

Happy Workplace Cultures

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The Context

This paper showcases Celebratory Network's (CN) work on their framework of happiness called '*Happy Workplace Cultures*' (HWC). The paper also aims at sharing its beginnings and applications across various organizational systems. The document is structured as follows.

- *Existing Research on Happiness at Work*
- *CN's Research on Happiness at Work*
- *Happy Workplace Cultures™*
- *Approach – Happy Workplace Culture™*
- *Types of Organizations that Focused on Happy Workplace Cultures*
- *Intent of Taking up HWC*
- *Findings of Happy Workplace Cultures™*
- *Our Learnings on Shaping a Happy Workplace Culture™*

Existing Work on Happiness at Work

Martin Seligman pioneered positive psychology, which focused on happiness and well-being. His model, PERMA, concentrated on the person and wrapped all work into one element.

- P - **Positive Emotion.** Feeling good, positive emotions, optimism, pleasure and enjoyment.
- E - **Engagement.** Fulfilling work, interesting hobbies, "flow."
- R - **Relationships.** Social connections, love, intimacy, emotional and physical interaction.
- M - **Meaning.** Having a purpose, finding a meaning in life.
- A - **Accomplishments.** Ambition, realistic goals, important achievements, pride in yourself.

In his book, ‘If You Are So Smart, Why Aren’t You Happy’, the author, Raj Raghunathan, has used a model for happiness at workplace called BAMBA – Basic Needs, Autonomy, Mastery, Belongingness and Abundance. He shares that on an average, organization with happier people are 9% more profitable than those with unhappy employees and that is one of the prime reasons for organizations to care about the happiness of their employees.



Figure 1

Jessica Pryce-Jones, in her book Happiness at Work, has talked about the 5C Model based on her 5-year research. She defines Happiness as “a mindset which allows you to maximize performance and achieve your potential. You do this by being mindful of the highs and lows when working alone or with others”.



Figure 2

A. CN's Research on Happiness at Work

- *Genesis*

During our meetings on Happiness with organizational leadership, we gathered that the widely held belief is that 'less work and more money, high-end parties and offsite meetings make employees happy'. However, CN believes that employees like to work and while they can hold themselves responsible for their own happiness, their work environment also plays a pivotal role. This is highlighted in Jessica Pryce's research. (Jessica Pryce, 2010).

- *CN's Research*

The curiosity to understand what happiness at work is, led us to ask the question around the globe in 2017-18. A hundred and five professionals took the survey. In 2019-20, we refined the tool to collect data specifically around the enablers and blocks of happiness in Organizations (see Fig 4, 5 & 6). Hence, the data is presented differently in the two time periods.

In 2017-18, 105 professionals took the online survey and in 2019-20, 196 professionals participated in the survey. The methodology for getting participant enrolment was through snowball method – CN team reaching out to friends, clients and social media.

The survey data was collected through Google Forms. The survey tool comprised of the following sections

- Demographic details
- Job profile
- Multiple choice questions on happy and unhappy experiences at workplace
- Open-ended questions to capture experiences of employees

The enablers and blocks were seen in the following elements:

- Relationships – approachability of seniors, healthy relations, acceptance, support, collaboration.
- Growth – challenges at work, self-development, learning opportunities, innovation, achievement
- Organizational Spirit - empowerment, respect, fun, trust, ethics, fairness
- Practice & Processes – appreciation, positivity, recognition, flexible work hours
- Organizational Purpose – developing others, purposeful, contribution to society, building leaders

In 2018-19, data was processed and analysed using STATA 13. Frequency tables and graphs were used for visualization of data. Individual characteristic wise analysis of data was done to determine the variations. Some of the findings were as follows:

- Happiness at Work

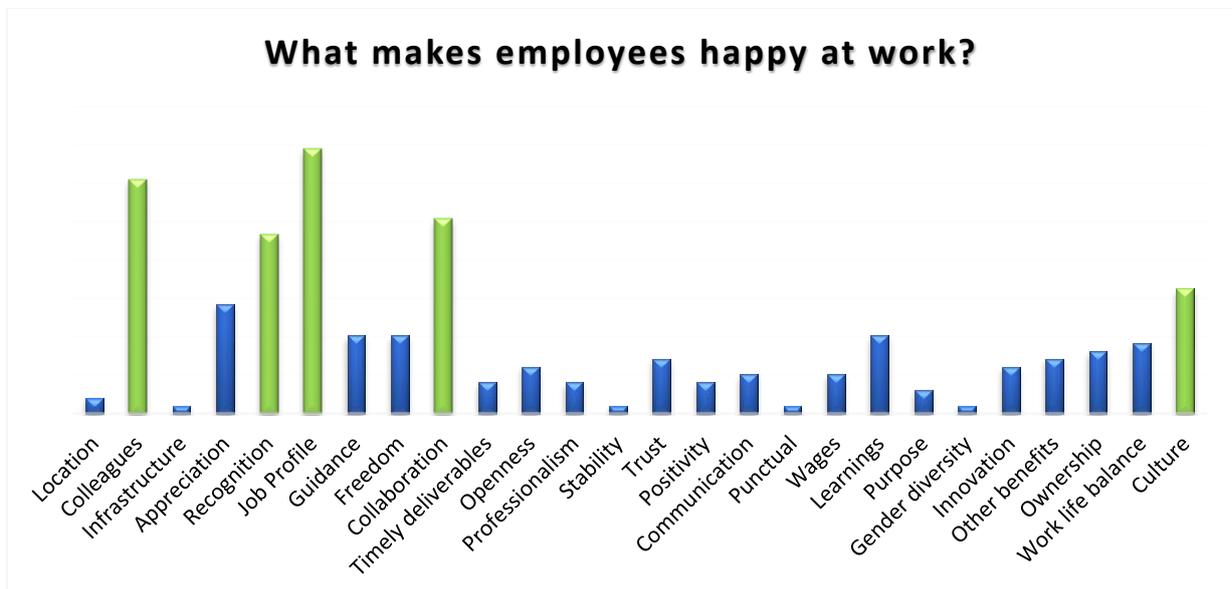


Figure 3

The top 5 sources of happiness were

- Job profile
- Relationships with Colleagues
- Recognition
- Collaboration
- Culture of the Organization.

