

The logo consists of the lowercase letters 'rh' in white, set against a dark red square background with a white triangular shape pointing downwards from the top-left corner.A close-up photograph of two hands holding a strip of yellow paper. The paper has two simple red smiley faces drawn on it. The background is a blurred office setting with people in the distance.

IT'S TIME WE ALL WORK HAPPY.™

The Secrets of the Happiest
Companies and Employees

The logo features the lowercase letters 'rh' in white on a dark red square, followed by the text 'Robert Half' in a black sans-serif font with a registered trademark symbol.

rh Robert Half®

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HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE BETTER EMPLOYEES

INTRODUCTION

Happy employees are better employees. Or said another way: Happy employees are good for your business.

This is true no matter your field, industry or location. A growing body of research indicates that successful companies around the country have happy employees who are more engaged, more loyal, more creative and more productive than their less-satisfied counterparts.

In today's world, workplace happiness can't be viewed as an abstract, touchy-feely, nice-to-have for employers. Rather, there's a powerful business case for making employee happiness one of your top organizational priorities.

At Robert Half, we have long understood this. We've made it our mission to assist professionals in finding jobs where they can thrive while helping companies build happier, more productive teams. We've been making matches designed to foster job satisfaction and productivity for nearly 70 years, and we have consistently found that employee engagement and organizational success are closely connected.

"We know that workplace happiness truly impacts the bottom line," says Paul McDonald, senior executive director at Robert Half. "Employee engagement and satisfaction levels must be a focal point for companies to remain competitive today."

To help your company build a happier team and derive the benefits of a more satisfied workforce, Robert Half joined with [Happiness Works](#) to conduct a research study.

EMPLOYEES SAID ...

Thinking about the last few weeks, when were you happiest at work and why?

- “When wrapping up a long-term project.”
- “At my 10-year work anniversary dinner, our employer gave us a glass bowl with some candy and a check.”
- “It was my birthday, and I received lots of love.”



Together, we [evaluated](#) the happiness levels of more than 12,000 working professionals across the United States and Canada who agreed to talk with us about their on-the-job satisfaction. Respondents spanned all age groups, experience levels and industries. We also interviewed leading experts on workplace happiness — including Nic Marks, Daniel Pink, Dr. Christine Carter, Todd Henry and Dr. Aymee Coget¹ — about what businesses with the happiest employees have in common.

The findings, and our analysis of them, provide a detailed look at what really matters to employees, the link between happiness and performance, and specific steps employers can take to increase employee satisfaction.

The good news is that, in general, employees are happy at work. On a happiness scale of 0-100, they score 71.

But there’s certainly room for improvement. In our research, some groups of workers fall below that mark. Employees at companies with 10,000 or more staff members, for example, score just 67. That’s concerning. In fact, one-third (33 percent) of employees admit that they are thinking about leaving their jobs in the next six months.

What can you do to increase employee happiness at your firm? You certainly can’t mandate it. And you can’t control every element that contributes to a person’s overall happiness. But it is possible to create conditions at work that allow happiness and positivity to flourish. This report outlines the steps you can take to do just that.



1. Refer to [Page 33](#) for information about these experts.



WHICH EMPLOYEES ARE THE HAPPIEST?

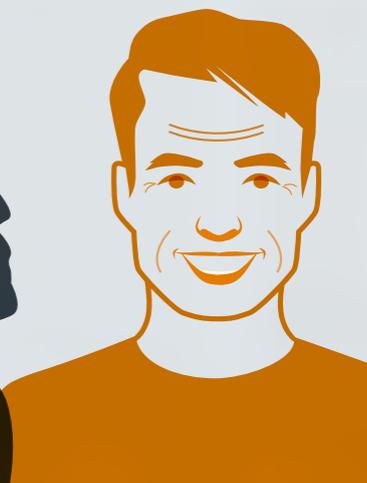
THE HAPPIEST FIELD:
MARKETING AND CREATIVE

THE HAPPIEST TENURE:
FIRST YEAR ON THE JOB

THE HAPPIEST ROLE:
SENIOR EXECUTIVE

THE HAPPIEST COMPANY SIZE:
FEWER THAN 10 EMPLOYEES

THE HAPPIEST AGE: 55+



Some industries/occupations covered by the research are not included in this graphic.



WHAT DRIVES HAPPINESS?

Happiness at work means different things to different groups of people. Here are the top three drivers of happiness for the various groups we surveyed.

RANK		# 1	# 2	# 3
COUNTRY				
U.S.A.		PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.
CANADA		PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.
GENDER				
MEN		PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	A sense of ACCOMPLISHMENT from their work.
WOMEN		PRIDE in their organization.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.
AGE				
18-34		A sense of ACCOMPLISHMENT from their work.	PRIDE in their organization.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.
35-54		PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.
55+		PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.



WHAT DRIVES HAPPINESS?

Rankings by profession

RANK	# 1	# 2	# 3
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PROFESSION			
ACCOUNTING	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.	A sense of ACCOMPLISHMENT from their work.
FINANCE	A sense of ACCOMPLISHMENT from their work.	PRIDE in their organization.	Doing WORTHWHILE WORK.
FINANCIAL SERVICES	PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	A sense of ACCOMPLISHMENT from their work.
ADMINISTRATIVE	PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	INTEREST in their work.
TECHNOLOGY	PRIDE in their organization.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	INTEREST in their work.
LEGAL	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	PRIDE in their organization.	Being treated with FAIRNESS AND RESPECT.
MARKETING AND CREATIVE	Doing WORTHWHILE WORK.	FEELING APPRECIATED for the work they do.	INTEREST in their work.
HUMAN RESOURCES	PRIDE in their organization.	INTEREST in their work.	A sense of ACCOMPLISHMENT from their work.

Some industries/occupations covered by the research are not included in this chart.



SENIOR LEADERS LEAD THE PACK

Senior executives rank highest in happiness and interest in their jobs. They also feel the least amount of stress among the roles surveyed.

RANK	LEVEL OF HAPPINESS	LEVEL OF INTEREST IN WORK	LOWEST STRESS LEVELS
1	SENIOR Executives	SENIOR Executives	SENIOR Executives
2	MANAGERS	MANAGERS	ADMINISTRATIVE and Secretarial Clerks
3	STAFF-LEVEL Professionals	STAFF-LEVEL Professionals	SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE Workers
4	ADMINISTRATIVE and Secretarial Clerks	ADMINISTRATIVE and Secretarial Clerks	MANAGERS
5	SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE Workers	SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE Workers	STAFF-LEVEL Professionals

Some industries/occupations covered by the research are not included in this chart.



INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Marketing and creative professionals report the highest levels of on-the-job happiness and interest in the work they do. Those in the technology field feel the least amount of work-related stress.

