

Want Happier Employees? Here Are 5 Powerfully Simple Steps to Increase Happiness at Work

By Peter Economy

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We all want to be happy, right? But just how happy is the place you work or the country you live in? While I don't have the answer to how happy your workplace is, I do have the answer to how happy your country is.

According to the 2018 World Happiness Report, the happiest country in the world is Finland, which edged out Norway for the top ranking. Denmark was third and Iceland and Switzerland fourth and fifth respectively. The United States ranked only #18 this year—down from #14 in 2017 and #13 in 2016. For some reason, the United States has never made it into the ranks of the top-10 happiest countries, and the trend is not good.

While you might not be able to move the needle when it comes to a happier country or world, you certainly have the power to have a positive influence on the happiness of the people who work for and with you. Here are five powerful ways to do just that.

1. **Extend Your Gratitude Whenever Possible**

While a simple "thank you" is a supremely easy, no-cost thing to give to employees—and the people we care about—it's something few of us do often enough. Express your gratitude for others sincerely, willingly, and often. The only way people will know you care is if you tell them you do (and they will be much happier as a result).

2. **Provide Support and Guidance**

Every leader wants their people to take initiative and to go out of their way to provide the best service possible—not just to customers, but to one another. However, to do this consistently and well, they need your support and guidance. This means not punishing them for experimenting or trying something new to improve the system and failing, but to help them stand back up, brush themselves off, and try again, keeping in mind the lessons they just learned.

3. **Create a Positive Workplace Where People Want to Be**

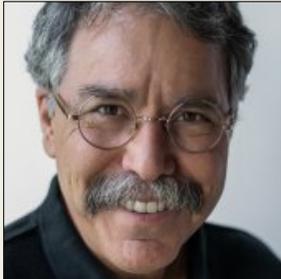
No one wants to go to work each day at a drab, uninviting workplace where everyone just wants to go home 5 minutes after they arrived. As a leader, you have the ability to create an upbeat, positive, happy workplace based on a culture that brings out the best in everyone instead of shuts it down. Think about the kind of place where you want to work, and then create it for your people.

4. Always Tell the Truth (Even When It Hurts)

In his book *Leading Through Uncertainty*, former Umpqua Bank CEO Ray Davis explains that employees always want to be told the truth, especially in uncertain times. According to Davis, "I always tell our people that they're entitled to get answers to every question they have, I don't care what it is. I let them know I'm not going to defend myself when it comes to their questions, but I will explain what's going on. I also tell them that while they're entitled to answers to every question they may have, that doesn't mean that they're going to like the answers. But it's going to be truthful and I know they can deal with the truth."

5. Let Your People Make Decisions Too

While you may be the leader, there's no way you can or should try to make every single decision for your organization all by yourself. Tap into the hearts and minds of the smart and talented people who work for you and encourage them to be leaders, too. Having leaders at every level of your organization is the best way to create a business that's built to last—and employees who are happy, engaged, and productive.



While **Peter Economy** has spent the better part of two decades of his life slugging it out *mano a mano* in the management trenches, he is now a full-time ghostwriter and best-selling author of more than 85 books—including *Managing for Dummies*, *Everything I Learned About Life I Learned in Dance Class*, and *User Story Mapping: Discover the Whole Story, Build the Right Product*—with total sales in excess of two million copies. He has also served as associate editor for *Leader to Leader* for more than 12 years, where he has worked on projects with the likes of Jim Collins, Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and many other top management and leadership thinkers.

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