Gender Wise Distribution of Themes of Happiness at Work

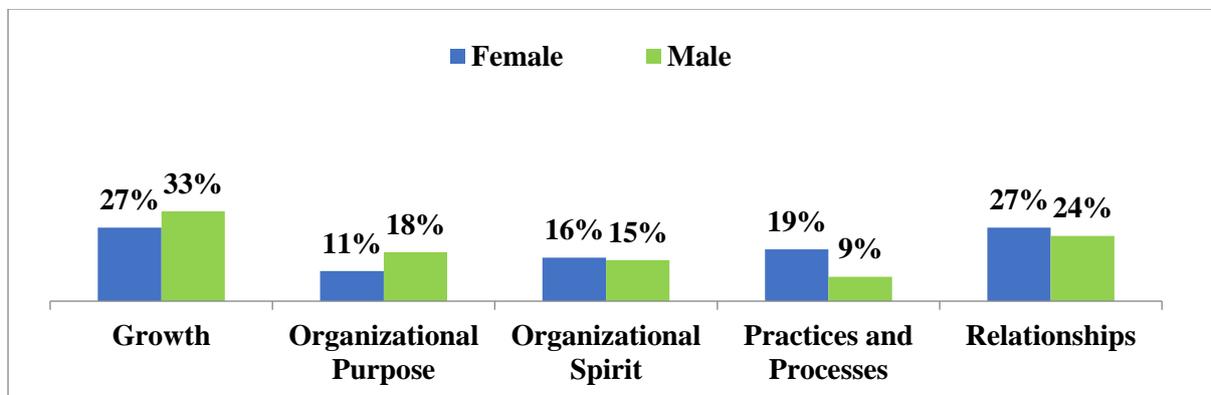


Figure 4

The enablers of happiness for men and women

- Men chose Growth (33%) followed by Relationships (24%) as enablers at work.
- Women find Relationships (27%) and Growth (27%) as equally important enablers.

Female respondents reported practice and processes (19%) as determinants of happy experience in proportions higher than that of male (9%) respondents. Men chose growth (33%) and organizational purpose (18%) in higher proportions.

- Age Wise Distribution of Themes of Happiness at Work
-

Age (in years)	Growth	Organizational purpose	Organizational spirit	Practice and processes	Relationships
	%	%	%	%	%
20-30	43	11	9	14	23
30-40	32	12	12	10	35
40-50	23	21	28	17	11
50-60	29	14	29	21	7
60 and above	0	25	0	25	50

Distribution of determinants of workplace happiness by number of years of work experience remained same as that of age in years. While respondents with lesser work experience selected growth and relationships in higher proportions, organizational purpose and spirit were selected by higher proportion by those with more work experience.

Employees Experiences of Happiness

Appreciation as Predictor of Happiness:

- “Positive feedback from students is a gratifying experience. Also, when I find a thank you note, from a student, slipped under my office door, I feel elated.” (Male, 41 years, Teaching)
- “Every time a new innovative idea sees the light of day, is well appreciated, I feel happy.” (Female, 32 years, Operations)
- **Recognition as Predictor of Happiness:**
- “Happiness was when my contribution to a high impact project was recognized.” (Male, 38 years, Manufacturing)
- “Whenever we celebrated our success and my contribution was recognized, it made me happy.” (Male, 36

years, Talent Management)

Achieving Goals as Predictor of Happiness

- “A clear objective with a clear reward (both pecuniary and social recognition) and very high achievement standards bring me happiness.” (Male, 40 years, Operations)
- “Recognition of my contribution Achievement of Business Goals made me happy.” (female, 44 years, Learning and Development)

Learning as Predictor of Happiness

- “Learning opportunities given by the company. Trust and confidence shown in my abilities and encouragement on taking roles beyond the scope of defined job role gives me happiness.” (Female, 31 years, Human Resource)

