs and a decline in the quality of the final product. The causes of toxic work environments are diverse, but all share the ability to undermine workplace dynamics. However, fundamentally, the common cause is a failure in communication, often hindered by unresolved conflicts, misunderstandings, and a culture that values secrecy. This toxic atmosphere permeates the environment and negatively impacts everyone involved.

IDENTIFICATION AND COMBATTING THE CAUSES

To combat toxic work environments, it is essential to identify and address their underlying causes. This begins with conscious and ethical leadership, which promotes a culture of open and respectful communication. It is essential for leaders to be aware of the negative effects that toxicity can have and actively work to create a healthy work environment.

Furthermore, organizations can invest in wellness and mental health programs, providing resources and emotional support to employees. Promoting awareness of the importance of mental health in the workplace and providing conflict management training are also valuable steps.

Inadequate leadership is also a critical factor. Leaders who do not demonstrate empathy, fail to provide emotional support, or do not uphold ethical standards or respect differences and rules within the organizational structure can create a toxic environment. Employees feel undervalued, neglected, and demotivated under inadequate leadership. Lack of emotional support is another underlying cause. Work environments where employees' mental and emotional health is not taken seriously can quickly become toxic. Constant pressure, overwork, and the absence of mental health support programs are alarming indicators of a harmful work culture. But how can we foster harmony in the workplace?

STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In this regard, understand that leadership, when dedicated to being inspirational, becomes the cornerstone of healthy interpersonal relationships. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, integrity, and a commitment to the well-being of their teams create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated. Inspiring confidence and providing a positive example are crucial for fostering healthy relationships in the workplace.

Fostering happiness in companies is not a simple task, but it is essential for the success and productivity of organizations. There are several ways to create an environment conducive to organizational happiness:

- **Supportive and Collaborative Culture:** Companies can foster a culture of support and collaboration by encouraging the development of healthy relationships among colleagues and superiors. This involves promoting open communication, mutual respect, and support during challenging times.
- **Personal and Professional Development:** Offering opportunities for personal and professional development helps employees to grow and feel valued. Investing in the development of skills and careers of employees contributes to their satisfaction.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Companies can promote a healthy work-life balance by recognizing the importance of employees having time for their families and interests outside of work.
- **Recognition and Gratitude:** Recognizing hard work and expressing gratitude to employees is essential. Recognition creates an environment where employees feel valued and motivated.
- **Health and Well-being:** Encouraging health and well-being practices, such as exercise, healthy eating, and stress management, contributes to employee happiness.

- **Inclusion and Diversity:** Valuing diversity and promoting an inclusive culture helps build stronger relationships and fosters happiness among all employees.

I know it may seem so trivial, but these are aspects that are routinely overlooked and continuously underrated. By adopting these strategies, organizations help create a healthy and harmonious work environment, promoting solid interpersonal relationships that will benefit both employees and the company itself. Therefore, on the path to a more meaningful life, remember to value what truly matters: our connections with others.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL HARMONY

Before we conclude this journey, I must emphasize that you understand not only the importance of interpersonal relationships in the workplace, which is undeniable and highlighted by the study presented since the first article and deeply researched as I describe at the beginning of this work. However, as a behavioral developer, I must draw attention and warn that direct, in-person human contact is an essential part of this equation.

Although technology has its role in modern work dynamics, physical human contact plays an irreplaceable role. It's important to understand that face-to-face personal contact is crucial for creating genuine connections and solid relationships in the workplace.

Even though technology has enabled faster communication, it doesn't replace the richness of personal interactions. In-person human contact is essential for building trust, empathy, and rapport. Moreover, personal relationships at work are more likely to develop bonds that extend beyond the workplace. Personal connection allows colleagues to know each other on a deeper level, sharing interests, challenges, and triumphs outside the office. These broader relationships strengthen the foundation of collaboration and understanding in the workplace.

Therefore, understand that interpersonal relationships in the workplace should be nurtured and valued, and this includes recognizing the fundamental role of direct human contact. Organizations that prioritize personal connections are better positioned to promote a healthy work environment where employees feel supported, valued, and, above all, connected on a human level. The pursuit of healthy relationships at work is thus a quest for genuine, personal, and human connections that transcend the limitations of technology.

FINALLY,

We have come to the end of this journey of four chapters focused on understanding and reflecting on "Happiness in Organizations." But I still want to use this final part of the article to recall another passage from Dr. Waldinger's book mentioned here, in which he brings up something very important to end this journey, and it has to do with regret. In his book, he reminds us that when participants reached 80 years old, they were asked the following question: when you look back on your life, what do you regret the most? There were two major regrets.

