The Six Essentials of Workplace Positivity

By Elizabeth F. Cabrera

Research shows that the more positive emotions people experience, the more successful they are. Positive employees make better decisions, are more creative, more productive, more resilient and have better interpersonal skills. Companies can, therefore, gain a competitive advantage by creating positive work environments.

There are many benefits and causes of positive emotions. This article presents a framework developed from research in positive psychology that includes six essentials of workplace positivity: positive thinking, positive relationships, strengths, empowerment, meaning and well-being. Specific steps for increasing each of the six positivity dimensions are detailed. Managers and human resource professionals can use this framework to enhance employee engagement and performance in order to achieve greater levels of organizational success.

Positivity is the frequent experience of positive emotions such as joy, hope, gratitude, interest, serenity or inspiration. It is the day-to-day pleasant experiences that leave a person feeling happy and satisfied. Evidence shows that increasing positivity in the workplace can provide a major competitive advantage for organizations (Achor, 2010). People who experience positive emotions at work have higher levels of engagement, organizational citizenship behavior and job performance, and are less likely to experience burnout or engage in counterproductive behavior (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).

Positivity is good for the bottom line and for employees. It is beneficial for organizations because it leads to higher levels of motivation and performance. Positive employees make better decisions, are more creative and more productive, and have better interpersonal skills. Positivity is also good for employees because it enhances well-being and personal success. This, in turn, benefits organizations because employees appreciate their company's efforts to improve their well-being, resulting in greater loyalty and commitment.

Benefits of Positivity

In 1998, Martin Seligman, then president of the American Psychological Association, challenged the field of psychology to broaden its primary focus on human problems and how to solve them to include more research on positive emotions, positive traits and positive institutions. Since then, a significant amount of research has been dedicated to exploring positive aspects of individuals and of organizations.

The overwhelming conclusion from this research is that positivity or happiness leads to success (Achor, 2010). Yet most people still believe it is the other way around. They spend long days and nights working hard, convinced they will find happiness when they finally achieve success. We now know that happiness comes first. Positive people are more likely to become successful. For example, one study showed that college students who were the happiest as freshmen were the ones who made the most money 15 years after graduating (Diener, Nickerson, Lucas, & Sandvik, 2002). Another study showed that employees who reported being the happiest received higher supervisor evaluations and pay increases 18 months later (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994).

So just how does positivity lead to success? There is a long list of benefits associated with experiencing positive emotions, all of which contribute to achieving success. Positivity benefits people mentally, socially, psychologically and physically.

Mental Benefits

Our emotions affect the way our mind works. When we are in a negative mood, our mind has a very narrow focus. This can be useful in helping us to respond rapidly to an eminent threat. When we hear a honking horn, it is in our best interest to ignore everything else and to focus on the car that honked to see if we are in danger. When a customer calls with a complaint, we should listen carefully to the explanation and focus on trying to resolve the situation.

Positive emotions have the exact opposite effect on the way our mind works. Rather than narrowing our focus, the range of ideas and behaviors that come to mind when we are in a positive mood are much broader (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005). Positive people are more mindful of what is going on around them; they take in more information. This leads them to make better decisions because they are more open and see more solutions to problems. Also, when people experience positive emotions, they feel safe and secure, so they can think in more divergent ways without feeling threatened. Thinking outside the box leads to greater creativity.

In one study, doctors were asked to diagnose a complicated case of liver disease. To increase their positivity, some doctors were given a bag of candy beforehand. Being in a positive mood caused the doctors to be more open to examining all the different pieces of information available to them. As a result, the doctors who received the candy were nearly twice as fast in making the correct diagnosis and exhibited much more creativity than the doctors who didn't receive candy (Isen, Rosenzweig & Young, 1991). Managers have also been found to make more accurate decisions and to be more effective leaders when they have higher levels of positivity (Staw & Barsade, 1993).

