How Can Positive Psychology Be Applied to Inform and Promote Positive Communication in the Workplace?

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By

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Happiness can be linked to various factors within the world of work. "How often has your friend or partner commented, 'You are really grumpy. Did you have a bad day at work?' Or it can go the other way: 'Wow, you are in a great mood. Did things go well at the office?' Without question, what happens at work spills over into various other aspects of our lives." (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 412). Individuals experiencing stress at work may find it pointless to spend a great deal of waking hours doing something that is not enjoyable, somewhere miserable, unhappy and un-motivating. Is there a way to make work more enjoyable, provide a positive environment in businesses and introduce positive ways to communicate with coworkers? Work is where people spend most of their lives, it would be a more positive experience if work was something people looked forward to, somewhere surrounded by positivity where communication promotes happiness. This research study examines these issues.

> Happiness is not just a hedonistic, self-centered pursuit – instead, it has been associated with numerous other-oriented positive outcomes, such as relatively more pro-social behavior, greater productivity and cooperation at work, and more successful relationships. Thus happiness not only feels good, it *is* good- both for the individual and his or her community and society at large. (Layous, Nelson & Lyubomirsky, 2012, p. 636)

According to Layous et al., happiness creates positivity in all aspects of life, it is not selfish to want happiness; positivity can grow and spread through interactions, communication and relationships. This is why happiness at work is so important, Froman expresses that happiness at work "can lead to productive and creative work outcomes, outcomes that are both rewarding to employees and linked directly to organizational results (Froman, 2009, p.61). How do we reach a level of happiness at work that promotes such positive communication outcomes? The field of

psychology has addressed this by identifying interventions designed to increase positive emotion. The goal of this paper is to build on those ideas and take them further by focusing on how they might apply to communication in the workplace. By combining the studies of psychology and communication the workplace can become an overall happier environment.

Communication and positive psychology are linked in ways that impeccably intersect and form new outlooks on today's societal ways. It is necessary to show how practices from these two disciplines can be combined specifically to increase positive communication in the workplace. First background on the study of positive psychology is provided. Second, an introduction is presented on the importance of applying these two ideas to a work setting. Literature review provides some preexisting interventions applied in the workplace to increase positive communication and overall happiness at work. Next, communication and some essential concepts are discussed. Concluding this thesis, bringing knowledge from the previous sections, ideas are formulated for two positive communication interventions.

Positive Psychology

Positive psychology is "the scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive function" (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.3). This is a paradigm that has gained increasing attention within the last two decades, research has generated several theories that have been studied and supported. Martin Seligman is known as the father of positive psychology, and has adjusted his theory many times now settling on a form of positive psychology called well-being. He states that the goal of positive psychology is to "increase flourishing by increasing positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships, and accomplishment" (Seligman, 2011, p. 13). Seligman wanted humans to get the most out of life

and devoted his studies to improving the lives of others through his positive psychology theories. He studied human issues, applied his theories and then wrote several books about his work. Christopher Peterson's ideas are a hallmark in the psychology world because he intentionally took a different stance on psychology and explains how *positive* psychology is the more resourceful way of studying people. He describes positive psychology as "the scientific study of what goes right in life" compared to psychology being focused on problems and disorders leading to "an incomplete view of the human condition" (2009). Author and historian Sarah Lewis has a similar viewpoint as she describes positive psychology as "accruing a body of knowledge that is useful to people who want to live good, long, happy and productive lives" (2011, p. 3). By gathering this information that promotes a positive and happy life, allows for that knowledge to be applied to all aspects of life, especially where you spend most of your time, at work. Lewis explores many psychological concepts such as appreciative inquiry and capitol. Her style explores the reality and empiricism of positive psychology and how it can be applied to the workplace through ideas and interventions. Another positive psychology theorist whose views align with those above is Barbara Fredrickson, who introduced the Broaden-and-Build theory. She discussed how individuals can use positive emotions to expand their personal, physical, intellectual and psychological resources (2001). Broaden-and-Build theory "captures the unique effects of positive emotions" and how they have "the ability to broaden people's momentary thought-action repertories." Broaden basically means when positive emotions arise, individuals come up with new, creative ways to react instead of normal, automatic responses. Build means using these new found perspectives to increase our personal bank of knowledge and understanding. Therefore broaden and build together form the theory that revolves around how positive emotions improve wellbeing. The field of positive psychology is quite widespread and

several theorists have differing views, but by combining empirical research with theories and literature, positive psychology comes together to form one idea and that is a focus on human happiness and reaching potential.

