

#WorkHappier

Employee Motivation in the United States

By Rodd Wagner and Amy Stern



The Unwritten Contract at Work

Engagement for Happiness

Over the past quarter-century, a lot of companies have spent a lot of time and money on “employee engagement.” Ever since Boston University professor William Kahn coined the term “engagement” in a 1990 issue of the Academy of Management Journal enterprises have been trying to get more of it – whatever it is – from their employees.

Twenty-five years after the term was introduced, there still is no widely accepted definition, but most agree engagement is a state of mind and the right circumstances that allow and motivate the employee to do as much as possible for the business. Engaged employees are more loyal to the company, less likely to have an accident on the job, more focused on customers, more careful with company resources, more innovative, and they speak well of the firm. Numerous studies have demonstrated that, in those areas where employees can make a difference, engagement is connected to higher levels of company performance.

Companies that have gotten it right have improved their trajectory, creating an advantage over their competitors difficult to replicate. When the majority of the tens of thousands of people

who work for a large company are energized about their work, things just happen. Cool new products get invented. Customers feel a difference in the level of service. Collaboration is stronger. Burnout runs lower. Smart and hard-working people who could work at any of the enterprises in the industry nonetheless remain with the company.

And yet, for many organizations, the engagement process has been fraught with frustration. In the aggregate, engagement levels have not increased. Sometimes the initiatives have fallen flat, quietly rejected by the workforce, who see it as a one-sided bargain or feel pressure to answer more positively than they really feel.

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The problem goes to the core of the relationship between the employee and the enterprise. Employees have always had a term for that thing that happens when the job brings out the best in them.

They just call it happiness.

Once in a while, you will hear someone say he's "engaged" or "disengaged" at work. Not often. Even after two decades of HR using it, it's not part of the natural vocabulary among employees and, it's now safe to say, it never will be.

Employee engagement is what the business wants. Happiness is what the employees want. If they each look out for the other's interest, the bargain works exceptionally well.

When people talk about where they work hardest, they talk about happiness. "I have a good manager," reported one subject-matter expert at a software firm in India. "I can talk to my manager like how I talk to my friend, about anything, and my manager also understands me." The company, the employee posted, is "a great place to learn, grow, and be happy."

"I work with amazing people," wrote an online analytics employee in San Francisco. "I went to a top-tier university, but I'm more impressed by the people I work with now. Everyone is so super smart, and they're all fantastic people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Our culture is why I love it here; we're transparent, hard-working, fearless, passionate people. I couldn't be any happier."

Employee engagement is what the business wants. Happiness is what the employees want. If they each look out for the other's interest, the bargain works exceptionally well.

An employee's happiness is at the core of her connection with the company, whether that connection is packaged inside the organization as "satisfaction," "morale," a "psychological contract," or "engagement." This logical fact has been largely overlooked because engagement researchers almost always exclude questions about happiness from their surveys. They think happiness is too frivolous or the concept too fuzzy.

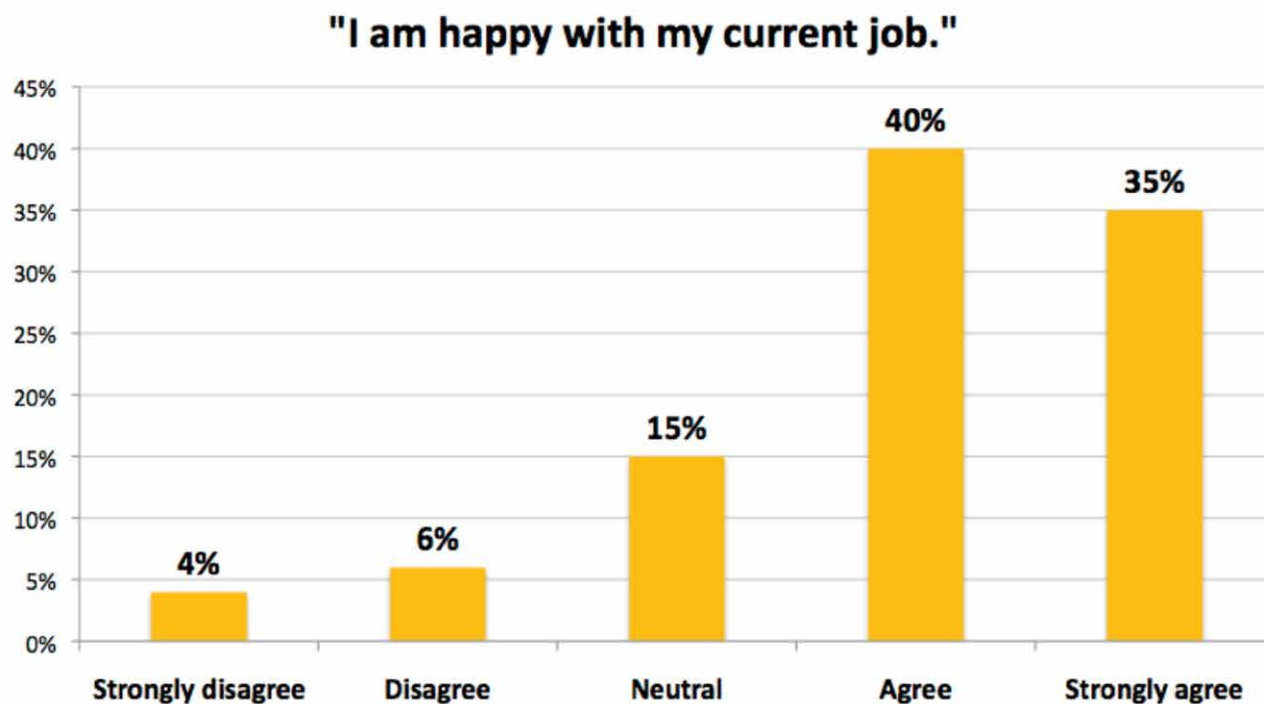
Based on the evidence, we disagree.

News Flash: Most People Are Happy at Work

Most of the employee survey results released over the last 25 years have focused on the supposed sorry state of engagement. Gallup routinely reports that only three in 10 Americans meet its secret definition of “engaged.” Everyone else is either “not engaged” or “actively disengaged,” groups to whom the company ascribes various levels of sloth, recklessness, or outright hostility toward their employers. Other consultancies have their versions of an engagement crisis. Writing on the Harvard Business Review’s site, the CEO of one consultancy outlined “9 Employee Engagement Archetypes” that include “brat,” “under-achiever,” “delinquent,” “drifter,” “saboteur,” “cynic,” and “martyr.” Another consultancy categorizes a certain percentage of employees as wheel-spinning “hamsters.”

BI WORLDWIDE’s surveys of American employees find no such crisis. While it is true that a sizable minority of employees are on the extreme high end of the range of answers, the majority of workers are not that far behind. Most employees either love their jobs or like them well enough to ably perform them week in and week out.

Perhaps most surprising in the face of all the gloomy coverage, the majority of employees are happy at work.



We posed the question simply. In our most recent study, we asked for people’s level of agreement to the statement, “I am happy with my current job.”

Three-quarters of employees agree with the statement to some degree. These new happiness numbers indicate that people are more connected with their work than commonly assumed. Happiness is hardly an impossible-to-attain aspiration for companies that pay attention to the needs of their employees.

Yet some consultants would dismiss the importance of these results because they consider employee happiness irrelevant, if not counterproductive. Some actively argue against happiness.

The Argument Against Happiness

Only in the consulting world could happiness be bad. The idea that making employees happy is good for business makes some people in the “engagement” industry bristle.

Equating engagement and happiness “makes my ears ring and my mouth twitch,” wrote Forbes contributor Maren Hogan. “There’s no proof that happy employees will do anything great for your company,” she asserted. “While I don’t want to deny employees happiness, I’d rather have engaged employees.”

“The idea of trying to make people happy at work is terrible,” Gallup CEO Jim Clifton told Fast Company. “Measuring workers’ satisfaction or happiness levels is just not enough to retain star performers and build a successful business,” he wrote on his company’s web site.

One’s belief in the importance of happiness depends in part on the definition of the term. Social scientists (who prefer the phrase “subjective wellbeing”) can argue all day about it. The grossly simplified version is that happiness is a two-sided coin. One side is “hedonic,” driven by pleasures such as eating lobster, partying on the weekend, or being able to fly-fish for a whole day. The other side is “eudaimonic,” created by the fulfillment of doing something meaningful such as volunteering at a food bank, helping a friend, or formulating a new medicine.

The anti-happiness contingent focuses largely on the hedonic aspects. In the process, they make some disdainful assumptions about human nature and the maturity of a company’s workers. According to this line of thinking, rather than being responsible grown-ups, employees are more like children at risk of being spoiled.

“Someone can be happy at work, but not ‘engaged,’” wrote engagement author Kevin Kruse. “They might be happy because they are lazy and it’s a job with not much to do. They might be happy talking to all their work-friends and enjoying the free cafeteria food. They might be happy to have a free company car. They might just be a happy person. But! Just because they’re happy doesn’t mean they are working hard on behalf of the company. They can be happy and unproductive.”

“Ask any employee, ‘What will satisfy you?’ and the answer is easy: free lunches, more vacation time, latte machines – and don’t forget a ping pong table,” Clifton alleged. He compares employees to bears in Yellowstone National Park whose “natural instincts” are fouled up if they get a taste of human food. “Once the bears taste a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, they quit digging for roots and catching deer,” he wrote. “Don’t feed the bears.”

Much of the rest of the world, however, sees happiness as a logical and worthy – maybe even self-evident – objective. Thomas Jefferson considered the “pursuit of happiness” so integral to human nature that he included it in the United States Declaration of Independence. He left plenty of evidence that he was not referring to the me-me-me type of happiness. “Without virtue, happiness cannot be,” Jefferson wrote in 1816.

“Scholars have long noted that for Aristotle and the Greeks, as well as for Jefferson and the Americans, happiness was not about yellow smiley faces, self-esteem or even feelings,” wrote Jon Meacham, author of *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*. “According to historians of happiness and of Aristotle, it was an ultimate good, worth seeking for its own sake. Given the Aristotelian insight that man is a social creature whose life finds meaning in his relation to other human beings, Jeffersonian eudaimonia – the Greek word for happiness – evokes virtue, good conduct and generous citizenship.”

The overlap between those who are happy and those who are engaged is so large that there simply are no appreciable numbers of people who are happy at work and not engaged, or, conversely, engaged and not happy.

Evidence for the Power of Happiness on the Job

There's an old saying about designing a product or service: "The customer is always right." Regardless of what the company wants him or her to buy, or even believes is in his or her best interest, the customer holds the wallet. He or she makes the decision. Therefore, the customer is "right."

By the same logic, when determining what makes a motivating workplace, the employee is right. Regardless of what the CEO, the human resources department, the consultancy they retain, or an ostensible expert on the subject believes should motivate an employee, the question is what motivates the employee. He or she makes the decision about how much effort to put into the work, what to say or post about the firm, and – if the labor market is competitive enough – whether to stay at that company. As it relates to his discretionary effort for the company, the employee is always right.

The ultimate determinant of whether happiness is the right goal is whether happiness is what the employees want and whether they reciprocate happiness on the job with greater commitment to the company and intensity in their work. BI WORLDWIDE's study shows the power of happiness. In the process, it demonstrates the assertions of the anti-happiness contingent are just plain wrong.

