



the monthly croak

Happy New Year from all of us here at Kissing Frogs! We hope you had a chance to relax over the holiday period. The Kissing Frogs team has been busy over the last month, taking a break and catching up on some reading that has been in a pile for far too long. Starting next month we will feature a book that may be of interest to you or your business. If you have any books to recommend or that you have read and you would like to review for us please [email](#), we are always interested in new ideas and research. As always, this month's issue will feature information and stories from a number of sources, we hope you find it interesting and applicable to your workplace!

how much happiness is being spread in your workplace?

Feeling inexplicably cheery today? Thank your friends. And your friends' friends. And your friends' friends' friends. New research shows that happiness isn't just an individual phenomenon; we can catch happiness from friends and family members like an emotional virus. When just one person in a group becomes happy, researchers were able to measure a three-degree spread of that person's cheer. In other words, our moods can brighten thanks to someone we haven't even met.

On average, every happy person in your social network increases your own chance of cheer by 9 percent — and the effects of catching someone else's happiness lasts up to one year. The study, which looked at nearly 5,000 individuals over 20 years, was published online in the British Medical Journal.

Fowler and Christakis were able to map the social networks of 4,739 individuals with data from the Framingham Heart Study, an ongoing cardiovascular study. Participants in that study listed contact information for their closest friends, family members and neighbors, connecting the pair of researchers to more than 50,000 social ties. The researchers used the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Index — a standard set of questions psychologists use to measure happiness — to analyze the cheeriness of the study participants. They found that when someone gets happy, that person's friend experiences a 25 percent increased chance of becoming happy. A friend of that friend experiences a nearly 10 percent chance of increased happiness, and a friend of that friend has a 5.6 percent increased chance of happiness.

That means a stranger's good mood can do more to lift your spirits than a \$5,000 raise, which only increased happiness 2 percent, Fowler and Christakis found. "Happiness is a social emotion. It's an emotion that we derive from social events, and very typically it becomes important for cementing the social connections we have with others," says Jack Dovidio, a Yale University social psychologist who was not involved in the study. "Happiness is not simply about me."

Sadness isn't as catching - On the flip side, if you're feeling blue, you've only yourself to blame. Sadness doesn't infect a social group as reliably happiness does, researchers found. Within some friendship networks, sadness had a significant effect on the members of the group, but on others, the effect was very small.

"With sadness, rather than pulling you in to your social network you often push people away," says Emory University psychologist Nadine Kaslow, who wasn't involved in this study. "Even though we know social support is really good for us when we're sad, when we need it the most, we tend to push people away." It might be a matter of private, personal emotions versus those that are meant to be shared. Anger, for example, might be another outward emotion that would spread within a group the same way happiness does, suggests Dovidio.

- By Melissa Dahl ([msnbc.com](#))

mind those left behind

Companies today are faced with the pressing challenge of finding new, cost-effective ways to motivate a workforce that is becoming increasingly fearful, distracted and, most importantly, unproductive. ' Psychological recession' and 'layoff survivor syndrome' are a few of the new buzz words that have entered the vernacular, which describe the state of many employees who have had to say goodbye to co-workers, bonuses, pay raises and benefits - all while taking on more work.

A December 2008 study by Leadership IQ, as reported in Workforce Management magazine, said the following: "Corporations are mistaken to think that employees who survive layoffs will work harder out of gratitude. In fact, by their own admission, employees say their companies should expect less from them going forward. Moreover, nearly 75 percent of employees who held on to their jobs amid downsizing acknowledge that their individual productivity is declining, while nearly seven in 10 say their company's product or service lines are in decline since the layoffs."

4 more tips for creating & sustaining employee engagement in your organisation

Continued on from last months newsletter four more tips for creating and sustaining employee engagement in your organisation:

- 1) **Let go of any negative opinions you may have about your employees.**
- 2) **Make sure employees have everything they need to do their jobs.**
- 3) **Clearly communicate what's expected of employees, what the company values and vision are, and how the company defines success.**
- 4) **Get to know your employees.**
- 5) **Make sure they are trained - and retrained - in problem solving and conflict resolution skills.**
- 6) **Constantly ask how YOU are doing in your employees' eyes.**
We know it can be difficult for managers to request employee feedback - and it can be equally if not more challenging for an employee to give the person who evaluates them an honest response. To get strong at this skill and to model it for employees, begin dialogs with employees using conversation starters such as, "It's one of my goals to constantly improve myself as a manager. What would you like to see me do differently? What could I be doing to make your job easier?" Be sure to accept feedback graciously and to express appreciation.
- 7) **Pay attention to company stories and rituals.**
Are people laughing at each other or with each other? Do they repeat stories of success or moments of shame? Stay away from participating in discussions that are destructive to people or the organization, and keep success stories alive.
- 8) **Reward and recognize employees in ways that are meaningful to them** (that's why getting to know your employees is so important).
And remember to celebrate both accomplishments AND efforts to give employees working on long-term goals a boost.
- 9) **Be consistent for the long haul.**
If you start an 'engagement initiative' and then drop it your efforts will backfire, creating employee estrangement. People are exhausted and exasperated from 'program du jour' initiatives that engage their passion and then fizzle out when the manager gets bored, fired or moved to another department. There's a connection between an employee's commitment to an initiative and a manager's commitment to supporting it. A manager's ongoing commitment to keeping people engaged, involved in and excited about the work they do and the challenges they face must be a daily priority.

Ultimately, you must keep in mind that **employees are a company's greatest assets**. Their collective ideas, feedback and enthusiasm for what they do can help your business grow and succeed. Some people are naturally wired to give their all and do their best no matter where they work. But the majority of people require the guidance of skilled managers who welcome their ideas, ask for feedback and generate enthusiasm in order to have a sense of purpose and energy about what they do.

whats your BHAG? do your staff know about it?

The authors of the book "Built to Last" coin the term **big, hairy, audacious goal (BHAG)** which they describe as follows:

"A BHAG engages people – it reaches out and grabs them in the gut. It is tangible, energizing, highly focused. People 'get it' right away; it takes little or no explanation." A BHAG is different from traditional organizational goals and objectives in that they are way **bigger**. Built to Last suggest that you will know a BHAG by the following characteristics:

- A BHAG should be so clear and compelling that it requires little or no explanation.... If it doesn't get the people's juices going then it's just not a BHAG.
- A BHAG should fall well outside the comfort zone. People in the organization should have reason to believe they can pull it off, yet it should require heroic effort and perhaps even a little luck...
- A BHAG should be so bold and *exciting in its own right* that it would continue to stimulate progress even if the organization's leaders disappeared before it had been completed...
- A BHAG should be consistent with the company's core ideology.
- BHAGs have a long time frame - 10 to 30 years.

They also suggest that you consider the following questions to test your BHAG:

- Does it stimulate forward progress?
- Does it create momentum?
- Does it get people's juices going?
- Do they find it stimulating, exciting and adventurous?
- Are they willing to throw their creative talents and human energies into it?

To help you gain a better understanding of what a BHAG is consider the following from some organisations that we all can identify with:

- Google** : Organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful.
- Boeing** : Bet the pot on the B-17, 707 and 747.
- IBM** : Commit to a \$5 billion gamble on the 360; meet the emerging need of our customers.
- Nokia Siemens Networks** : Connecting 5 billion people by 2015.

For us the **key benefit** of a BHAG is the focus and change of mindset which it demands. BHAGS cannot be achieved by continuing to do what you did last year and the year before. Incremental improvements are not sufficient if you are to achieve the BHAG. You're forced to think differently, to work differently and to break away from that which worked in the past. A real BHAG require people to behave and act differently. Lastly a real BHAG is accompanied by a true sense of urgency.

Bold visions stimulate progress, ignite passion, focuses the mind and fires up the imagination. They ensure that you focus on what's important and are influenced by unnecessary distractions. Big bold visions break the back of mediocrity and small mindedness. Don't settle, make a dent in the universe.

So, what is your BHAG? What are your big plans? Does your company have a BHAG? Do your employees know all about it? Do you have a BHAG for your life?

a laugh to end it all

We thought, as we have been talking about happiness in the workplace, that we would share with you a couple of fantastic froggy jokes. This months competition is for another bottle **Greystone Waipara's** award winning Riesling and the winner will be the person who sends in the funnest joke (as judged by the Kissing Frogs team). We will publish all PG rated ones in the next edition of the Monthly Croak. As you will be able to tell from our joke even the lamest jokes are welcome!

Why did the frog read Sherlock Holmes?
What does a Romulan frog use for camouflage?

He liked a good croak and dagger.
A croaking device