Positive Psychology at Work

Positive psychology can be applied to several aspects of a person's life, so why specify positive psychology in the workplace? "If a person is happy at work, chances are that his or her overall satisfaction with life will be higher. The correlation of job satisfaction with overall happiness is about .40" (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 411). This deems the workplace as an important factor for an individual's general contentment. Agreeing with the previous statement was "Sigmund Freud, who first made the bold statement that a healthy life is one in which a person has the ability to love and to work" (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 408). Therefore, since work consumes a great deal of many human's lives and positive work experience makes for overall happiness, it is worthwhile to study how to increase positivity at work. Froman's research relates, stating "how can workers and their organizations create a more positive proactive workplace that bridges economic and human goals" (2009, p.59)? Froman recognized that the recent rise in unemployment rates has increased anxiety and "uncertainty, growing insecurity and lack of confidence" that is affecting daily lives of individuals in the workplace (Froman, 2009, p.59). Due to the unemployment rates there has been a "loss of self-esteem, anxiety and depression that can interfere with a person's ability to engage in constructive and adaptive behaviors" (Froman, 2009, p.60). These negative consequences then create a decrease in communication and possibly a loss of any positive communication. Froman's (2009) solution involved:

positive psychology, with its forward looking orientation, suggests that the potential

for a more hopeful, productive, and satisfying future can emerge for people who are

struggling to find their way through these tough times, as well as many others who are

somewhat more secure but find themselves coasting along without much joy and meaning

in their day-to-day work lives. (p. 60)

Froman's suggestion to use positive psychology is later supported in his findings, through the

use of interventions discussed later on. Though he makes an interesting point in the above

quotation, he indicates that even those who are not, so called struggling, but just 'coasting,'

should follow the same road as those who are struggling. This endorses the idea that positive

psychology can help all individuals, and that all businesses should use positive psychology to

promote happiness at work resulting in optimistic communication. Another reason that positive

psychology is important to use to promote positive communication at work is because "uncivil

behaviors in the workplace can negatively influence employee health, job satisfaction,

productivity, commitment and turnover" (Laschinger, Wong, Cummings & Grau, 2014, p. 5).

Laschinger et al. studied the importance of positive communication between nurses, nurse

leaders and other hospital staff. They used an intervention that decreased the original incivility,

between nurses and nurse leaders, through positive psychology and communication processes.

The study shows why work settings, such as hospitals, are an important place to implement such

processes through examples of patient mortality and nurses mental health. If situations and work

environments are not handled in the appropriate way and through positive communication,

incivility may cause negative outcomes. Sarah Lewis suggests that applying positive psychology

can create a positively deviant organization which is "one that is flourishing, benevolent,

generous and honors people and their contributions. It is focused on creating an abundance of

good and positive things" (2011, p. 15). Here, she is contrasting a positively deviant organization with most other organizations that mainly concentrate on making sure nothing bad happens and economic gain for themselves. Lewis believes that businesses should strive to surpass the norm, not in a greedy way, but in a way that promotes their business along with their employees. If this area of positive psychology is applied to a workplace, employees would be honored and called upon for their excellence and specific contributions, creating positive workplace communication. Lewis also discusses how social capitol is an important concept of positive psychology to be applied to the workplace in order to create positive communication. Social capitol is trust between the networks of an organization; it creates the culture for relationships and interaction within work social networks (Lewis, 2011, p. 21). Overall, social capitol is trust and interactions between employees that is created through positive communication. Therefore, in order to achieve this very important aspect of business an organization must first achieve positive communication. Positive communication in the workplace is most closely linked with introducing positive psychology interventions such as those that follow.

Positive Psychological Interventions

Positive psychological interventions (PPI), according to Van Zyl and Rothmann (2012), are used in many settings to accomplish certain goals:

> PPI's are being increasingly used in clinical therapy and people development today. PPI's refer to intentional activities and/or methods of treatment that aim to nurture the development of positive emotions, cognitions and behaviors. These interventions aid the client in developing positive thoughts, behaviors and emotions, and help the client progress beyond the point of 'not feeling well' to a point of flourishing. (p. 371)

