



CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Management does not do the work themselves. Much of the difference is directly attributable to management practices. A new concept of psychology called “positive psychology” developed by Martin Seligman, which has remarked its importance in all fields, management also is not been untouched by the concepts and topics covered in positive psychology. It focuses on strengths, virtues, and factors that help people thrive and achieve a sense of fulfillment, as well as more effectively manage stress. Positive psychology is about scientifically informed perspectives on what makes life worth living. It focuses on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfillment, and flourishing. In the workplace, there is still a tendency to focus on the negative. But how do the rest of people in management learn how to manage people effectively through positive psychology? Business leaders manage their enterprise by setting goals and achieving them. Recent findings from positive psychology research identify factors such as character strengths, optimism and resilience playing significant roles in how well those goals are managed. Concepts like optimism, flow, happiness, satisfaction, meaning and purpose all are the modern and updated stars in management by positive psychology. The applications of Positive Psychology to improving the performance and the quality of work life are immediate and clear. The new knowledge created through Positive Psychology is aimed to improving organizational effectiveness and the work life of all individuals.

Keywords: *Positive Psychology, Management.*

Introduction

Management is an individual or a group of individuals that accept responsibilities to run an organization. Management does not do the work themselves. According to Mary Parker Follet, “Management is the art of getting things done through people.” They motivate others to do the work and co-ordinate (i.e. bring together) all the work for achieving the objectives of the organization. Management brings together all **Six Ms** i.e. Men and Women, Money, Machines, Materials, Methods and Markets. They use these resources for achieving the objectives of the organization such as high sales, maximum profits, business expansion, etc.

Much of the difference is directly attributable to management practices. Some project managers seem to know by instinct how to organize groups to make the most effective use of individuals, how to motivate people, and how to deal with the inevitable conflicts successfully.

A new concept of psychology called “positive psychology” developed by Martin Seligman, which has remarked its importance in all fields, management also is not been untouched by the concepts and topics covered in positive psychology. Positive Psychology is a newer and increasingly popular branch of psychology that seeks to focus not on pathology, but on what contributes to human happiness and emotional health. It focuses on strengths, virtues, and factors that help people thrive and achieve a sense of fulfillment, as well as more effectively manage stress.

Positive psychology is about scientifically informed perspectives on what makes life worth living. It focuses on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfillment, and flourishing.

Positive psychologists seek "to find and nurture genius and talent", and "to make normal life more fulfilling", then why not to management. The field is intended to complement, not to replace traditional psychology. It does not seek to deny the importance of studying how things go wrong, but rather to emphasize the importance of using the scientific method to determine how things go right. Positive psychology acts as an umbrella under which various topics in management can be placed together. These new insights then help people live life to its fullest potential in the competition world.

Researchers in the field analyze things like states of pleasure or flow, values, strengths, virtues, talents, as well as the ways that they can be promoted by social systems and institutions. Positive psychologists are concerned with four topics: (1) positive experiences, (2) enduring psychological traits, (3) positive relationships and (4) positive institutions.

The Challenge

In the workplace, there is still a tendency to focus on the negative. Managers are generally geared up to solve problems,



employers will often use training as a way to rectify a perceived shortcoming, employees still get shoe-horned into jobs that clearly don't fit and then managers wonder why workers get stressed and call in sick.

A particular person can be a mediocre performer in some circumstances and a superb performer in others. Some project teams respond to changes in economic conditions with resilience and innovation, while others diminish in productivity and fail.

But how do the rest of people in management learn how to manage people effectively through positive psychology? How do they know which practices really work and why?.

To understand how positive psychology—the so-called science of happiness—is being used by entrepreneurs; it helps to look at a company under siege. After all, it's one thing to talk about the connections between a positive mental state and a healthy company when a business is running well, turning a profit, and grabbing new customers. But tougher times really test entrepreneurs, separating those who hunker down and hope the worst will pass from those who use their strengths to find opportunity amid rubble.

Understanding Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology has so far identified several positive emotional states that can contribute to greater emotional resilience, health and fulfillment.

❖ Gratitude

appreciating what one has in life can lead to more satisfaction and happiness. Both having what you want and wanting what you have can lead to a sense of gratitude, as can specific exercises such as maintaining a gratitude journal.

❖ Happiness and wellbeing

"This means identifying the factors that make a positive difference to people's subjective experience of happiness and satisfaction with life - resulting in better health, energy, longevity and coping abilities,".

❖ Optimism

we tend to have a natural tendency toward optimism or pessimism, but that's just part of our potential. We can work on developing more of a tendency toward optimism if we choose. And, given that optimists see many benefits in life, this is something to work toward.