Unhappiness at Work

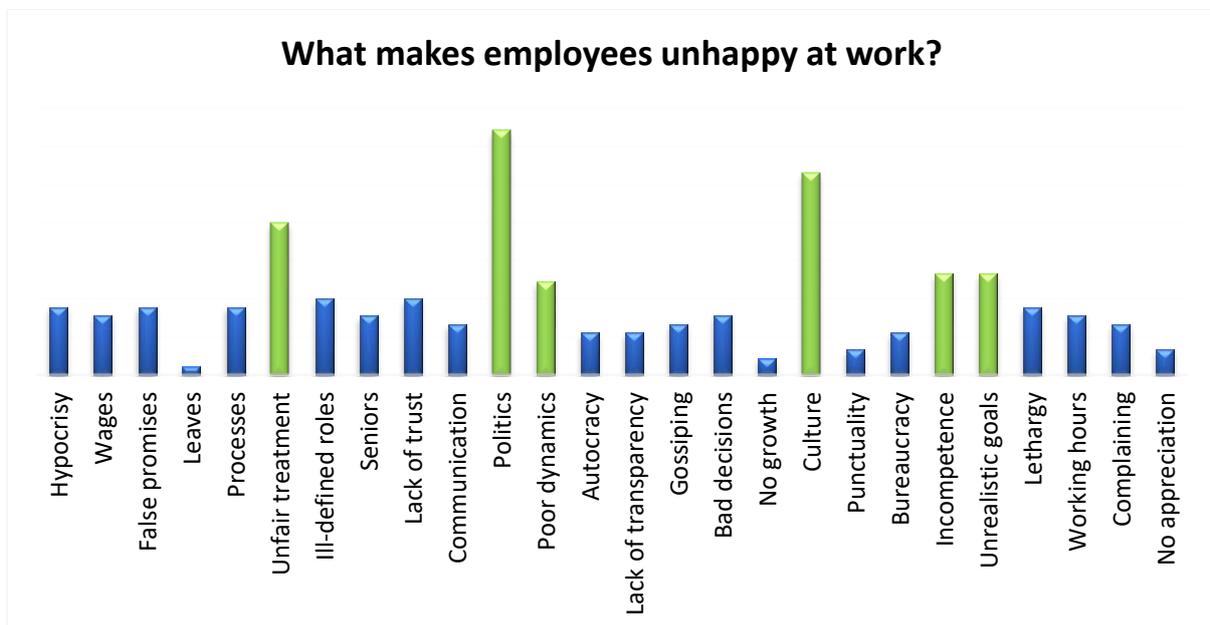


Figure 5

The top 5 sources of unhappiness

Organizational Politics, Culture of negativity and not valuing the person, unfair treatment, unrealistic goals and sense of incompetence.

- Gender Wise Distribution of Themes of Unhappy Experiences at Work

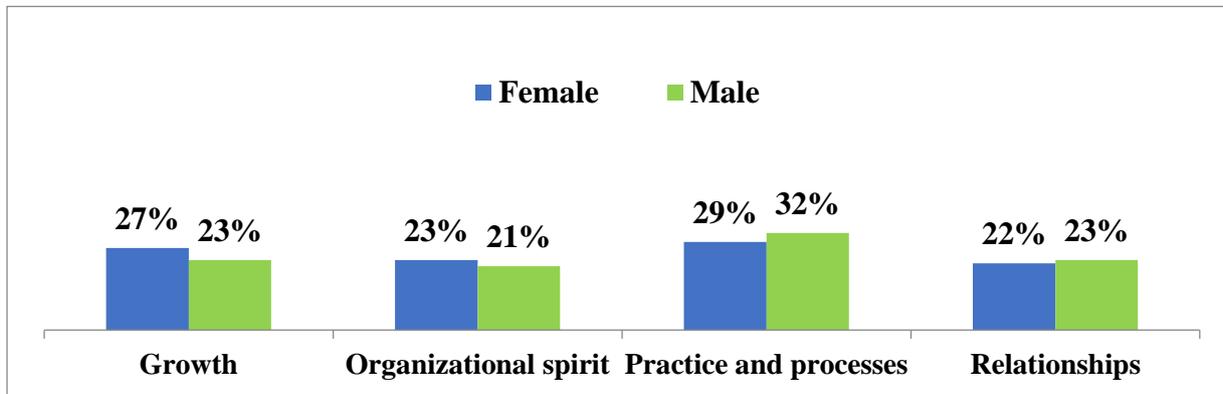


Figure 6

The responses of unhappy experiences were concentrated under Practices and Processes. (29% by female and (32%) by male respondents).

Specific blocks were politics, gossip, favouritism, non-clarity of goals and fire fighting.

- Age-Group Wise Distribution of Themes of Unhappy Experiences at Work

Age (in years)	Growth	Organizational spirit	Practice and processes	Relationships
	%	%	%	%
20-30	40	14	31	14
30-40	24	20	29	27
40-50	15	23	38	23
50-60	29	57	0	14
60 and above	25	13	50	13

The unhappy experiences were concentrated under themes of growth (33%) and practice and processes in higher proportions (32%) in respondents with work experience of up to 10 years. This proportion remained same for practice and processes (33%) in respondents with work experience of 10-20 years. However, it was almost equally distributed under other themes. For respondents with experience of 20-30 years, the unhappy experiences represented themes of organizational spirit (30%) and relationships (27%) in higher proportions.

- Employee Suggestions for a Happy Workplace

Ethical Practices

- “Company should follow fair practices and help each individual grow based on merit. Support, encouragement and guidance of leaders will enhance employee performance.” (Male, 38 years, Human Resource)
- “Transparency in each and every aspect of the company policy😊.” (Male, 48 years, Advertising)

Positive Leadership

- “Walk the Talk of Leadership” (Male, 48 years, Manufacturing)
- “Need to have strong leadership” (Female, 39 years, Human resource)

Growth

- “Professional growth and variety of work with balanced pay.” (Male, 40 years, IT)
- “Inclusive growth that focuses on collaboration, learning, value for all” (Male, 35 years, Manufacturing)

Learning and Development

- “Any company must be pro-training.” (Male, 42 years, Human resource)
- “Employee contributions should be valued and appreciated.” Create opportunity to explore and learn. Discourage politics. (Female, 37 years, Human resource)

Team Engagement

- “Team culture; Provide ownership to execute roles independently.” (Female, 30 years, Operations)

- “Power of One Team pulling together in one direction” (Male, 59 years, Human Resource)

Strategic Planning:

- “Clearly defined and articulated organizational purpose. Clarity in processes and practices.” (Male, 48 years, Finance)

▪ **Conclusion**

A. The research provides an opportunity to identify the determinants of happiness at workplace, along with the variations among different individual and organizational profiles. It was evident from the survey that the growth within an organization was found to be linked with both happy as well as unhappy experiences of organization.