As stated by these researchers, flourishing is the main goal. This is similar to the goal of happiness and positive workplace communication, where employees flourish and excel through optimistic conversation and interaction. Therefore when applying Zyl and Rothman's above definition, if PPI's are implemented in the workplace they likely will similarly nurture development of positive emotions, thoughts and behaviors which then in turn improve workplace communication. This definition suggests a connection to Froman's definition where he mentions people who are coasting through a job; this is similar to not feeling well in the above description especially when applied to work rather than a clinical setting. This means that interventions will help employees who are struggling as well as people who are stuck at that coasting phase and bored with their daily work. Interventions can be applied in three different ways, self-administration, group mediations or individualized coaching (Van Zyl & Rothmann, 2012). Not only are there different settings interventions can be given in, but there are different ways to present them. A popular way to inspire employees to participate and engage in the intervention is to make it fun and interesting. "Something new may draw our attention and interest in ways that not only create excitement and joy, but fuel our motivation" (Froman, 2010, p. 61). Froman is exploring how to bring curiosity and energy to employees when implementing interventions. The way we present the material is important but the actual positive psychology intervention is the key to success.

Communication

Communication is a term that is "not easy to define" according to Stephen Littlejohn and Karen Foss (2011, p.4). When talking about a business setting or a workplace we use the term organizational communication, which is "the field that studies how cooperation is achieved or how organizational form is created" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 293). Therefore,

communication is "the process by which one person stimulates meaning in the mind of another through verbal and nonverbal messages" (McCroskey, 1971, p.3). So, through a workplace standpoint, organizational communication would include interaction within the hierarchy in the business, different groups or departments, interpersonal relationships between co-workers, and any other relationships or interactions present. As indicated above, these relationships and interactions are not always positive. Positive communication can be accomplished, and can replace the existing norm. Two relevant concepts from the study of communication that are emphasized in the workplace are emotional contagion and accommodation theory. According to Floger, Poole and Stutman "emotional contagion is defined as a tendency for emotions to automatically mirror or mimic the emotional response to another, leading to a synchronization of emotional experience and reciprocation of behavioral responses to emotion" (2013, p. 51). For example, if an employee comes to work with a positive attitude, expresses it openly with friendly remarks, motivational comments, smiles, handshakes and a hop in his step, others will notice and observe his behavior. Through the theory of emotional contagion, as a response to his positivity, fellow employees will mirror his emotions. As this positivity catches on, synchronization occurs throughout the organization. This occurs in the workplace constantly, any interaction, no matter the hierarchal relationship, most likely involves some emotion. According to the above theory, this emotion can become contagious, in other words one person catches the other person's emotion. In the case of trying to increase positive attitude and positive communication, organizations and individuals within businesses should be pushing for these interactions to form positive emotions that diffuse among employees. Accommodation theory is "one of the most influential behavioral theories of communication," it describes the way people adjust their communication behaviors in reaction to others behaviors (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 183).

Accommodation can be seen as conformity or adjustments to ones behavior to match those around them. For example, in many business settings it is the norm to say good morning, in others "good morning" may not be a sufficient greeting. Therefore, if a company's veteran employees have created a norm of morning greeting being extravagant such as "good morning Bill, love the suit, let's make millions today." Then a new employee would replace their low key salutation adjust to a similar greeting as the veterans have set as normal. Accommodation is what forms a company's culture; individuals follow the norms set by long time employees. Newcomers converge to the existing culture and accommodate their actions to meet the unwritten standards of the business. Since this is the way culture is formed, it can also be the way culture is changed, improved and how a more positive communication environment can be implemented. Therefore, communication in the workplace can make or break employees' positivity, striving for positive communication and achieving it through contagion and accommodation are plausible solutions.

Two additional communication concepts that apply to each individual in a company are important to consider when formulating interventions are explanatory style and growth/fixed mindset. These two concepts deal with employee's personalities and attitudes. Employees who possess the wrong type of explanatory style or strong fixed mindset may have a large impact on a company and this must be addressed with intervention.

According to Peterson explanatory style is "one's habitual manner of offering causal explanations for bad events" (1992, p.1). This means that when individuals attribute their personality effects the ways they perceive an event. Three explanatory dimension exist, the first being internal versus external. Internal means that the individual is negatively attributing all blame on themselves, "my own fault." Opposing this is external explanations where the response

is "it's someone else's fault." The next dimension is stable versus unstable. Here, stability view means that this event is going to effect the individual forever. The unstable viewpoint is that this event will only effect the person for a short amount of time. The last dimension is global or specific. Global explanations reflect a view that the event will effect everything or the person's whole life. Specific is viewing the event as something much smaller that will only effect this aspect of their life (Gottschalk, 1996, p.624). An example of a negative explanatory style, using the low aspects of each dimension could occur at school when a student fails a spelling test. The style would sound like "Mom, I failed because I did not study. I will never be good at spelling or any subject in school, so I will probably never go to college." The other end of the spectrum would oppose with a statement such as "I was distracted by the fire drill, next week I will get a better grade, it's just one spelling test, it's not a big deal."