Myth: *"There's no proof that happy employees will do anything great for your company."*

Happiness is associated with hard work. Nine of 10 happy employees agree they "feel an obligation to work as hard as I can for my organization." Among unhappy employees, the proportion drops to only six out of 10. Ninety-three percent of happy employees agree they are "willing to work especially hard for my organization's customers." Among unhappy employees, the figure drops to 69 percent. Similar differences appear on other predictors of an employee's best work.

Myth: *“Somebody can be happy at work, but not ‘engaged.’”*

Technically, they can; in practice, they aren't. The overlap between those who are happy and those who are engaged is so large that there simply are no appreciable numbers of people who are happy at work and not engaged, or, conversely, engaged and not happy. In the vast majority of cases, engaged employees are happy, and happy employees are engaged.

Myth: *“Measuring workers’ satisfaction or happiness levels is just not enough to retain star performers and build a successful business.”*

The portion of retention influenced by an employer is largely composed of the worker's happiness there. Among those who are unhappy at work, 54 percent plan to leave in the next 12 months. It's only 23 percent among those who are happy at their current jobs. And, as discussed above, the happy employees intend to work harder and better to build the business.

It also turns out that the Gallup CEO's definition of engagement and overall satisfaction “correlate .91 with a standard existing measure of job satisfaction at the unit level, which means it is ‘virtually identical with overall job satisfaction,’” University of Bath professor Rob B. Briner pointed out in a 2014 working paper.

Myth: *Employees “might be happy because they are lazy and it's a job with not much to do. They might be happy talking to all their work-friends and enjoying the free cafeteria food. They might be happy to have a free company car. They might just be a happy person. But! Just because they're happy doesn't mean they are working hard on behalf of the company. They can be happy and unproductive.”*

The research on employee motivation clearly demonstrates that people appreciate and reciprocate efforts to make them happier – even hedonically happier – during that majority of their waking hours they spend at work. There is nothing wrong, and a lot that's right, with an air hockey table or some free food. The research is equally clear that these hedonic gestures are just the

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frosting on a eudaimonic or results-oriented cake composed of people's needs to do meaningful work, to collaborate with others, to achieve, to take the lead, and to build their own and the company's future.

Happiness at Work

One of the advantages of concentrating on happiness at work is that in many of its most important respects, it needs no definition. Ask someone, “Are you engaged at work?” and you may well get the question, “What do you mean?” in return. Ask someone, “Are you happy at work?” or “Are you happy with your job?” and you will get a real answer. No one ever says, “What do you mean by ‘happy?’”

From there, it gets a little more complicated. What makes someone genuinely happy at work? Is it making more money? Is it getting the chance to work with really smart colleagues? Is it having a flexible schedule? The list of possible causes could get quite long, confusing, and unmanageable for leaders, managers, and even for the employees themselves.

BI WORLDWIDE's research is aimed at prioritizing and making sense of those aspects of work that make employees happy or unhappy and that most powerfully drive performance. Our studies conducted in the United States, Australia, Canada, Latin America, India, China, and the United Kingdom identified 12 key aspects and provided the foundation for the book *Widgets: The 12 New Rules for Managing Your Employees As If They're Real People* (McGraw-Hill, 2015). This report describes the first iteration of that research in the United States following publication of the book.

What follows is a description of each of those factors. We frame them as “rules” for leaders and managers, because the degree to which an organization delivers on each has important consequences for the motivation of its employees. Because people are strongly reciprocal, a company gets the level of performance from them that it deserves. We call them “new” because each represents an aspect of the relationship between employee and enterprise that shifted substantially because of the economy, technology, legislation, or changing attitudes in society.

the NEW RULES of ENGAGEMENT®

1. get inside their **heads**

More than ever, great managing is a matter of intense understanding of each unique individual, knowing their abilities, their aspirations, and how they work best.



2. make them **fearless**

No one can promise job security anymore. But that doesn't mean you can't make your people courageous, able to focus on the company's goal rather than self-preservation.



3. make **money** a non-issue

Money isn't everything. It only gets you so far. But companies that mishandle this emotional area will make it a bigger deal than it has to be.



4. help them **thrive**

Work conditions and policies can't help but affect people's health. Getting them right, and with the right intent, doesn't just reduce costs; it invigorates the employees and the business.



5. be **cool**

Talented people don't have to work for boring companies, and most won't. Loosening up and making a uniquely stimulating culture create a real competitive edge.



6. be **boldly** transparent

There are no more secrets; everything about a company is public, or will be. Behave accordingly.



7. don't kill the **meaning**

People need to be part of something bigger than just a job and a paycheck.



8. see their **future**

What people do today is largely motivated by where they think it will take them in the future. It's as true on the job as it was for every employee dreaming of a future career when he or she was in school. Companies that are deliberate about helping employees chart that future get those people's best work.



9. **magnify** their success

What a company does not recognize, it should not expect to see repeated. Making a big deal of employees' accomplishments ensures the victories will be multiplied.



10. **unite** them

People have always been willing to take one for the right team, but players get traded much more these days. With people moving between companies at a faster pace than ever before, it's never been more important to create conditions that foster strong collaboration.



11. let them **lead**

Employees don't just want their opinions to count. To accomplish all they can for the company, they need the chance to take the lead.



12. take it to **extremes**

Your best people are itching to accomplish something incredible together. Challenge, rally, and support your people and you will be struck by what they can do.





The First Rule

Get Inside Their Heads

The most fundamental element of employee happiness is getting inside that person's head. A company may have powerful strategies derived from in-depth analyses of company-wide patterns in attitudes and performance, yet if those strategies are not adapted to the specific employee's personality, abilities, and circumstances, the initiative will become "one size fits all." People in authority need to individualize how the company supports each person.

A wealth of workplace research, including ours, says that one person is the employee's manager, the person in the best position to understand that worker and marshal the resources of the company to make him or her most effective in the job. That kind of individual attention is, of course, part of the manager's job. Hopefully, he or she makes the time to understand the employee. And he or she – again, hopefully – has the authority to either personally deliver the right support or arrange it from elsewhere in the company.

Happiness at work is an individual phenomenon. While the factors that create workplace happiness are largely the same, the details are specific to the employee.

For each of the New Rules, we use three questions that group together statistically and that proved to be the most powerful for predicting employees' commitment to their employers and intensity in their work. For the First Rule, those statements are as follows.

First Rule Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	■	■	■	■	■
"My manager understands me."	3%	6%	16%	44%	31%
"My manager makes decisions with my best interests in mind."	3%	9%	24%	40%	24%
"My manager divides work among our team according to employees' abilities."	4%	8%	18%	44%	26%

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In the United States, responses to all three of these statements lean positive, each question gaining a majority agreeing at some level. There is, however, a meaningful difference between simple agreement and strong agreement. On this type of five-point scale, “agree” communicates both positive feelings and a degree of reservation – concrete ways in which, in the view of the employee, the manager could do better. A manager who meets with the employee individually once a month, for example, would get credit for those meetings, but the employee might reserve “strongly agree” for a manager who met with her every two weeks.

When employees feel understood, they are happier on the job and more inclined to perform at a higher level for the enterprise. Ninety-one percent of employees whose managers understand them are happy with their current jobs, and those who are happy are nine times more likely to be performing with greater intensity. These understood employees are 13 times as likely to recommend their organization as a great place to work and eight times as likely to say working there brings out their best ideas.

Happiness at work is an individual phenomenon. While the factors that create workplace happiness are largely the same, the details are specific to the employee. No one likes to live in fear, but what scares one person may not bother another. Nearly everyone seeks meaning in his or her work, but some find meaning in construction while others find it in medicine. Everyone likes to be recognized, but the public acknowledgement one person craves would be torture for another.

Consequently, the degree to which an employee feels his manager “gets” him or her correlates strongly with his or her ratings of the

company on the other 11 rules. This makes sense. It's the reason "Get Inside Their Heads" is the First Rule. How can one properly recognize an employee without knowing what recognition would be most meaningful? How can one create a promising future for an employee without understanding his or her career goals? How can one best create balance between work and personal time without understanding that person's outside interests and commitments? Individualization is the lens through which all other factors are most clearly seen.

Our analyses bear it out. High levels of performance on the First Rule at least triple the odds of success on each of the other rules, and often range much higher. Getting inside an employee's head makes it 16 times more likely that the worker will consider himself or herself well recognized for hard work on the company's behalf.

Not all groups of employees, on average, feel equally understood or appreciated as individuals. As the age one starts a job increases, scores on "Get Inside Their Heads" statements decrease (in the aggregate, of course – there are large individual differences in all age categories). The age at which someone starts his or her job is a better predictor of First Rule score than his or her current age or tenure in that role.

There are also substantial differences in the average levels of the First Rule between some demographic groups. Women and those with less than a bachelor's degree, on average, perceive lower levels of individualization in their jobs. Having just one of these risk factors - being a woman, starting a job over age 45, or having less than a bachelor's degree - results in being half as likely to feel understood as an individual. Those with all three risk factors are eight times less likely to feel understood than those with none.

Improved Odds When First Rule is High

Rule		
2	Make them Fearless	3 to 1
3	Make Money a Non-Issue	9 to 1
4	Help them Thrive	3 to 1
5	Be Cool	10 to 1
6	Be Boldly Transparent	12 to 1
7	Don't Kill the Meaning	7 to 1
8	See their Future	9 to 1
9	Magnify their Success	16 to 1
10	Unite them	11 to 1
11	Let them Lead	12 to 1
12	Take it to Extremes	10 to 1

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The Second Rule

Make Them Fearless

There is no more primal emotion than fear. It's a survival instinct. We are hardwired to experience and react to it. Over tens of thousands of years, the human brain evolved a powerful fight-or-flight response against mortal dangers.

Outside of the risks of serious workplace accidents, not much on the job presents the kind of dangers against which humans are conditioned. Yet employees struggle to give measured responses to the nonlethal dangers of a poor performance evaluation, the potential closing of a company plant, or a boss who yells. If a company seeks to perform at its optimal level, it's essential the firm ensure its employees are not so distracted or paralyzed by fear that nothing else matters.

The odds of fearful employees being happy at work are only one-sixth of those who are not fearful.

Addressing fears is substantially more important in the wake of the Great Recession, because its effects continue to linger many years after the downturn was technically over. "The entire post-recession economic recovery in the U.S. has been far less than stellar," a CNBC guest commentator reported in May 2015. "Median household real incomes have not recovered and jobs created have been at lower wages than previously existing jobs. The pace of job growth has slowed significantly this year, with the percentage of the employable population actually working near a 35-year low."

We measure employee fear with three statements that proved most strongly associated with worker commitment. To give respondents implicit permission to mention concerns, all three are negative statements.

Second Rule Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
"Management uses fear to motivate employees to work harder."	13%	21%	14%	29%	24%
"I worry about losing my job."	10%	17%	20%	31%	23%
"I don't see a way to get ahead at my current organization."	12%	22%	22%	28%	15%

Note that these statements are negative, so disagreement with them reflects best on the company.

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More than one-quarter of employees worry about losing their jobs and another one-fifth are ambivalent on the question. The psychological effects of the Great Recession are lasting, even when employees are no longer in financial trouble.