Happy Workplace Cultures™

Our Definition of Happiness at Work: Being completely absorbed in what one is doing (the zone) brings in deeper meaning, while pushing boundaries of the individual and the system. This impacts connectedness, progress, energy and purpose, leading to happiness for the individual and the organization.

The Framework – Happy Workplace Cultures™(HWC)

- The Being of an individual is the nature or essence of a person (*Oxford Dictionary*)
- The Being of the system is the climate - Organizational climate is the recurring patterns of behavior, attitudes and feelings that characterize life in the organization that contribute to happiness. (*Isaksen, S. G., & Ekvall, G, 2007*). that contributes to happiness
- Individuals and Organizations both have a personality and that contributes to what they do and how they do. So, our framework looks at the Being which manifests in the form of Mindset and Energy.

- The Doing is activities a person does and tasks/goals a system works towards.
- In our framework the doing shows up in the form of the ways in which people relate - connectedness and the movement the organization makes – in other words, progress

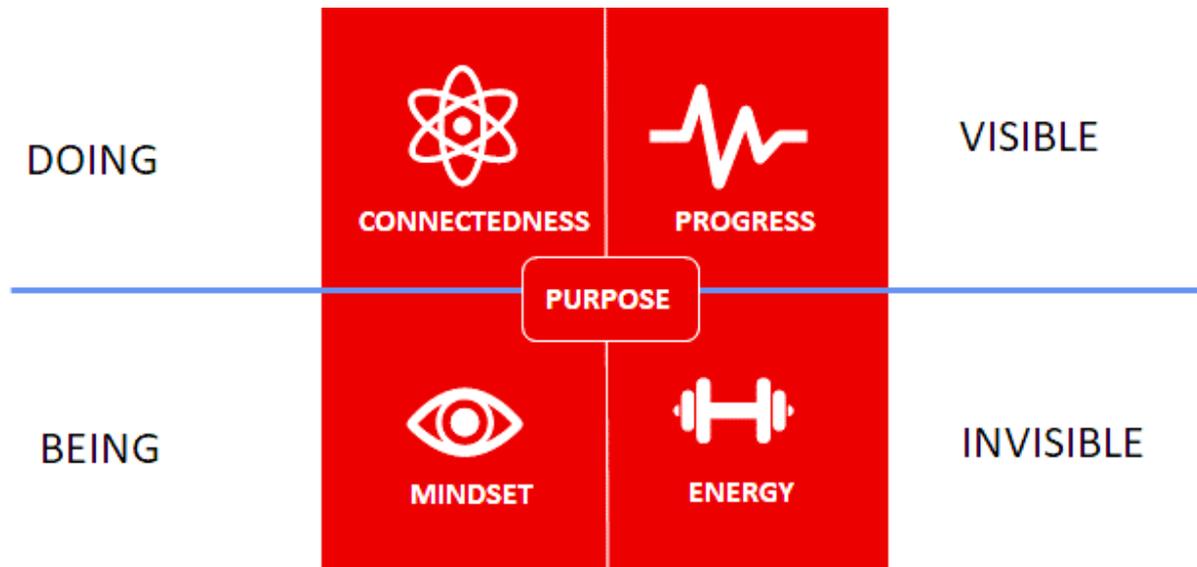


Figure 7

Elements of Happiness at Work

- The 4 elements in the framework have enablers (that contribute to happiness) and blocks (that contribute to unhappiness)
- Purpose which is at the centre doesn't have a block. Purpose is behind everything we do at work. It could be day to day purpose or long-term purpose

Enabler	Block
1. Connectedness: The quality of relationships at work; that which gives credit, appreciation and support when due.	1. Contamination: The quality of relations which experiences false promises, gossip, politics, etc
2. Progress: Clarity of work goals, movement towards goals and capability development	2. Stress: When the achievement of goals/targets/development is not supported by the system, it creates stress
3. Growth Mindset: The Beliefs and assumptions that enable in looking at continuous learning, making things work and from abundance	3. Limited Mindset: The beliefs and assumptions that limit possibilities and new ways of thinking and operates from a scarcity lens
4. Functional Energy: The emotional and mental being of the workplace which can be seen in the form of stated and unstated rituals in the organization	4. Blocked Energy: The emotional and mental being of the workplace which creates tension, blocking effective decisions, collaboration etc.
5. Purpose: The meaning of work, the value work adds to the larger vision of the Organization and the difference it makes to customers and stakeholders.	

HWC as a framework focuses on both the enablers and blocks of happiness at work. The focus of the framework is to discover what exists in individuals and the system that enables and blocks Happiness at Work. When we look at both, it can be consciously deciding what does the organization wish to amplify and shed and what the organization wants to initiate.