This concept is important for interventions because if individuals have a certain explanatory style it may be effecting the business as a whole. Also, they may view proposed interventions differently. Therefore, an intervention may need to consider explanatory styles or work on adjusting or changing them for the better.

Dweck describes a fixed mindset as viewing talent as something one either possesses or does not possess and growth mindset as an individual able to "enjoy challenges, strive to learn, and consistently see potential to develop new skills" (Dweck, 2014, p.28). Employees are an interesting population to study when it comes to fixed and growth mindset. Dweck addresses the idea that not only employees but managers need to have a growth mindset in order for the organization to grow (Dweck, 2014, p.28). As a company, the organization must believe that they have talent. If certain employees believe that they only have a certain amount to offer, with a fixed mindset, they may be holding the company back as a whole. With low growth mindset in

employees or in a company as a whole, low production and definitely low levels of positive emotions are present. When interventions are offered, individuals with a fixed mindset may not be open to trying new approaches in the workplace. It is important to consider these mindsets when assessing a company and formulating interventions. That is because before an intervention can be applied, a company may first need an intervention that addressed mindset so further intervention can be implicated and accepted with growth mindsets.

Integrating Psychology & Communication

Combining the studies of communication and psychology leads to the area where these two intersect, the workplace. The workplace is a context where communication is not only essential but it is the entirety of a business' existence. Communication is what creates work, forms businesses and generates organizations. Aforementioned today's workplaces are not always a positive place to be or to communicate. This is where positive psychology intertwines with workplace communication. By applying ideas and interventions from the field of positive psychology, workplace communication can be improved, creating an environment of positive communication that promotes happy and healthy employees. Using positive psychology to create constructive communication will form a workplace that promotes relationships and gratitude, empowers employees, builds strengths and has capitol.

Inferences

In depth research has indicated that positive psychological interventions applied to multiple contexts, including the workplace, show empirical evidence of an increase in happiness in the workplace. Through studies of this increased happiness, positive work related outcomes have resulted. The goal of using the idea of PPI's to inform possible positive communication

interventions (PCI's) in organizations has not yet been directly targeted, but may be implied through literary review of the above concepts. Since an intervention has not been created that directly applies positive psychology to positive communication outcomes in the workplace, this calls for further research.

Drawing conclusions from the previous literature review, a focus on the general idea of gratitude presents itself as an important concept to apply in the workplace. Since gratitude has yielded outcomes such as increased happiness and therefore more positive social relationships, it is the key to increasing positive communication in the workplace. The other issue that stands out is the amount of negativity going on in businesses due to poor explanatory styles and fixed mindsets, therefore interventions are needed to combat this. The goal of increasing positive communication in the workplace here, will be to promote positive interactions, to encourage employees to engage in conversation that builds co-workers up, and therefore will overall improve positive communication in a business. The result of this increase in positivity through communication interactions will create a norm of positive communication in an organization. The norm will be formed through emotional contagion and accommodation.

Intervention #1

An increasingly popular intervention today is the three good things, or daily diary, although identified by differing terms, this method "requires individuals to list three things that they are grateful for each evening" (Mills, Fleck, Kozikowski, 2013, p. 156). Methods like this

have been empirically tested and proven to increase "levels of enthusiasm, energy, attentiveness, alertness, and determination" (Mills at al., 2013, p. 156). The "three good things" intervention was implemented at a school for their staff. Here, participants were asked to "reframe their thinking to include more positive outcomes and beliefs….asked to keep a written record of their reflections" (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012, p. 67). They found that school staff had an increase in their sense of cooperation and gained greater belief in the necessity to support their wo-workers. With a more positive environment at the school, thanks to this intervention, "the capacity to experience positive emotion should increase the capacity for thought and action, thus enhancing long term personal resources" (Critchley & Gibbs, 2012, p. 68). This leads to applying such happiness creating methods to an organizational setting. Critchley and Gibbs directly applied their research to a business locale, a school, this study shows that the method is effective in a workplace setting. According to the study, human's inclination to change behavior based on more positive affect, creates positive conversations, interactions and relationships to follow with increasing communication and positivity. If employees, such as the school employees, took some time out of their day to write about something positive, or preferably three good things, positive psychology findings show that they likely will become overall more happy and satisfied individuals. This likely would then transfer to their work lives as well, increasing positive communication at work.