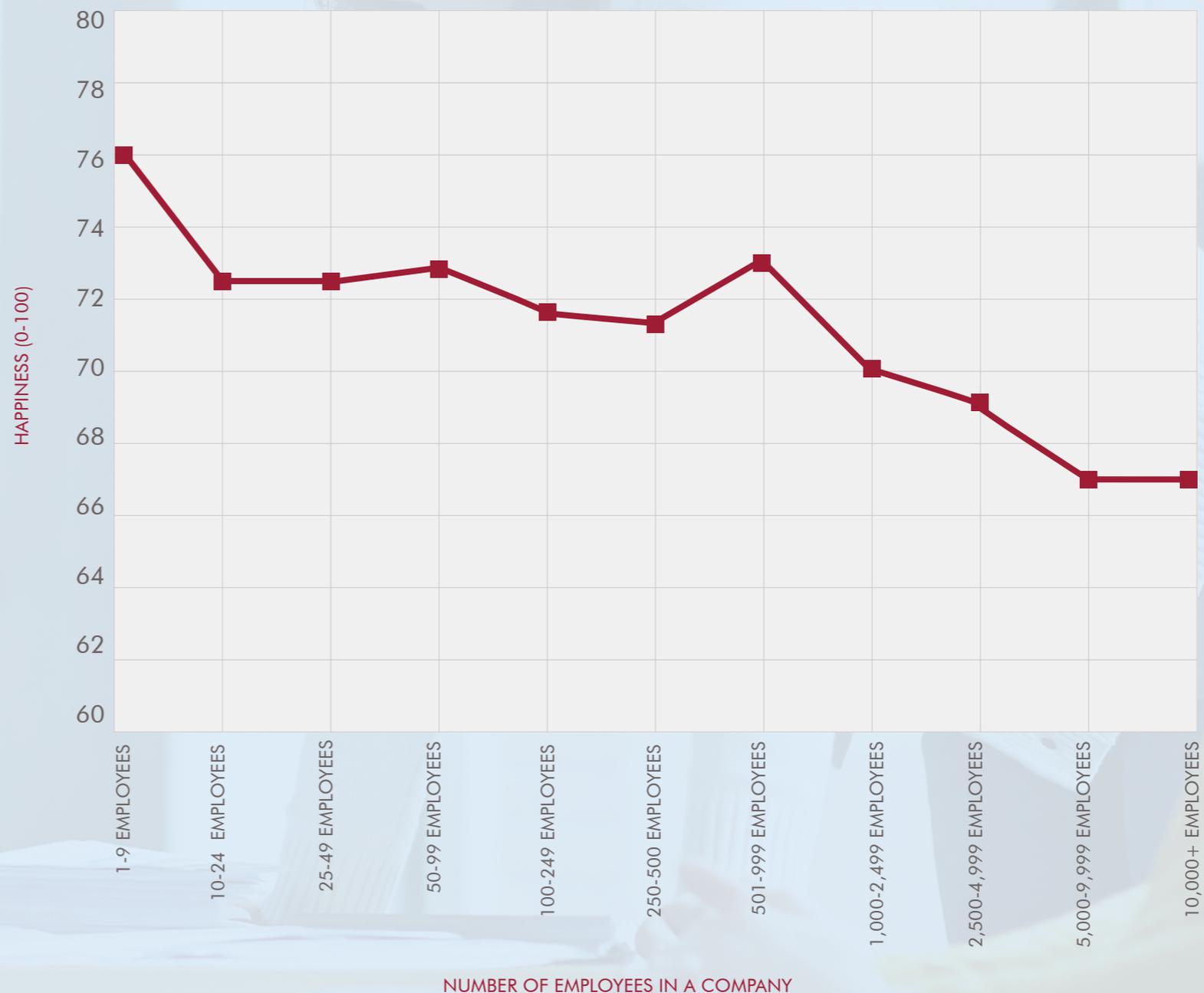
RANK	LEVEL OF HAPPINESS	LEVEL OF INTEREST IN WORK	LOWEST STRESS LEVELS
1	MARKETING and CREATIVE	MARKETING and CREATIVE	TECHNOLOGY
2	HUMAN RESOURCES	LEGAL	FINANCE
3	LEGAL	HUMAN RESOURCES	MARKETING and CREATIVE
4	TECHNOLOGY	TECHNOLOGY	HUMAN RESOURCES
5	ACCOUNTING	ADMINISTRATIVE	ACCOUNTING
6	ADMINISTRATIVE	FINANCIAL SERVICES	ADMINISTRATIVE
7	FINANCIAL SERVICES	ACCOUNTING	FINANCIAL SERVICES
8	FINANCE	FINANCE	LEGAL

Some industries/occupations covered by the research are not included in this chart.

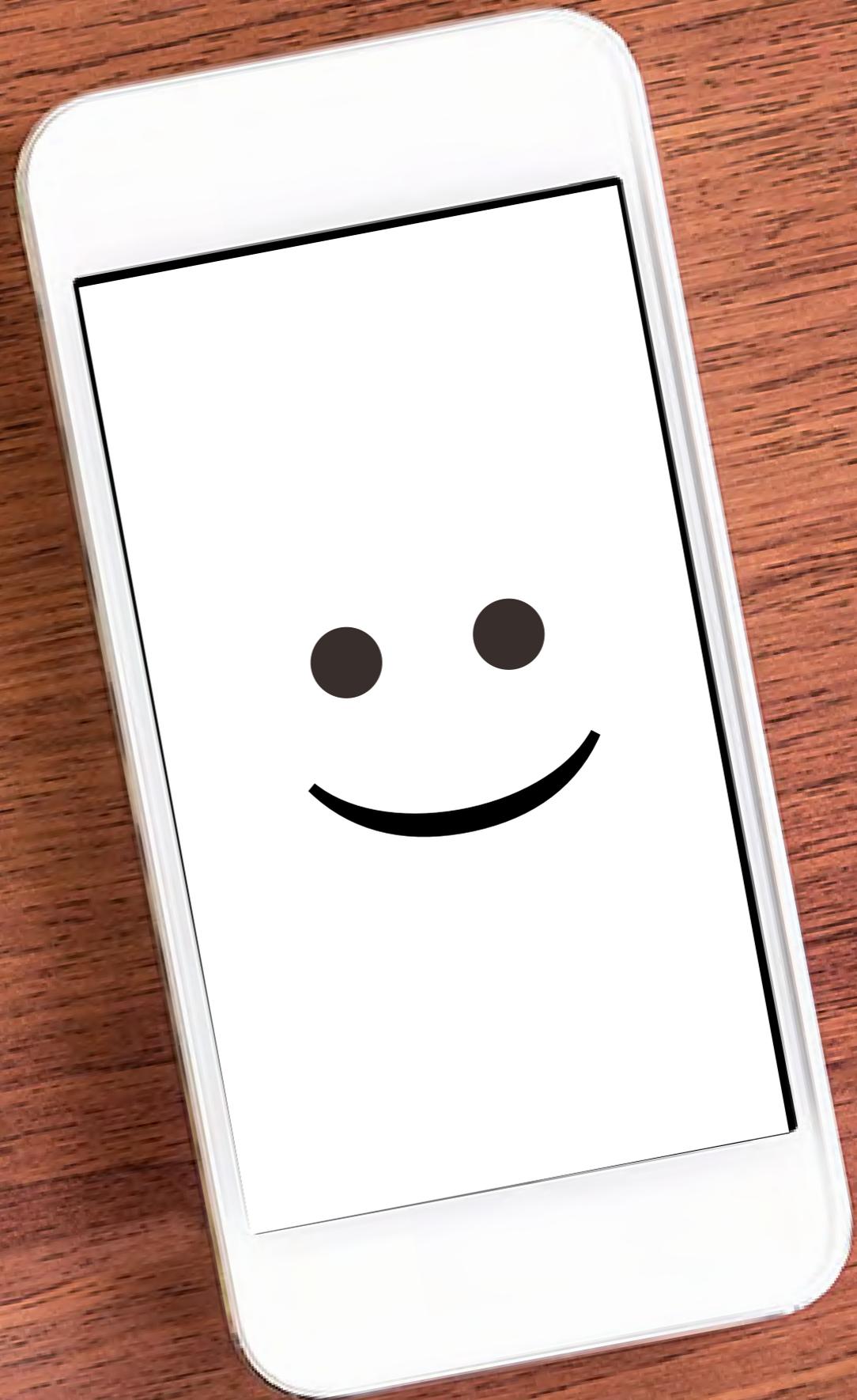


SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

The happiest employees work at companies with fewer than 10 employees, with those respondents scoring 76 on a happiness scale of 0-100. The least happy workers are at organizations with 10,000 or more employees, where workers scored just 67.