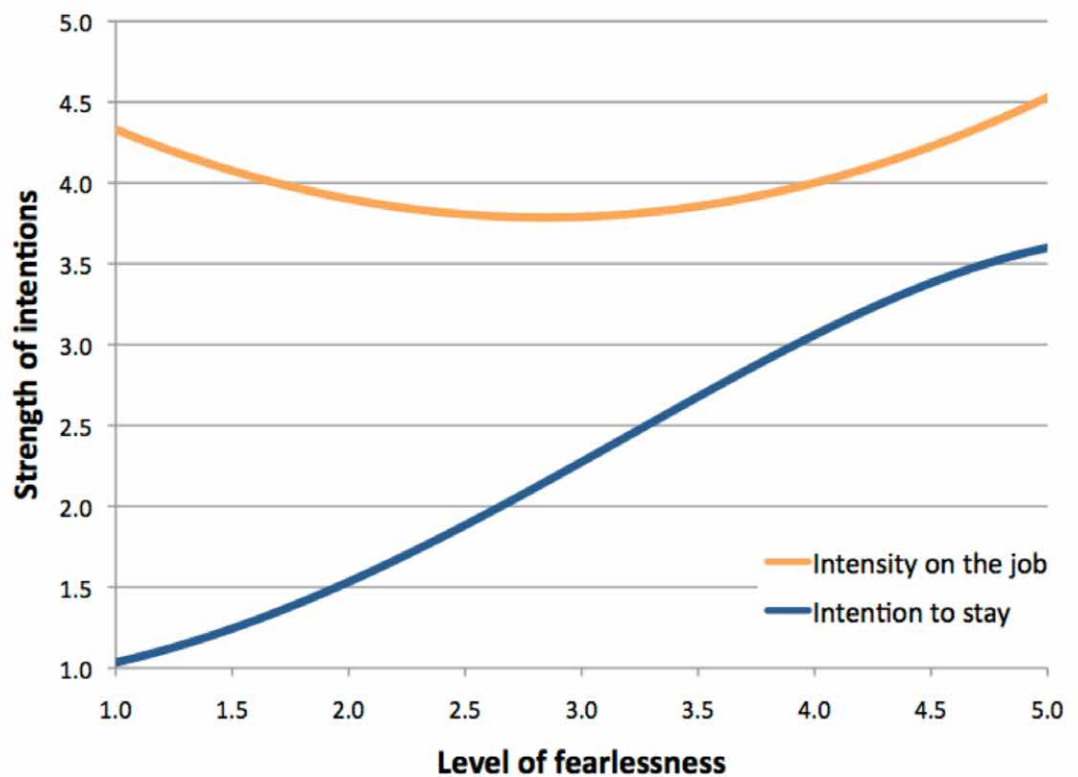
Fear evidences itself especially for people whose organizations conducted layoffs in the prior year. Many worry that they're next. Forty-two percent of these employees worry about losing their jobs, twice as many as those working for companies who did not lay off any employees. Employees who have seen coworkers laid off are twice as likely to say they don't see a way to get ahead at their current organizations and that management is intentionally using fear to motivate employees.

This most recent New Rules study found a remarkable proportion of employees – one out of three – say their company's management uses fear to drive people to work harder. Why so high? Perhaps because in the short term and in limited ways, it works. Until a person quits, her employer has tremendous power over her life and can scare her into doing some things it wants.

People work harder on both ends of the intimidation scale than they do in the middle. But there is a vast difference between working

hard voluntarily and doing so because one is freaking out. Fearful employees scramble to find ways to improve the way they work, to cover their butts, but the drive is not as strong, as effective, or as honest as it is among those who are fearless. (One set of experiments found that people experiencing anxiety are more likely to engage in “self-interested unethical behaviors” and to rationalize their misconduct as not as serious as similar acts by others.) Fearless employees, however, perform intensely in the way an employer would hope. They find ways to improve the way they work by being honest, admitting mistakes, and sharing what they have learned with others.

Very Different Effects of Fear On Commitment and Intensity



Fear on the job has consequences. The odds of fearful employees being happy at work are only one-sixth those who are not fearful. Logically, many fearful employees want to flee to a job somewhere else. In fact, “Make them Fearless” is the most pivotal rule for an employee’s commitment to an organization. Thirty-five percent of fearful employees plan to leave their organizations in the next 12 months. Only 7 percent of fearless employees are packing to leave.

Because it’s so powerful, fear tempts leaders and managers who lack confidence or competence in their abilities to motivate through meaning, trust, individualization, recognition, accomplishment, and positive reciprocity. When companies either use fear or fail to address it, they should not be surprised at how quickly people scatter.



The Third Rule

Make Money a Non-Issue

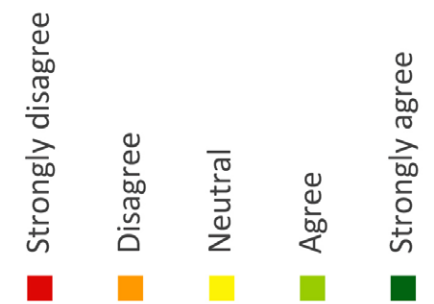
Few aspects are more fundamental about a job than money. The employee works; the company pays him. It's the core of the bargain between employee and enterprise.

Yet nothing illustrates better than pay the difference between the theoretical, fictional “agents” in economics textbooks and the flesh-and-blood people that companies have on their payrolls. Money motivates, but not in the ways people typically believe it does.

It's a common assumption pay is a strong motivator and that the more an employee is paid, the happier he will be. Neither of those assumptions is really true. Instead, if pay is perceived as fair – comparable to what the person could make elsewhere – the issue of compensation sits quietly in the background.

If pay becomes *an* issue, it will often become *the* issue.

The three questions asked in the New Rules study about pay test the employees' perceptions of the company's intentions around their compensation, how fairly they feel they are paid, and whether they believe they are making as much as they could at other employers.



Third Rule Statements

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
"My organization is actively helping me reach my long-term financial goals."	7%	11%	23%	36%	23%
"Over the long-term, I believe I can earn more here than I could somewhere else."	7%	12%	22%	36%	24%
"I am paid fairly."	5%	10%	19%	44%	23%

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The pay questions have the lowest average scores of any among the New Rules. The reason is straightforward: Almost everyone would like more money, many believe they deserve more money, and it's therefore more difficult to mark strongly agree to a statement such as "I am paid fairly."

One-third of U.S. workers do not feel they are being paid fairly. For them, pay is an issue. Yet, surprisingly, perceptions of pay fairness are only weakly connected to the amount a worker makes. It's not the money that counts, but rather the perception of how fairly or generously it's being paid to the person in exchange for his work.

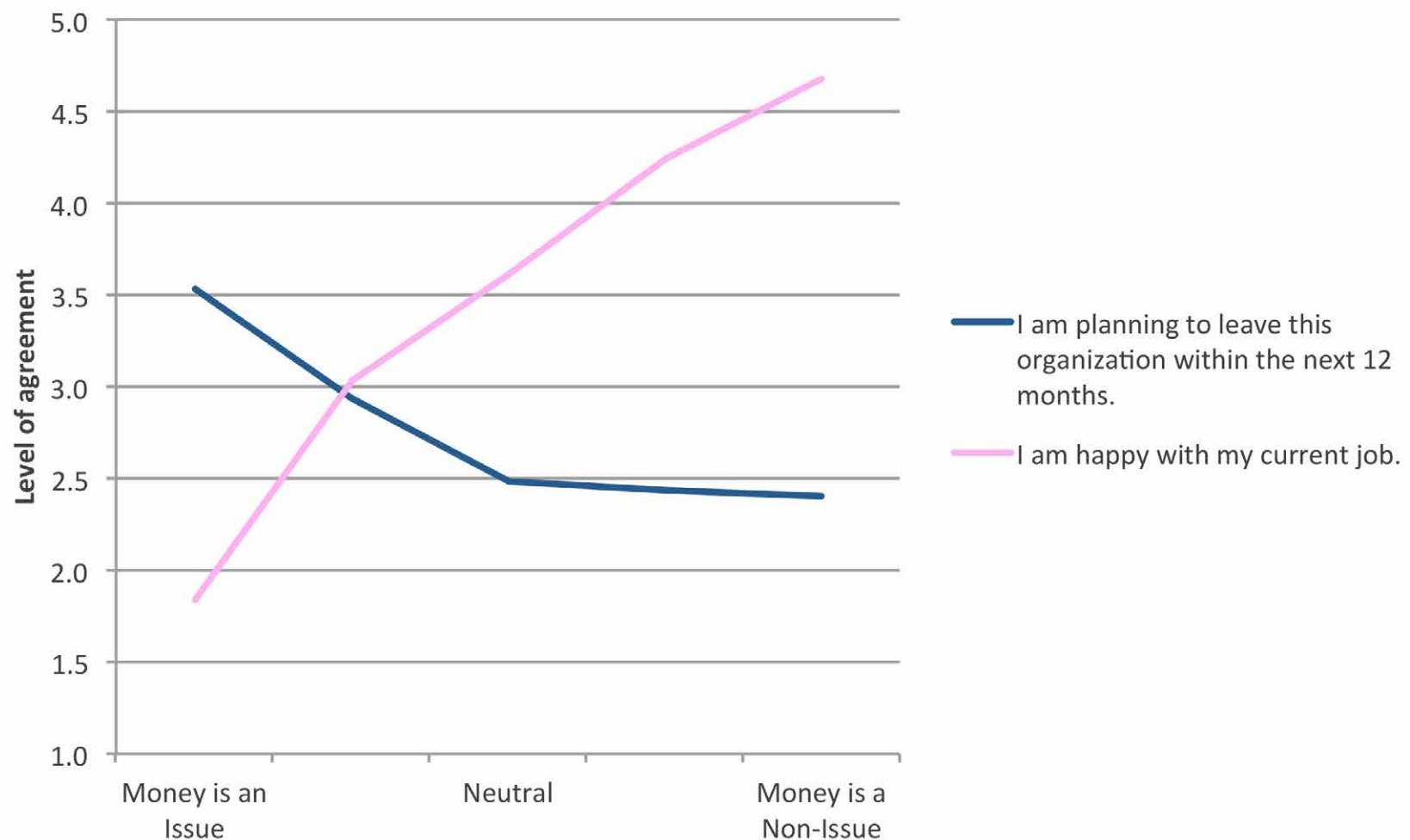
Likewise, in line with other research on the topic, the New Rules study finds money does not buy happiness. Those making under \$30,000 are just as likely to be happy with their current jobs as employees making \$100,000 or more.

Satisfaction with pay and actual income are weakly correlated, with those making more money being marginally more likely to be satisfied with their pay. However, low income does not preclude an employee from being satisfied with his pay, nor does high income guarantee satisfaction.

The perception of being paid fairly is about more than numbers on a paycheck. The New Rules research shows that before employees can be satisfied with pay, they often need to feel recognized and understood, find transparency at the company, and be afforded the ability to lead, succeed, and have a future with the company. An employee may be due a pay raise, but often that raise in isolation will not be enough. Deprived of the non-financial aspects so important

to happiness at work, an employee's reaction will sometimes be, "They're not paying me enough for this!"

Happiness Increases with Pay Perceptions, But Turnover Plans Flat-line



However, if pay becomes an issue, it will often become the issue. There is, for example, little difference in how seriously employees are considering leaving their jobs between those who rate their pay high and those in the middle ranges. But among those who score their pay worst (which includes people at all salary levels), plans to leave are appreciably higher.

Perhaps the best advice is that companies should look out for the financial futures of their employees as much as they expect their employees to look out for the financial futures of those firms.