Intervention #2a

A second type of intervention supported by psychological research involves gratitude, which can be used in different interventions to increase well-being. Mills introduces a gratitude intervention in her article, one intervention involves composing a letter of thanks to someone you feel that you owe something to and then actually reading the letter aloud to them. Here, Mills

hints toward applying positive psychology in the workplace by stating that although gratitude visits "are uncommon in a business context, there is nothing preventing their application in such an organizational setting" (Mills et al., 2013, p. 156). Gratitude is not only something that can be written and read aloud, it is an internal state as well. This links back to writing down positive things about yourself or about your day. This is showing gratitude, a "positive recognition of benefits received….key components to holistic well-being" according to Mills (2013, p.156). Kaplan et al., agree with Mills, on outcomes of gratitude as they state "gratitude interventions have produced improvements in well-being similar in effect size to those associated with techniques used in clinical therapy" (Kaplan, Bradely-Geist, Ahmad, Anderson, Hargrove, Lindsay, 2014, p. 367). This statement exemplifies the power of self-help, gratitude visits and compares results to a professional setting with a psychologist. Therefore, by performing a gratitude visit on your own you may benefit similarly to if you had invested in psychotherapy. With a connection to mindfulness, gratitude has been related to amplified brain activity, a decrease in feelings of anxiety, less stress and better sleep habits. Taking into account internal improvements toward self-happiness and increased subjective well-being, enhancement of social relationships has been linked to gratitude (Mills et al., 2013, p. 156). This relays that if applied in a business setting, gratitude may increase positive socialization and interaction. With a more positive communication style, workplaces may even create a culture that expresses gratitude, not only through an intervention but as a normal activity. Other results that may be beneficial in a work setting are an increase in the "sense of responsibility toward co-workers and society" (Mills et al., 2013, p. 156). Positive communication may follow several routes, but having a responsibility for co-workers brings a team closer and helps them work as one unit. With the positive result of increased teamwork, companies may flourish in exponential ways from one

small act of gratitude. This is where emotional contagion and accommodation theories of communication fall into place. Once an individual's emotions are effected positively, interactions with co-workers will trigger emotional contagion. As the day or week goes on, employees will be spreading this positive emotion throughout the workplace. The same is true for accommodation theory, when a visitor or new employee comes into the organization they will pick up on the positivity that has spread throughout the building and accommodate, therefore adapting their mood in a positive direction as well.

Intervention #2b

As Mills suggested, gratitude interventions in the business setting may come in different shapes and sizes. Kaplan et al. created a psychological study that used a self-guided positive psychological intervention (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 367). This study suggests that self-guided gratitude holds "potential for enhancing employee well-being" and that it is a sensible intervention for the workplace "because the interventions are short, simple, and self-guided, there is little in the way of costs or drawbacks for organizations" (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 367). The main purpose of this study relates to previous studies by Mills and Gibbs and is "oriented towards noticing and appreciating the positive in one's work life" (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 369). Kaplan's study exemplifies empirical research performed directly and specifically with a workplace environment and provides evidence of the intervention's success in an organization. The procedure states that employees are to report "things that they are grateful for related to their job," this specificity helps us see a direct relationship between positive psychology interventions at work and the optimistic outcomes that create positive communication in the workplace (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 372). Kaplan argues "that gratitude can be enhanced through intentional practice" (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 368). The intentional practice she refers to is an online journal

with reports of gratitude related to their career. This differs from a gratitude visit because there is no verbal presentation of the gratitude, it is more about psychically recording gratitude. By intentionally recording these ideas on their own, according to empirical evidence, employees are facilitating their own increase in happiness and well-being. The organization is responsible for introducing the intervention but the employee creates his own thoughts and records that improve happiness for several months on end (Kaplan et al., 2014, p. 368). Overall, gratitude, in the way of keeping a diary of positive things or writing a letter to someone and reading it, bring happy thoughts to mind that in turn improve mood and positive communication in the workplace. This positive emotion could spread through contagion and create accommodation while others adapt to the environment creating a place of positive communication.

