

BUILDING HAPPY ORGANISATIONS

New ILM research, *The pursuit of happiness: positivity and performance among UK managers*, revealed that happy, well developed managers were more productive and higher performing. Here are eight steps to improving managers' positivity

1 MAKE HAPPINESS MATTER

Happiness at all levels is key to managerial performance and organisations will benefit by improving their staff's wellbeing.

The happiness of your staff is a reliable indicator of their performance, and unhappy staff are unlikely to be performing to their full potential. Watch out for and act on any signs of unhappiness in teams or individuals.

2 LOW STRESS, NOT NO-STRESS

A little bit of stress is actually a positive thing – the challenge is to keep it at the right levels. This is less about restricting a manager's workload and more about supporting and enabling them to manage that workload more effectively. Invest in training and development to equip managers with the practical skills and resilience to deal with the challenges of a stretching workload.

3 DEVELOP VISION

Vision is simply a mental picture of something – in leadership and management terms, a picture of what an organisation, department or team will look like at some stage in the future.

To develop a vision, leaders and managers need to be able to analyse the environment in which they work, forecast how it will develop, and plan how to progress from where they are to where they want to be. This enables them to set their strategic direction, which is vitally important for driving engagement across their team and the wider organisation. Vision allows others to see where you are going and how they fit into the bigger picture.

By converting goals into a coherent vision, leaders and managers can allow the people they lead to appreciate what they mean in practice and, most importantly, what success will look like. Finally, a vision converts dry objectives into something more tangible and

inspirational; something people can not only see, but something they can see themselves being part of.

4 TRAINING, TRAINING, TRAINING

Leadership and management training and development are critical to a manager's individual performance, with ancillary benefits on staff wellbeing, motivation and positivity. Organisations with a talent pipeline – that is, a clear and established pathway of development and progression – are in a far stronger position to develop skilled, engaged and high-performing staff.

5 DON'T FORGET FIRST-LINE MANAGERS

First-line managers are critical to an organisation's performance – they're responsible for the front line of the organisation, and they manage the staff who deal directly with your customers, goods providers and services.

Despite being new to the role and likely to have been promoted primarily for their technical expertise, they often do not receive the training they need. First-line managers are the weakest link in any organisation's management chain. All parties would benefit from a more focused and consistent approach to training and developing first-line management level staff with the skills they need to communicate with their team, handle stress and workload, and begin to develop vision and strategy.

6 BEWARE THE 'DANGER ZONE'

Two years is a pivotal time in a manager's career within an organisation, and employers should view this as an optimal time for change or intervention.

One powerful way to achieve this would be to offer training or qualifications within

the first two years in a management role to increase the skills needed for the future and boost development opportunities.

Coaching and mentoring in this period will also help overcome the 'two-year itch', by helping managers deal with the negative aspects of their role. It is also important to set clear targets for success over the first two years and beyond. This will ensure managers realise when they are succeeding and remain positive and engaged as a result.

However, these interventions must be pre-emptive and not reactive. Prevention, rather than treatment, is by far the best course of action when trying to safeguard managers' psychological wellbeing.

7 DEVELOP SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

While ILM's *Leadership and management talent pipeline* report identified the need for the core skills of performance management, communication and planning, this study highlights the value of managing workloads. We also see that managers are on the whole less confident around their leadership skills, in particular regarding vision and goals.

Employers can address these issues by providing employees with opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills to manage their own and others' workloads – for example, by learning to plan better and delegate more, and taking advantage of the abilities of those they lead and manage. However, this alone is not enough.

Managers also need to develop insights into their own attitudes, motivations and performance. The leadership and management styles they adopt should also fit their personality and mental resilience.

It is this combination of skills and self-awareness that employers seek, and which enables the high level of psychological wellbeing that is so closely linked to performance.

Read the full report at
WWW.I-L-M.COM/HAPPINESSANDPERFORMANCE