The Fourth Rule

Help Them Thrive

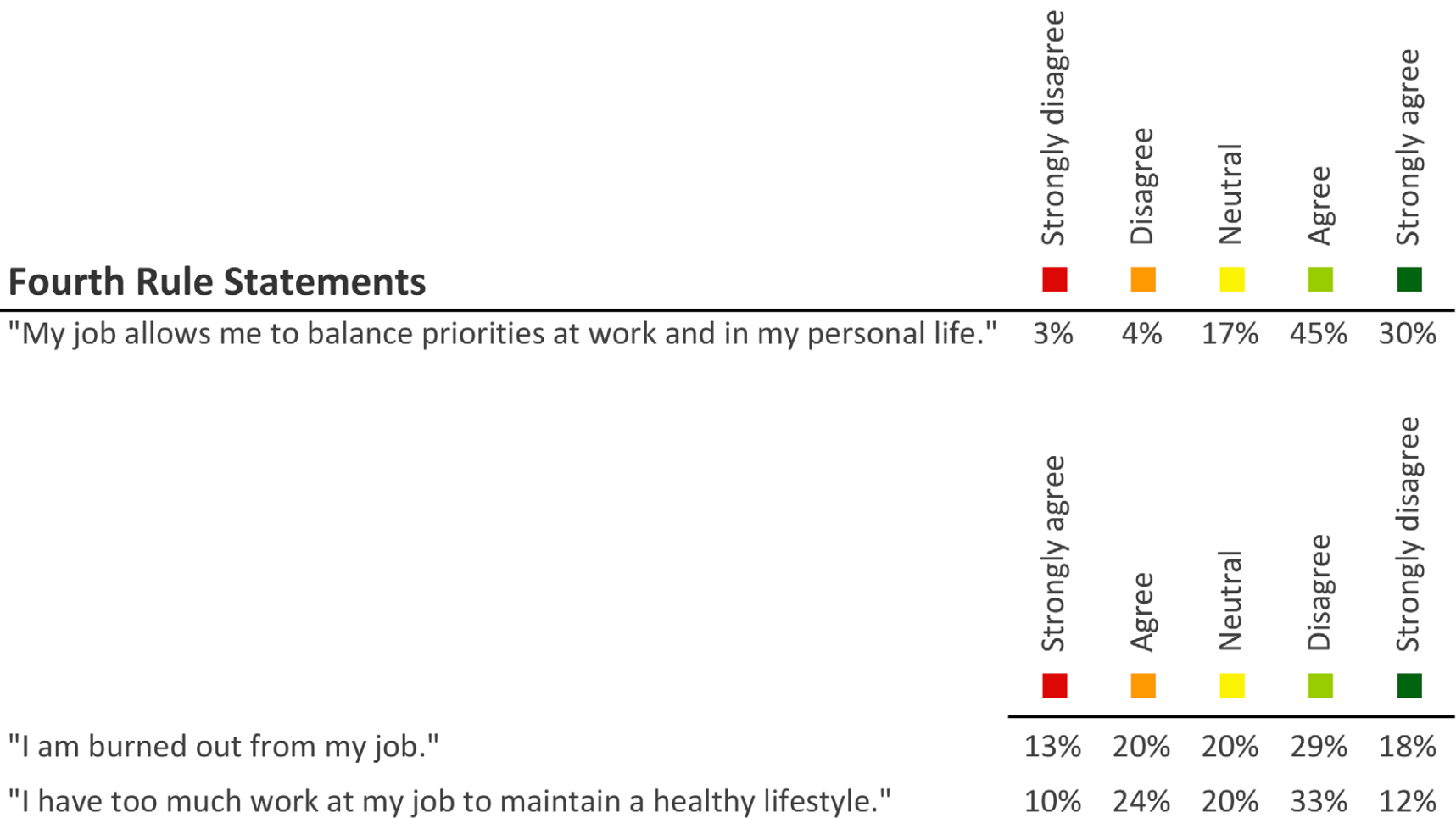
There is no escaping the fact that a person's job influences his health, one way or the other. Policies, workloads, vacation time, boredom, manager quality, and other aspects of working at a place either can help those employees thrive or can degrade their health, their psychological well-being, and the performance of the enterprise. It's always been that way, but it's gotten more serious now that work follows people everywhere they go on their tablets and smart phones.

Meanwhile, an increasing number of companies are encouraging their workers to track their fitness – the number of steps they take, calories they eat, and hours they sleep. The grand irony in all that company-sponsored tracking is that employees often discover the reason they are not sleeping and eating as well as they could and not exercising as much as they should is because of the demands of their jobs.

The New Rules study includes three statements that best ascertain whether an employer is helping its workers thrive. One is phrased positively and the other two are framed negatively.

Being able to avoid burnout is one of the biggest drivers of happiness at work, second only to the ability to accomplish more at that organization than somewhere else.

Fourth Rule Statements



Note that the second and third statements are negative, so disagreement with them reflects best on the company.

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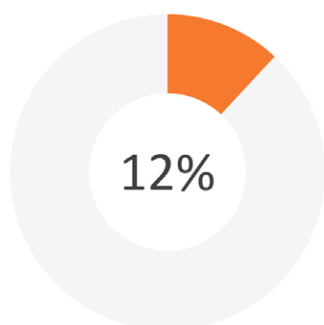
Roughly one-quarter of working Americans say they are burned out from their jobs. Because people often overestimate their ability to persevere through long working hours and high stress, the actual percentage of those burned out is likely even higher. Many of the people who answered “neutral” in the survey will feel differently when a sick child, flat tire, or one additional emergency at work makes it clear they were stretching things too thin.

The data reflect some of these internal contradictions. Three of four U.S. workers say their jobs allow them to balance priorities at work and in their personal lives, yet 30 percent of those same ostensibly balanced people say they have too much work to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

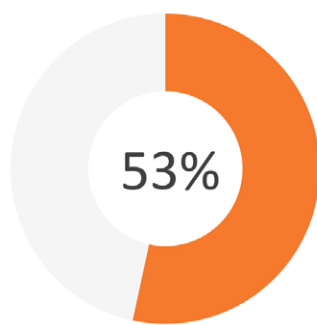
Assuming the employee does not have a heart attack along the way, whether a job allows a person to avoid burnout has important consequences for that person’s commitment to the company. Being able to avoid burnout is one of the biggest drivers of happiness at work, second only to the ability to accomplish more at that organization than somewhere else. And burnout is the best

predictor of an employee's intent to leave an organization. Over half of burned out employees plan to leave their organizations in the next 12 months. Employees who can avoid burnout are 12 times as committed to their organizations.

Not Burned Out



Burned Out



■ I am planning to leave this organization within the next 12 months.

Our previous studies showed that employees who feel their employers are looking out for them in many ways, not just work-life balance, are far more likely to be interested in company-sponsored wellness programs. Conversely, frustrated or demoralized employees are inclined to feel their health is none of their company's business. Much of the difference between health initiatives that succeed and those that fail is whether they are something the company does to its employees or for them.



The Fifth Rule

Be Cool

Being cool was not something employees talked about or employers aimed for a generation or two ago. Work was work, so the saying went. If it were fun, it wouldn't be called work.

In business today, coolness is crucial. It is one of the aspects most highly correlated with happiness and performance on the job. People who work for what they consider cool companies and cool leaders and cool managers and with whom they consider cool coworkers are substantially more motivated to stay and to work harder for the company. It's highly profitable to be cool.

Employees working at cool organizations are 15 times more likely to be happy with their current jobs than those on the other end of the scale. They are three times more likely to be committed to the organization and 10 times more likely to be intensely performing.

It is almost statistically impossible today for an employee to be energized by everything else about the job and not find the company a cool place to work.

The three statements about the Fifth Rule that emerged from the analyses focus on workers' perceptions of whether the company is a cool place to work, how exciting its future is, and its openness to disparate points of view.

Fifth Rule Statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
"This organization will do exciting things in the future."	2%	6%	20%	40%	32%
"My organization is a cool place to work."	3%	8%	21%	38%	29%
"My organization is open to different points of view."	3%	8%	19%	41%	29%

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Employees in the United States are relatively liberal in their assessments of their employers' coolness. Two-thirds either agree or strongly agree theirs is a cool place to work. Similar proportions answer positively to the other two questions.

There are substantial differences in the United States on this rule between young men and women and between younger employees and older ones. There is no obvious explanation for the differences. It may be due to younger people, and younger men in particular, making a higher priority of working for a cool company and being more willing or able to switch companies in order to find that type of experience.

It is almost statistically impossible today for an employee to be energized by everything else about the job and not find the company a cool place to work. This is not true of fearlessness, of pay, or of balance. People can and do say, "It's a great job, but I'm worried the company will be acquired." They sometimes say, "I love my job, but the pay is not great." Or they might say, "I love it there, but the hours are a bear." But almost no one on one hand scores their overall job high and the coolness of their company low. Coolness is not the frosting on the cake. It's the sugar in the cake.

Much of what makes a company cool is that it avoids doing things that are uncool. That's more than a tautology. If a company is

secretive, fails to individualize, keeps people in their places, fails to recognize successes, and does little to help employees gain a sense of accomplishment, few of its workers will see it as cool. The real power comes from the combination of many or all of the New Rules to make an organization people see as cool. For example, 97 percent of those who see their companies as cool also see them as transparent, yet only 64 percent of those who see their companies as transparent also see them as cool.

- Ninety-four percent of those who see their company as cool also rate it high on “Get Inside their Heads.”
- Ninety-five percent of those who see their company as cool also rate it high on “Let them Lead.”
- Ninety-four percent of those who see their company as cool also rate it high on “Magnify their Success.”
- Ninety-three percent of those who see their company as cool also rate it high on “See their Future.”
- Ninety-five percent of those who see their company as cool also rate it high on “Take it to Extremes.”

On top of these fundamentals, employees are increasingly looking for a company with great office architecture, creative work spaces, gourmet coffee makers, foosball tables, chances to bring their dogs to work, or regular parties.

Numerous engagement consultants over the last few years have criticized the perks that some companies give their people. These are not the heart of a great job, they argue – and they’re not. They’re not the only aspects that make a company cool. It may not even be the actual perk that makes the place cool so much as it is the signal sent by leaders when they do a few things to make time on the job enjoyable. But given the demands many firms place on their employees, part of what makes people happy on the job is that the company tries to, well, make them happy on the job.



The Sixth Rule

Be Boldly Transparent

People have always communicated with others about their jobs, but never at the speed they do now nor, in many cases, with as great an audience. Leaking a document can be done in a keystroke. One thumb drive can contain file cabinets' worth of information. Everyone has a still and video camera as close as his or her smartphone.

Almost nothing is secret anymore. It's never been more important to run a company so that there's nothing to hide.

The last decade was marked by a democratization of the means of publishing and broadcasting unimaginable a generation ago.

Hundreds of websites trade in "user-generated content," making

anyone who wants to be a reporter, editor, news photographer, columnist, or talk show host, not that any of us would go by those titles. It's casual. We just post, upload, tweet, or share. No matter. The information is out there.

Sites such as Glassdoor feature a regular feed of anonymous reviews of companies from their applicants, current employees, and former workers. Prospective employees are increasingly relying on this information and considering it more credible than what the firms say on their websites. In other words, a company's reputation is no longer under its immediate control. It's in the hands of its current and former employees.