❖ Flow

"The state of 'flow' has been described as 'a highly productive state of concentration'. When working in flow, people are generally more productive, more creative, less stressed and often lose any sense of boredom or that time is dragging. There is a sense of effortless achievement."

❖ Mindfulness

A state of being characterized by being fully present in the 'now', without trying to make anything different, mindfulness actually takes some practice for most people, but brings wonderful benefits as well.

❖ Spirituality

Whatever the path, a focus on spirituality can lead to a greater sense of meaning in life, as well as greater resilience in the face of stress.

❖ Meaning and purpose

"Activities that can help employees develop a greater sense of 'purpose' and 'meaning' (how what they do really matters and contributes to the bigger picture of the organization/the community at large) are a key weapon in the retention war - making people feel more 'connected' and committed to the organization."

Business leaders manage their enterprise by setting goals and achieving them. Recent findings from positive psychology research identify factors such as character strengths, optimism and resilience playing significant roles in how well those goals are managed. Jill Hamburg Coplan, in an article in Business Week, "How Positive Psychology Can Boost Your Business," argues that positive psychology can help leaders manage the bad times much better when they focus on employee strengths, praise, linking rewards to performance results, helping employees become better self-managers, and maintaining a cheerful,



Positive and optimistic attitude regardless of what is happening. The basis of their thinking is that people perform better when their jobs play to their strengths, and when they love what they do. Some organizations profile the strengths of a role and hire people who have those strengths. And instead of correcting people's weaknesses - which is potentially demotivating - these organizations develop employees according to their strengths.

Positive Pay-Off

This article takes positive psychology concepts from the domain of individual psychology and applies them to the workplace. The adaptation of the Approaches to Happiness Questionnaire, developed by Martin Seligman, suggests that the three dimensions of pleasure, engagement and meaning are relevant to employees in the organizational context. In addition Seligman's classification of Character Strengths and Virtues is explored and their relevance for workplace performance is discussed. The paper concludes by suggesting how positive psychology can be further explored in organizations in relation to motivation, personality, identity, reputation, strategy and governance.

Since its inception at the beginning of this century, the positive psychology movement has generated a huge following. It is led by former president of The American Psychological Association, Professor Martin Seligman. A key belief of positive psychology is that for a long time, psychology has focused principally on understanding the development of mental illness and dysfunctional- behaviour. Whilst this line of enquiry has provided significant benefits for people suffering from psychological distress, it is the view of positive psychologists that important insights into the study of psychological health can be achieved by studying the positive side of human experience. Positive psychology research has concentrated on understanding people's lives and the factors that are associated with life satisfaction. A key finding is that beyond the threshold of a safety net, money adds little to subjective wellbeing (Seligman, 2002). As Seligman 2002, explains, we are experiencing the change from a money-based economy to a "satisfaction economy" in which people experience decisions on what makes them satisfied and happy, not just financially better off. To date, positive psychology has been applied mostly in clinical psycho-logy and educational settings. Yet there is still a relative paucity of research which applies the positive psychology metaphor directly to organizations and the workplace.

Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions (Gable and Haidt, 2005). It champions the development of positive emotions and the fulfillment of human potential (Gable and Haidt, 2005; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As Seligman (2000) explain, the mission of positive psychology is to focus more attention on the study of strength and virtue and not just the study of pathology, weakness and damage. Thus, positive psychology is about nurturing what is best in human nature and not solely fixing what is broken. It applies the subjective methods to the various aspects of management and beyond the traditional remit of target and achievements, work, education; the new story is of insight, love, growth and play (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Similarly, as Luthans (2002) explains, the purpose of positive psychology is to shift the emphasis away from studying only the worst things in life to studying some of the best things in life and to build a scientific theory base around the factors that allow individuals, groups, organizations and communities to thrive and prosper. Positive psychologists are concerned with "valued subjective experiences: wellbeing, contentment and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present)" (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Historically, the positive psychology movement is rooted in the writings of humanistic psychologists like Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Rollo May and Victor Frankl whose interests lay in the positive features of human functioning and people's experience of optimism, joy, altruism and meaning in their lives (Gable and Haidt, 2005; Fineman, 2006).