HAPPINESS DEFINED





HAPPINESS DEFINED

Getting to the root of what happiness means is essential to promoting it among your workforce. But what exactly is happiness?

“Happiness is shorthand for a great experience,” says Nic Marks, one of the world’s leading happiness experts and CEO and founder of Happiness Works. “It’s an emotional word we use to summarize the quality of experiences in our everyday work — essentially, whether we are feeling good and doing well.”

Dr. Christine Carter, author of “The Sweet Spot: How to Find Your Groove at Home and Work,” adds that people often conflate happiness with enjoyable-but-fleeting moments of gratification. Happiness at work, however, involves so much more than that.

“When we are talking about happiness — and why happy workers are more productive, engaged and better for your bottom line — we’re using happiness as an umbrella term for something much larger,” explains Carter, senior fellow at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of

California, Berkeley. “The type of happiness that’s great for the workplace involves the ability to access a wide range of positive emotions.” She notes that these emotions include hope, optimism, confidence, gratitude, inspiration and awe, among others.

For his part, Marks boils happiness at work down to three core positive emotions:

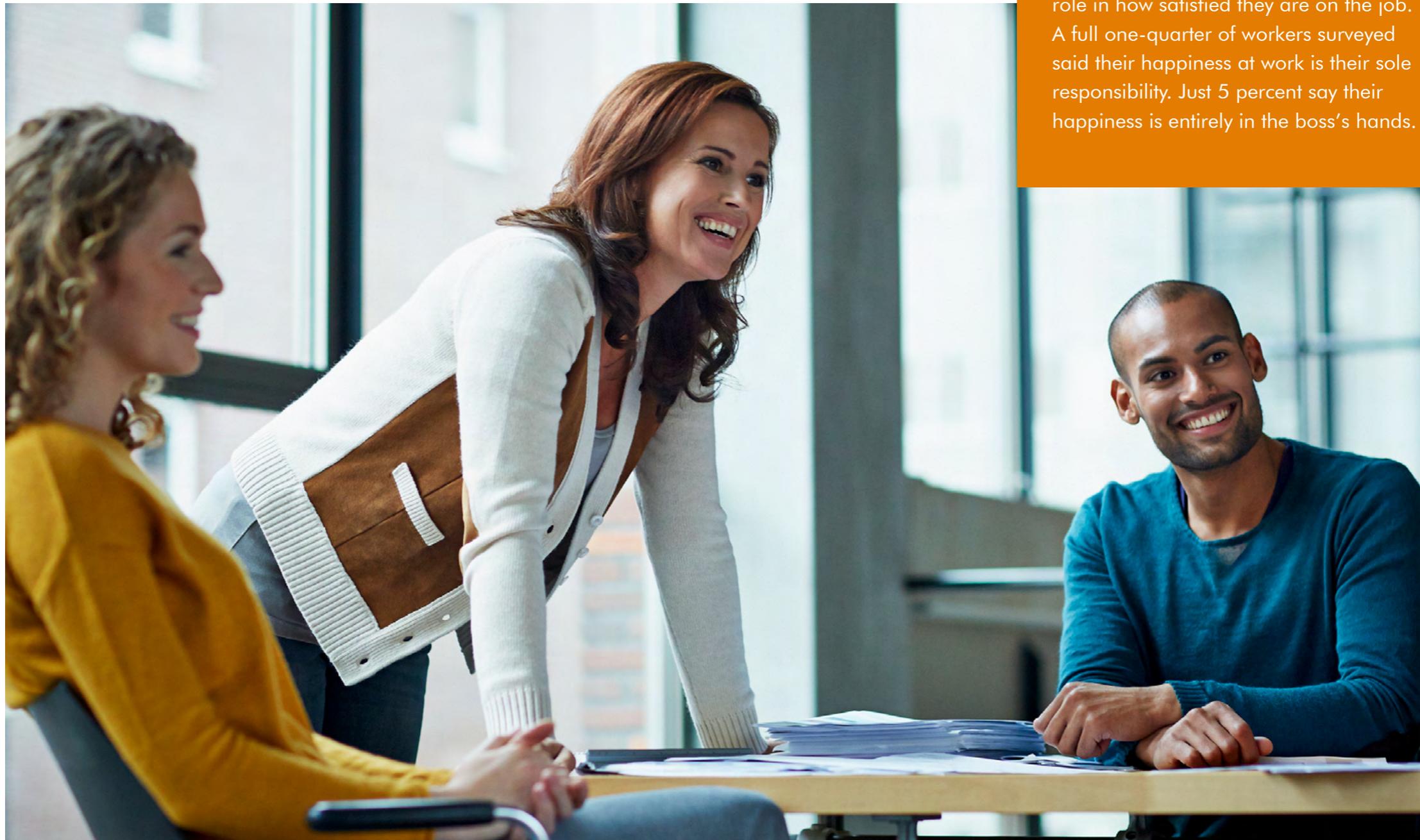
- **Enthusiasm** — Enthusiasm is a high-energy state that helps people create and seize opportunities. It’s a way to mobilize our efforts, as well as other people’s.
- **Interest** — Interest can be understood as a focusing energy. It helps us commit to tasks that are perhaps challenging in the short term but have medium-term or long-term benefits.
- **Contentment** — Contentment is a reflective, lower-energy emotion. Think of the satisfaction and “glow” of having achieved something. Contentment helps us reflect on what went well and how the same type of success can be duplicated.

Happiness doesn't mean feeling great every moment of the day. We're all aware of how our feelings can fluctuate over the course of the workweek or workday. An employee who's frustrated by the lack of progress on a current project can still be extremely happy on the job as long as that feeling of dissatisfaction is relatively short-lived.

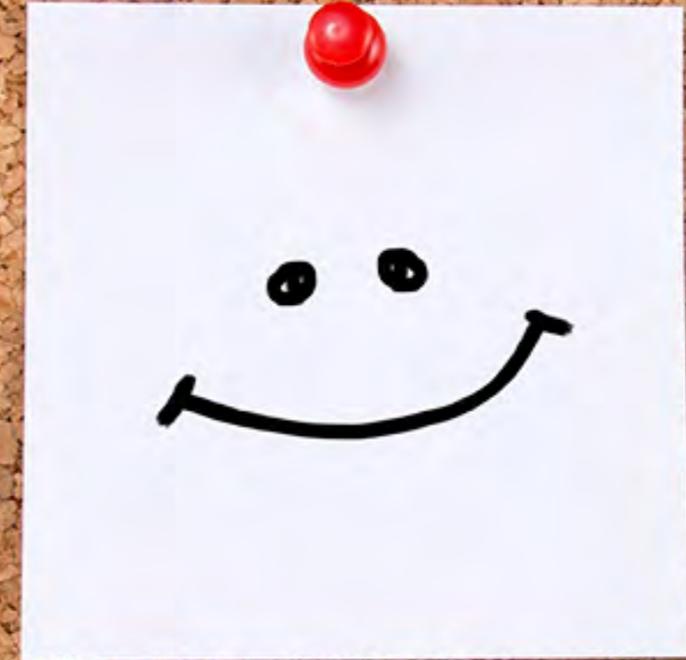
Happiness, then, is more than a mood. It's a deep feeling of satisfaction and meaning generated by doing a good job, helping a colleague, receiving recognition for your work and other similar everyday actions.

