

Highly fulfilled employees

How to encourage employee wellness and increase workplace contentment

INTERVIEWED BY JAYNE GEST

Workplace contentment, fulfillment or wellness may be intangible, but it will affect the growth and success of your business. When it's present, there are obvious, unmistakable signs, says Satinder Dhiman, Ph.D., Ed.D., associate dean of the School of Business, chair and director of the MBA Program and professor of management at Woodbury University.

"When you go into an organization, you can almost smell it," he says. "Being highly fulfilled takes a conscious decision; it's not something that just comes about."

Businesses have less absenteeism, turnover and stress leave when employees have a sense of belonging, enhanced contribution, and more engagement and trust.

Smart Business spoke with Dhiman about how to encourage highly fulfilled employees.

Why do executives need to be concerned with workplace contentment?

A recent Gallup survey found that 47 percent of employees feel disengaged, and when that's the case it will affect the bottom line. People just going through the motions are more likely to be absent and leave the company. There also are about, depending on the survey, 17 to 20 percent of employees who are positively disengaged.

Organizations are not just numbers, and you don't want to pursue profits in an unbridled manner. Remember that businesses are about people.

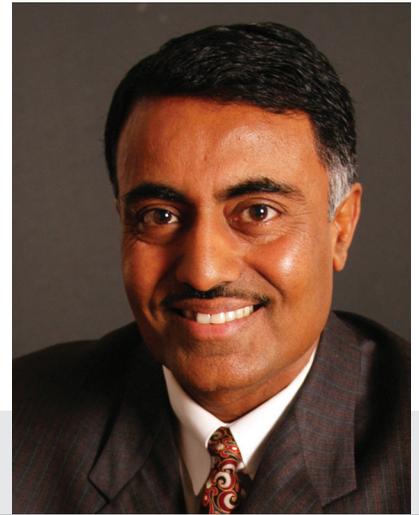
What are the characteristics of highly fulfilled employees?

These employees have a sense of ownership and commitment. They focus on what is right, are generally more appreciative and concentrate on making things work. They are aware of their contribution to the organization and know how it adds to the

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BOOK: More on this subject can be found in Satinder's new book, "Seven Habits of Highly Fulfilled People: Journey from Success to Significance." Find it on Amazon.



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bigger picture.

This then leads to high emotional intelligence. They are in better control of their own feelings, so they are better equipped to deal with the feelings of others. And better interaction leads to greater trust, which is the glue holding things together.

Research shows corporate communication failure happens not because the message was wrong, but because it was interpreted wrong. There was distrust of the messenger.

How can management increase workplace contentment?

A great employer will inspire employees through actions, not just words or slogans. To achieve this, approach employees in a holistic manner, appreciating all skills and ability. There's a joke that at his retirement party, an employee said, "For 40 years you paid me for my hands; you could have had my brain for free." Also, strive to create a culture of appreciation. Instead of catching people doing something wrong, catch people doing something right.

Fulfillment engages the body, mind and spirit. So, take a genuine interest in employees' well-being and what is happening with their emotional makeup. You want to help employees attain their dreams — send a few staff members to a local conference, provide tuition

reimbursement or be flexible on hours to allow them to go to class.

If employers support employee education, many fear employees will gain skills and leave. However, in addition to being more productive while working for you, think of the economy as a whole. You hire people who have been trained elsewhere. Your employees gain skills and go elsewhere. There is no real gain or loss. Of course, bonuses and pay raises don't hurt in terms of building trust and appreciation.

Why is personal fulfillment so important?

Workplace fulfillment is more likely when employers and employees are fulfilled in their own lives. It trickles down.

Attaining personal wellness comes from self-knowledge or understanding your purpose in life, as well as selfless service. Once those two pillars are in place, certain mental habits or gifts contribute and help create a sense of self-fulfillment. They are:

- Pure motivation.
- Gratitude.
- Generosity.
- Taking a vow of harmlessness.
- Acceptance.
- Mindfulness.

By focusing on each of these habits, you can create personal fulfillment. And, by sharing it with your employees, achieve organizational well-being. ●