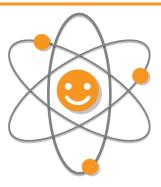
LEVERAGE THE SCIENCE OF HAPPINESS TO INCREASE PERFORMANCE, PRODUCTIVITY, & PROFITABILITY

25 TIPS FOR LEADERS



ALEX BRATTY, MBA



Leverage the Science of Happiness to Increase Performance, Productivity, and Profitability

25 Tips for Leaders



Alex Bratty, MBA

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25 TIPS FOR LEADERS

Leveraging The Science Of Happiness

Many of us labor under the idea that success will bring us happiness. I'll be happy when I get that promotion. I'll be happy when I sign the big client. I'll be happy when I'm making more money. Sure, when we accomplish those goals we do experience happiness...but it doesn't last.

Sooner or later, we're searching for the next big thing that's going to make us happy, and it rapidly becomes a hamster wheel of constantly pursuing happiness that is ever-fleeting. Plus, let's be honest, if success were going to bring us lasting happiness, that would mean all successful people are happy.

But we all know that's not true. So, what gives? Well, it turns out most of us have the equation backwards.



It's NOT: success = happiness

It's: happiness = success

There are now decades of research showing that happiness precedes success. So, instead of thinking, "I'll be happy when..."; it's really more about, "I'll be happy and then..."

But why? It all seems rather counterintuitive. Why is it that happiness comes first in the equation and not success?

It's all about our emotions.

Close your eyes for a moment and think of a situation wherein you experienced negative emotions - anger, resentment, blame, guilt, shame - anything in that realm. Relive the situation for just a few moments and then open your eyes. How did that make you feel in your body?



Chances are you felt a sense of tightness or restriction.

That's because when we experience negative emotions our body produces cortisol and adrenaline, which results in a narrowing of our thoughts and actions.

Essentially, we find ourselves in the classic fightor-flight scenario.

Now, try this again. Close your eyes, but this time imagine a situation wherein you experienced positive emotions. You felt joyful, ontent, peaceful, curious, interested, optimistic - anything in that wheelhouse. Now open your eyes and compare how you felt in your body this time.

Likely, you felt lighter, more open, and expansive. That's because when we experience positive emotions dopamine and serotonin flood the brain making us feel good and boosting our cognitive ability.



Our thoughts and actions expand. We are able to think faster, be more creative, and problem solve in new and different ways. This biological process is why happiness leads to success.

Simply put, when we are happy we are more energized, capable, and productive.

So, does this mean we all just have to slap on a happy face and we'll be successful?

No.

In the equation happiness = success, the happiness we're talking about goes beyond just feeling happy. Sure, positive emotions are a crucial element, but they don't last and we don't want to end up on the hamster wheel chasing them.

The happiness in this equation of happiness = success is more of a deep, enduring, fulfilling sense of happiness, or what

scientists call "wellbeing." It's about realizing our potential and cultivating meaning in what we do each day; and conveniently enough, there is a simple formula that can help us do just that. Dr. Martin Seligman, the founder of positive psychology, has boiled it all down to five key elements under the acronym PERMA:

Positive emotions; Engagement; Relationships; Meaning; and Accomplishments.

By simply focusing on these five elements, we can not only create a deep sense of happiness, but actually flourish in every aspect of our lives. Let's take a closer look at each of them.

POSITIVE EMOTIONS:

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As you might have guessed, this is about feeling happy, enjoying the good times, and having fun.



ENGAGEMENT:

This is about being in "flow," or as some people call it, "being in the zone." Essentially, it's about engaging in tasks and activities that we find so absorbing that time simply falls off the clock. When we're in this place we're using our strengths, we're at our best, and it's not only personally satisfying, it's also a pathway to greater productivity and creativity.

RELATIONSHIPS:

Of course, this element is about cultivating positive relationships. As humans, we are social creatures. In fact, the experience of loneliness can take years off our lives. Social support is so important to us that it has the same impact on our physical health and longevity as factors such as high blood pressure, smoking, or obesity.

MEANING:

This element is about developing a sense of being part of something that is bigger than just us or our jobs. It is about creating meaning in our work and in our lives.



► ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

This one speaks for itself. If you are reading this book, I'm going to take a wild guess and say that you enjoy setting goals and achieving them. Hey, you're a leader – it's who you are!

The 25 tips in this book are grouped by these five elements; but, the beauty of this PERMA model is that by engaging in just one activity, focused on just one element, you'll find that you often incorporate multiple elements.