Social Benefits

Positive individuals are also more effective interpersonally. People feel closer and more connected to others when they experience positive emotions. They are more likely to make favorable judgments of people, which increases liking and leads to stronger relationships. Having high-quality relationships at work is related to personal growth, creativity and motivation. Close relationships are a source of emotional support, and they provide resources necessary for task accomplishment. People in high-quality relationships cooperate more readily and are more likely to help each other. They exchange more information, are better at coordinating their efforts and have less conflict.

A study of radio stations found that the stations with the highest percentage of ➤

employees with best friends at work had the greatest profits (Clifton & Nelson, 1992). And in his book "Good to Great," Jim Collins (2001) pointed out that a distinguishing characteristic of excellent companies was that employees often developed lifelong friendships with co-workers.

Psychological Benefits

In addition to enhancing both cognitive and interpersonal skills, positivity also helps people build valuable psychological resources. Positive people have better mental health, experiencing less anxiety and lower levels of depression. They are also more hopeful, self-confident and resilient (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005).

These psychological resources that are built when people experience positive emotions increase motivation. People who are hopeful and self-confident set higher goals, generate multiple pathways for meeting their goals and expend a good deal of effort to reach their goals. Resilient individuals are able to bounce back from setbacks. They don't let difficulties deter them from pursuing their goals. Positive people are more resilient because they have more effective coping skills. They are proactive and problem focused when facing difficulties. The psychological resources that positivity provides not only make people more motivated, but also increase the likelihood that they will achieve their goals.

Health Benefits

Positive people are physically healthier. They have lower blood pressures, lower heart rates, lower levels of stress-related hormones and stronger immune systems. Positivity lowers the probability of hypertension, diabetes and stroke. Positive people sleep better, have fewer colds and report experiencing less pain than negative people (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). And thanks to the many health benefits, it is estimated that positive people may live up to 10 years longer than negative people (Danner, Snowdon & Friesen, 2001). Having healthy employees is clearly good for organizations because it improves productivity, reduces absenteeism and can greatly reduce health care costs.

Thanks to the many benefits of positivity, employees who experience positive emotions at work are more engaged and more effective. Positivity inspires them to strive for challenging goals. It helps them to be more effective by enhancing their cognitive and interpersonal abilities and providing them with valuable resources like social support, resilience and good health. Positive workplaces give companies a competitive advantage because happy employees are successful employees.

Understanding Positivity

In order to take advantage of the benefits of positivity, we first need to understand what causes people to experience positive emotions. To begin with, some people are naturally more positive than others. Genes account for around 50 percent of our happiness. While this means that we all have a set point for our happiness that is determined genetically, it doesn't mean that we can't do anything to increase our positivity. Our set point only determines about half of our happiness. So what about the other half? Many people think that life circumstances, such as income, health or major events, play an important role in our positivity. They might be surprised to find out that our circumstances only account for around 10 percent of our happiness. This is because human beings adapt rapidly to new situations. Our brains are wired to respond to novelty, so we readily notice what is new and different and tend to ignore what becomes redundant in our lives (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

So what is responsible for the rest of our happiness? It turns out that 40 percent of our positivity is determined by our own thoughts and actions. This means that almost half of our positivity is the result of the activities we choose to engage in and the way we interpret the world in which we live. It is under our control. In fact, we can actually raise our happiness set point through intentional effort. Our set point for happiness is similar to our set point for weight. Some people might have to work a bit harder at being positive, but they can be happier if they so choose (Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Increasing positivity requires considerable sustained effort because humans have a negativity bias. People react more strongly to negative events and negative feedback and they remember them more. Negative emotions are felt more intensely than are positive emotions. When asked to recall important emotional events, people remember four negative memories for every positive one. According to Rick Hanson (2009), our "brain is like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones." We are constantly on the lookout for danger because our brains evolved to keep us alive. While a negativity bias has certainly played a role in our survival, in today's world, paying so much attention to negativity is not as crucial as it was for our ancestors and is actually what leads to suffering and unhappiness (Hanson, 2009).