Intervention #3

Branching off of gratitude is a similar idea that focuses on people's strengths instead of weaknesses, appreciative inquiry (AI). "In line with the self-fulfilling prophecy, organizations change in the direction of that onto which the organization focuses its attention" (Mills et al., 2013, p. 155). Mills indicates that businesses that are focused on fixing what is wrong in their company only end up with more problems, but if companies were to focus on the strengths of their employees and the positive outcomes that the company has reached, it would result in more strength and increased positive organizational outcomes. Mills shows the 4-D cycle for AI as discover, dream, design and destiny. She says that through these four steps, "employees' AI can be fostered" (Mills et al., 2013, p. 155). The phases start with discovery of positive aspects of an organization, these positive things are then used in the dream phase to predict what the business would look like if the positive ideas from the first step were the norm, this gives the employee a mental picture of a goal to reach for. In the design stage the employee will come up with what

needs to be done to create these norms to reach the end goal. The final step, destiny, is how to take action toward the goal. This type of intervention can be done on several levels, through top organizational leaders, or a program where superiors work directly with their employees to come up with a 4-D cycle. AI "fosters collaborative excellence among different organizational divisions, departments and individuals, guiding mergers and acquisitions, and rectifying co-worker conflicts" here, Mills indicates that this type of intervention was applied in the US Navy, and therefore may be applied to many types of organizations because most have similar conflict areas (Mills et al., 2013, p. 155). Another supporter of the AI approach is Lewis who agrees that AI "is a positive change methodology that helps organizations identify the root causes of their success, release the positive potential of the organization and its processes and create positive change…a positive change methodology for growing a positive workplace" (Lewis, 2011, p. 34-35). Lewis and Mills indicate that anything positive can be enhanced through this intervention, if an organization's goal is to increase positive communication, then they can focus their AI 4-D cycle on just that. Employees can discover what is positive about the current communication culture, dream of what it could be like as a norm, design a plan for what needs to be done to reach a goal of increased positive communication and then, in the destiny phase indicate ideas for how to apply the design. By focusing attention on positive communication, organizations can enhance it, especially through the use of AI.

Tactic #1

Interventions such as those explained above have specific steps that can be taken when implementing to promote positivity. Other aspects of positive psychology may be considered as well. These ideas are not considered to be specific interventions, but may be used to promote positive psychology in the workplace.

Positive psychological capitol or "PsyCap is a multifaceted construct that is relatively recent but has been receiving increased attention" (Mills et al., 2013, p. 156). Mills explains that this concept has been associated with several work-related outcomes like happiness, well-being, job fulfillment, imagination and many more. Lewis defines the element more directly as:

> an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks: (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future: (3) preserving towards goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success. (Lewis, 2011, p. 143)

PsyCap in general is a development process that can be used as a tactic when trying to promote positivity in a company. Therefore, when organizations promote and initiate this development it may at encourages employees to increase their PsyCap. Development in this area can be life changing, therefore when applied to employees at work, this element can create a positive change for the organization as a whole. With increased self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience, evidence has shown "a positive impact in the individual's work attitudes and behaviors" (Bin et al., 2014, p. 136). A common way to develop PsyCap was suggested by Mills in 2013 and again by Bin in 2014, they agreed that the format should be an online, web-based training. For organizations this is a low cost, minimally time consuming and individually paced activity. The outcomes of these types of training have shown countless positive outcomes. Through communication and psychological theories, positive emotions are directly related to positive interactions. This leads to the connection of PsyCap development to increasing positive communication in the workplace.

Tactic #2

Another important positive psychology tactic that should be used in conjunction with interventions is empowerment. The term empowerment usually means a structure where the top of the hierarchy has all of the power and ability to distribute power as they please, but empowerment in positive psychology is viewed differently. Mills et al. explain that empowerment is a "construct consisting of employees' sense of control over their own work and their active interest and involvement in their own role, couched in self-determination, job meaning, competence and impact" (2013, p. 155). Lack of empowerment is one of the reasons employees do not enjoy work, those who are coasting along have low autonomy and minimal sense of control. Empowerment will give these 'coasters' a sense of increased responsibility, a view of their contribution to the company as a whole and in turn "increased commitment, job satisfaction and performance" (Mills at al., 2013, p. 155). When employees take ownership of their individual responsibilities and pride in their work, their career will feel more like an accomplishment rather than a prison. After introducing empowerment which improves employee's attitude about everyday work, communication and interactions between employees will begin to become more prominent and increasingly positive.

Tactic #3

Happiness can be traced to the broaden-and-build theory proposed by Fredrickson. This idea can be applied as a positive psychology tactic as well, especially when implementing interventions. Fredrickson applies all the positive emotions that above interventions create and describes how each feeling may broaden our resources (Fredrickson, 2001, p. 220). Positive emotions allow for an increase in creativity and ability to push the limits. When this theory is

applied to the workplace, employees who experience positive emotions will succeed with greater work skills including positive communication. Happiness promotes positive communication between individuals in the workplace and can broaden individual's resources in a business as well.