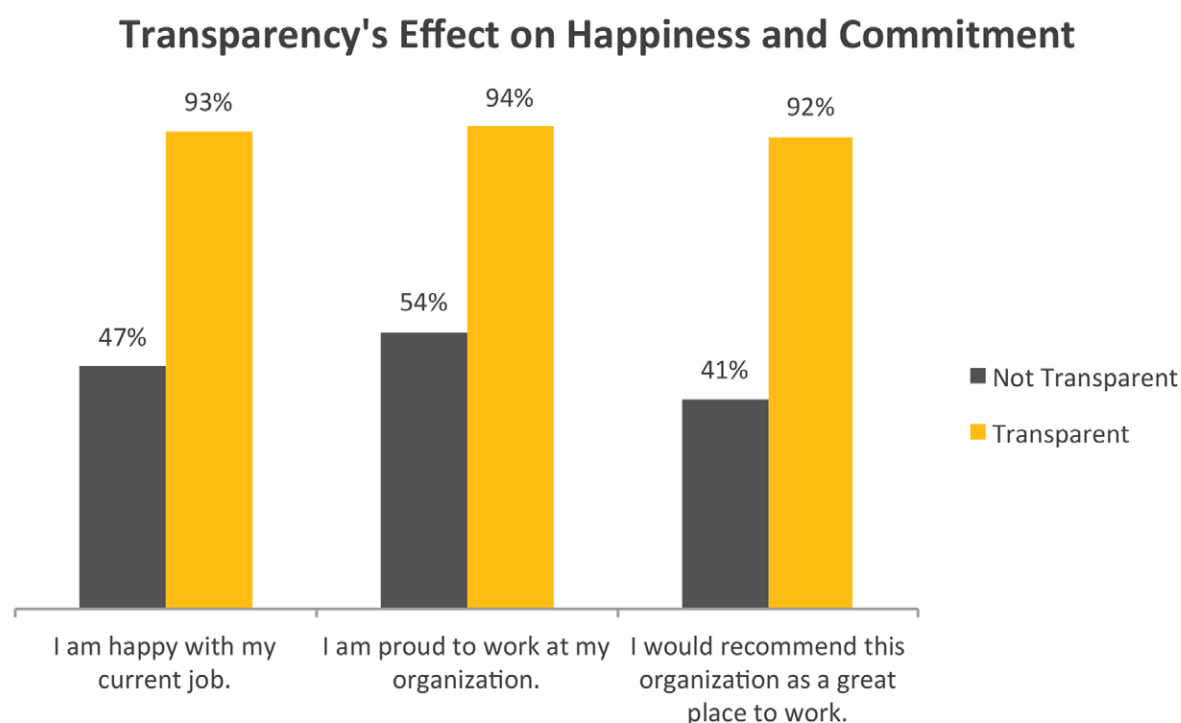
Transparency has the largest effects on pride in and commitment to an organization, suggesting that being open and honest with employees is at the foundation of the relationship between the worker and his or her employer.

When a job gets posted on LinkedIn, prospects can easily build a list of first- and second-level connections who either work there or once did. Within a few texts or e-mails, and perhaps a cup of coffee with a key informant, the job seeker can be well briefed on the organization’s culture. A generation ago, a prospective employee likely would not have known that much unless and until she took the job. By then, it would be too late. Now, if a company does not have a solid digital reputation—a reputation increasingly outside its control—the best hiring prospects evaporate long before they ever make contact with HR.

Once on the job, employees are less likely than those a generation ago to trust other people, including their leaders. The trend of all generations toward greater skepticism is accelerated by the fact that millennials, as a group, are substantially less trusting than the boomers they are replacing.

“Millennials have emerged into adulthood with low levels of social trust,” reported the Pew Research Center in 2014. “In response to a long-standing social science survey question, ‘Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people,’ just 19 percent of millennials say most people can be trusted, compared with 31 percent of Gen Xers . . . and 40 percent of Boomers.” The patterns appear stable, meaning that Millennials’ trust is unlikely to increase, and as they become a larger proportion of the workforce, overall trust levels are almost certainly going to keep declining.

The three statements that best measure transparency question an employee’s trust of the leadership, believe in the vision they have (or have not) communicated, and the ethics of the organization.



Sixth Rule Statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
"I trust the leadership of my organization."	5%	8%	18%	37%	31%
"The leadership of the organization has a compelling vision for the future."	4%	7%	20%	39%	30%
"Everything this organization does is honest and ethical."	4%	8%	21%	36%	32%

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Companies that are secretive and perceived as less than completely ethical put their employees in a dilemma. Many are likely to feel they are associated with an organization whose values contradict their own, which leads people either to distance themselves from the enterprise emotionally, becoming less committed to working hard for the organization, or distance themselves physically by resigning.

About three out of five employees don't experience this conflict; they "agree" or "strongly agree" with the three Sixth Rule statements. They find their employers trustworthy, honest, ethical, and with compelling visions for the future. These employees are more likely to:

- Be happy at work.
- Be proud to work for their organizations.
- Recommend their organizations as a great place to work.

Transparency predicts performance, but not as strongly as do other rules. Transparency has the largest effects on pride in and commitment to an organization, suggesting that being open and honest with employees is at the foundation of the relationship between the worker and his or her employer. Leaders who frequently share as much as they can with their staffs help to maintain their happiness and commitment to the company. Those who insist on keeping information close to the vest should not be surprised if many of their best employees choose to migrate to a more transparent organizations.



The Seventh Rule

Don't Kill the Meaning

People gravitate toward meaning. Most are eager to see in their daily labor something more than a simple exchange of work for money. Most want to believe – arguably need to believe – that their work contributes to something bigger, regardless of whether they are saving lives in a hospital or concocting a new flavor of ice cream. Numerous books, articles, and research papers have been written about the importance of purpose to an individual's motivation at work.

The need for meaning evidences itself in the fact that the New Rules statements used to assess the Seventh Rule garner the most positive responses of any in the entire survey. While people are most likely to score money harshly, signaling they would like to be paid more, they are most likely to score meaning highly, indicating most find purpose in their work.

Seventh Rule Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	■	■	■	■	■
"I value my organization's mission."	2%	3%	13%	44%	39%
"I see how my work connects to larger organizational goals."	1%	4%	13%	46%	35%
"My job is important."	1%	3%	9%	41%	47%

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One of the most important factors for happiness at work – and in life – is fortunately one of the most attainable. Four in five value their organization’s mission, and 88 percent agree their job is important.

People early in their current roles are less likely to say their jobs fulfill their need for meaning in their work. This pattern is probably the effect of people moving between jobs until they find one where their need for purpose is fulfilled, then disproportionately staying in those roles. Those who have been in a job five years or more report finding levels of meaning in their jobs that correlate with substantially lower levels of turnover. There is also a decline in sense of meaning after about a decade on the job, probably due to people whose family and other commitments do not allow them the luxury of changing jobs to recapture purpose as they could have done earlier.

The sense of meaning can be degraded if employees see their leaders or others acting inconsistently with the mission.

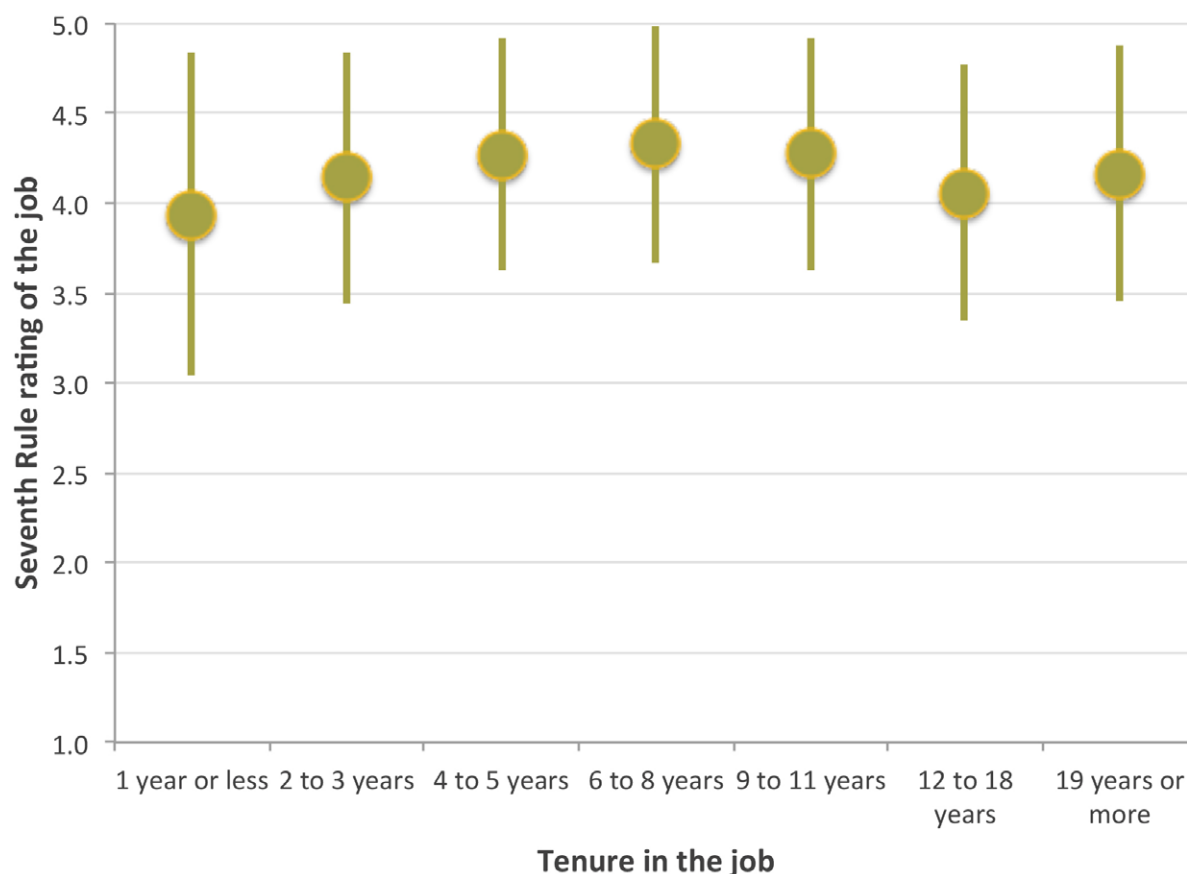
This sense of meaning occurs without much help from companies themselves; it’s simply the way people are wired. There is little need for organizations to give or impose a purpose on people’s work. Many were attracted to the employers because there was something about what they do that is important to them. People who are intrigued by the workings of the stock market gravitate toward brokerages. People who like fashion gravitate toward clothing companies. People fascinated by the news gravitate toward journalism.

There are two major mistakes enterprises make regarding meaning. The first is in presuming to tell employees what they should find meaningful about their work. While it is powerful to show employees how their work had an effect on a firm’s customers or patients or future, attempts to paste meaning onto an employee’s work often miss the mark. Like the other components of workplace happiness, meaning is an individual phenomenon. For example, one nurse may latch onto making people comfortable for meaning, while another nurse may find the ability to innovate new healthcare solutions as the most meaningful part of his or her job. The employer can remind employees of all of these aspects, but be careful to not prescribe any one in particular onto all employees.

The second mistake is when companies assume that the important mission of the company compensates for failing workers in other areas. The goal – whether it’s national security or getting the latest product to market on time – is so crucial, so the argument goes, that the employee should sacrifice his health, his own goals, his need for recognition, or his wish for a manager who would invest himself or herself in that employee’s success. The sense of meaning can also be degraded if employees see their leaders or others acting inconsistently with the mission. If a group of zookeepers who are making numerous personal sacrifices in the interest of taking care of the animals see money that could be used for that purpose spent frivolously elsewhere, it can’t help but demoralize them.