Obviously we can't avoid negativity in our lives; bad things do happen. What matters is the ratio of positive to negative emotions over time. Because of our negativity bias, we have to make sure that we have more than enough positive experiences to counterbalance the negative ones. We need more positive emotions to outweigh the stronger negative ones. Research in positivity indicates that we should have a ratio of at least three-to-one positive-to-negative emotions (Fredrickson, 2009).

Unfortunately, in many workplaces, people don't experience a three-to-one positivity ratio. In fact, incivility is becoming an increasing problem in organizations (Pearson & Porath, 2009). Companies that understand the power of positivity can gain a competitive advantage by intentionally creating environments where employees experience more positive emotions. Managers can influence workplace emotions through the policies and practices they implement. They can also model and encourage positive thinking and behavior.

The Six Essentials

Research in positive psychology has identified numerous interventions that have been proven to increase positivity. Drawing on this research, I have developed a framework for workplace positivity and identified strategies that can be implemented by managers in order to create and maintain positive workplaces where people thrive. The Six Essentials of Workplace Positivity model includes: positive thinking, positive relationships, strengths, empowerment, meaning and well-being.

Positive Thinking

The way we think has a powerful effect on our emotions and our behavior. It even affects our abilities. People who think about words related to success before they take an intelligence test do far better than people who think about words related to failure, for any given IQ level (Achor & Peterson, 2008). While we

often can't control what happens to us, we can control how we think about it. Managers can help to create a positive work environment by encouraging people to think positively. Four strategies for promoting positive thinking include 1) positive focus; 2) optimism; 3) gratitude; and 4) forgiveness.

Positive focus. Recent research in neuroscience has shown that we can train our brains to be more positive. The more we push ourselves to look for what is positive and to ignore small negative annoyances, the more we will see good things. Positive thoughts can be cultivated by intentionally focusing on what is good (Achor, 2010). There are many ways in which managers can keep people focused on the positive. Some include directing conversations toward what is going well, celebrating small wins, pointing out people's strengths, telling success stories and encouraging teams to search for solutions rather than dwell on problems. A good manager is "a builder of dreams, not a destroyer of ideas" (Sanders, 2011).

Optimism. Optimism is expecting a desirable future. Optimistic people believe that goals can be accomplished. This leads them to take risks, try out new ideas and make necessary changes, all of which increase their chances of success. Optimism is based on the way people mentally explain the things that happen to them (Seligman, 2002). Optimists see setbacks as temporary circumstances they have the ability to overcome. Pessimists view setbacks as longer lasting situations they are unable to control. Fortunately, optimism can be learned because how we interpret events is up to us. Managers can help people to dispute pessimistic thoughts and come up with a more optimistic explanation of negative situations. For example, a manager might suggest to a team member who failed to close a deal that it was because the client was in a rush, not because of his performance. He should be optimistic that he will close the deal tomorrow when the client has more time.

Gratitude. Gratitude is being thankful. It is relishing moments, counting blessings, noticing how fortunate your circumstances are and thinking about all the good things in life. One of the most effective ways to increase positivity is to develop a culture of gratitude. People experience positive emotions each time they take a minute to think about what is good. Managers should encourage people to find a way to remember to be grateful. They might keep a gratitude journal where they write down three things they are thankful for each

day, or reflect on what they are grateful for when they turn on their computer or during their commute home from work. Managers can start meetings by asking people to mention something or someone for which they are grateful. Expressing gratitude is especially powerful in that it creates a virtuous circle; people who feel appreciated will be more motivated to express their gratitude as well.

Forgiveness. Whereas gratitude boosts our positivity by increasing the frequency of positive emotions, dwelling on bad times decreases our positivity by increasing the amount of negative emotions we experience. Positive work environments also have a culture of forgiveness. Managers encourage employees to forgive one another and they model forgiveness themselves. When people make mistakes, time isn't wasted looking for someone to blame or dwelling on what happened. Mistakes are viewed as opportunities to learn; lessons are identified and then everyone moves on.

people they work with, asking about their families, their hobbies and their stories. A good idea is to set a goal to learn one new thing about someone at work every day. Managers should directly communicate to people that they are valued members of the organization. The importance of expressing appreciation should not be overlooked. One of the number one reasons people leave their job is because they don't feel appreciated (Rath & Clifton, 2005).