Organizational Culture as a Contributor to Happiness

Organizational culture is a set of shared assumptions that guide behaviors. (Ravasi, D.; Schultz, M.) It is also the pattern of such collective behaviors and assumptions that are taught to organizational members as a way of perceiving and, even thinking and feeling. (Schein, Edgar H). Thus, organizational culture affects the way people and groups interact with each other, with clients, and with stakeholders. Organizational culture may affect how much employees identify with an organization. (Schrodt, P)

Our focus on the culture is to bring happiness at a deeper level and make it an internal process. When happiness becomes long-lasting, it becomes a habit and gets embedded in the culture.

B. Approach of Happy Workplace Culture™

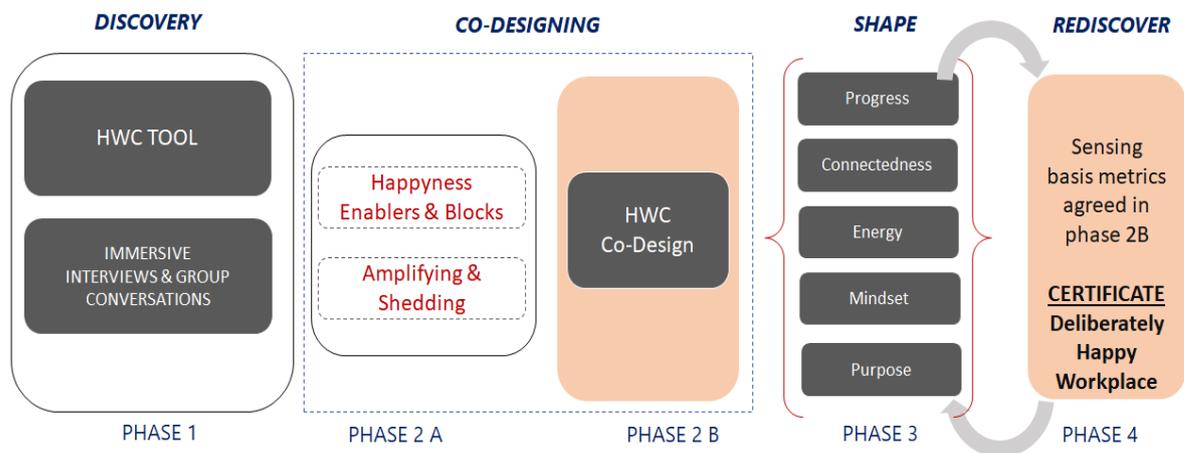


Figure 8

Phase 1 - Discovery

Data is collected to understand the existing and desired enablers and blocks of Happiness at work via 3 methods:

1. An online Happiness tool developed by CN
2. Immersive one-on-one conversations
3. Immersive group conversations

Phase 2 – Co-Designing

We believe that every Organization does something to enable and block happiness. We feel it is important to share both of these with the client such that there is an awareness of what needs to be amplified (do more of) and what needs to be shed (let go of).

Hence, the data is presented in both the quantitative and qualitative forms with the focus being on enablers and blocks for each element. This enables, the Organization to understand how the qualitative narrative has a bearing on the quantitative.

This process of meaning making is collaborative. We bring in data, stories and images verbatim to engage creativity in the Organization.

Phase 3 - Shaping a Happy Workplace

A group of Culture-Bees/Happiness Agents are formed based on readiness of the person, diversity in position, location, age and gender to have a mixed group. This group with team CN forms the core group and work as partners in the process of change. Together, we prioritize and implement interventions to shape a Happy Workplace Culture.

Phase 4 – Rediscover

Post the organizations' efforts towards creating a Happy Workplace, we do a dipstick with the HWC tool and hold some conversations across levels to see how much the needle has shifted. Our intent is to measure the metrics that we had agreed on in phase 2. Then we certify the organization in their journey towards being a Deliberately Happy Workplace, with a focus on intent and effort.

C. Types of Organizations that Focused on Happy Workplace Culture TM

1. A multinational corporation (MNC) is a corporate organization that owns or controls production of goods or services in at least one country other than its home country. (Pitelis, Christos; Roger Sugden). Some common factors across MNCs are complex work environment, different types of global client context that impact the need for change in the organization. The resultant attrition and rehiring seem to be the norm. The business is constantly gearing towards change in products and innovation being the driver.
2. Start-ups, where response to change is quick and founder involvement is in day-to-day affairs, the need is to run the organization professionally. Start-ups face high uncertainty (Schmitt, A.) and do have high rates of failure, but the minority that go on to be successful companies have the potential to become large and influential (Erin Griffith (2014)).
3. In Social Enterprises, focus is on community development and helping the community work for causes that matter. A social enterprise is an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximize improvements in financial, social and environmental well-being—this may include maximizing social impact alongside profits for external shareholders. Social enterprises have both business goals and social goals. As a result, their social goals are embedded in their objective, which differentiate them from other organizations and corporations. (Mathew, P. M.)

G. Intent to Adopt HWC

1. MNC - The Organization had similar goals like:

- Creating a centre of excellence that is ahead of its times and one that enables cohesive work culture to achieve the larger goal of learning.
- Restructuring caused angst and tension and impacted trust and involvement of employees. The next 3 years the Organization desires to work on Employee Happiness, while impacting their motivation, well-being and productivity.