One of them was something like: "I wish I hadn't spent so much time at work and had spent more time with the people I love." So, there's a reason for that well-known cliché that "no one on their deathbed wishes they had spent more time in the office." The other regret particularly expressed by women was: "I wish I hadn't spent so much time worrying about what other people think."

In this regard, I want to leave you with something to ponder on how you're building your relationships. Today, I can say that, like Dr. Waldinger, among my regrets is precisely the little time I spent with loved ones and how much I worried about what others thought. May this serve as a powerful reminder that, at the end of our journeys, no one would wish they had spent more time in the office than with the people who truly matter. Just as our concerns about the judgment of others are often a burden that prevents us from seeking genuine happiness in organizations. It's essential to reflect on how we balance our professional and personal lives, ensuring that the time spent at work doesn't prevent us from taking care of ourselves and nurturing meaningful relationships with our loved ones.

I hope that, at the end of this last chapter, it's possible to understand that the secret lies in balancing the promotion between professional and personal life. I refer to the ability to balance the demands of work with personal life, allowing employees to take care of themselves, their families, and their personal interests.

Having a proper balance is crucial to avoid burnout, reduce stress, and maintain mental and physical health. Employees who feel overwhelmed with professional responsibilities without time to take care of themselves often face health issues, demotivation, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships at work.

Organizations that recognize the importance of work-life balance are adopting policies that promote employee well-being. This includes offering flexible work hours, the option of remote work, and implementing wellness programs that cover everything from physical activities and support for mental health to parental leave policies. These initiatives demonstrate that the organization cares about the well-being of its employees.

Work-life balance not only benefits the individual but also strengthens interpersonal relationships at work. Employees who have time to attend to their personal and family needs are more likely to enter the workplace with a positive attitude. They are less likely to bring stress and personal issues to work, creating a more harmonious environment.

Furthermore, flexibility in work allows employees to participate in social and leisure activities, which promotes building relationships outside the workplace. These personal connections often translate into stronger and more collaborative relationships at work.

ust as, don't forget, leadership is a reflection of organizational culture, consequently, of organizational climate. It plays a crucial role in promoting the balance between professional and personal life. Leaders who model this balance send a clear message that caring for personal life is acceptable and encouraged. Leaders who support flexibility and well-being of their employees create an environment where balance is valued and, in turn, promote healthier interpersonal relationships.

I also hope that as we come to the end of this exploration on understanding the impact of "Happiness in Organizations", it is clear that it all comes down to relationships within the workplace. It is essential to reflect on how human connections shape not only our experience at work but also our overall quality of life. Understanding the importance of interpersonal relationships is the first step to improving both employee satisfaction and organizational performance. Now is the time to adopt policies and practices that prioritize the cultivation of positive relationships in the workplace and create a healthy environment for all involved.

Similarly, I hope that from this sequence of specific chapters on happiness, the role of the CHO (Chief Happiness Officer) and its responsibilities become clear, which are not merely a matter of convenience or courtesy; they are fundamental to structuring an organizational environment that values our health and well-being. In this sense, it is worth remembering that we spend a significant part of our lives at work, and the quality of those hours can influence all other areas of our lives. Healthy relationships at work not only make us feel more valued and supported but also have a direct impact on our mental, physical, and emotional health.

It's time for organizations to take responsibility for creating work environments where human relationships are valued and prioritized. This implies inspiring leadership, effective communication, support for diversity and inclusion, and policies that promote work-life balance, and all of this is the joint responsibility of the CHO (Chief Happiness Officer).

By doing so, organizations can expect a more motivated, creative, and productive workforce. Satisfied and committed employees not only thrive at work but also contribute to the overall success of the organization.

A good Chief Happiness Officer will never doubt that workplace relationships are the backbone of healthy organizations and happy employees. Understanding and embracing the importance of human connections in the workplace is the first step to creating an environment where everyone can thrive. Now is the time to adopt policies and practices that prioritize the cultivation of healthy interpersonal relationships and create a work environment that benefits both individuals and organizations as a whole. The pursuit of healthy relationships at work is an ongoing journey, but the fruits of these efforts make each endeavor valuable and rewarding.



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Eu, Marcello de Souza, tenho dedicado minha vida a explorar as interseções entre o desenvolvimento cognitivo comportamental e organizacional, sempre buscando formas inovadoras de aplicar esses conhecimentos para melhorar a vida de indivíduos e organizações.

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Este é apenas o começo. Juntos, podemos explorar novas fronteiras do conhecimento e aplicá-las de maneira que faça a diferença real no mundo. Agradeço por me acompanhar até aqui e espero continuar essa jornada juntos.

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