

Lord Richard Layard, Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics, tells us in his book 'Happiness: Lessons from a New Science': "As Western societies have got richer, their people have become no happier". (Footnote 1).

We also know from studies and research performed by leading organisations in the HR field that, in motivating employees, extrinsic motivators rate poorly against intrinsic motivators such as helping staff to find their mission, passion, purpose and meaning at work.

And, when it comes to enhancing employee productivity and job satisfaction, leaders and managers can gain much from using strategies which help build employee's happiness, wellbeing, engagement and meaning in the workplace.

### **With the festive season fast approaching, what can be done in the next few weeks to enhance positivity, meaning and engagement at work?**

1. Meaning. "People who care about other people are happier than those who are preoccupied with themselves"; "More anxiety comes from striving to 'do well' for yourself than from striving to 'do good' for the rest of the world"; "The happiness of a society is likely to increase the more people care about other people" (Lord Richard Layard). This Christmas, what can you and your teams do for others?
2. More Meaning. From the field of Positive Psychology, meaning is one of the paths to greater satisfaction. It's about being part of something larger than ourselves, and using our skills, strengths and talents in the service of something larger than we are. How can you and your team channel your individual and collective strengths for the purpose of contributing to someone or something else?
3. Simplify. Too much complexity and choice can lead to greater stress, and decreased happiness, health and satisfaction. Give a gift to your staff: what complexities at work can you take away or minimise? How can you simplify things and take away stress? As a team, work together on how you could collectively achieve this for yourselves and your colleagues.
4. Kindness. "Evidence suggests that a certain form of helping behaviour – namely volunteerism – is associated with many measures of mental and physical health for benefactors" (Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson). What can you and your staff do this Christmas, in and out of the office?
5. Workplace Giving: A recent PriceWaterhouseCoopers study reports that nearly three quarters of fast-growth private companies are involved in charitable giving activities. Benefits to the organisation include: attraction and retention of good employees with compatible values, high-level networking, keeping staff motivated. It also results in improved communications, a sense of common purpose, and leadership development opportunities for employees involved in workplace giving programmes. Thus, combined with the benefits noted further above, workplace giving is powerful for all involved. Examples of activities include:
  - giving staff paid time-off to volunteer
  - giving to charities
  - providing educational grants
  - sponsoring local events and other charitable and community activities
  - donating services and products

Ernst & Young, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility efforts is active in this area all year round. Specifically with Christmas in mind, a friend who is a Partner in the Sydney office emailed all staff with 'giving' ideas which included: play Kris Kringle and donate toys to charity; 'Can for a Can' – at the next social function, for every can of beer, donate a can of food to the Exodus Foundation's Christmas hampers; Give a gift which benefits children and families in the third world; Engage in a team-building activity by taking an opportunity to volunteer with your group; Give \$ to charity.

## Website Links and Your Imagination

Combine your team's imagination with some help from these links: what ideas will you create?.

[www.shareanopportunity.org](http://www.shareanopportunity.org) - look under Gift Opportunities in the side bar  
[www.worldvision.com.au/smiles](http://www.worldvision.com.au/smiles)  
[www.careaustralia.com.au](http://www.careaustralia.com.au)  
[www.au.store.yahoo.com/redcrossvic](http://www.au.store.yahoo.com/redcrossvic)  
[www.tear.org.au](http://www.tear.org.au)  
[www.newdream.org](http://www.newdream.org)  
[www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)  
[www.philanthropy.org.au](http://www.philanthropy.org.au)  
[www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)  
[www.volunteeringaustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org)

*All the best for the festive season and a happy new year.*

**I will help to simplify your inbox: there are no December or January articles; they re-commence in February 2006.**

*Footnote 1:* For a local flavour, read 'Growth Fetish' and 'Affluenza', by Clive Hamilton of The Australia Institute; the latter book co-authored with Richard Denniss. The books cover wealth/ happiness paradox, stress, consumerism, consumption, advertising and marketing etc. See [www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au). Depression, happiness and progress/consumption are also topics covered in 'Authentic Happiness', by Martin Seligman.

### About this article

Each monthly email aims to provide you and your staff with professional and personal development information. Topics covered are based on areas of interest raised by clients and colleagues, with material drawn from journals, books, articles and shared experiences.

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