A TEAM EFFORT

Workers realize they play a significant role in how satisfied they are on the job. A full one-quarter of workers surveyed said their happiness at work is their sole responsibility. Just 5 percent say their happiness is entirely in the boss's hands.



THE BENEFITS OF HAVING HAPPY EMPLOYEES





THE BENEFITS OF HAVING HAPPY EMPLOYEES

Ask managers to comment on happiness at work, and their responses might sound something like this: "I do what I can to make sure my employees are happy. But I've got a business to run, and what matters most right now is the bottom line."

However, the choice between a happy, satisfied workforce and a successful, profitable company isn't a binary one. It's possible to have both. Happy employees are an essential component of any thriving business.

How does focusing on employee happiness help your company? Read on.

HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE MORE RESILIENT AND LOYAL

Happy employees strive to reach the organizational goals you've set. They ride out rough patches and help your firm survive them, too.

Happy employees stay for the long term. Reduced turnover means you retain more institutional knowledge and spend less time and money on hiring and training. As Marks points out: "Why would someone search for another job when they enjoy the one they have?"

Moreover, we've found time and again that happy employees are the most vocal and most persuasive advocates for their



Learn how happy employees can benefit your firm's bottom line.



Learn how to connect the dots between the happiness and health of your workers.

organizations. Beyond spreading optimism and goodwill within the company, happy employees share positive feelings about their jobs outside the workplace and on social media. These enthusiastic endorsements enhance your firm's reputation and can bolster recruitment efforts.

HAPPY EMPLOYEES DO BETTER WORK

Many studies show that happiness positively impacts the quality and quantity of work at both the individual and team level. For instance:

- Nearly two-thirds of happy employees report consistently putting in extra effort at work, according to a study by Horizons Workforce Consulting.¹
- Research published in the Journal of Applied Psychology shows that those with high levels of on-the-job satisfaction also volunteer for optional tasks, help others and are more cooperative compared to unhappy workers.²
- Gallup has found that engaged employees are 21 percent more productive than their non-engaged counterparts.³

Why is this? Well, it's simple really, Marks explains: "Happier people tend to care more about their work, so they put in greater effort. This also means they are quicker to notice when things are not going right and take action to prevent negative outcomes."

Also, happier employees tend to be more innovative and creative. Positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and interest, help to broaden their thinking, awareness, and tendency to explore novel pathways and approaches.

HAPPY EMPLOYEES ARE HEALTHIER

Stress is a drain not only on the immune system but also your organization. Employees who are burned out or chronically frustrated are more prone to illness and absenteeism.

On the other hand, engaged employees also experience fewer chronic health problems, eat a healthier diet and exercise more frequently than their less-engaged counterparts, according to Gallup.⁴ As a result, they miss less work due to sickness — and recover faster when they do fall ill.

1. Horizons Workforce Consulting, "Employees' Personal Lives Are Critical to Business Success," June 27, 2012, <http://www.brighthorizons.com/about-us/press-releases/employees-personal-lives-are-critical-to-business-success/>.

2. Seth Kaplan, Jill C. Bradley-Geist, Joseph Nicholas Luchman and Douglas Haynes, "On the Role of Positive and Negative Affectivity in Job Performance: A Meta-Analytic Investigation," Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol 94(1), February 2009.

3. Gallup, "State of the Global Workplace: Employee Engagement Insights for Business Leaders Worldwide," 2013.

4. Ibid.

THE SCIENCE OF POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Stress and burnout can inhibit performance at work, while happiness can boost it.

But why is that?

Dr. Christine Carter says that employees who experience a lot of positive emotions have critical resources that unhappy workers don't. "You have greater access to the parts of the brain that you need to innovate, to be creative and to be more empathetic. And you're going to function much better in a team environment because your social intelligence will go way, way up."

She continues, "Managers need to realize that if they want their direct reports to fulfill their potential, it won't be possible if they are stressed. And the way to reverse a stress response is to help induce positive emotions."



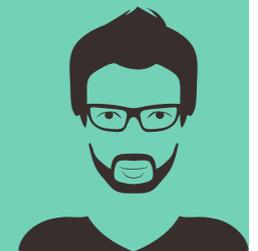
THE HAPPINESS CURVE

Workers between the ages of 35 and 54 are the least happy, most stressed and least interested in their work. Things are likely to turn around for them in just a few years, however. The most experienced workers, those 55 and up, are the happiest employees and the most interested in their jobs.

EMPLOYEES SAID ...

Looking back, when was the happiest point in your career and why?

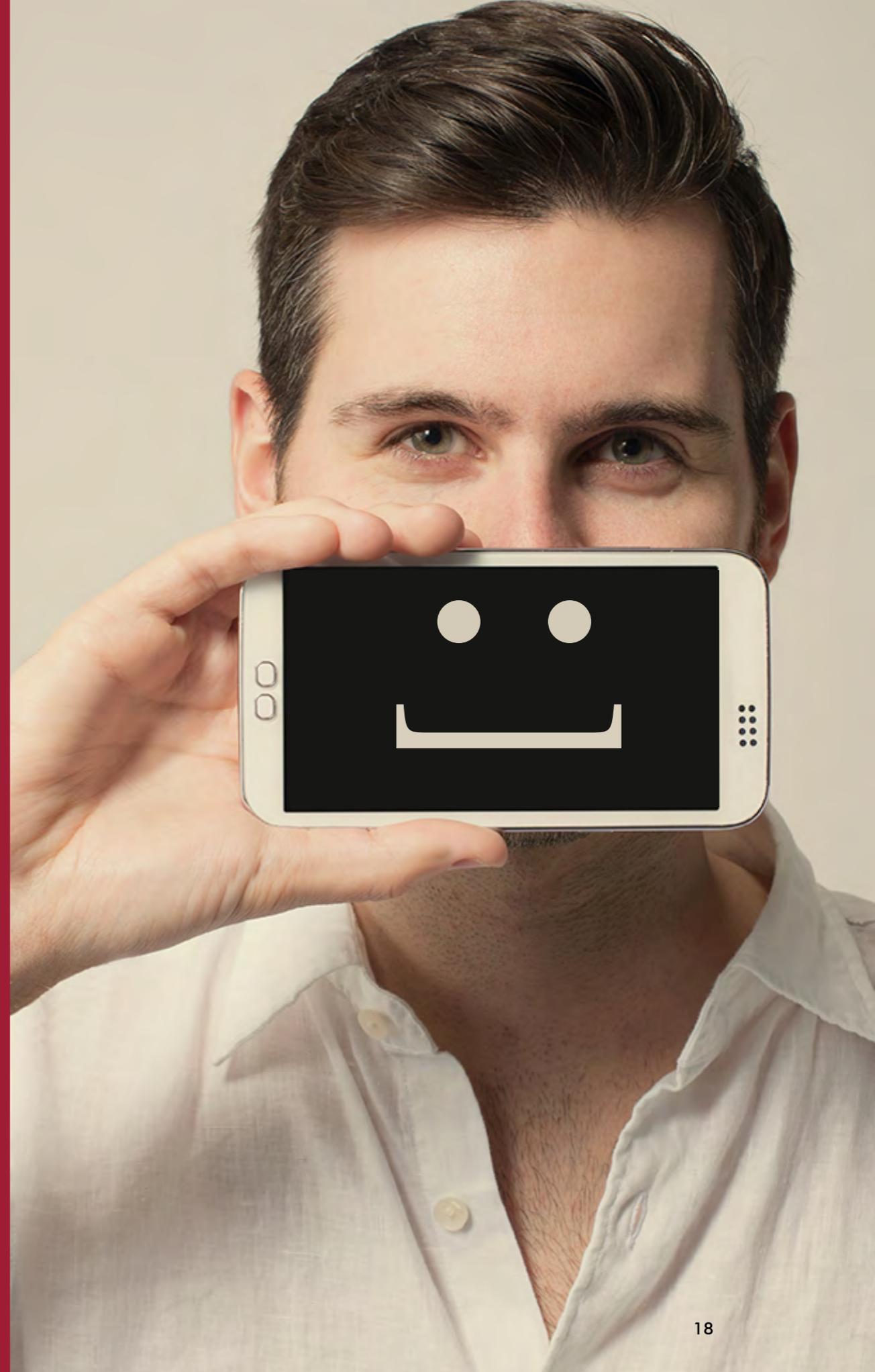
- "10 years ago, in a position [where] my skill set and my contributions were acknowledged and appreciated."
- "12 years ago. Better job, better staff, people cared about working there and it was more of a family."



