

HAPPINESS LEADS TO HIGH PERFORMANCE

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Happiness is underrated. People think that happiness is a luxury that busy working people cannot afford. Worse yet, they think that happiness is trivial and not worth discussing. The fact is that happiness is a key driver for good health and high performance. There is nothing trivial about that.

Happiness is a health issue. Years of medical research have shown that happy people are healthier and suffer less from depression or stress-related ailments than their unhappy counterparts. Happiness actually regulates the heart's rhythm and puts the body into a synchronized state that optimizes the functions of the entire body. No matter what you do, you will do it better and have more energy and stamina to do it if you are happy.

Happiness is also a performance issue. Companies across industries are demanding outstanding performance from their employees. And people who are concerned about keeping their jobs know that the better they perform, the better chance they have to stay employed. Happiness and working to your strengths are the two biggest contributors to high personal performance.

Working to your strengths requires that you pay attention to the activities at work that energize you and those that drain you. Once you are able to specifically identify them, you can begin to find ways to shift more minutes each week toward the activities that energize you, and you can find strategies to make those dreaded activities less draining. Marcus Buckingham has developed a simple but highly effective approach to help people maximize their strength

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at work. Working to your strengths means that work will be more fun and more rewarding. But it takes discipline to do it. First, you need the self-awareness to know which activities are your strengths because they energize you and which are your weaknesses because they drain you. Then you need to learn to talk about them with your colleagues at work. Tell them which activities you really enjoy and volunteer for projects that let you do more of those activities. Finally, you need to find practical strategies to minimize the time you spend on your weaknesses, those activities that drain you. It may be that you can team up with someone who loves to do what you hate to do. Or maybe you can change the way you perceive the dreaded task to make it less draining. For example, if you love serving clients but hate to fill out forms, think of the forms as an extension of your client service. It probably won't make you enjoy the administrative form-filling task, but it could take it from draining to neutral.

Research has shown that teams in which people work to their strengths most of the time are high-performing, happy teams. There are many ways to attain short-term high performance, but sustained high-performance levels are driven by happiness. Happiness breeds success, not the other way around.

There is a myth that happiness is a function of luck. Some people seem to lead charmed lives, and if you are not one of those people, you are destined not to be very happy. In fact, happiness is a discipline. It is like good health. Without it, you will be alive but you won't be your best at home or at work. You control your own

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happiness much like you control your physical fitness. Happy people cultivate certain habits and practices that help them lead happy lives at work and at home—and often despite the trials and tribulations of their lives.

If you manage a team of people, consider the value of engaging each of them so that they work to their strengths most of the time. You will reap the benefits of a highly motivated, highly productive team of happy people. If, as an individual, your goal is to be your best at work and at home, it needs to start with happiness. Our formula for happiness is simple:

H = Health. Take care of your physical and emotional health. Get enough sleep, stay hydrated, and make time each week to do something that re-energizes you.

A = Adaptable. Change is inevitable. If you are clear about your values and your strengths, you will be able to weather change without too much anxiety.

P = Proud of your work. Find meaning in your work and focus on that instead of on the trivial ups and downs. Not every day will be fun, but, if you stay focused on the positive, you will find work to be very satisfying.

P = Proud of your family. Raising a family should not be a competitive sport. Look for the good in each family member and tell them what you see.

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Y = Young at heart. Find joy in the small things and don't take yourself too seriously. We tend to find what we are looking for, so look for the good in people.

Happiness is important because it underlies and colors everything we do, from the way we do our job to the way we raise our children. To be happy, you don't need to be rich or beautiful. You need to understand the components of a happy life and then cultivate them every day. You need to prioritize your happiness. Happiness, as a health and performance factor, is important for everyone. For working parents, it is doubly important. If you want to raise happy children into happy adults, you need to show them what a happy adult looks like.

About the Authors



Cathy L. Greenberg, Ph.D., is an author, speaker, and master-certified personal and executive coach whose mission is to help individuals and organizations apply the new science of happiness to achieve “Happiness=Profit.” She is coauthor of *What Happy Companies Know* (with Dan Baker and Collins Hemingway) and *What Happy Women Know* (with Dan Baker and Ina Yalof). She is also the creator of the breakthrough coaching program *The Power of Performance Coaching*.



Barrett S. Avigdor, J.D., is an international lawyer, talent development innovator, and certified career coach. She is Director of Legal Talent Strategy at Accenture, a leading global management consulting and outsourcing company.

About Carolyn Kepcher



“We are thrilled to offer insights from our Work Her Way Experts to the millions of career women who seek credible advice for their career development,” Kepcher said recently. “Short content is the perfect format for those seeking answers in a quick and easy-to-read format.”

Kepcher has earned a solid reputation as a thought leader on business and, in particular, women in business. She authored the best-selling business book *Carolyn 101* and currently writes the weekly “Your Career” column for *The New York Daily News*, which addresses business, career, and balance.

Kepcher is the founder and CEO of WorkHerWay.com, an Internet destination providing advice and answers to women in the workplace. Kepcher works with more than 150 contributing authors and experts to make Work Her Way a comprehensive resource for career and life skills.

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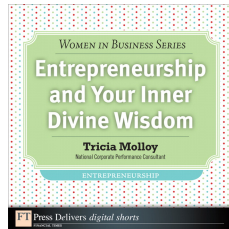
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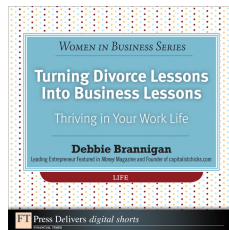
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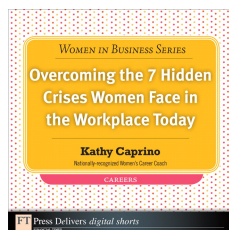
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