2. Start-up – a deeper desire to lead the way in new age

- The desire to be a leading organization, ahead of its times, be different while focusing on excellence
- The focus was on how to bring in Happiness as a way of being for their employees who are in constant delivery mode and under stress. To help employees who experience burn-out to sustain their energy.
- Desire for global expansion

3. Social Enterprise

- Pride in being a part of the community, however also feeling stuck in a particular growth stage
- Desire to impact many more causes beyond the existing ones.
- Wish to add more torch-bearers to the cause

Findings of Happy Workplace Cultures™

H. The data presented below are cumulative findings from across all the organizations that worked with CN on HWC. The study was on how Happiness was experienced and what enables or blocks it.

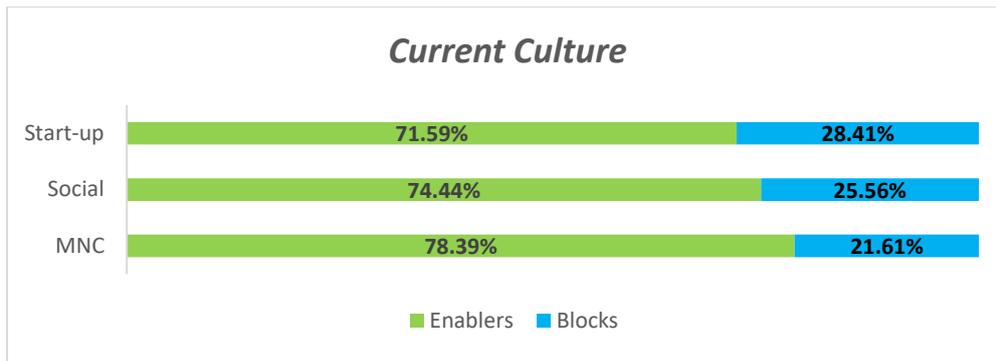


Figure 9

Figure 9, depicts the enablers and blocks of happiness in the existing culture in 3 kinds of organizations. The most common enabler -- Approachable Seniors; Block -- Lack of Planning.

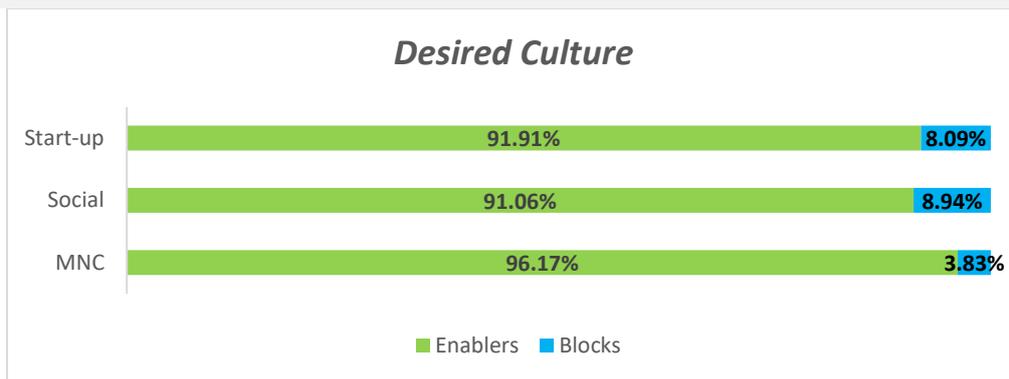


Figure 10

Figure 10 indicates desired culture to create a Happier Workplace. The top 3 desired culture enablers --

Social Enterprise - Self Development, Being More Organized, Positive Environment.

Start-ups – Positive Environment, Value Addition and Supportive Atmosphere.

MNCs -- – Collaboration, Leading Change and Value Addition.

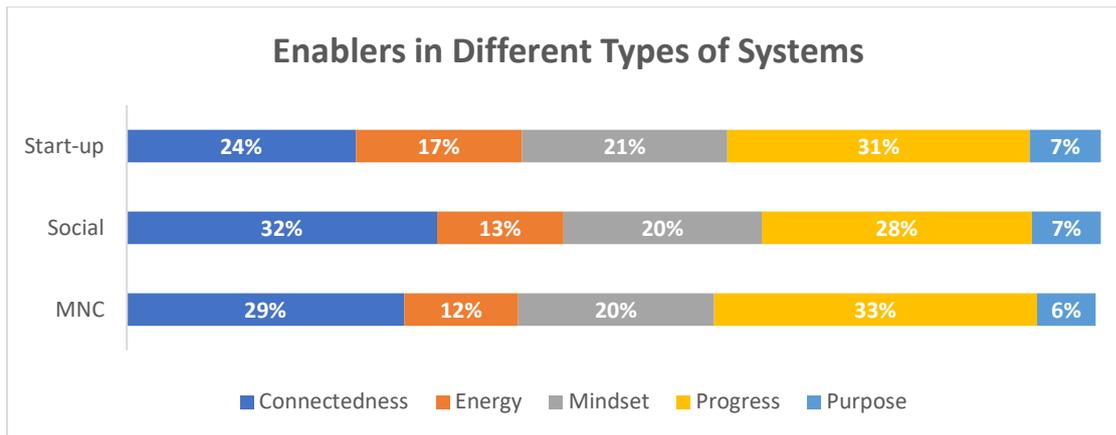


Figure 11

Figure 11 Compares the enablers of Happiness at Work that exists in the organizations. The Start-up and MNC find Progress as an enabler and Social Enterprise find Connectedness as an enabler. In all 3 types of organizations employees did experience purpose as an enabler but it was the least experienced in comparison to others. In Start-ups and Social Enterprises employees were drawn towards purpose more than MNCs. For Start-ups, the top 3 enablers are Achievement, Approachable Seniors, Learning Opportunities. For Social Enterprise the enablers are Self Development, Being Organized and Approachable Seniors. The employees of the MNC find Learning Opportunities, Flexible Work Hours and Approachable Seniors as enablers.