6 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS

It's clear that happiness is an individual experience. No two employees have the same needs, goals, preferences and personalities. There are, however, some universal factors that directly affect employee happiness. Understanding those factors and adapting your leadership approach to address them won't just increase employee engagement, it will also boost the quality of your team's work and significantly aid your recruitment and retention efforts.

Review six key ingredients to job satisfaction on the following pages.





RIGHT FIT FOR THE JOB AND COMPANY

Creating conditions for employee happiness begins before you even bring someone on board. When you hire people who mesh well with your workplace culture, they acclimate with greater ease and begin making substantive contributions quickly.

On the other hand, a poor fit can dampen the morale of the entire team. And when you look for a replacement and still don't get the right fit, you'll have the same problem all over again.

LETTING THEM KNOW WHAT THEY'RE IN FOR

A good fit entails both skills and temperament. In the Robert Half and Happiness Works study, professionals in the marketing and creative fields are most likely to describe their skill sets and experience as being well-aligned with the requirements of the job. On the other end of the spectrum are finance professionals, who say they feel the least well matched to their work. Employees in the finance sector also say they are not able to use their strengths on the job to a high degree. Only administrative workers score lower in this category.

Painting an accurate picture of the job when hiring is a safeguard that can help you avoid skills alignment issues. When you set expectations by clearly communicating to prospective hires what an open position entails, you greatly

reduce the risk that they end up feeling surprised, unchallenged or disappointed once on the job.

"Practicing diligence in each step of the hiring process — from crafting detailed job postings that accurately describe the role and company to conducting in-depth interviews and thoroughly checking references — sets the stage for both employee and employer happiness," says Paul McDonald.

THE SOFTER SIDE OF HIRING

Beyond qualifications and technical abilities, ask yourself whether the candidate has the personality and soft skills necessary to thrive in your workplace. Conversely, think about what the job seeker is looking for in a new position.

Judging a person's true interest in the job is key to ensuring your new hire will be engaged in the work and likely to stay over the long term. According to the Robert Half and Happiness Works survey, interest in the job is highest among workers who are 55 and up. One reason could be because younger workers may still be figuring out where their professional passions lie. They lack the years of experience in various roles that can be needed to find a job that is genuinely exciting.

FINE-TUNING FIT

As important as it is to hire people who are a good fit with your workplace to begin with, ensuring they remain compatible is just as key. Think of it as “re-recruiting” your employees.

Periodically step back to think about fit across your team. Have discussions with your direct reports about their connection to the company. Do they still feel challenged in the role? What do they enjoy most about their job? Do they feel their skills are being fully utilized?

“Career goals are not static,” McDonald says. “Check in regularly with employees to talk about the evolution of their objectives and

potential avenues to help them get there. They’ll be happier, more productive and far more apt to stay with your company.”

Realize that re-recruiting your employees does not have to be a solo endeavor. Make use of your more tenured staff to help them along. As professionals gain tenure, they feel their strengths are used to a higher degree on the job, according to our survey. They also say their skills more closely match the requirements of the position and they better understand what is expected of them. By serving as mentors, tenured members of your team can help newer hires acclimate to the job and company and help build engagement among your workforce.

FLIGHT RISKS

Workers who say there is not a good match between them and their employers are the most likely to leave their jobs within a year. Those who lack pride in their organization are the next most likely.

BEWARE OF THE BRILLIANT JERK

Adding to your team? It pays to be highly involved in the hiring process because nobody understands the job or the people the new employee will work with better than you do.

In terms of evaluating fit, devote particular attention to interpersonal abilities during the interview process. A candidate who seems perfect on paper won’t add to the happiness of your workplace if his or her soft skills are lacking. Attitudes are contagious, and one bad apple can indeed spoil your happy bunch.

“We’ve all had experiences with brilliant jerks,” Marks says. “If someone is brilliant, but they’re going to irritate the people around them, they are likely to cost you more than they add.”





A SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowering your staff to make decisions on their own, or with minimal direction from you, improves employee happiness in multiple ways:

- Empowerment helps staff develop critical skills they can use to advance their careers and make greater, more meaningful contributions to the company.
- Empowerment makes workers feel more invested in the jobs they do because they are the ones making decisions.
- Letting go of the reins also helps team members build confidence as they realize they are able to make the right decisions.
- Empowered employees feel more comfortable questioning the status quo and suggesting new ideas. Large organizational changes or disruptions, like a staff restructuring, are less likely to knock these workers down.

Unfortunately, many companies miss out on these benefits.

According to our research, a sizable number of workers feel unable to influence important decisions in their jobs. In fact, 23 percent of respondents say they wield little or no control over their work; 26 percent feel they have few opportunities to be creative.

Influence, which comes with empowerment, does increase the longer people are on the job, however. In our survey, it was lowest

among professionals who had been on the job for a year or less and generally increased as workers gained tenure.

To keep new hires and less-tenured staff from becoming disengaged and dispirited, make a point of seeking their input and feedback regularly. Beyond making these employees feel valued, your efforts will likely lead to new perspectives and fresh solutions.

OFFER SUPPORT, NOT MICROMANAGEMENT

Considering the weight of their responsibilities, some leaders feel compelled to keep a controlling hand on projects big and small. But doing so comes at a cost. It robs employees of the chance to grow, and it keeps managers from focusing on bigger-picture business objectives.