Possible Positive Communication Intervention 1

Gratitude visits and writing down three things you are grateful for daily, have of course been proven to work as positive psychological interventions, but seem to be more of an individual activity that involves a self-administered notebook or a one on one interaction. A new idea is to use the concept of gratitude but combine it with every day workplace communication. With this type of intervention, employees would be encouraged to give thanks to their peers on a normal basis. Employees would be encouraged to interact more often and in a more positive way, changing boring water cooler talk into an interaction that lifts moods, invigorates people and motivates workers to share in positive exchange.

Following the advice of Froman, to catch the interest of employees, the intervention must draw attention, be interesting and creative and in turn motivate co-workers to participate (2010, p. 61). This intervention would fall under the 'self' category while being implicated, but addressed to the organization as a group at an all-hands meeting. The intervention would be low cost and minimally time consuming, making it easy and cheap to implement. At the initial meeting, the concept would be introduced and the previous literary review presented. This would give employees a background on positive psychology, communication and recent studies showing confident empirical evidence that this intervention will increase happiness and well-being. I would call this intervention 'positive call out,' the act of calling people out on something

positive, or simply complementing them on something specific. Employees would be trained on gratitude, how to give compliments and thank people. Examples and video clips would be shown to help employees visualize positive call outs. Practice rounds would help co-workers brainstorm some potential utterances and ways to communicate positively. Some examples would be statements such as "your presentation at the board meeting was amazing, you did a great job," "the report looks great, your effort really shines through," "your bravery to present yesterday was encouraging for all of us." Employees may give thanks to others, "I really appreciate the advice you gave me about my proposal," "I am so grateful for your help in persuading those vendors, I couldn't have done it without you." These are verbal and expressed forms of gratitude that are not only going to increase happiness for the speaker, but also or even more so for the employee on the receiving end of the conversation. The interactions do not need to be planned or even thought out, but if employees can adopt the good habit of catching someone doing something good and expressing it to them, positive communication will naturally evolve. After employees fully understand the intervention the meeting would end and people would be set free into the old business world to implement this new culture.

Imagine a workplace where compliments were the norm, where you left for the day with more positivity than you had when you arrived to work that morning. A place where work was empowering and co-workers constantly supporting and making you feel accomplished. An environment like this would undoubtedly increase employee's motivation to come to work and continue the positive cycle.

It is a simple concept, calling people out on positive things and making them aware that they are appreciated, but why doesn't that happen anyway? Why isn't this already the norm in the workplace? According to literary review companies are too busy focusing on what needs to

be improved and how people can better themselves, rather than appreciating employees for what they do contribute to the company. With this intervention, the broaden-and-build theory supports that the positive emotions gained from positive call out, will broaden and build employees who will then apply their new found resources and creativity to their work. So not only is positive call out increasing positive communication, it is expanding employee's resources to succeed in the company and in turn help the business itself prosper. Once emotional contagion and accommodation run their course, all employees will catch on to this new communication style, positive communication will benefit the company as a whole. This is important for today's society because if these types of positive psychological interventions are applied throughout all employees in all businesses, and positive workplace outcomes yield positive business outcomes, there may be potential for a happier society overall.

Possible Positive Communication Intervention 2

Lack of positivity in many organizations, is due to fixed mindsets and employee's perceptions of lack of control over bad events. Peterson would consider these employees to have learned helplessness, due to feelings of little or no say in the company (Peterson, 1992, p.1). Dweck would suggest promotion of a growth mindset to defeat employee's perceptions that they are stuck in a current position (Dweck, 2014, p. 28). If positive communication, growth and self-help are not accomplished in an organization, then negative interactions, low self-esteem, fixed mindsets and helplessness are likely regular occurrences throughout the work day. This is why there is room to introduce positivity into the workplace, which can be accomplished through an intervention that *combats negativity.*