Recognition. Positive relationships are built when people are recognized for the work they do and when their accomplishments are celebrated. While respect and appreciation show people they are valued for who they are, recognition shows them they are valued for what they achieve — that what they do matters. As important as recognition is, 65 percent of Americans say they have gone an entire year without receiving recognition for good work (Rath & Clifton, 2005). Because of our negativity bias, we are often quicker to point out

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Positive Relationships

Having close, trusting relationships is the key distinction between happy and unhappy people (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Positive relationships are vital for our well-being and effectiveness (Dutton, 2003). Four key strategies for building positive relationships are: 1) respect and appreciation; 2) recognition; 3) trust; and 4) generosity.

Respect. Positive relationships are built on the basic needs of respect and appreciation. We want to feel that others view us as competent individuals and valued contributors. There are several ways in which managers can demonstrate respect and appreciation. One is to ask people for their ideas and opinions and really listen to what they have to say. Collaborative problem solving involves everyone in the search for and evaluation of alternative solutions. It demonstrates that you value their opinion and trust in their abilities to successfully resolve the situation.

Another way managers can show appreciation is to learn as much as they can about the

what is wrong than what is right. When something goes wrong, it causes negative emotions, we feel threatened and we focus in on it. When things are going well, we often don't say anything. It requires intentional effort by managers to notice and respond when things are going well.

Day-to-day recognition is especially effective because it is spontaneous and immediate. It requires that managers constantly be on the lookout for good behavior so they can recognize people when they see it. Above-and-beyond recognition is used to recognize contributions such as product innovation, cost reduction or extraordinary sales. Career recognition includes events to celebrate loyalty, such as having a party to recognize people who have been with the company for a certain number of years and to recognize the lifelong contributions of people when they retire (Gostick & Elton, 2009).

Trust. Managers build positive relationships by demonstrating they are trustworthy. Individuals are perceived to be trustworthy when

they act with integrity, dependability and benevolence (Dutton, 2003). This means that managers need to be honest, act in accordance with their values, show consistency in their behavior, demonstrate good judgment and show they care about others.

Not only is it important for managers to be perceived as trustworthy, but they also need to show that they trust their employees. One of the very best ways to show people you trust them is to give them autonomy. By allowing people to make important decisions and giving them control over how, when and where to work, managers demonstrate their trust in them. A second way in which managers show their trust in others is by sharing valuable information. Sharing information regarding profits, costs, productivity, customers and strategy with people sends a clear signal that managers trust them with sensitive information.

Generosity. Giving is one of the best ways to increase happiness. Tim Sanders (2011) calls giving a wonder drug. We get a rush of positive feelings when we help someone else. People have reported a bigger positivity boost when they provide support to others than when they themselves receive support (Brown, Nesse, Vinkur, & Smith, 2003). Managers can capitalize on the power of generosity in order to increase workplace positivity.

ees to give of their time to help younger employees with their career. People who serve as mentors typically find it rewarding to be able to give back by using their experience to make a difference in someone else's career. Finally, the power of leading by example should never be underestimated. Managers who are generous themselves will set in motion positive reactions, inspiring those around them to follow suit.

Strengths

People have a natural desire to realize their potential, and the best way to do this is through their strengths. The happiest, most successful people have the opportunity to use their strengths often. Employees who have the chance to use their strengths every day have higher levels of customer satisfaction and productivity, as well as higher retention rates (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002). They are six times more likely to be engaged in their jobs and have higher levels of energy and lower risk of heart disease (Achor & Peterson, 2008).