Robert Half's McDonald says that empowerment requires balance. "Encourage team members to stretch their problem-solving skills by taking smart, strategic risks," McDonald says. "But also make it known that you are available to offer input and support so that they don't find themselves floundering alone."

Marks notes that a sense of autonomy and freedom is a fundamental need for people. "Feeling that we can make our own decisions is a critical part of being human. Respect that employees are going to have their own way of

ISSUES WITH INFLUENCE

Influence is one area where workers across many groups feel unsatisfied. Consider the following:

- Only 47 percent of women say they exert influence on the job, compared to 55 percent of men who say the same.
- Workers 55 and up also struggle in this area, with just 47 percent saying they are able to influence important decisions.
- Just 45 percent of administrative workers feel they have a say in important decisions.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it can be hard to make your mark in large companies. Only 35 percent of workers at organizations with 5,000 or more employees say they have influence.

doing things and be willing to offer praise when they come up with something you never thought of.”

TAKE A SMART RISK BY REWARDING SMART RISKS

“Some managers pay lip service to the idea of creative risk-taking but quickly pull an employee back in line whenever the person actually takes a chance,” says author Todd Henry, who speaks frequently about productivity, creativity, and passion for work and leadership. “If your words and your actions are out of alignment, it creates dissonance and dissatisfaction. Instead, reward what you say you want. When someone strategically tries something that doesn’t work, capture what was learned through the failure and celebrate the risk.”

One mistake managers make is not allowing everyone on the team to flex his or her creative muscles. Seventy-two percent of the marketing and creative professionals we surveyed say they are frequently able to be creative on the job. But they’re the exception. Only 38 percent of administrative workers and 36 percent of accounting professionals agree.

When brainstorming new ideas and approaches, include your entire workforce, not just those on the creative side of the house. Innovative ideas can come from anyone in any department.





3.

FEELING APPRECIATED

It doesn't have to break the bank to instill loyalty, establish a positive working environment and generally make your employees happier. Simply show your staff that you appreciate their hard work and dedication. Offering a sincere thank-you for a job well done has much greater motivational impact than many people realize. In fact, feeling appreciated is the single biggest driver of happiness for professionals in both the accounting and legal fields.

"Fostering positive emotions through gratitude is easy and powerful," Carter says. "The science on this is blazingly clear. There are loads of research studies that show how much higher functioning people are when they feel appreciated by their teams and their manager."

THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRAISE

When it comes to offering appreciation, sincerity, specificity and timeliness make all the difference. Attempts at recognizing employees can backfire if the praise is vague ("You're such a hard worker") or delivered late ("Nice work the other day").

"The key for managers is to express gratitude and to be really specific about the particular effort the employee made," Carter says, "because that's when people feel seen and recognized."

Be careful not to overdo it, though. Praise that is delivered in response to even the smallest achievements quickly loses its impact.

Also remember that your entire team needs to hear from you frequently. The tendency is often to focus feedback on less-experienced workers who may still be learning the ins and outs of the job and workplace. Fifty-four percent of workers between the ages of 18 and 34 say they receive constructive feedback often; just 44 percent of those aged 55 or above agree.

MANAGERS' MOODS ARE CONTAGIOUS

Marks of Happiness Works says it's important for leaders to remind themselves regularly of the pivotal role they play in how their employees feel. "If your manager says one bad thing to you, it can really dampen your motivation for days, even weeks," he says. "Similarly, when a manager says something great to you, it can expand your positive feelings and make you feel good about yourself for quite a while.

"We're so quick to point out problems, but we need to share when things are going well," Marks continues. "Managers should aim to catch employees doing something right rather than wrong. These positive micromoments are very important and salient. Believe it or not, a bonus is nice, but a kind word can go even further with employees."

DANIEL PINK ON THE HALLMARKS OF HAPPINESS

Author Daniel Pink knows a thing or two about how to bring out the best in ourselves — and others. We asked him to weigh in on the commonalities of happy workers, the dangers of micromanagement and what managers can do today to elevate their team’s happiness.

Are there any common factors you see in the people you meet who are happiest in their jobs?

Daniel Pink: It varies from person to person, but the list includes:

- Having some control over the work you do, when you do it, how you do it and whom you do it with.
- Having great colleagues whom you both like and trust.
- Feeling like what you’re doing makes a difference in the world.
- Being able to make progress on meaningful work.

Why are autonomy and self-direction so intertwined with happiness and job satisfaction for so many people?

DP: One way to think about this is to consider the opposite. The opposite of self-direction is control. Human beings have only two reactions to control. We comply, or we defy. Compliant behavior doesn’t lead to satisfaction; neither does defiant behavior. The only way humans engage is by having some — not necessarily total, but some — sovereignty over their work.

What is an easy step a manager could take to help his or her employees feel happier?

DP: I can’t resist giving more than one suggestion



because the particular technique depends on the person, the situation and the goals. So, here are three:

- Have very short (maybe five-minute) weekly one-on-one meetings with each staffer that get at these questions: Are you making progress in your work? And, if not, what can I do to help?
- Encourage all employees to take a “genius hour” once a week. Have everyone spend one hour, unencumbered from their regular duties, thinking about something new the organization could be doing, something stupid it should stop doing, a process that needs improvement or simply a better way to run the place.
- This week, have two fewer conversations with your team about how to do a particular task — and two more about why they’re doing the task in the first place.



Find out how you can create a culture of happiness at work.

AN HONEST THANKS GOES A LONG WAY

Feeling appreciated is the second-biggest driver of happiness in both the United States and Canada. It occupies the top spot for professionals in the legal and accounting sectors.



INTERESTING AND MEANINGFUL WORK

For the vast majority of people, work isn't just about a paycheck. As Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Far and away, the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

Employees who say the work they do is worthwhile are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be happy than those who feel the job they do is "just work." Interestingly, our research shows that doing worthwhile work is the biggest driver of happiness for those in the marketing and creative fields.

"At Robert Half, we regularly remind our employees that, through our recruiting and job placement efforts, we are helping companies strengthen their teams, and we are changing people's lives for the better by helping them find employment," McDonald says. "Everyone contributes to that in some way."

"People are most invested in their work when they feel like they are part of something larger than themselves," author Todd Henry says.

SHARE THE VISION

"Happy workers understand why their tasks matter and how they connect to the overall objective," Henry adds. "When there is a gap in that connection, people tend to drift and have difficulty investing emotionally. Employees who have a strong, through-line, that ties their work together tend to be happy, fulfilled and engaged even when times get tough."

Says McDonald: "Contextualize individual contributions by explaining how each employee plays a part in the overall success of the organization." He notes that gaining a sense of meaningful progress and achievement is particularly important to millennials. According to the survey Robert Half conducted with Happiness Works, a sense of accomplishment is the strongest driver of happiness for employees under 35.

Workers at the largest organizations, those with 2,500 or more employees, feel the lowest sense of accomplishment. That's not necessarily surprising. It can be difficult to ensure the company's vision — and the role employees play in achieving it — reaches each and every person in a large company. For managers, this is a reminder that they can't assume workers have this information. Communication through multiple channels is the key.