How Positive Psychology can help Management

In management one of the Maslow's theory in which he explained about the reason behind any work to be done by the individual is "incentives and motivation" is very popular. In other way he explains that, the motivation can be of various types, especially in management we can include Financial and Non- Financial Motivation, but with the arrival of positive psychology, they gave importance to Maslow's positive motivation, in which Confidence of Faith, Praise and Encouragement, Co-operation, Tangible incentives are important. Positive psychology, championed by psychologist Martin Seligman, and others, demonstrates research that shows that having a healthy sense of control over one's life, work and environment is important for well-being and the absence of it results in anxiety, depression and lowered performance. Management leaders seem to be reluctant to talk about the value of positive psychology in the workplace during tough economic times. On the one hand it's understandable not to be discussing happiness and positive things when people are losing their jobs. On the other hand, this is exactly the time for positive psychology to be used, to dispel the myth about "negative competition arena in management."



Values are at the heart of what is important in management. A commitment to core values takes place in three forms: First, managers need to be clear about the values they hold; second, they must effectively communicate those values to key subordinates, and third, managers need to ensure their actions are in alignment with their own personal values.

In applying the positive psychology principle of resilience, both managers and employees need to develop coping strategies to maintain or regain their sense of control over their lives. This means either they change their environment and start resolving issues causing their stress or they change their perspectives on what is within their control and what lies outside of it.

True enough some say, but that doesn't necessarily mean a focus on happiness is the answer, either. Such noted psychologists as Harvard University's Jerome Kagan, who has studied temperament for 50 years, caution that the psychology and biology of happiness are little understood and vary dramatically across time, cultures, and individuals. "A suicide bomber who's really committed to the cause feels very happy the moment before he blows himself up," Kagan says.

Causality is also a problem: Does being cooperative, engaged, and generous make an entrepreneur happy, or are naturally happy people just more cooperative, engaged, and generous?

But this much seems certain: People can take control of certain actions that will make them happier for a time, such as setting appropriate goals. They can add gratitude, hope, and a dose of self-control to each working day. And it's clear that happy bosses perform measurably better, building productive teams and inspiring loyalty. Infrequently, some managers neglect to examine the principles and strategies of positive psychology.

Positive psychology in management start by asking their clients to take a test that evaluates a person's strengths, on the premise that doing what we're best at naturally brings joy. It is found that the most successful management are ones whose employees believe they get to do what they do best every day.

But by using positive psychology, leaders/managers can bring happiness to the workplace. And happiness, they argue, can lead to better productivity, engagement and retention.

"Every time an individual interacts with a guest that a reflection of the company - good or bad. If managers don't motivate their people, they won't look after the guest, and the company loses out because reputation slides and therefore so does sales and profits.

This approach may not work for everyone, but it is making a difference to organizations as diverse as banks and councils. As Green says: "What is wrong in promoting 'love' in the workplace: love what you do, love where you do it, love who you do it with?" It does not mean that managers ignore poor performance - in fact, they address unacceptable performance quickly and positively.

Major empirical findings indicate that if people have overall positive experiences at work, their overall job satisfaction will be higher even if their overall life satisfaction may not be high.

Other Praise

Gainful employment is a positive psychology concept that explores the benefits of work and employment. As work is the most important determinant of quality of life. **Gainful employment** is most often approached from a psychological standpoint with business, real world, and clinical applications. Specifically, the Strengths-Based Practice is a psychological approach to gainful employment that has business applications for the employed and people in management positions. In management in particular, managers who focus on employee strengths, communicate company goals, and give constructive feedback to employees promote gainful employment.

A lack in variability can lead to presenters, in which the employee physically goes to work, but becomes unproductive or discontent due to boredom with repetitive work activities. If the tasks at work are varied, satisfaction comes more easily.

Conclusion

The relationship between happiness and quality of life in management and satisfaction with life suggest that job satisfaction among the managers, best achieved through positive thoughts and is a necessary yet insufficient component of living a



fulfilled working life; argument is simple, according to positive psychologists. A decade of research suggests that happiness at work—defined as pleasure, engagement, and a sense of meaning—can improve revenue, profitability, staff retention, and workplace safety. Thus, positive psychology has an important and remarkable place in the contemporary world of management, which strongly suggests that positive emotion increases creativity and problem-solving ability and aids in fighting stress.

Emphasis on the relationship between work and fulfillment can be traced back to Sigmund Freud who noted that a healthy life is one in which people have the ability to love and work. Research confirms that when individuals are gainfully employed, as characterized by a safe environment, purpose derived from work, engagement, etc., their quality of and satisfaction with life increases.

The applications of Positive Psychology to improving the performance and the quality of work life are immediate and clear. The new knowledge created through Positive Psychology is aimed to improving organizational effectiveness and the work life of all individuals. It is for creating or improving socially responsible organizations ready to meet the challenges of an increasingly diverse workforce, global economy, and global community.

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