Despite the positive benefits of using strengths at work, one report found that only 20 percent of the people around the world have the opportunity to do what they

spot strengths in others. They can interview people to find out which tasks they enjoy the most. Observing people at work to look for rapid learning, high energy or repeated patterns of successful performance is another way to spot strengths.

There are also inventories that can be used to identify strengths. Two of the most popular inventories are the VIA Survey of Character Strengths (www.viasurvey.org) and Gallup's StrengthsFinder (www.strengthsfinder.com). Human resource professionals can play an important role in helping employees identify their strengths by offering everyone access to a strengths assessment. Finally, feedback from others can be useful for identifying strengths. Insight can be gained by asking team members — even friends and family — to recall specific incidents and stories about when they have seen someone at their best. The feedback they provide can be organized into common themes, which can point to an individual's strengths (Roberts, Spreitzer, Dutton, Quinn, Heaphy, & Barker, 2005).

Use. People need to have the opportunity to use their strengths at work. The first step toward this goal is to select individuals with the particular strengths that are needed to meet the organization's objectives. Human resource professionals can have a major impact here by carefully selecting the individuals who best fit the organization's needs. Managers can then work with employees to structure their roles so they make the best use of their strengths. Jobs are rarely designed based on an employee's unique combination of strengths, so managers need to work with employees to modify their roles. Role shaping is critical for improving person-job fit. When work is designed in teams, tasks can be allocated to team members on the basis of their strengths. A final way to ensure that people have the opportunity to use their strengths at work is to designate a few hours each week as "strengths time," during which individuals can work on tasks that may not fall within their job descriptions but do advance the goals of the company.

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There are a number of different ways to encourage people to help others. One is to recognize people when they demonstrate generosity. This sends a clear message to everyone that helping behaviors are valued and makes it more likely that these behaviors will be repeated. Another way to encourage generosity is through the process of socialization. Telling stories of past acts of generosity helps newcomers see that helping others is expected and appreciated. Assigning specific individuals to help new members adjust demonstrates through actions, not just words, that helping is highly valued.

Mentorship programs provide excellent opportunities for more experienced employ-

do best each day in their current job (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). So a key strategy for managers who want to create positive workplaces is to help people identify, use and develop their strengths.

Identify. Most people are aware of some of their strengths, but not all of them. Because strengths come so naturally, we often take them for granted, thinking they come as easily to everyone else as they do to us. Therefore, helping people to identify their strengths is an important first step in strengths-based management. Enjoyment, ease, energy and excellence are useful clues for uncovering strengths. Managers can use these clues to

The more often people use their strengths at work, the more likely they will experience moments of flow. Flow is a state of intense involvement with the present moment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). It is like a natural high that occurs when people are deeply engaged in a challenging task that is well matched to their strengths. It is during moments of flow that people experience both peak enjoyment and peak performance.

Develop. The greatest opportunities for growth come from building on strengths. Managers can help employees build on their strengths by providing feedback and developmental opportunities. Frequent, positive feedback is crucial for learning. However, feedback is typically given only a few times a year in annual or biannual performance reviews. And often it is focused on pointing out weaknesses or what has been done wrong. Yet, we learn better with positive rather than negative feedback. In one study that videotaped people while they were bowling, half of the bowlers were shown videos of their spares and strikes while the other half watched videos of the frames when they failed to knock all of the pins down. When they bowled again, the half who had watched videos of the frames where they had bowled spares and strikes improved significantly more than the other half. (Kirschenbaum, 1984). Obviously, areas of weakness should be discussed if they are critical for performance. But in keeping with the three-to-one positivity ratio, three-fourths of feedback should focus on strengths or what is working and, at most, one-fourth should address weaknesses or problems.

In addition to feedback, training opportunities are crucial for employees to further develop in the area of their strengths. Human resource professionals should provide on-the-job training, off-site courses and other skills-building tools and resources to help employees achieve success through their strengths. Managers should encourage their employees to take advantage of development opportunities. Mentoring and coaching can also be extremely valuable for helping employees identify ways of growing their strengths.