People can and do plow through these kinds of frustrations because of their commitment to the worthiest goals of an enterprise, but eventually they will abandon the fight and go somewhere without the conflict between what they believe and the level of support they receive. On the other end of the scale, companies that show people how their work is helping the firm accomplish its most noble goals and do all they can to support that employee through the other 11 New Rules gain exceptional intensity, commitment, and employee happiness.

Job Meaning Increases, Then Declines, With Tenure





The Eighth Rule

See Their Future

Humans are the only creatures that envision themselves in the future and actively plan for those events to come. Neuroscientists believe much of our capacity for recalling the past exists because evaluating those occurrences helps us make better decisions for the future.

Going mentally backward and forward in time comes easily to people, so it's only natural that an employee doing a job today would wonder where it will take her tomorrow. Much of people's happiness depends not just on their comfort and enjoyment in the present, but their hopes for great days ahead. Consequently, one way of describing a terrible role is that it's a "dead-end job," and one way of describing its opposite is "a job with a real future."

The Eighth Rule statements discover a worker's confidence in that future, both in the relative short term (her "next career step") and over the longer term (that her "career will advance" with the company).

Eighth Rule Statements					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
"My career will advance as this organization grows."	5%	9%	21%	36%	28%
"I am optimistic about my future at my current organization."	4%	7%	20%	38%	31%
"I know what my next career step will be at this organization."	3%	11%	25%	37%	24%

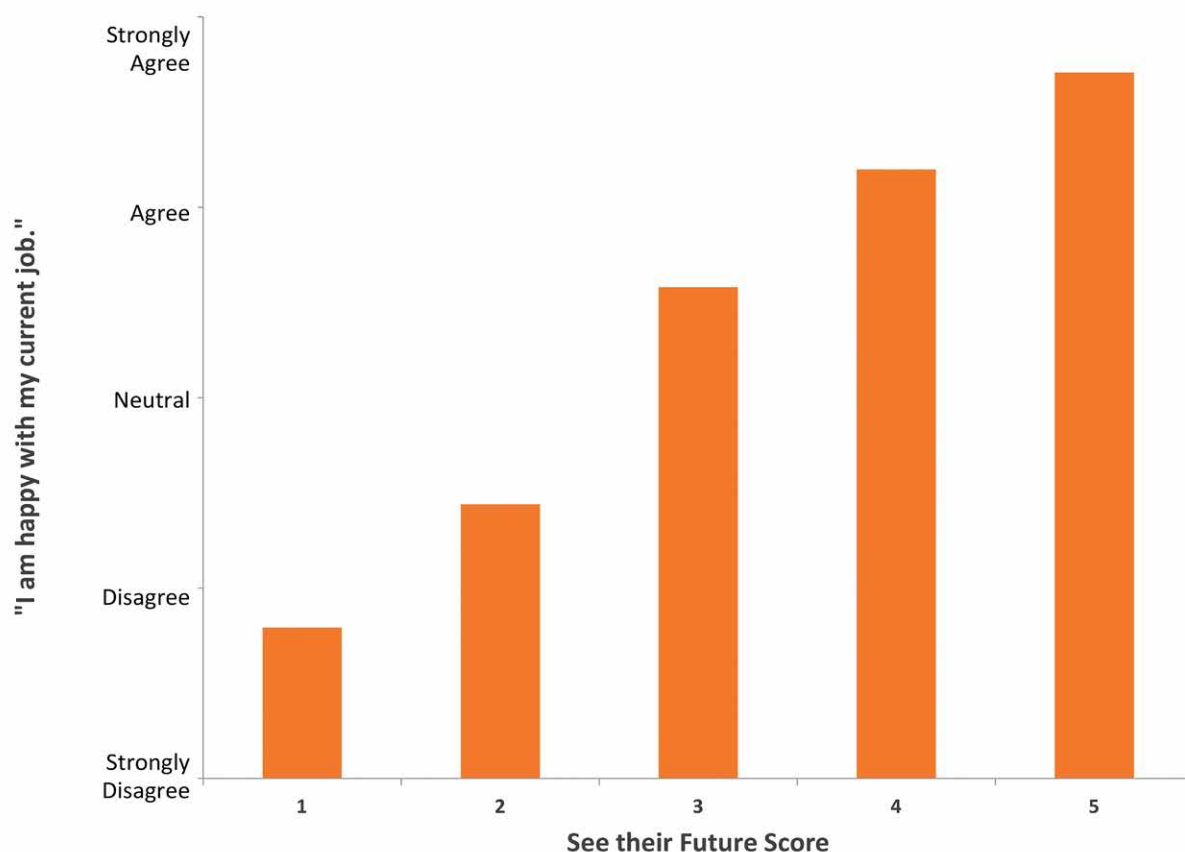
Over half of U.S. workers agree that they see their future growing at their organizations and that they know what the next step will be. There is, however, a lot of uncertainty in these items, with at least one in five marking “neutral” on each.


Men, employees of both sexes with a bachelor’s degree or higher, and young employees (under 45) are more likely to be confident in their futures in their current companies. Each of these

Employees who can see a positive future at organizations are 17 times more likely to be happy with their current jobs.

probably has a separate cause. Women still more often take jobs for more temporary reasons than their male counterparts. Those with stronger education credentials are, in fact, more likely to see their employers invest in preparing them for future opportunities. And younger people might still hold out hope for what’s to come while older workers have already arrived at the future they contemplated years before. Given that people typically dream more optimistically than reality delivers, the difference makes sense.

There is, of course, tremendous variation among individuals. However, on average, leaders and managers will find a greater need to help employees look forward among women, older employees, and those who don’t have as strong of an educational background.





Helping an employee see a promising future pays tremendous dividends in those employees' happiness, commitment, and intensity. Employees who can see a positive future at organizations are 17 times more likely to be happy with their current jobs. Ninety-four percent of those who can see their future would recommend their organizations as a great place to work. Ninety-two percent who see a great future agree that "working here brings out my best ideas."

In the end, it's quite simple. Employees want to work toward a brighter future, either at their current firm or because of credentials they are gaining at that firm they will use elsewhere. If neither of those is delivered, it's only logical that an employee would be less invested in the work he is currently doing and eager to fast-forward to a role that holds greater promise.



The Ninth Rule

Magnify Their Success

Accomplishment is, in many ways, its own reward. The human brain gets a charge out of success through a neurotransmitter called dopamine. A small shot of the stuff is released whenever a person does what he hopes to do, whether it's hitting a drive right onto the green or getting a spreadsheet to balance the way it's supposed to.

But the golf shot isn't quite as rewarding if no one is around to see it and congratulate the golfer on his success, or if no one else really cared if the spreadsheet balanced as intended. It turns out that applause or acknowledgement or recognition or someone somehow appreciating the accomplishment is as reinforcing – sometimes more so – than the small victory itself.

Being recognized for good work is simply part of the social bargain between a worker and his or her employer.

Actions that get no reinforcement suffer what the social scientists term “behavioral extinction.” They simply stop. Whatever the company wanted done becomes, literally, a “thankless job.” No one likes to do thankless jobs.

This psychological phenomenon is the foundation for the Ninth Rule, which is measured by one statement that looks to the past, one that assesses confidence in future recognition, and one that focuses on the employee's manager.

Ninth Rule Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	■	■	■	■	■
"I am confident that if I do good work, it will be recognized."	3%	9%	15%	42%	31%
"I have received incredible recognition in my current job."	6%	12%	25%	34%	23%
"My manager tells me when I do a good job."	3%	7%	13%	44%	33%

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U.S. employees are generally positive about recognition at work, with majorities agreeing at some level with all three statements. However, large proportions of workers back their answer off a full notch to just “agree” to all three questions rather than “strongly agree.” A little less than a third are fully confident that they will be recognized for good work; the rest are at greater risk of not trying as hard as they otherwise might.

Past recognition has a slightly less positive distribution of answers than confidence in future acknowledgement, perhaps because the former includes the phrase “incredible recognition.” While the phrase is extreme, most people can name an accomplishment they consider incredible and for which they would have hoped for matching recognition.

Confidence in future recognition is highly correlated with past reinforcement. This makes sense. No employee can know for certain whether the recognition will come. So his or her best indicator of whether it will happen in the future is whether it happened in the past.

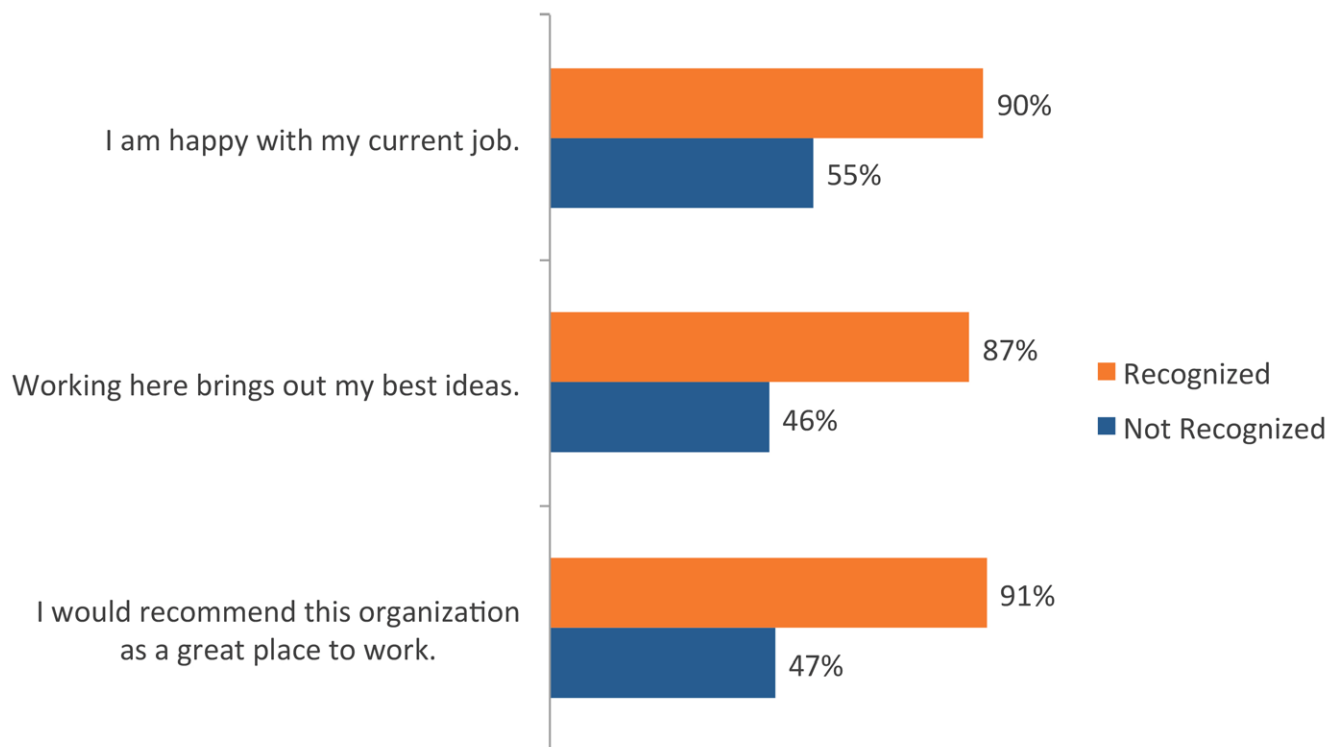
Ninety percent of people who are recognized at work are happy with their jobs, compared with only 55 percent whose average score on the three statements falls short of 4.0 (“agree”). Eighty-seven percent of employees whose work is acknowledged say that their current jobs bring out their best ideas. Recognized employees are more likely to stick around and tell their friends about the

organization. Nearly all recognized employees (91 percent) say they would recommend their companies as great places to work.

