

The Worklife Journey: Journal

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Welcome to the WorklifeOnline Ezine! That's a mouthful but we at WorkLife Performance Consulting hope that you find the thoughts, comments and information useful as well as helpful and sometimes entertaining.

Each month, we plan to send you an issue devoted to a topic of importance to your development. We will address Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Communication, Strategy and Motivation to name just a few big ones. We will alternate each month between a focus on Business/Workplace Coaching and Life/Personal Coaching topics. We will work to keep you up to speed on the latest books & articles as well as give you food for thought and creativity vitamins. As always, we will include insights into managing yourself and others and enrich your understanding of what drives you onward as well as what gets in your way.

Hopefully, we will also have guest visits from Dr. Squish, the Workplace Wizard, and his research on fun in the workplace as well as guest authors on a variety of innovative topics. In short, we hope to be your eCoach and give you the executive summary of executive summaries.

So, we hope you enjoy this, our inaugural issue on the Art of Positive Emotions and the importance of Optimism in leadership and workplace effectiveness.

Please feel free to forward this to anyone you think will find it of interest, send us any comments or suggestions and/or tell us to get lost if you don't want more clutter in your email (unsubscribe at the bottom of the page). Please join us in our mission to build a stronger sense of community in Work & Life!

The Art of Positive Emotions

The ability to inspire positive feelings in others is a key leadership quality. When people feel good, they work better, are more creative and more productive. Good feelings are like lubrication to the brain—mental efficiency goes up, memory is sharpened, people can understand directions and make better decisions.

One study of 62 CEOs and their top management teams assessed how upbeat they were—how enthusiastic, energetic and determined they were. They were also asked how much conflict and tumult the top team experienced in the form of personality clashes, anger and friction in meetings and emotional conflicts (in contrast to disagreements about ideas). The study found that the more positive the overall moods of people in the top management team, the more cooperatively they worked together—and the better the company's business results. The longer a company was run by a management team that did not get along, the poorer that company's market returns.

Balancing Feeling Good with Results

The challenge for leaders is obtaining a balance between workers feeling good, having satisfying relationships, and keeping their focus on performance goals. The ability of a leader to foster group enthusiasm can determine its success. Conversely, emotional conflicts in a group take time, attention and energy away from shared tasks and performance suffers.

Executive coaching can help a leader communicate feelings that are realistic and authentic, maintain positive emotions in the face of stressful challenges, and inspire energy and enthusiasm. Practicing an attitude of realistic optimism can help a leader increase the ability to experience and sustain positive emotions.

Common wisdom would predict that employees who feel good will likely make more efforts to please customers, thus, produce increased revenues. Since emotions are contagious, then all leaders, whether CEO, manager or head of a team, have a larger responsibility for creating and sustaining moods of employees. Leaders can, by managing their own moods, drive service climate and influence employees to go the extra mile to satisfy customers.

Positive Climate and the Bottom Line

Studies have actually produced data to prove how important a positive climate is in creating good business results. At one insurance company, a researcher found that



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The ROI of a Smile

"So", I can hear you saying, "somebody finally did the research and proved what we already knew – being positive and optimistic actually does make the world a better place"! Or at least helps to make us think so. I tried it on myself just to be sure. When I was 10 years old, I mean. I guess I was into psychological research at an early age. My favorite Grandma died, my baby brother didn't make it when he was born early, my Dad went blind, my goldfish died...you get the picture. In the midst of what certainly seemed like the end of my little world, my aunt put a book (relatively new at the time – 1959!) in my hands and told me to read a little when I could find the time. It was called "The Power of Positive Thinking" and I had no idea what I was about to get into. Well, I read about affirmations and self talk and the ability of the human mind to achieve what it could believe and I was stunned! Could it all be that simple?

Well, it is 40 years later and I can attest to the fact that when I begin my day with a little positive self talk, take time to make a "gratitude" list and smile at the first five people I meet – the world miraculously seems a brighter place. In fact, those five people start

percent difference in insurance renewals – a seemingly small margin that made a huge difference to the business.

Another study shows that for every 1 percent improvement in the service climate, there's a 2 percent increase in revenue. According to Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee in Primal Leadership (2002), how people feel about working at a company can account for 20 to 30 percent of business performance.

smiling back and when I see them again after a few days, they still seem to want to return my "smile investment". The most amazing thing is that somehow that simple act of optimism from my aunt has turned into a part of a full time coaching career for me. Hmmmm.....I wonder if she knew something..... ?

Try a gratitude list or a smile investment today and see what happens. Get back to me with your research results. Email me at davidbutler@worklifeonline.com.

Leaders Drive Climate

Climate alone does not determine performance. The factors are notoriously complex. But if climate is such a big determinant, what then drives climate? According to well-documented research from both the Gallup Organization and the Hay Group, roughly 50 to 70 percent of how employees perceive their organization's climate can be traced to the actions of one person—the leader. More than anyone else, the person in charge creates the conditions that directly affect people's moods at work and ultimately their ability to work well together and create satisfied customers.

Leaders' emotions affect, to a much greater degree than was previously thought, how their people will feel and therefore perform. It becomes imperative that managers and leaders be actively self aware and manage their moods and feelings well, as their emotional intelligence becomes even more important at higher levels in the organizational hierarchy.

What can leaders do to increase positive emotions—enthusiasm, energy and engagement—in themselves and in the people who work for them?

Increasingly, companies are seeing the benefits of providing executive coaching to top managers and high performers. Many coaches have been trained in emotional intelligence, and are experienced in a variety of assessments and research, for example, those provided by the Hay Group, www.EISGlobal.com, or Birkman International, www.birkman.com.

In particular, there are two important concepts an executive coach considers when working on developing authenticity: optimism and realism.

The Importance of Being Optimistic – and the Pitfalls

A large body of research by Martin E.P. Seligman, a Pennsylvania psychologist, was put forth to the business world in 1990 in his landmark book, Learned Optimism. ([Click here to read article](#)) He found that just about everyone who has a propensity to be optimistic in their worldview tends to have greater success, better health and longer life. CEOs and leaders naturally skilled in optimism are often visionaries who inspire others through their ideas and positive enthusiasm.

This is not to mean that CEOs who project a Pollyanna view that everything's rosy in the corporation are wise. There have been enough corporate scandals in recent times to create healthy skepticism. Rather, a leader should speak openly and frankly, with realism. A leader must resonate honestly with those he or she leads and offer a clear picture of current reality while also upholding a compelling vision of a future state that is possible for us to see.

Optimism is necessary when motivating employees; however, it is dangerous when planning and forecasting. Realism is key when making decisions and committing large sums of money. An important article in Harvard Business Review; "Delusions of Success: How Optimism Undermines Executives' Decisions," (July 2003) underlines the dangers of "over-optimism" in corporate planning (Kahneman & Lovallo). An optimistic CFO could mean disaster for a company, just as a lack of optimism could undermine the visionary qualities essential for superior R & D and sales forces. Optimism, as part of one's emotional intelligence, is a competency that can be learned, practiced and acquired. Realism, on the other hand, usually comes from maturity and experience. Seeing things as they truly are while believing in what they could be is a powerful attribute of authentic leadership. Optimism and Realism in a dynamic balance create an organizational essential - Creative Tension - a concept we will discuss in a future issue.

The "Best of" Worklife

Movie	Book	Website
Jerry Maguire "Shut up and play the game, play it from the heart."	The Power of Positive Thinking By Norman Vincent Peale	De-Motivators A Little Anti-Positivity - and humor

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