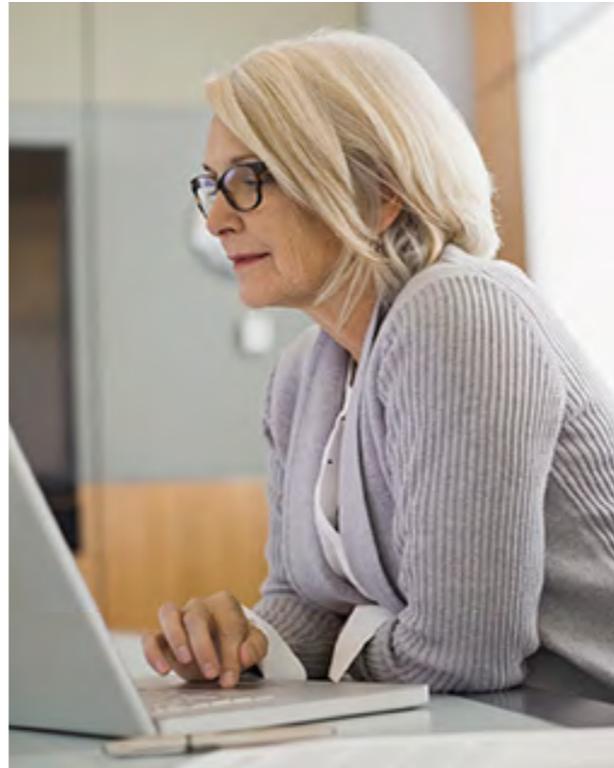
CARE ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Another effective way to give employees a sense of meaning in their work is to establish genuine ties within your community. In a separate Robert Half survey of workers who are involved in volunteering, 61 percent of respondents said that their philanthropic activities help them improve their sense of well-being and effectiveness at the office.

LET HAPPINESS FLOW

Flow is the feeling of intense focus and happiness you experience when you are fully absorbed in something. When in a state of flow, a term coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, time seems to fade away as you become completely immersed in using your skills to complete a project or solve a problem. You're in the zone.

Dr. Christine Carter of the Greater Good Science Center says managers should make a concerted effort to provide employees the opportunity to do uninterrupted in-depth work. "There is a really deep sense of fulfillment and meaning that comes when we can dig into a project and do our best work," she says. "And most workplaces make it very hard for that to happen now. The expectation is that employees will be available all the time by phone, email, IM or when someone stops by their desk. Most people's brains today don't trust that they're going to be allowed to focus. So reset the expectation that people can do deep focus work."



A MATTER OF PRIDE

Pride in one's organization is the strongest driver of happiness for workers in both the United States and Canada. Pride also topped the list for men, women and workers 35 and up, as well as those in the IT, financial services and administrative sectors. In short, feeling good about the company you work for is a big deal to employees.

What's more, workers who feel proud of their organizations are three times more likely to be happy at work compared to those who don't.

EMPLOYEES SAID ...

If you could change anything about your workplace, what would it be?

- "To work four 10-hour days."
- "A better line of communication from the supervisor."





5.

A SENSE OF FAIRNESS

Fairness matters deeply to employees. So deeply, in fact, that a single instance of unfair treatment — whether actual or perceived — is often enough to turn a happy, satisfied worker into one who is cynical and skeptical of the company.

It's worth noting that fairness and respect are together a major driver of happiness for women, according to the Robert Half and Happiness Works survey. Yet, this is an area where many women feel let down. Only 70 percent of women say they are treated fairly compared to 74 percent of men. Likewise, just 52 percent of women say they are paid fairly versus 58 percent of men.

When we look at various occupations, those in the marketing and creative sector feel best about the level of fairness and respect they experience on the job. Technology professionals are most likely to say they are paid fairly for the work they do.

WHAT IT MEANS TO PLAY FAIR

What can managers do to improve fairness in the workplace? Several simple steps can have a meaningful impact.

First, strive to be transparent in your decision making. Be sure policies around pay, promotions and projects are clear. Every member of your team should know what they must do to earn a new title or a higher salary.

Also, give workers a chance to alert you when they feel a sense of inequality. Often, employees just want to be heard and know that their concerns are being taken into account.

Keep in mind that, when it comes to fairness, even the smallest infraction can be seen as a sign that favoritism is at play. Cut an employee off midsentence, and he or she may wonder why you let others express their opinions uninterrupted. Forget to invite a member of your team to an important meeting, and that person may feel his or her ideas matter less than those of others in the group.

WHERE FAIRNESS MATTERS MOST

A sense of fairness is particularly crucial when it comes to compensation. It is important for employees to feel that their pay is equitable compared to others doing the same work.

This is why it's so essential for employers to offer compensation that is better than or at least on par with that of companies in their region and industry. "Employers must get into the habit of periodically benchmarking salaries to ensure that they're offering competitive pay to job candidates as well as current employees," McDonald says. "Knowing the going rate is vital to recruiting and retaining top talent, particularly in a candidate-driven job market."

How can you find out if your salary ranges are keeping pace? Review resources such as the [Salary Guides from Robert Half](#), connect with recruiters specializing in your industry, and survey your employees to see if they are happy with the salary, benefits and perks you provide.

THE BENEFITS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE



Striking an equitable balance between professional and personal responsibilities is a common struggle. Many employees are trying to keep up with hefty workloads while also managing pressing personal issues. It's a challenging juggling act that can leave workers feeling sapped and stressed.

According to our research, technology professionals report the best levels of work-life balance, with 73 percent of respondents feeling happy about this area of their jobs. Those in the accounting, finance and

financial services sectors rank near the bottom; only about 65 percent of respondents in each field are satisfied with their work-life balance. The nature of accounting and finance roles has traditionally required practitioners to put in long hours, and that is likely one reason for their dissatisfaction in this area. Managers should encourage workers to take advantage of work-life balance options when available and especially during slow periods.

Offering empathy and support goes a long way as well. "If you respect that employees have a life outside of the job, they will respect you much more and become more loyal," Marks says. "If people have bad work-life balance, they might still love their work. But if it's causing them problems at home, they will get jaded over time, they will tire and they will leave you. Supporting work-life balance is about managing risk for the organization, as well as just being the right thing to do."

It's also important to lead by example. Your employees take their cues from you. So show them it's OK to have a healthy work-life balance. Try to leave the office at a decent hour and avoid the temptation to keep answering emails late into the night. Take vacations, and unplug while you're away. Don't come to work when you're sick. If you set appropriate boundaries and protect your downtime, your staff will follow your lead.

RESPECT THE NEED TO FEEL RESPECTED

Feeling treated with fairness and respect at work is one of the top three ingredients for happiness in both the U.S. and Canada.

Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of U.S. workers who say they are treated with little or no respect are likely to leave their jobs in the next year, compared to only 7 percent of those who say they experience a high level of fairness and respect.

6.



POSITIVE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

A sense of camaraderie at work improves employee communication, cooperation and collaboration. Staff cohesion also leads to greater innovation.

The good news for employers is that workers across the board say they have good team relationships at work. None of the groups surveyed reported significant dissatisfaction in this area.

Even better: Those who say they have good relationships with others on their team are 2.5 times more likely to be happy on the job than those who do not get along well with colleagues.

THE GLUE OF AN ORGANIZATION

Maintaining healthy, supportive workplace relationships is an important source of enjoyment for employees. It also helps them to better manage stress and the demands of the job.

“Good relationships are the glue of an organization,” Marks says. “For managers, it’s all about encouraging relationships for reasons beyond narrow business needs. When employees have friends at work, it has a broad impact on happiness.”