Empowerment

In positive work environments, people are empowered to do their job successfully. They know what their goals are and they have the support and autonomy needed to achieve their goals. According to the progress principle, a new theory of work motivation, people are happier at work when they have the opportunity to experience achievement. They feel their best days are those when we have made consistent, meaningful progress, while their worst days are when they have setbacks (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Managers can increase the amount of positive emotions experienced at work by helping people progress. Empowerment is the best way to help employees achieve their goals. It involves clarity, support and autonomy.

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Clarity. The first step in empowering employees is to clarify goals and expectations. People can only progress at work if they have a clear idea of what results they are expected to deliver. With empowerment, the role of a manager shifts from closely supervising what people are doing to holding them accountable for results. This means that managers need to clearly define expected outcomes and communicate them frequently so everyone understands their responsibilities.

Support. The second step in empowering others is to support them by providing the resources they need to succeed and removing any obstacles that may hinder progress. Managers empower people when they commit to serving their needs. As servant leaders, they view their role as coordinating, facilitating and supporting the work of others (Strock, 2010). This requires not only providing the time, resources and encouragement necessary for accomplishing goals, but also actively working to eliminate barriers to success.

Autonomy. Finally, empowering people means giving them the autonomy they need to do their work. Once employees know what they are expected to do and have the support they need to do it, the best thing a manager can do is to get out of their way. Trusting employees to get their work done however they choose is fundamental for creating positive work environments. Managers provide supportive autonomy by giving people the room they need to succeed on their own, while still remaining hands-on enough to provide support when it is needed (Hill & Lineback, 2011).

Meaning

Many people look to their work to find a sense of fulfillment. They believe their career is not just about making a living, but that it is about making a difference. According to one survey, Americans value meaningful work more than anything else, including promotions, income, job security and balance (Cascio, 2003). Because people experience more positive emotions and are more engaged in their work if they sense that what they are doing fulfills a higher purpose, managers need to help employees discover the why of work (Ulrich & Ulrich, 2010). Three key elements for creating this sense of meaning or purpose are 1) mission; 2) impact; and 3) social responsibility.

People typically see their work as a job, a career or a calling (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Those who view their work as a job do it mainly to earn a living. People who see their work as a career are interested in money, responsibility and ➤

TABLE 1: MANAGERIAL PRACTICES FOR INCREASING WORKPLACE POSITIVITY

Six Essentials	Managerial Practices
1. Positive Thinking Positive Focus Optimism Gratitude Forgiveness	• Celebrate small wins • Share success stories • Focus on solutions rather than problems • Help people view negative events as temporary setbacks • Start meetings by asking people what they are thankful for • Express gratitude frequently • View mistakes as opportunities to learn
2. Positive Relationships Respect Recognition Trust Generosity	• Listen to people's ideas and opinions • Let people know you appreciate who they are • Recognize people for doing good work • Celebrate accomplishments • Act with integrity, dependability and benevolence • Encourage participation in decision making • Share information freely • Reward people for helping their colleagues • Establish a mentorship program
3. Strengths Identify Use Develop	• Look for rapid learning, high energy or repeated success • Administer a strengths inventory • Select individuals whose strengths fit the company's needs • Assign or modify roles to maximize strengths use • Designate a few hours each week as "strengths time" • Focus feedback on people's strengths • Provide training to further develop people's strengths
4. Empowerment Clarity Support Autonomy	• Clearly define goals and expectations • Provide the time and resources needed to achieve goals • Remove obstacles to success • Let people choose how to do their work
5. Meaning Mission Impact Social responsibility	• Continuously remind people of the company's mission • Highlight the impact people have on clients or colleagues • Communicate the company's social responsibility initiatives • Encourage participation in social responsibility programs
6. Well-being Health Fun Work-life fit	• Adopt wellness programs to prevent health problems • Play games, have parties, find creative ways to have fun • Offer quality of life benefits, flexible work, childcare, etc. • Work to ensure individual needs are met

advancement. People who view their job as a calling feel their work is important or meaningful because it benefits others in some way. They are passionate about doing the work for its own sake, not for financial or other benefits. Interestingly, whether people experience their work as a calling does not depend on the actual work they do. Meaning is about how we understand the work we do, not the work itself. Most any job has social value. What matters is that the person recognizes the value of the work they do.