Using explanatory style and mindset, *combating negativity* can be formed into an intervention that brings positivity and growth to a company. This negativity combating means that when an employee observes another talking or acting anything but positive, to intervene and take action. Action is required especially when observed behavior reflects helplessness or a fixed mindset. Action, in this sense would be through communication. Once negative behavior is noticed, action that should be taken to combat it would be confronting the employee and offering a positive outlook on their situation. This of course would be adapted to the situation, but generally, combating would involve bringing a positive attitude into the pessimist's path. This can be done through explanatory style. Most likely the negativity is coming from an internal, stable or global explanatory style. Intervention would promote the opposites, external views, unstable outlooks and specific effects. The intervening employee would then propose new outlooks, cheerier points of view and positive set of eyes on the position. For example external causes would be offered such as this is not your fault, you did everything you could. TO switch from a stable outlook to unstable and short term, one could mention that a new opportunity is right around the corner, so the effects of this loss will not last long. Being specific rather than global would sound like "it's just one document, you have a new chance to submit one every week, it's not the end of the world." The goal of negativity combating is to help employees see events and situations through other angles and to help them adapt more efficient explanatory styles. Employees will take a step back and realize that negativity is not the only path, and with the help from a coworker, combating the pessimist view, new mindsets may be reached.

Growth and fixed mindset can come into play with negativity combating as well as the intervening employee introduces a new mindset and helps to minimize a fixed attitude. During this part of the intervention the negative employee would be presenting signs of stationary talent,

and inability to improve. An intervening employee would bring to their attention where there is room for growth, and help them see that their abilities are not limited. For example Kim would say I am no good at creative writing so I cannot make this book any better. Eric would step in and encourage Kim to give it a try, tell her that she may surprise herself. Eric may express to Kim that she is an artsy individual and he believes in her abilities to write an incredible story. He is combating her negativity with a growth mindset and encouraging her to adapt the same viewpoints.

An example of negativity combat in the workplace may begin after rejection of a product. John worked hard on his new software program and the corporate manager rejected his proposal. John, on the phone with his best friend, after the meeting, is complaining, ranting and raving about the situation. John states that his product was the only idea he had and since it was rejected, he had nothing else to contribute. He explained that it was all his fault and he should have gone to engineering school, now he will never get another opportunity, and his life is ruined. Jill, in the next cubicle over, hears the conversation. This presents the perfect opportunity for Jill to combat John's negativity. After John hangs up with his friend, Jill comes to John's cubicle to converse about the proposal rejection. After offering her condolences for his hurt feelings, Jill offers a new perspective on the situation by addressing external factors. She indicates that John cannot take full responsibility for the rejection, he had five other men working on this project with him, some responsibility may fall on the others. Next she mentions next month's meeting and how he has another opportunity to propose a new draft in the near future, so the effects are not stable, they will only be short lived. Jill comments that she overheard John say that his life is ruined and reminds him of the promotion he received last month. She reiterates his importance to the company and says that this is only one small aspect

of his work here, and his life will go on, and quite productively in fact. She continues the combat by addressing his fixed mindset as she encourages John, reminding him that there were several aspects that the corporate manager liked about his proposal, indicating that he has expanding talent. Jill tells John that his projects have become more and more successful, earning the company money constantly. She says, "of course you have more to offer the company, you always do!" This type of growth mindset should allow John to see his potential, as Jill helps combat his negativity. Jill offers several rational and positive outlooks on John's situation. Jill's viewpoints offered a more positive growth mindset to John and discouraged such a negative outlook and explanatory style. After a conversation with Jill one can imagine that John felt less negativity and reduced stress levels, hopefully resulting in an adoption of positive explanatory style and growth mindset.

Implementation of this intervention would be similar to that of the positive call out. Organization of a group meeting would take place at the company, negative combat intervention actions will be explained and practiced. Explanatory styles both positive and negative would be explained and growth and fixed mindset concepts clarified. Finally, employees will get a chance to try out the actions and hopefully see positive results as John did. Emotional contagion will begin as wellbeing spreads throughout the workplace as positive emotions rise due to more positive explanatory styles and growth mindsets. As accommodation takes effect, new employees will adapt to the company's existing positive explanatory styles and benefit from the same wellbeing and happiness.

As the above positive psychology interventions produced an array of constructive outcomes for individuals it is likely that these proposed positive communication interventions

will produce similar effects. Combining two parts, positive communication and positive

psychology, outcomes may be even greater as whole, in response to these new interventions.

Conclusion

Consequently, the above research has the potential to put an end to that 'same old, same

old' answer that individuals often recite. Uncivil behaviors may come to an end, and a focus on

business economic specific success may dwindle. As PPI's are implemented and new ideas such

as *positive call* out and *negativity combating* are developed, coasters and pessimists will be

absent, and replaced with engaged, empowered, happy, appreciative, and positively

communicating employees.

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