Managers can promote a positive workplace culture by creating opportunities for employees to forge and strengthen bonds with

colleagues. Think across teams as well. In today’s workplace, your staff will likely have to work with colleagues in many other departments. In our survey, workers ages 55 and up expressed the highest level of happiness in their interteam relationships. Enlist their support in helping less experienced workers build bonds throughout the organization.

DON’T UNDERESTIMATE YOUR INFLUENCE

Dr. Aymee Coget, founder of Happiness for HumanKIND, says those in leadership positions must authentically embrace positivity instead of just promoting it to others. She notes that research shows happiness can impact those up to three degrees of separation away. For instance, Coget states, “When a manager embodies positivity, their influence touches their team, clients and even their clients’ customers.”

She adds a cautionary note about the need to adopt a caring and people-oriented managerial mindset. “If a company decides to take on happiness as a cultural value, it is paramount that leaders embody this principle,” Coget says. “Relationships make or break any job. And the number-one reason people stay — or quit — is because of their relationship with their boss.”



See how good working relationships lead to higher levels of workplace happiness, innovation and collaboration.

GO TEAM!

Among the professionals surveyed by Robert Half and Happiness Works,

88%: Get along with people on their immediate team

72%: Feel that teams within their organization generally work well together

63%: Have good friends at work

**THE
BOTTOM
LINE**





THE BOTTOM LINE

Is employee happiness pivotal to organizational success? Yes.

Is there a one-size-fits-all approach to fueling happiness at work? Absolutely not. There are simply too many factors that influence each person's happiness for such a guarantee.

But understanding the significant role that satisfaction and engagement levels play in your company's success — and being willing to alter your approach to increase them — is a great start. Your efforts will have an effect. And you're likely to see benefits across several fronts, including productivity, recruitment and retention.

The bottom line is this: Workplace happiness truly matters to your employees and to the long-term health of your organization. And, most important, you have the power to directly influence it.

Good luck on your journey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Robert Half would like to recognize and thank the following people for their contributions to this report. Your expertise, insights and opinions have been invaluable.

We owe special thanks to Nic Marks, Saamah Abdallah and the entire team at Happiness Works. Nic is one of the world's foremost experts on workplace happiness and was instrumental in guiding Robert Half's research into this area. We've long known the importance that satisfaction and engagement play in the success of people's careers and companies' fortunes. Nic and Saamah helped us quantify this effect and delve into the unique factors that influence happiness among various groups of workers.

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ABOUT ROBERT HALF

Founded in 1948, Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialized staffing firm. We believe working happy is the only way to work. We've made it our mission to help people find fulfilling jobs and companies build happy, productive teams.

Our network of talent spans more than 325 staffing locations worldwide and includes millions of highly skilled professionals who are ready and able to make a positive impact on the businesses we serve. Visit [roberthalf.com](https://www.roberthalf.com) to learn how we can help make your workplace, or job search, a little happier.



ABOUT HAPPINESS WORKS

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[Happiness Works](#) provides powerful measurement tools that enable performance-driven organizations to identify, measure and manage employee happiness. The team at Happiness Works is made up of passionate people who believe employee experience data is crucial to effective business decision making.

Organizations that consider employee happiness as a fundamental performance objective consistently unlock greater innovation and long-term financial success. Founded by Nic Marks, the creator of The Happy Planet Index, the world's first measure of sustainable well-being, Happiness Works is based in London and has a growing global portfolio of forward-thinking clients.

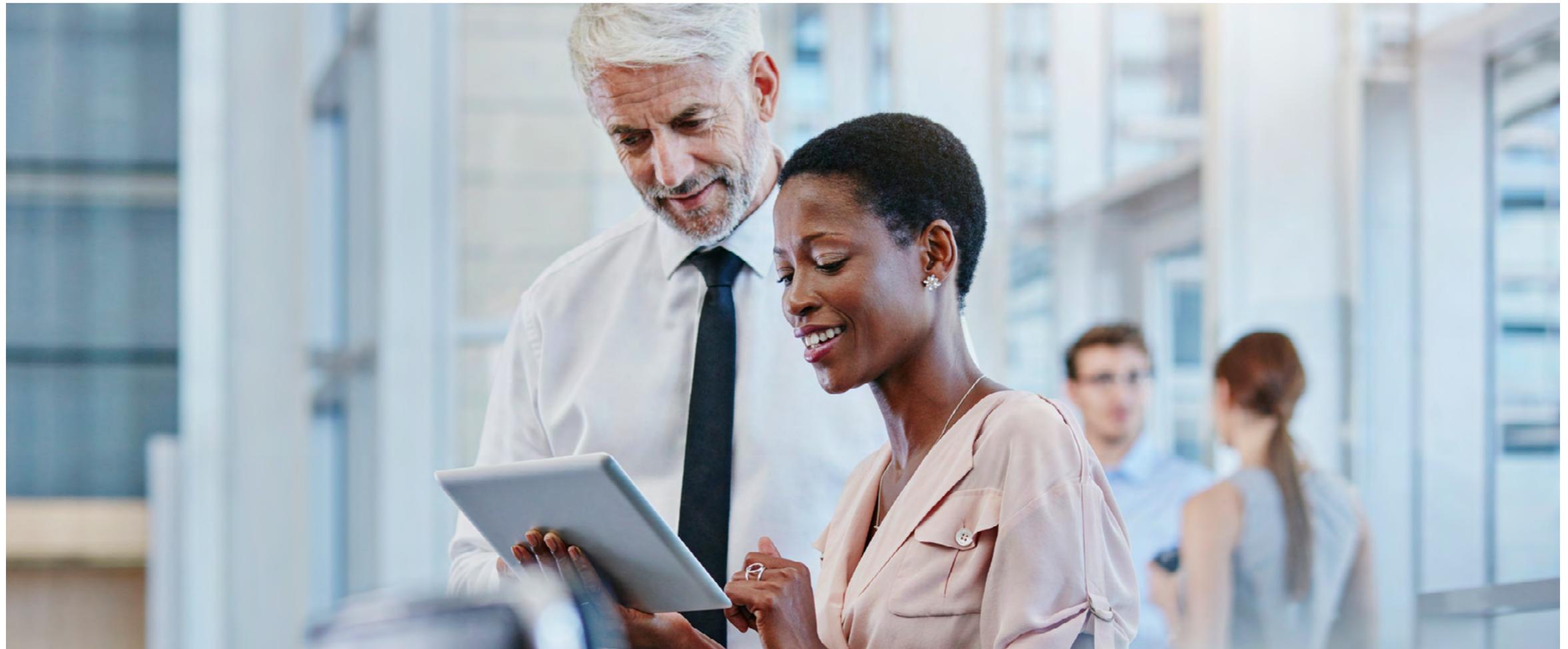


ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Data referenced throughout The Secrets of the Happiest Companies and Employees is based on the results of an online survey of more than 12,000 workers in the United States and Canada conducted in the third quarter of 2016 by an independent research firm. Respondents were asked 30 questions about how happy they feel at work and what they attribute those feelings to. To allow comparisons among professional fields, our sampling placed an emphasis on

workers employed in professional settings. Some industries and roles covered by the research are not included in this report.

In analyzing the data, a post-sample weighting methodology was used to match U.S. and Canadian populations by age, gender, education level, occupation/role and job sector. A country-weighting methodology was also used so that the weighted percentages for the U.S. and Canada matched the actual difference in the two populations.



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