Mission. Managers can draw on the company's mission to help people see their work as a calling. Mission is a company's purpose or reason for existing. It can encompass the customer needs a company is working to satisfy, the goods and services it supplies or the mar-

kets it serves. Mission can contribute to employees' sense of meaning by showing them how the company's products and/or services make a real difference in people's lives. Managers need to communicate the mission constantly so employees know what the company is trying to achieve. The more they understand what the purpose of their company is, the more likely they will see a purpose in working for the company.

Impact. In addition to feeling their company's mission is important, people also need to sense that what they themselves do makes an impact. They need to understand how their work fits into the bigger picture, to know that what they do each day is about more than simply completing their own daily tasks. The more people realize how their actions benefit

and are appreciated by others, the more meaning they will experience.

A powerful strategy for helping employees view their work as a calling is to facilitate ways for them to see firsthand the impact they have on customers (Grant, 2008). Some companies have programs to ensure their employees have contact with customers who benefit from their work. For example, employees who work for Novo Nordisk, a Danish pharmaceuticals firm that specializes in the treatment of diabetes, meet with diabetes patients so they can learn about the illness and how it affects their day-to-day life (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006). People can also see their work as meaningful if they feel that what they do is helping their colleagues. Managers need to make sure employees are aware of the internal impact of their work. One way to do this is to take a moment at meetings to ask people to share how a colleague has made a difference to them at work.

Social responsibility. Finally, people experience a sense of meaning when they believe the company they work for is helping to make the world a better place (Sisodia, Wolf & Sheth, 2007). Employees today have a strong preference to work for socially and environmentally responsible companies. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives humanize a company, showing that it cares about more than just maximizing profits. Employees who believe their company demonstrates socially responsible behavior have higher levels of commitment, greater morale and a sense of pride (Bhattacharya, Sen & Korschun, 2008).

Managers can maximize the impact social responsibility has on employees by making sure everyone is aware of the company's CSR activities. They can do this by communicating the initiatives and encouraging employee participation in the social responsibility programs. Managers should also let employees have a voice in the causes the company supports so they are more closely aligned with issues of interest to them. Employees can be surveyed to determine which CSR initiatives they value the most (Bhattacharya, Sen & Korschun, 2008).

Well-Being

Managers create positive work environments by showing their employees they are genuinely concerned about their well-being. Well-being is defined as a state of health, hap-

piness and prosperity. Managers can, therefore, affect employee well-being by addressing health needs, encouraging people to have fun at work and helping them to achieve fulfillment through work-life fit.

Health. People's health is an important factor in their well-being. Many human resources departments have adopted wellness programs that focus on helping employees prevent health problems. These programs typically educate employees about health risks such as smoking, high blood pressure and stress and offer screening to help employees identify potential risks. They also encourage employees to adopt healthy lifestyles by providing healthy food choices in their cafeterias, providing fitness facilities at work or discounts for local gym memberships, offering yoga classes or hosting seminars on subjects like stress management.

Fun. By creating fun work environments, managers demonstrate their concern for employee well-being. There are many different ways to infuse the workplace with fun, such as playing games, celebrating obscure holidays, encouraging people to wear costumes to work on Halloween, picking creative names for meeting rooms (Apple has Play-Doh and Lincoln Logs rooms and IBM has Paris and Rio de Janeiro rooms) or having picnics or chili cook-offs. Employees in some companies, such as Zappos and Southwest, have made fun videos. And isn't it great to see Google's logo on its homepage each day? Managers who make an effort to increase the fun factor at work show they care about the happiness of their employees.