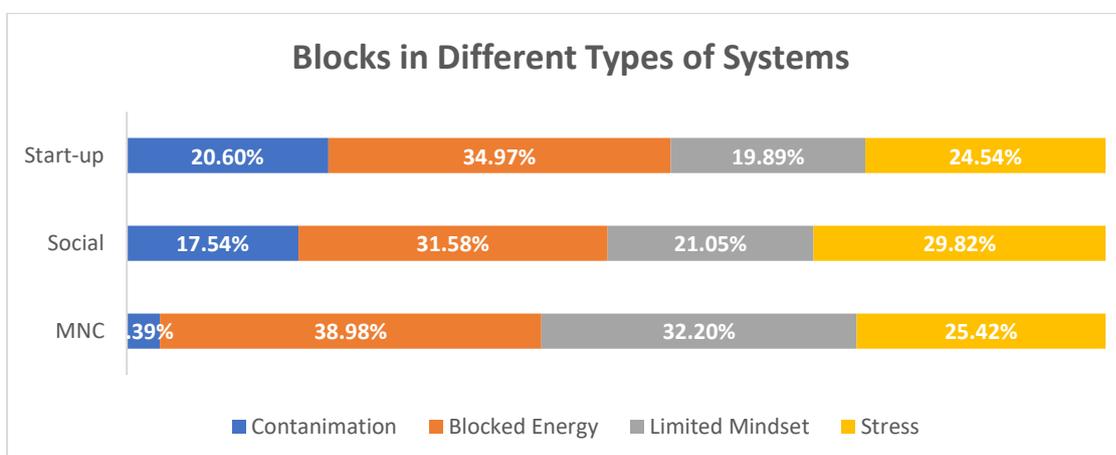


Figure 12

Figure 12 looks at the blocks that impact happiness at work in each type of system. In all systems blocked energy was highest. This is about the ‘being’ of the organization, which shows up as Silos, Lack of Planning and Work Load in MNCs. Social Enterprise experienced Lack of Planning (even with some of them being organized), Routine and Competition as blocks. Start-ups considered Lack of Planning, Competition and Work Load as blocks. In MNCs the being is most impacted by energy and mindset being a block. Not being able to go beyond routine and delays in bringing about change due to the large system in MNCs were a few pointers during the study.

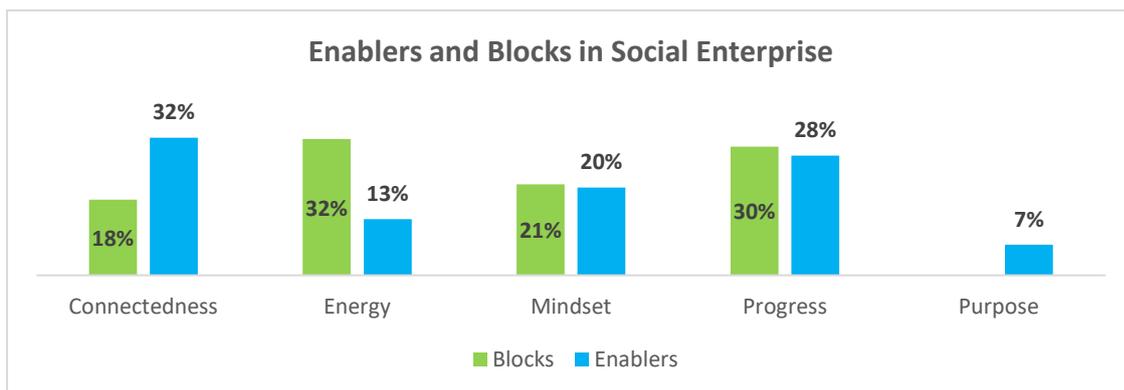


Figure 13

Figure 13 points out what is enabling or blocking happiness most in Social Enterprises. Connectedness is the biggest enabler and (Blocked) Energy is the biggest block. Followed by Stress in Progress

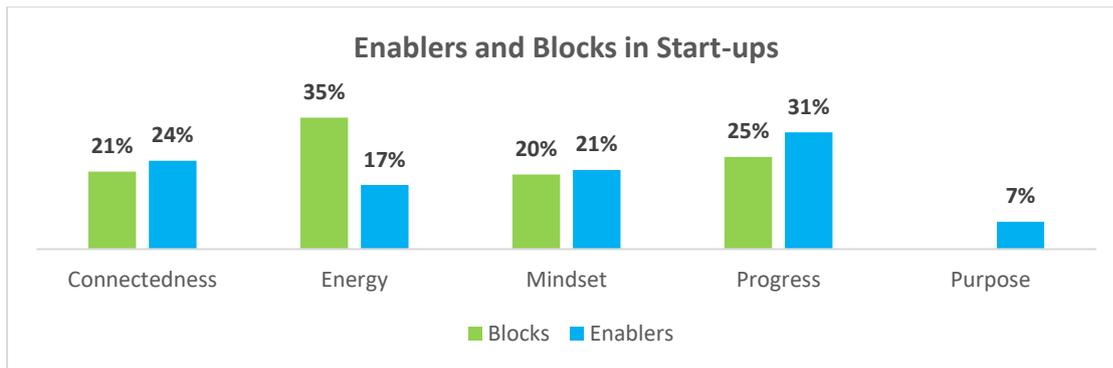


Figure 14

Figure 14 shows that (Blocked) Energy and Progress are the major sources impacting happiness. Most employees shared, the achievement and bringing in new ways of work in the industry via their contribution was a big enabler for them.