For example, Tip #6 Follow the Flow, encourages you to maximize time spent on tasks where you are "in the zone." By doing this, yes, you're targeting the element of Engagement, but you're also going to hit on Positive Emotions (you'll feel these after spending time in flow), Meaning (it's almost impossible to be in flow on an activity that you don't find important or meaningful), and Accomplishments (to be in flow is to use your strengths, which naturally leads to more achievement). Just one simple activity, yet it touches on four of the five PERMA elements.

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How To Get The Most Value From This Book

You're a leader. You want optimal results for yourself and your organization. You're also busy. That's why the 25 tips provided in this book are designed to be quick, simple, and highly effective. Every tip has been scientifically tested and shown to be successful in cultivating some aspect of happiness or wellbeing, which in turn, has a positive impact in the workplace.

You don't need to work through the tips in order. You don't even need to monitor which element of the wellbeing formula (PERMA) a tip belongs to.

What you do need to do is **take action**. Try out the tips. Some may resonate more than others and that's just fine. Take the ones that appeal to you and put them to work. Experience the positive impact for yourself and then introduce them to your organization.



The bottom line is that when you bring happiness to the workplace, you're actually putting happiness to work for you and creating a competitive advantage. So, get to work on getting happy: Use these tips and leverage the science of happiness to increase performance, productivity, and profitability in your organization.

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Positive Emotions



Practice Gratitude

Write a letter to someone who has had a positive effect on your life, but whom you have not yet properly thanked. Provide details about what that person did for you and how it impacted your life. Visit the person and read the letter to them, then spend a little time discussing it and how you feel about one another. Can't deliver a letter in person? Simply mail it and follow up after they receive it.

Fact: Engaging in this practice results in increased levels of happiness and decreased levels of depressive symptoms.





Discover Your Signature Strengths

Take the VIA Institute on Character Strengths survey: https://www.happinessatworknow.com/survey.

You will receive a free, personalized, rank order list of your character strengths. The top 3-7 are your signature strengths – the strengths that are at the core of who you are. By becoming aware of these you can be more authentically you and apply them more often in your work and in your life life.

Fact: People who are aware of their signature strengths are nine times more likely to flourish.



Use Signature Strengths in a New Way

Take the VIA Institute on Character Strengths survey: https://www.happinessatworknow.com/survey.

You will receive your very own rank order list of strengths. The top 3-7 are your signature strengths – those that define who you truly are and how you show up in life. Pick one of your signature strengths and apply it in a different way each day for one week.

Fact: People who use their signature strengths are more engaged and productive at work, have greater job satisfaction, and are 18 times more likely to flourish in their life.





Make a point of including some physical exercise or activity throughout your day; even if it's just a walk around the block at lunchtime. It will get more oxygen flowing and increase your endorphin production – which means you'll feel good!

Fact: Engaging in regular physical activity increases selfworth and self-esteem, builds physiological and psychological resilience, and reduces the risk of multiple ailments, including depression, dementia, and cognitive impairment.

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Journal about a time when you were at your absolute best and contemplate the strengths you used in that situation.

Why were you at your best? What were you doing? How did it make you feel? How can you bring your best self forth in other situations?

Fact: Engaging in this practice results in increased levels of happiness and decreased levels of depressive symptoms.



Engagement



Flow happens when you are so absorbed in an activity that time falls off the clock and you are not aware of other happenings around you.

Some people call it "being in the zone." Start noticing when you are in flow at work and what you are doing during that time. Then, maximize the time you spend doing those tasks and minimize the time spent on other tasks.

Fact: Flow is when your strengths and skills meet the challenge presented. Spending more time in flow means using your strengths, which contributes to happiness and success.



Savor the Experience

Select one or two enjoyable experiences and make the enjoyment last as long as possible. For example, when eating lunch, prolong the pleasure by focusing on the various features of the meal – the different tastes and textures – and how they combine together. Eat more slowly so you can literally savor every bite.

Fact: People who make it a habit to savor the good times are happier, have greater life satisfaction, express more optimism, and are less likely to be depressed.





Cultivate Your Passion

Identify at least one activity in your life that you love to do, is important to you, and you enjoy spending time and energy on. Commit to spending 10-15 minutes on this activity every day. Don't have an activity you're passionate about? Simply take 10-15 minutes each day to explore something you are curious about...and you'll discover your passion (see Tip #17).

Fact: People who cultivate their passion are more fulfilled and they spend more time in flow (see Tip #6), which in turn, contributes to greater happiness and well-being.