Recognition can't be faked; it needs to be meaningful. Those who received an award they felt was inadequate or not meaningful have the same New Rules score as those who receive no award at all. However, people who received a meaningful award are happier and more likely to stay with the company. To be most effective, this rule must be interpreted through the First ("Get Inside Their Heads") to ensure that the acknowledgement best resonates with that individual.

Being recognized for good work is simply part of the social bargain between a worker and his or her employer. When it happens, the employee presses forward, grateful that someone noticed and eager to receive future recognition. When it doesn't, the employee questions her initial decision to work hard and usually dials back her interest in that task going forward. Therefore, what a company does not recognize, it should not expect to see repeated.

Recognition Creates Markedly Different Outlooks





The Tenth Rule

Unite Them

Business is a team sport. It's a combination of specialists – accountants, salespeople, marketers, product designers, and hundreds of other people who do a few things really well and whose work is combined with that of the others to deliver on the company's brand promise. A company is successful in large part based on how well it can match the work of each employee to the work of the rest.

It turns out creating a “whole that is greater than the sum of its parts” is also invigorating for the employees who each have separate responsibilities for one of the parts. Working together helped people survive though tens of thousands of years. Being part of an effective team makes people happy. Being stuck on a dysfunctional team can be exceptionally frustrating.

Tenth Rule Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	■	■	■	■	■
"There is a strong sense of teamwork at my job."	2%	6%	16%	45%	31%
"I get to work with a lot of talented people."	1%	5%	16%	45%	32%
"I have many strong working relationships at my job."	1%	4%	16%	47%	32%

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The New Rules survey poses three questions about the strength of collaboration surrounding an employee, all relatively straightforward.

Most U.S. employees grade their jobs high in collaboration, each statement garnering at least three out of four either agreeing or strongly agreeing. Two-thirds of people score an average of “agree” or better on the three statements.

Workers score the Tenth Rule statements higher than every other rule except the Seventh (“Don’t Kill the Meaning”). People are eager to be on a strong team and most quite naturally accommodate others’ abilities and personalities with their own to accomplish more together than they could separately.

A company is successful in large part based on how well it can match the work of each employee to the work of the rest.

The data across different workers shows two countervailing patterns. Feelings of team unity decrease, on average, as age increases. However, the longer an employee has been at a company, the more likely he is to feel united with his team. In general, the two patterns should cancel out each other. The decrease in unity with age has historically been offset by the increase of unity with tenure.

If employees change jobs every three to five years, the decrease in unity with age will no longer be offset by those older workers’ higher tenures. Employers who frequently lay off and hire new employees will need to be cognizant that the churn creates pressure on the collaboration inside an organization.

More than half of employees who do not feel united are unhappy at work. Relationships and teamwork are further associated with being proud of your organization and recommending it as a great place to work. The odds of an employee being willing to recommend their organization as a great place to work are 11 times higher if she feels united with her coworkers than if she does not. Employers need not worry if their employees are best friends or spend time together outside of the office. But employers should foster an environment in which employees can work well in a team, appreciate each other’s talents, and have strong working relationships.



The Eleventh Rule

Let Them Lead

There is a large body of research on how important it is for employees to have a say in how their work is done. In the research journals, it's most often called employee "voice." Employees are more motivated in jobs where their opinions matter. People are more committed to doing things that are at least partly their own idea, rather than having their goals and the way they do their work dictated to them by the higher-ups.

This is hardly a novel or controversial idea today. Ideas of employee "empowerment" or "participation" have been kicking around for decades. But do those concepts fully tap a person's potential energy for performing at the highest level? Perhaps not.

Counterintuitive as it may seem, letting people lead increases the importance of managers.

Several years ago, BI WORLDWIDE decided to begin asking questions not just about "voice," but also to test how motivating it is when non-supervisors have the chance to take the lead. The three questions that emerged from the analyses were as follows.

Eleventh Rule Statements

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
"I get the chance to lead at my job."	3%	9%	16%	38%	34%
"My organization trusts me with important decisions."	2%	6%	17%	41%	34%
"My ideas are taken seriously."	2%	5%	18%	43%	31%

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Sixty-four percent of U.S. employees average a response of 4.0 (“agree”) or higher on the three statements. This leaves one in three employees feeling largely told to stay in his or her place and do as directed, not getting the chance to show what he or she could do if given the reins for a time.

Although giving someone the chance to lead could actually increase the demands on her time, our analyses show that people generally welcome these opportunities. Those who are given the opportunity to lead have eight times greater odds of being happy with their current jobs. Happiness goes from 50 percent among those who do not get to lead to 89 percent among those who are given the opportunity to lead.

There are strong correlations between the Eleventh Rule and the First (“Get Inside Their Heads”) and Ninth (“Magnify Their Success”). These connections suggest the importance of encouragement along the way to give the person confidence in taking on new challenges and a high degree of coaching tailored to the individual.

One of the most important challenges for companies today is how best to balance the employees’ need to take greater responsibility without depriving them of the structure, guidance, and coordination among business units that allows a business to accurately be termed an “organization.”

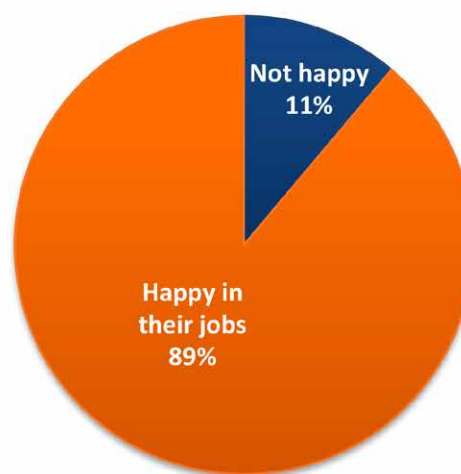
Counterintuitive as it may seem, letting people lead increases the importance of managers. They become more involved in knowing

the abilities of their people. They have to know when to give a person more responsibility and when too much responsibility would be setting him or her up to fail. They spend less time directing, but more time coaching. They must become even better at reducing ambiguity and confusion, more astute at helping their people navigate organizational politics. They spend more time championing the introverts on their team, better at seeing each person's future. They have even greater accountability for their people's success.

Those Deprived of Chances to Lead



Those Given Chances to Lead



Letting people lead unleashes a tremendous amount of energy. Ninety-five percent of those who score the Eleventh Rule high are willing to work especially hard for their organization's customers. Eighty-five percent say they have been recognized as top performers in their companies. Ninety-three percent say they actively look for ways to improve the way they work.

Giving employees these types of opportunities creates more work. It's asking more of the worker and, at least in the short term, it's asking more of his manager. The evidence is equally clear, however, that the rewards to the manager, employee, and the company far outweigh the extra burdens.



The Twelfth Rule

Take It to Extremes

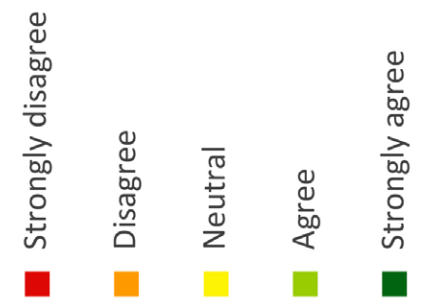
The Twelfth Rule is the culminating imperative for a reason. Each of the preceding rules lays the groundwork for the final one, and the ultimate question of an engagement strategy is how well it helps an enterprise and the people who work there reach their potential.

Organizations are not shy about asking their employees to do something incredible for the enterprise. They set “stretch” revenue and profitability goals. They want to “crush the competition” by capturing market share. They want to invent new medicines. Or bring a cool new product to market. Or be the one thing people at the industry trade show are talking about. Or go public.

But why should an employee care? The evidence is clear an employee will help the company pursue its big dreams if his leaders and managers have so invested in his experience at the firm that they triggered his natural reflex of reciprocity. How hard an employee works depends heavily on how well the firm built the job around his abilities, made him fearless, paid him well, kept him from burning out, made it a cool place to work, spoke plainly, made the work meaningful, paved the way to a promising future, recognized his best work, put him on the right team, and let him lead.

When given the opportunity to accomplish great things, the vast majority of employees step up to the challenge.

The evidence is also clear that when employees work harder to pursue the corporate goals, the employee also gains important individual accomplishments. This is at the heart of the Twelfth Rule statements.



Twelfth Rule Statements

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
"I believe I can accomplish more at my current organization than I could somewhere else."	4%	10%	25%	37%	24%
"I will accomplish incredible things at this job."	4%	7%	20%	41%	28%
"I enjoy being challenged to push my limits at work."	1%	4%	16%	45%	34%

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Accomplishment is one of the best predictors of being happy at work, and one of the strongest drivers of commitment to the company and intensity in one’s job. Employees who do not rate the Twelfth Rule statements high have a 50/50 chance of being happy at work. The odds of being happy at work are 15 times greater for those who do score these statements strongly. Nearly all (94 percent) of employees who “Take It to Extremes” are happy in their current jobs.

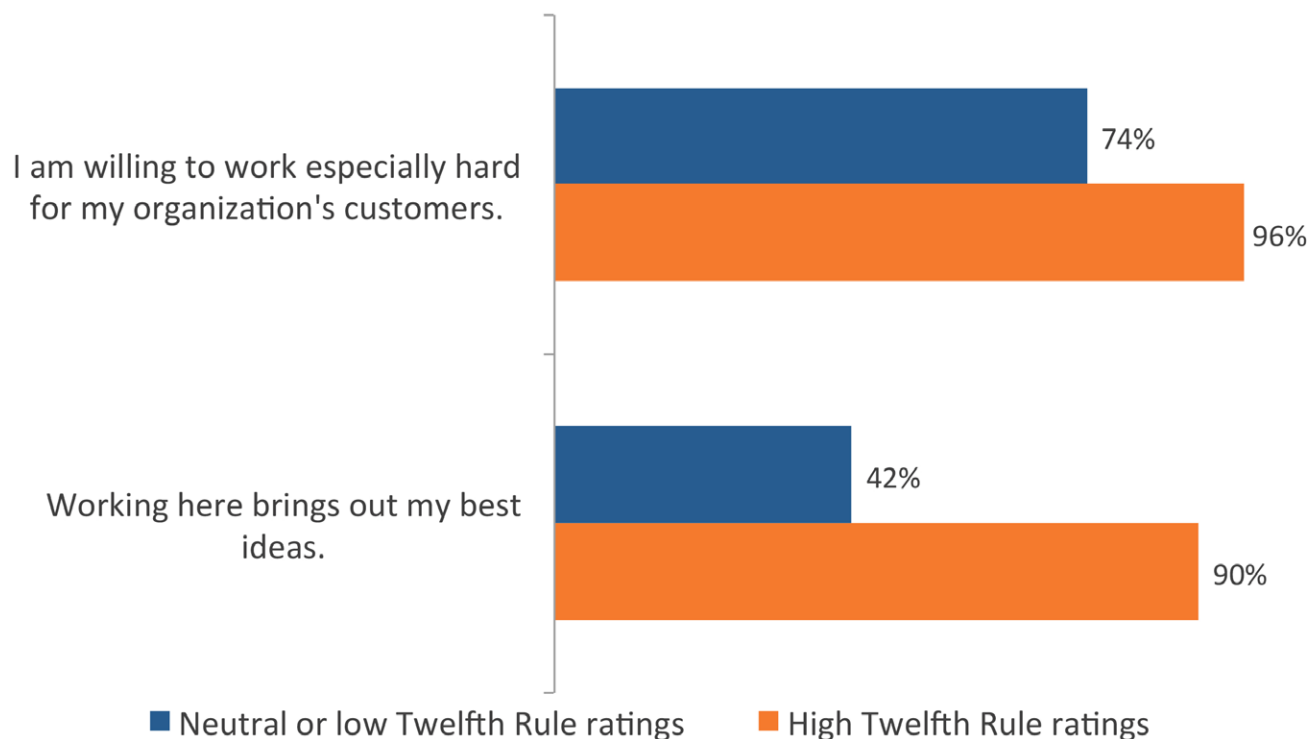
There is a barrier between the desire and the opportunity to achieve great things. Seventy-nine percent enjoy being challenged to push their limits at work. But only 69 percent think they will accomplish incredible things at their job and only 61 percent believe they will accomplish more at their job than elsewhere.

