



Happiness is the precursor to success, not vice versa.

Shawn Achor is the founder of Good Think, Inc. and the author of The Happiness Advantage. In 2006, he was the head teaching fellow for Positive Psychology - the most popular course at Harvard at the time. He holds a Masters from Harvard Divinity School and has spoken in 45 countries to a wide variety of audiences, including bankers on Wall Street, students in Dubai, and CEOs in Zimbabwe.

In his study at Harvard University, Achor found that only 45 % of the workers surveyed were actually happy at their jobs. From his experience designing a course on happiness, working with Fortune 500 companies across 42 countries, and restarting the world's largest banks after the economic collapse, Achor concludes:

“Most people believe that success leads to happiness, but that formula is backwards. The truth is that happiness is the precursor to success. When you raise your happiness, you raise your success rates and increase productivity.

... Everyone knows someone who is brilliant and unhappy. And everyone knows someone who is successful and not happy. I encountered both types frequently in my research at Harvard and in Fortune 500 companies, and when you see these two types of individuals, it is easy for us to assume that happiness has nothing to do with success or intelligence, or is even antithetical to it.

... The real story of happiness is that every person has a range of potential – in terms of intelligence, athletic ability, musicality, creativity, and productivity – and we are more likely to achieve the upper bounds of our brain's potential when we're feeling positive, rather than negative or neutral.

... In psychological experiments, a ‘prime’ causes a person to experience an emotion; then we see how that new state affects their performance. You can prime people to become more altruistic by giving

them something small yourself. When you prime a four year old child to be happy – by asking them to think of their happiest memory – their spatial memory increases dramatically, allowing them to put blocks together up to 50% faster than children at neutral. Doctors primed to be positive come to the correct diagnosis 19% faster when primed to be positive as opposed to negative. Salespeople have 37% higher levels of sales when optimistic. In fact, a meta-analysis of employees at companies reveals that nearly every single business outcome improves when a brain is positive. Happiness is a significant advantage.

... In fact, happiness is the single greatest competitive advantage in the modern economy.

... Given all the research about the happiness advantage and how positive brains reap higher business outcomes, the conclusion is clear: it is smart to be happy.”

Achor’s 4 main tips for boosting happiness.

Meditating: vital time spent just being, clearing your mind and paying heed only to the rise and fall of your breath.

Journalising: spend 20 minutes, just now and again, to chronicle a positive experience you’ve had – however great or small – going into as much detail as possible.

Gratitude: every night, write down 3 things that you are grateful for. Achor suggests that you try this for just one week and you will notice a marked change in your mental attitude.

Maximising on your strengths: identify your strengths and, each day, find a different way to use one of them. Every time you are faced with a challenge – consciously employ your key strengths to overcome it with greater satisfaction.

For more from Shawn Achor visit: www.shawnachor.com