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Practice Mindfulness

Each day for one week, take mindful pauses (set the timer on your phone as a reminder to do this). Just pause for 15-30 seconds and focus on your breathing. Let go of everything except paying attention to breathing in and out. Finish the pause with a question: what thought or action would best serve me right now?

Fact: People who practice mindfulness have greater awareness of their authentic self and core strengths. They are less stressed and they experience improvement in sustained attention and working memory.





Nurture Yourself with Nature

Fed up, tired, or just not as productive as you'd like to be? Take a break from your office and walk outside in nature. Can't take a walk or you can't easily get to an area that allows you to be in nature?

Never fear. It turns out that just taking a break from work and looking at pictures of nature works just as well. So pull up some nature shots on your phone!

Fact: People who interact with nature regularly have lower blood pressure, less stress, experience better moods, and have improved cognitive functioning.

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Relationships



Make the Human Connection

Commuting to work on public transport? Stopping by the coffee shop for a caffeine fix?

Take a moment to engage with a total stranger or a vague acquaintance. Have a conversation. Find out something about that person and tell them something interesting about you.

Fact: We often prefer to keep to ourselves; it turns out this is a mistake. Making a human connection - with total strangers or acquaintances - results in increased happiness, a greater sense of belonging, and more positive emotions.





Cultivate Connection with Colleagues

Take the time to connect with coworkers, whether it's in person, over email, or on the phone. Don't just communicate at a transactional level. Get to know your colleagues, learn about their lives outside of work, and find opportunities to socialize.

Fact: Satisfaction with colleagues is one of the primary drivers of workplace happiness and people who are more socially connected at work perform better in their jobs

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Engaging & Effective Communication

Practice active-constructive responding. This means responding to good news with a genuine display of enthusiasm and amplifying the experience by asking active questions about it.

For example, your coworker gets assigned to a prize project. An active-constructive response could be, "Wow! That's awesome. Tell me all about and let's grab a coffee to celebrate."

Fact: People who use active-constructive responding have more fulfilling and enduring relationships which leads to better job performance.





Cultivate Compassion for Others

For 3-4 minutes each day, close your eyes and direct compassionate thoughts or positive emotion towards someone in your life. You can choose your own compassionate thoughts, but here are some examples that are simple and easy to use: may you be safe, may you be happy may you be healthy, may you live with ease.

Fact: People who practice just a few minutes a day of this compassionate meditation have a greater sense of social connection and feel more positive towards others – even total strangers!

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Emphasis on Empathy

Making someone feel heard and understood is one of the most important gifts we can give another person. This week, when engaging with others, focus on being truly present. Put your phone away and listen intently – not with the intent to respond, but with the intent to understand.

Fact: Practicing empathy increases our capacity to help others and our ability to fully engage colleagues and customers.



Meaning



Volunteer with an organization or cause that is both important and interesting to you. Consider how often and in what ways you want to offer your time and skills. If you feel constrained by time or location, you can also offer to help online or over the phone.

Fact: People who volunteer regularly are happier, have greater life satisfaction, selfesteem, and physical health. Plus, their wellbeing increases over time if the volunteering activity is sustained.

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Pick a topic or activity that you don't know much about but about which you are curious to learn more. Spend a few minutes each day for a week researching it. As you cultivate your curiosity, you will discover your passion projects.

Fact: Exercising curiosity increases cognitive ability, happiness, meaning, and motivation.





Perform one act of kindness every day for one week or perform five acts of kindness in one day. Some acts of kindness can be cost-free and take little time (e.g. hold the elevator, compliment a stranger). Others may have minimal cost (e.g. pay the toll for the car behind you, buy coffee for the person in front of you), or require little time (e.g. help a friend with a project, mentor a colleague).

Fact: Performing acts of kindness boosts our sense of wellbeing and increases happiness.



Shift Your Perspective

Write about a negative event that happened to you and why. How did you describe it? Did you assign personal blame or did you explain it factually (e.g. I didn't get the job because I'm not good enough versus I didn't get the job because they want someone who has more experience)? If you blamed yourself, rewrite the story with a renewed, factual perspective.

Fact: Using the self-blame approach negatively impacts mental and physical health. Using the factual approach leads to more optimism and better performance.





Three Good Things

Each day for a week, write down the three things that went well that day and why they went well. Having fun with it? Don't stop after one week - keep doing it every day.

Fact: Engaging in this practice results in increased levels of happiness and decreased levels of depressive symptoms.

Accomplishments



Goal Setting and Planning

Write out your personal goals for the next 3-6 months. For each goal, write out any obstacles to achieving it and a specific plan for how you will overcome those challenges. Identify the action steps you need to take to reach the goal, making sure that each step is a small, manageable task. Include dates for when each task will be completed.