Work-life fit. In addition to staying healthy and having fun, people's well-being is determined by their ability to achieve work-life fit or a full life. They don't want to spend so many hours at work that they have no time or energy to dedicate to their family, their friends, themselves or their community. While being able to achieve work-life fit has always been important for working mothers, it is now a priority for both men and women from younger generations. One of the highest priorities for Generation X and Yers when choosing a job is a work schedule that allows them more time at home. They are willing to sacrifice career advancement in order to have the flexibility necessary to experience work-life fit (Chalofsky, 2010).

In positive work environments, managers understand the importance of work-life fit

and are willing to help their employees achieve it. It is important for the human resources department to offer quality of life benefits, work-life programs, flexible work, childcare, lactation rooms, etc.; however, the best way for employees to achieve work-life fit is for their managers to work with them to assure that their individual needs are met.

Conclusion

There is a growing body of rigorous scientific evidence showing the impact of positivity on organizational success. Research has also identified specific strategies that managers can implement to increase workplace positivity so that people thrive and perform at their best. In addition to the performance benefits, positive workplaces are vital for attracting and retaining talent. Many people today are looking for more than just financial rewards from their jobs. They want to work for a company that has a positive climate, enhances their emotional well-being and allows them to make a meaningful contribution.

Employee engagement is at an all-time low. According to a survey by Manpower, 84 percent of employees plan to look for a new job in 2011 (Dickler, 2010). The need to create more positive workplaces has never been greater. Building positive work environments does not require costly investments. It requires a commitment on the part of managers and human resource professionals to create positive change. Most of the strategies are simple and straightforward, so there is no excuse for not starting today.

Managers can apply the six essentials of workplace positivity to create environments where people focus on what is good; where they nurture their relationships; where they enjoy what they do and are successful because they are using their strengths; where they are empowered to make progress; where they experience meaning because they know that they and their company are making a difference; and, finally, where they know that others are truly concerned about their well-being.

Human resource professionals also play a vital role in the creation of positive work environments. They can assess current levels of workplace positivity in order to identify areas for improvement.[1] They can train man-

agers in the benefits of positivity and the six essentials for increasing workplace positivity. Finally, they can support managers with programs that promote positivity including strengths assessments, strengths-based selection, development opportunities, mentoring and coaching, wellness programs and work-life fit initiatives. **P&S**

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[1] For information on the Workplace Positivity Inventory visit: www.http://organizationalpositivity.com/?page_id=532.

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Steve Jobs *(continued)*

product launches and defining influences. There are times in the more than 630 pages when it bogs down, but the storytelling is rich enough to keep you engaged and eager to see what comes next.

Jobs' early obsession with Zen Buddhism imbued him with a love of simple design, minimalism and functionality. It also gave him an unflinching focus that he could direct toward achieving his goals, whether those goals were realistic. This led to what many of his associates called his "reality distortion field," a term lovingly borrowed from a "Star Trek" episode that describes Jobs' ability to bulldoze through doubt and objections on his way to masterfully creating fabulous products. Andy Hertzfeld, another member of the original Mac team, describes it this way: "The reality distortion field was a confounding mélange of a charismatic rhetorical style, indomitable will and eagerness to bend any fact to fit the purpose at hand"

(p. 118). In addition, Jobs approached the world in an entirely binary way. Your work was either "great" or "horrible," and that made you "enlightened" or "idiotic." Jobs lived in the pure white world of his products; he suffered no gray.

In sum, if you had the fortitude and coping skills to be in Steve Jobs' orbit, you were sure to be smitten by his incredibly creative and intuitive vision as well as his unflinching devotion to excellence and elegance both inside and outside of every product he produced. And, importantly, you believed by virtue of being around him that what he demanded of you was possible.

So maybe it's not always the good guys who win. Sometimes, just maybe, the guy who wins is the guy who mercilessly drives you to be far better than you ever knew you could be.

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