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Stop Sickies and Make People Happy At Work

By Alan Fairweather

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If you're an employer or a manager then work place absence is costing you money, inconvenience, and upsetting your customers. And as we all know, not all days taken off work are due to genuine sickness. Many employees "take a sickie" because their morale is low and they just don't like or can't do their work.

The challenge for employers and managers is to make people happier at work. And if people are happy at work then they are less likely to take a day off every time they wake up with a stuffy nose. Some bosses think that paying more money, improving job security or working conditions is the answer. It isn't and it's also something that can be very hard to achieve.

People who employ or supervise other people need to become more tuned to their employees' emotional needs and find out what really motivates them. This is also much easier to achieve than paying more money or improving job security, however there is no quick fix. Some years ago I inherited a tele-sales operation with low staff morale and poor sales results. It took nearly a year to fix. The long-term benefits were of course worth it in terms of fewer days lost due to sickness and an increase in business.

To reduce the number of sickies there are four steps you need to consider. Firstly, pick the right person for the

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job. There's a television advertisement running at present for a recruitment company. It highlights the fact that many people are in the wrong job for their skills and attributes. The daft thing is that it was an employer or manager who put

them in the job in the first place. We need to get better at interviewing and selecting people. Take more time over it; pay more attention to the applicant's human side rather than their qualifications or experience. Get to know them better.

Find out what makes them happy, how well they get on with other people and how much energy and enthusiasm they have.

Make sure they know what they're getting into and be sure the job suits them.

A manager in the telecom industry was telling me about an engineer who was taking too many sickies. He was being blamed for a poor attitude to his work. His job involved working in tunnels under the city repairing and installing equipment. Eventually it was discovered that the poor guy was claustrophobic and was trying to deal with it on his own. He still works for the same team but in a job that doesn't involve small spaces. It's not always easy to move people, which emphasises the importance of getting it right in the first place.

Secondly, you need to believe in your people. If you've interviewed well and picked the right person for the job then you need to trust them to do that job. You need to constantly demonstrate to your people that you trust and believe in them by what you say, your tone of voice and your body language. If you believe that your people are not to be

trusted, that they're unable to make a decision without checking with you. That they'll turn up late and go home early, then that's exactly what they'll do. If on the other hand you believe that they'll do their job well, that they can be trusted to make decisions and they will give you a fair day's work, then it is more likely this is what you'll get. As with all theories there is no guarantee that it will work every time, however the majority of employees are reasonable people and if you treat them as such then they are more likely to behave in a positive manner.

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The third and probably the most important thing you can do to motivate your people is to give them feedback and coach them. This is where so many employers and managers fall down in dealing with their people; we are hopeless at giving feedback. Many managers are uncomfortable telling staff how they feel about their work performance.

Most employees want to know how they are performing in their job; they want to know if they are doing it right or how they could do it better. If you really want to motivate your people then you need to give them feedback on what they're doing well and what needs improvement.

When you notice an employee doing something you do like, tell them about it. When you notice something you don't like, tell them about it.

Do it as soon as possible. Acknowledging a job well done is

not much good six months later. Also, if you don't immediately call someone's attention to something you're not happy about, then they'll assume it's okay. Either that or they'll think you didn't notice or you don't care. Do it in private. Why is it some managers still feel it's okay to reprimand someone in front of their colleagues? Even the mildest rebuke can have a negative effect on morale.

When you do speak to the person use "I" messages. Say things like "I liked the way you did that" or "I'm unhappy with the

way your reports are always late and I'd like your views on why this is". Avoid "You" messages such as "You're doing great". That can come across as patronising or insincere. "You're doing that all wrong" may cause conflict, lower morale and may not sort the problem.

Focus on one or two things. Don't run off a whole list of attributes or misdemeanours. Also be specific about job behaviour, focus on what the person did or didn't do, don't make a personal attack.

Employees will feel happier if they perceive their employer or manager as a reasonable and fair individual – someone who is quick to praise but also says when they're not happy about something.

When we start to look at what motivates people at work, it's

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important to realise that we all have different needs. It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that all our staff are motivated by money. However, research conducted over the years into what motivates people at work suggests some other factors.

Money is important however people are more likely to be motivated firstly, by the work itself. Secondly, by being appreciated for what they do and thirdly by a feeling of being in on things.

The message is – if you want motivated staff then make their work interesting, give them feedback and give them the feeling that they're involved in the business.

We can make the job more interesting by giving people more responsibility, assigning projects and by training and developing them. We need to regularly give people feedback on how they're doing; focussing on what they're doing well rather than on what is not so good. To meet their need to feel involved we should regularly communicate both formally and informally. We could also involve staff in meetings they

might not normally attend.

These steps will take time and thought however they'll make a huge difference as to how employees feel about their work. If they feel good and gain satisfaction from their work then they're less likely to find a reason to "take a sickie".

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Alan Fairweather is the author of "How to get More Sales by Motivating Your Team" This book is packed with practical things you can do to get the best out of your people .

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Alan Fairweather is the author of four ebooks in the "Howto get More Sales" series. Lots of practical actions you can take to build your business and motivate your team.—www.howtogetmoresales.com

Allow Yourself To Be Happy

By Gordon Bryan

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People often ask me explain my statements, and the title of this article usually has people forcefully telling me that it's 'the others' that won't stop them from being happy.

Er, wrong.

In fact, it *is* usually ourselves that stop us from being happy.

Society and education gears us to expect life to be a slog, many decades of working in a job we don't like, with the reward of, oh, let's say a white picket fence to go with your borderline pension.

This kind of mental conditioning leaves us more often than not, spending 50% of our time worrying about yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that.

The other 50%?

We spend the other 50% worrying about tomorrow, the next day, and the day after that!!

That's a whole lot of time spent worrying about the past and/or the future. So much time in fact, that we have precious little time left to think about, let alone *enjoy* the present.

As you read this, stop for a second, and look around.

Really, take the time to absorb the moment.

The past is gone, the future hasn't happened, but the present is here!

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Take a deep breath, smile, and ask yourself why you *shouldn't* be enjoying this moment?

Obviously the `live for the moment' notion can't be taken to extreme, or we'd end up in the gutter as tramps.

Of course you have to plan for the future, but not to the extent of ignoring today.

Allow yourself to be happy!

It's not a crime, in fact, surely that's what life's for isn't it, enjoying?

As you read this, think back to the moment a couple of minutes ago when I asked you to stop and consider!

It's gone now, past, but you can look back and say `I enjoyed it!'

I'll tell you something else too - look out, `cos there's another one coming, and another one, and another one!!

Make sure you are not ignoring the moment, let it become a habit, and you'll notice a bluer sky, enjoy the rain on you face, and hear the birds singing that little bit more in tune...

*****Gordon Bryan's new book, 'Transform Your Life in 21 Days!has been described as 'a must read', 'awesome', and 'a true gem'.If you liked this article, see the book for yourself at:<http://www.transformyourlifenow.com>*****

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