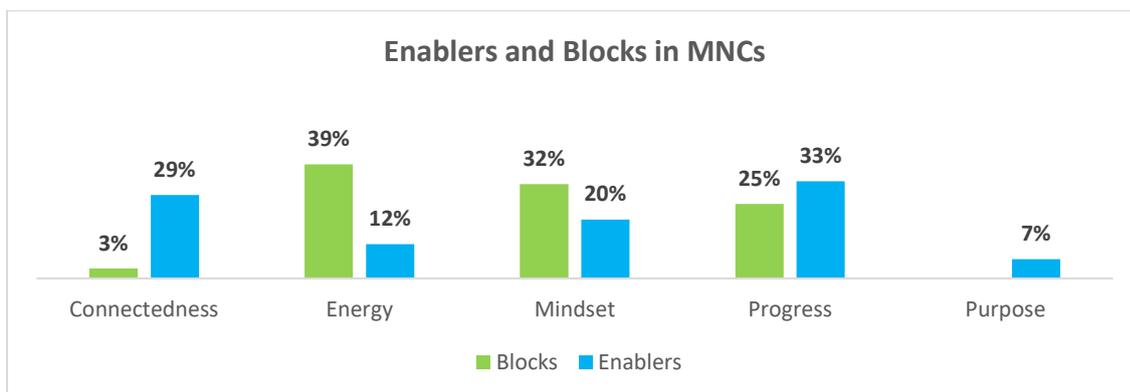


Figure 15

Figure 15 denotes that in MNCs, (Blocked) Energy around routine processes and systems routed via long channels of decision making didn't help in contributing. However, the enabler was also Progress, a sense of self development via learning interventions and skill building access to best knowledge resources.

Images drawn by us to present Diagnosis to the client system



Figure 16. Picture of a Diagnosis presented to a SOCIAL ENTEPRISE

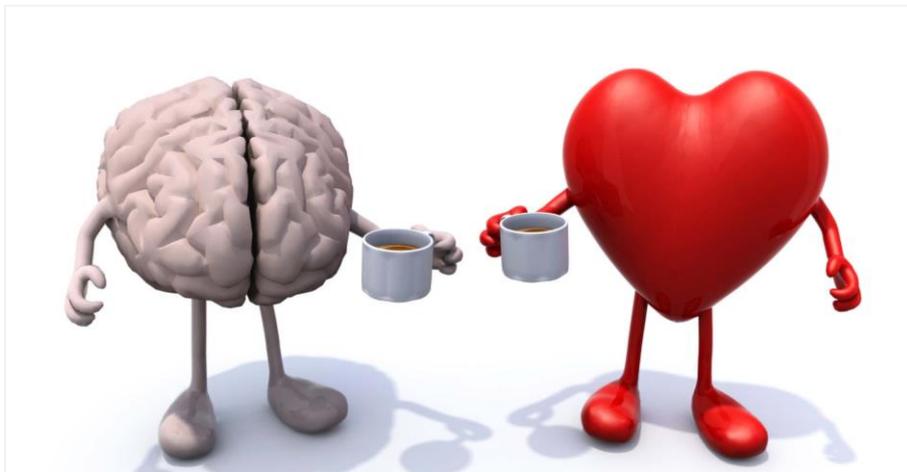


Figure 17. Picture of a Diagnosis presented to a Start-up



Figure 18 Picture of a Diagnosis presented to an MNC

I. Our Learnings on Shaping a Happy Workplace Culture™

- The discovery process enabled employees to observe their surroundings and understand the factors that made them and their workplace happier. We share some of their observations here. “I have never realised there is so much to celebrate. Simple things get lost in the din or we just take them for granted.” The process of Inquiry is an intervention in itself (*Bushe*) for deeper change.

Most leaders/managers (and probably others), see happiness as esoteric and fluffy and assume it doesn't contribute towards growth. Having worked on happiness they now see a shift in a positive direction.

There has been a noticeable shift in the system towards increasing productivity, collaboration, transparency and decrease in employee burnout. Some of these benefits have been reinforced by Jessica Pryce-Jones, Martin Seligman. Jessica Pryce-Jones' frame work shows happier employees take fewer sick leaves and are more focused on the task.

- Happiness cannot be dealt with as an external source, outside of the individual and system. It is very internal to who people are and what the system practises. Hence it needs to be worked with at the belief and behavior level (*Matthew Kelly*).

- CN looked at Interventions on Shaping a Happy Workplace Culture TM

Level 1 of Happiness is where one gets instant happiness, but it is short lived. Example, the next desired project, the promotion, the location of choice etc.

Level 2 of Happiness is being in the Zone, where one is deeply absorbed and has lost sense of time. This is the zone, where an employee pushes their capability / competence by attempting a challenge. (*Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*)

Level 3 of Happiness is working with a larger purpose, which is beyond self (Barrett Values) - Most long-lasting form of Happiness.

Shifting from Level 1 to Level 2

- Creating immersive experiences / the zone experiences; that enable stretching one's potential and challenging oneself
- Working with Polarities that are pulling the system in different directions
- Focusing on Nourishing Leadership

Shifting from Level 2 to Level 3

- Working with beliefs that are blocking the shifts in culture

- Helping leaders clarify their purpose
- Shifting from Leadership to Membership

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