Those who feel like they will accomplish something great have managers who help them see their future, work for cool companies, have leaders who are transparent, and are consistently recognized for their best work.

When given the opportunity to accomplish great things, the vast majority of employees step up to the challenge. Those who score an average of “agree” or higher on the Twelfth Rule statements work harder for their customers and say working at their organization brings out their best ideas.

In many ways, the patterns in the Twelfth Rule data mirror the patterns in all the New Rules data. The company seeks to achieve certain objectives. The employee wants to attain certain individual goals. Not only are the two usually not in conflict, there's usually a high degree of overlap; the more the company accomplishes, the better it reflects on the employees who had a part in it, and vice versa. The most powerful bargains between a worker and her employer allow both to gain what's most important to them and to take great satisfaction in seeing the other succeed.

Employees Work Hardest When Doing So Gives Them Accomplishments



The Heart of Working Happier

The preceding pages make clear that investing in employees' happiness is an exceptionally sound business decision. It has a high return across a host of metrics.

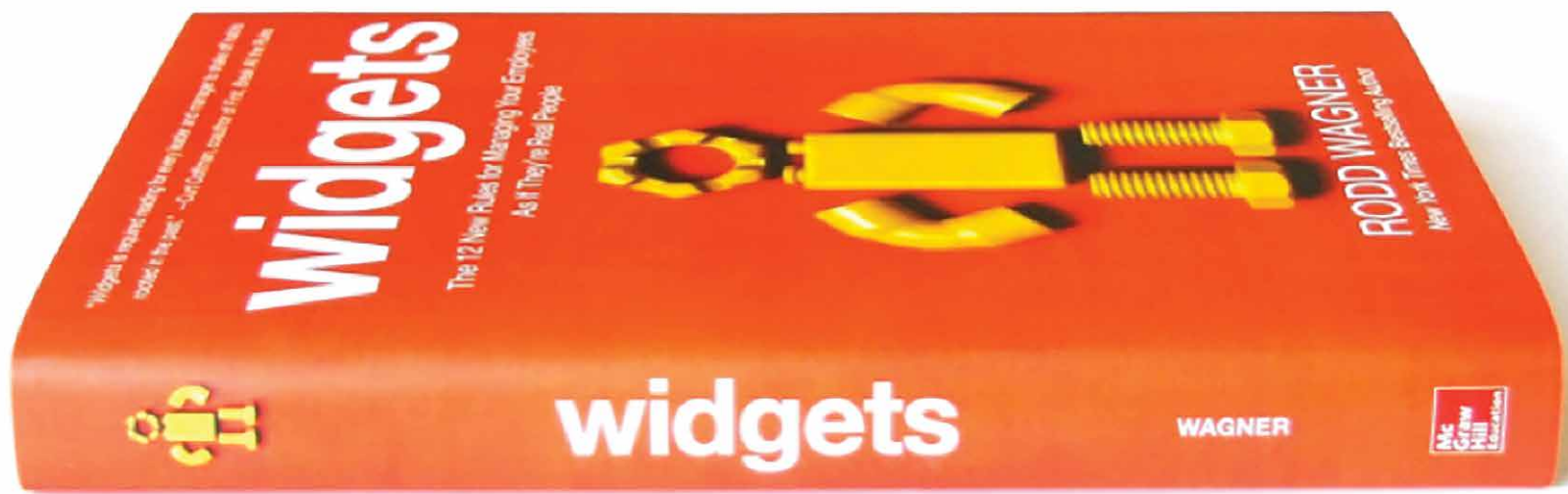
But there is a paradox within this research. Leaders who endeavor to make their employees happier for strictly financial reasons are likely to see less come of the effort.

The logic is clear. If a business does good things for its employee just because they are its employees, it can expect those people to do good things for the business just because it employs them. This mutual sense of moral obligation is a powerful force inside a firm. It motivates the right actions without either side constantly keeping score.

Companies are powerful, but people are reciprocal. The businesses that get the most from their employees are those that deserve to get the most from them.

But if an organization measures each gesture for its return on investment, employees eventually start gauging their actions in the same way. This hesitation on both sides as each considers "What do I get out of this?" diminishes the power of reciprocity. It replaces a sense of obligation with one of calculation. It cuts into trust. It takes a toll on each of the New Rules, and therefore on people's happiness. Many of the employees move on in search of a better place to work. Ultimately, then, it hurts the business.

It is, therefore, incumbent on the company to set the right tone. The employer gets to set the terms and conditions for the job. The company is powerful. But employees are reciprocal. The businesses that get the most from their employees are those that deserve to get the most from them – the enterprises that are most intent on helping their people work happier.

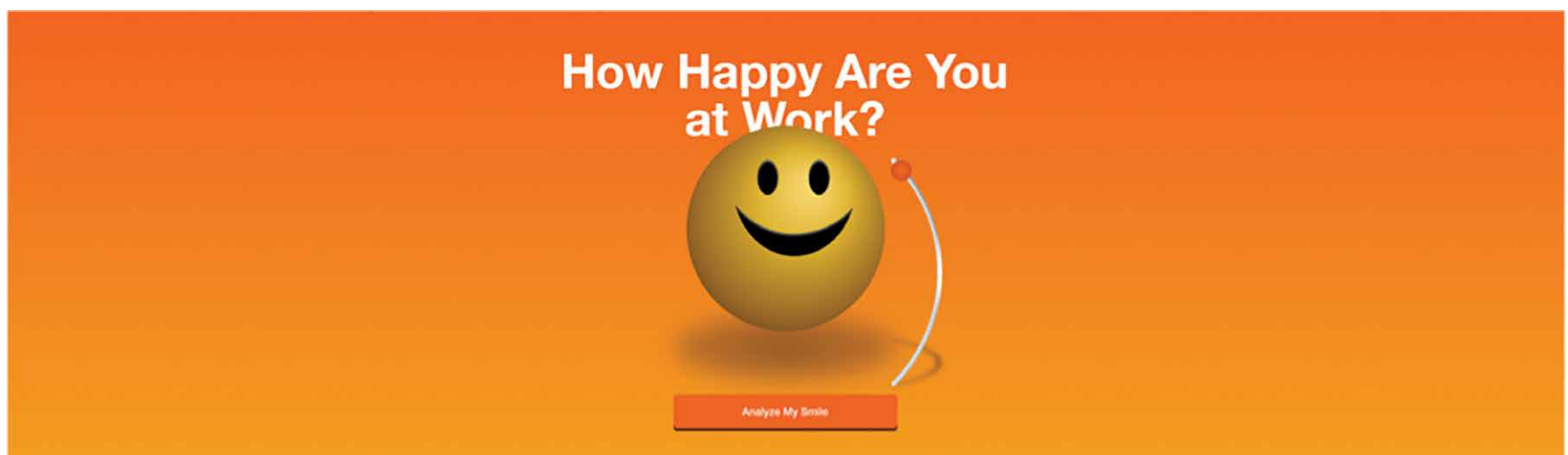


Widgets and WorkHappier.com

This paper expands on information found in the book and website that preceded it.

Widgets: The 12 New Rules for Managing Your Employees As If They're Real People (McGraw-Hill, 2015) includes a chapter on each of the dozen aspects of a great job discussed in this paper. The book incorporates current stories about organizations that have succeeded (Ford) or failed (Circuit City) in part because of how they managed one of these essential elements of workplace culture.

The site WorkHappier.com links to a job assessment that asks each of the questions discussed in this paper. The survey takes the average employee about three minutes to complete, and is free for individual use. After completing the assessment, an employee immediately receives a report comparing his or her responses with the benchmark data overall and on each of the 12 New Rules.



Methodology of the #WorkHappier Study

BI WORLDWIDE partnered with a United States panel company to target employees of companies with 500 employees or more. The online survey was available from June 12 to June 18, 2015. A total of 1,017 records were kept after data quality procedures removed respondents who completed too quickly or with suspicious response patterns. The data were weighted so that the incoming survey traffic reflected the age and gender of full-time American employees, as determined by United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. Fifty-three percent of respondents were male, 47 percent were female. Respondents had an average age of 38 years, with a standard deviation of 11 years. The typical respondent took 11 minutes, 12 seconds to complete the survey. Complete information on the New Rules of EngagementSM survey methodology can be found in the appendix to the book *Widgets*.

About the Authors

Rodd Wagner is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Widgets*. A contributor to *Forbes*, he is one of the foremost authorities on employee engagement and collaboration. Wagner's books, speeches, and thought leadership focus on how human nature affects business strategy. He currently serves as vice president of employee engagement strategy at BI WORLDWIDE.

Wagner is a confidential advisor to senior executives on the best ways to increase their personal effectiveness and their organizations' performance. His work has taken him to a fiberglass factory in Brazil, a vehicle engineering facility in India, a paper warehouse in Poland, a home improvement store in Wales, a medical device design site in Germany, a pharmaceutical firm in Switzerland, the Pentagon, the aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz*, and the attack submarine *USS California*.

Wagner's books have been published in 10 languages and his work featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company*, ABC News, *BusinessWeek*, CNBC.com, and the *Globe and Mail* and *National Post* in Canada, and parodied in *Dilbert*.

Wagner holds an M.B.A. with honors from the University of Utah Graduate School of Business. He was formerly a principal of Gallup, the research director of the Portland Press Herald and WGME-TV in Maine, a reporter and news editor for The Salt Lake Tribune, and a radio talk show host.

Amy Stern is the director of employee engagement research at BI WORLDWIDE. Her research has resulted in peer-reviewed publications, invited lectures, research awards, and faculty positions at two universities.

Amy's deep understanding of research allows her to bring rigorous thinking to a project while maintaining a fresh, innovative perspective. She advises companies on how to create a happy workforce, identifying what is important to employees, even if the employee cannot quite put a finger on it.

Amy brings a master's degree in experimental psychology, focusing on unconscious motivators of human behavior. Her past experience includes leading projects in consumer research and teaching both research methods and human development at the university level.





About BI WORLDWIDE

BI WORLDWIDE is a global leader in engagement solutions that drive measurable results for our clients around the world. We help our clients engage employees, build custom sales incentives, create channel loyalty, and engage customers.

With U.S. headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota, BIW is a multinational company serving Global 2000 corporations in over 125 countries in more than 20 languages. The firm has more than 25 sales offices throughout the U.S. and headquarters around the world in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Latin America, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

More information can be found at BIWORLDWIDE.com.

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