Fact: Taking the time to map out personal goals and plans for how to achieve them increases happiness and life satisfaction.





It is important to develop mental and emotional resilience so that we're better equipped to handle challenging situations.

A simple way to do this is to use the ABC model. That is, when adversity (A) happens, the emotional or behavioral consequences (C) are determined not by the adversity itself, but by what we believe (B) about it.

For example, let's say you got passed over for promotion. If you think, "I'm just never going to be good enough" or "the boss just doesn't like me," such thoughts may lead to unhealthy resentment or depression.

However, if you think, "I don't like this situation, but I can find out why this happened and what I can do to change things next time around," these beliefs will likely lead to healthy frustration followed by positive action.

Fact: Using the ABC model helps reduce the emotional impact of stressful events and provides a more constructive perspective when confronted with challenges.





Write about your future successful self. Picture yourself as having worked hard and accomplished your goals and dreams. Describe all the best possible outcomes you could have.

Then, take a little time each day to think about yourself in this way and allow it to serve as a guide for what you need to do now, in the present, to realize this best future self as your reality.

Fact: Imagining yourself as successfully achieving goals can lead to improved performance and greater happiness.

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Realize Your Potential

Think of a goal that you dream of accomplishing but that you have been hesitant to pursue because it makes you a little fearful or anxious. Now look at the gap between where you are and where you want to be. The only way to bridge that gap is to step outside your comfort zone and choose growth over security.

Think about how you would feel if you achieved this goal and take one or two steps towards it this week, even if it feels a little scary. Don't worry about whether the goal is accomplished this week. The point is to get comfortable feeling uncomfortable and to nurture the skill of channeling anxiety to your advantage.

Fact: Enduring a moderate amount of anxiety about completing a task or goal can boost performance and personal growth.





Adopt a Growth Mindset

How do you think about the tasks and skills you're not so good at? Do you think "I'm no good at that," or "I can get better at this"?

If you think in the first way ("fixed mindset"), you're limiting your potential. Start noticing how you approach difficult tasks and shift your thinking to the second approach ("growth mindset"), with which you take the perspective that you can always learn and improve.

Fact: Adopting a growth mindset leads to increased motivation and productivity, as well as enjoying working through a challenge.



Final Thoughts

Now that you've read these 25 tips for leaders, what will you do?

Will you keep on working harder and longer to get the results you want?

Or will you work smarter and harness the science of happiness to increase performance, productivity, and profitability?

I certainly hope it's the latter.

You're sitting on a major competitive advantage that will improve your life, the lives of your employees, the experience of your customers, and the financial health of your organization.

Put happiness to work for you today so that your future flourishes.

Alex Bratty, MBA



About Alex Bratty

With over twenty years of business and research experience, Alex has navigated various work environments, leadership styles, and company cultures. From management at a Fortune 100 company and partner in a multimillion-dollar firm, to most recently building a six-figure coaching and consulting business, Alex has had the opportunity to observe and experience firsthand what it takes to increase employee engagement, productivity, and performance.

She has a no-nonsense, yet fun, approach to speaking and training that allows her to quickly connect with audiences, always leaving them feeling energized and motivated. Alex's love of research means that all of her programs are grounded in evidence-based and scientifically researched concepts that have been tested in the workplace.

Over the years, Alex has worked with a range of clients, including Achieve, The Art Institutes, the Biotechnology Industry Organization, Turner Broadcasting (CNN, HLN, Turner Sports), Pew Charitable Trusts, Pfizer, the Recording Industry Association of America, Scripps Networks, Stanford University, and The Gates Foundation, to name but a few.

Her work has also taken her across the globe, running research projects in Haiti, Indonesia, and Iraq. During her time in Washington, D.C., she frequently appeared on Fox News Channel and was published in The Hill and The Washington Post.



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Contact Alex to have her work with your organization. She is available for consulting, training, workshops, seminars, and keynotes.



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For Leaders Who Want To Harness The Power Of Happiness In The Workplace To...

INCREASE:

DECREASE:

- Absenteeism
- 🖲 Turnover
- 😣 Burnout
- 😣 Retaliation
- Stress



Alex Bratty, founder of Happiness @ Work, helps leaders and organizations leverage the competitive advantage of a positive work culture. Combining her 20 years of experience in business and research with her expertise in positive psychology, Alex works with clients to increase employee motivation and performance in a way that produces a healthier and happier bottom line.



