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Important Tips for Finding Happiness at Work

Luther "Trey" Denton

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Important tips for finding happiness at work

Writing about happiness might seem a stretch for a professor of marketing, but I have been leading an honors section



Luther "Trey" Denton

of Georgia Southern's freshmen orientation class titled "Finding Happiness in Today's Consumption-Oriented Society." Marketers share some blame for the overt materialism that undermines much happiness in our lives today, and I will try to rectify some of this bad karma by offering these lessons in happiness from our class readings and discussions.

1. Find your noble purpose at work and make sure it's linked to helping others. Each day, do your best to help others, to alleviate suffering and as the legendary Georgia Southern football coach Erk Russell used to say, "Do good."

This lesson is so important as to render all the lessons to follow insignificant.

Study after study demonstrates what is known as the Happiness Paradox — the more one directly seeks happiness for themselves, the more elusive it becomes while the more one seeks to improve the happiness of

others, the more likely one is to find themselves in a state of happiness.

James Wagner, president of Emory University, recently mentioned in a baccalaureate speech that people looking to improve their life satisfaction by going to the "self help" section of the bookstore would be better served going to a section, if it existed, called "helping others."

While some sectors such as education, health professions and social services are inherently noble, all legal occupations can be viewed as making a contribution to the welfare of our society.

Bankers help financial dreams come true. Food providers serve nutrition and enjoyment. All managers have a noble purpose in taking care of their employees and the publics they serve.

Boosting productivity (and thus improving the long-term well being of your organization) is a noble purpose. Providing for the welfare of one's family is one of the most noble goals, no matter the occupation.

2. Look for good in others just as you look for the meaning and purpose in your work. If you look for good, you will find it. If you look for bad, you will find that, too.

One outlook will more

likely lead to happiness. The other will lead to your personal unhappiness. Make a point to express gratitude when you find others doing good things.

3. Don't expect your boss to be any more perfect than any other human being.

Shunryo Suzuki is credited with saying, "each of us is perfect, and each of us could do with a little improvement." Every human being has strengths and weaknesses, and frequently they are tied to one another.

For example, a leader with great empathy might be overly sensitive to criticism. When we give our leaders room to be human, we are more likely to see the good in them.

4. No whining. This is one of the most difficult of lessons because complaining is so tempting. Snarky pessimism and witty sarcasm get easy laughs, but they erode happiness at work for yourself and others.

Before complaining, ask yourself what you can do to offer a solution. Work helpfully to fix problems or keep quiet. Finding new employment is definitely an honorable course of action when efforts fail to correct persistent intolerable problems, but this is a drastic course of action.

Finding genuine humor in the multitude of minor irritations that are part of the normal workplace is helpful and healthy. You can tell the difference between an undermining comment and genuine humor by the impact on organizational culture. The former depresses spirits, and the latter raises them.

5. Regularly assess your contribution to an organization's happiness climate.

If you are bringing the happiness of an organization down, evaluate yourself honestly and consider what changes you can make in your actions and/or outlook.

There are many bad bosses and unhealthy work environments out there, but if your past is strewn with persistent unhappiness that spans people, bosses and organizations, do not "double down" this time with a strategy that has already failed you. Try something new.

Frequently, people unhappy at work decide to invest less in their organization. This most often results in a decline in happiness, job satisfaction and work performance.

To be happier, invest more. Also evaluate those you choose to socialize with at work and if they consistently make you feel worse about where you work, you

may need to choose a different group. Happiness and unhappiness are both contagious.

6. Widen your zone of happiness. Allow yourself to be happy under a wider range of circumstances. Do not intentionally narrow your happiness zone with a list of personal demands. Being picky and hard to please does not boost happiness.

7. Realize that happiness is not a destination. If you find yourself thinking, "I would be happy if ..." or "I will be happy when ..." or "If I owned a _____, then I would be happy," you are setting yourself up for sustained unhappiness while you await some future perfect satisfaction.

Look for the relative happiness available to you right now, even as you delight in your prospects of even more happiness down the road.

A dear friend of mine recently told my class "no one deserves to be happy." Embrace that mantra and then take responsibility for creating your own happiness at work.

Luther "Trey" Denton is a professor of marketing in the College of Business Administration at Georgia Southern University. He can be contacted at ldenton@georgiasouthern.edu.

Watch for theft — especially if your business takes credit cards

A number one question I get asked is simply: (With all of the advancements) why is it more difficult to accept plastic now than it was?

Really? How about theft? Or fraud? Or the thousands of people every day trying to actively abuse the system?

My grandparents always said no one they knew really locked their doors. Of course they meant a long, long time ago — in a galaxy far, far away — but today it's different. There are all kinds of locks on processing credit cards because there are all kinds of ways to steal.

Remember this simple phrase: A safe that is not locked is no safe at all. It's a really heavy box. The really crazy thing here is the system

has a paper trail that is not too hard to follow and the bad guys almost always get caught.

That being said, let's look at things people have done.

1. The self tipper: So we are in a restaurant and there is a waitress management needs to talk to. Why? Well, over the past week, several people have called to complain about unexplained charges on their card.

Here's what's happening: She had been writing down the card data and going back in and re-entering the card and giving herself a tip on top of it. This is because a waiter gathers credit card charges and cash over the course of the shift and then has to give the restaurant the amount they sold at the end.

First they give all the credit card receipts, then cash until the amount of food is paid off and they keep the rest. In effect, she was having to turn

in less cash as she was off-setting the bill.

2. The back draft: So now we are in a tire store. The store is losing money and has no idea how. It is so bad that a manager comes up front and watches every sale that's made. No cash register can be opened without a manager's key, and yet all product is accounted for as either in stock or has a sales receipt listed as being sold. So where is the money going?

As it turns out, management may be watching the transaction but doesn't know what to look for. Here's what's happening: The person at the counter has teamed with the customer who was a cousin with a different last name as well as a few friends.

Cousin (or friend) would come in, buy \$400-\$600 in tires, give the employee a valid card that would be charged for the full amount and then

leave with the goods.

The employee at the end of the shift would then credit back either the majority of the money or all of it to the accomplice's card.

3. Charge-back Charlie: This is one of the worst of the worst. This is the guy who buys stuff on his card all the time and then basically refuses to pay for it.

Either he'll buy some electronics or hire a contractor that accepts credit-card payment and then calls his credit-card issuing bank to complain that either the store did not live up to what it said it would do or the contractor did not get his approval before leaving the job and thusly fight the charge in its entirety.

Here's what's happening: As sinister as this is, this one is done right out in the open. He is counting on the law of averages and if he keeps fighting it, he knows plenty of people

will just quit fighting and he gets it for free.

Plain and simple: It's outright theft.

Here are the rules of the road:

- Most retail business fraud is from within.
- Most card-not-present accounts such as over the phone or internet, it's from the outside.
- Almost all fraud leaves a paper trail — in the end, 90 percent-plus of the good guys win.

- Appreciate the complications, Mastercard/Visa is trying to help you lock your safe.

All of these stories are true and have happened right here in river city. If you have had credit card fraud, feel free to call and we can review ways to make your business safer.

Will Black is the president of Meridian Merchant Services. He can be contacted at 912-596-3536 or willb@mmsiso.com.