

# Why your workers want you to celebrate International Happiness Day

 By Leigh Andrews

20 Mar 2018

Happiness may be the most subjective concept to measure, but that doesn't mean researchers steer clear of it. If anything, that makes it all the more appealing - here's why it's important for you and your employees, this International Happiness Day.

Yes, International Happiness Day is real.

“ When is the International Day of Happiness and what is it? <https://t.co/bIS18EbBJO>— Daily Mail Online (@MailOnline) [March 15, 2018](#) ”

Last year, the Smurfs teamed up with the United Nations and Unicef to promote their SDGs or sustainable development goals and “make the world a happier place for everyone,” as online ambassadors for International Happiness Day:

If you've seen anything on the topic, it's probably been about the World Happiness Report, typically published just before International Happiness Day. Finland was again announced as the happiest country in the world. This is based on the UN's “Cantril's ladder” measure, on how happy citizens are with life overall.

“ The [#Happiness2018](#) Report is out! [#Finland](#) is ranked #1! Where does your country stand? <https://t.co/tBTzMZ8xdlpic.twitter.com/j8dhQYBRSG>— Happiness Report (@HappinessRpt) [March 14, 2018](#) ”

But it's a far bigger topic of interest than just hopping on the fact that it's trending, and posting “Happy International Happiness Day” to social media, and has broader implications for business.

“ Happy International Day of Happiness 💎💎 If you want to feel good, do good ✨👉 [#InternationalDayOfHappinesspic.twitter.com/qM4kMrjQot](#)— rishabh maske (@rm\_rishabh) [March 20, 2018](#) ”

A few weeks ago, I met with Chris Rawlinson, founder of creative industries' learning platform 42Courses, and Michael

Birkjær, described as “a remarkably cheerful analyst at the Happiness Research Institute” – it’s an independent think tank exploring why some societies are happier than others, which then informs governments about the causes and effects of happiness and helps them make policies that will improve quality of life for people across the world.

Rawlinson was speaking about their newly launched masterclass in happiness, explaining:

“Happiness affects all areas of people's lives, this, of course, includes work. But happiness at work has little to do with money. In fact, a recent study by Warwick University found that when people are happy at work, productivity increases by 12% on average and people stay longer with the company. So a better understanding of happiness pays dividends for any business.”

Colour me intrigued!

Birkjaer also shared insights from a research study they had conducted, on the results of “a week of no social media.” You may expect you'd feel a bit lost or disconnected without that constant scroll of happy pics, but as much as a quarter of respondents who stayed on Facebook in that week reported feeling lonely on the back of all those jealousy-inducing holiday-snap-happy and lovey-dovey couple status updates.

That's because your happiness is very dependent on comparisons you make with other people's lives. So if other people are doing exceptionally well, it can make your bad day seem even worse as social media profiles rarely expose other's flaws – we only see the filtered, happy moments.



Social media - there are always two sides of the same coin

AIMEÉ SERRÃO 20 May 2016



That's just one finding that wriggled the worm of uncomfortable truth in my sub-consciousness. We think we're constantly checking in on social media to be happy, but aren't we just gloating and showing that we know how to keep up with the Khumalos? And if my assumptions about *that* were wrong, who's to say I'm right about anything else 'happiness' related?

And so, I had some trepidation on completing their online masterclass course in happiness, run by 'a Viking', nonetheless, but that's just what I did. It's led by Meik Wiking (yes, pronounced 'Viking'), CEO of the official Happiness Research Institute where Birkjaer works. And today seems as fitting a time as any to share the impact of it, as it's International Happiness Day...

### Working with hedonism and happiness

Here's the first thing I learned: While the Happiness Research Institute itself may not be quite what you expect as it looks

quite similar to most corporate spaces – for me, a ‘happiness institute’ would be a room full of rainbow cake and puppies and balloons – the outcomes of their happiness masterclass are quite profound and exceeded my expectations.



Ever feel this happy at work? You could be... Image © Leo Lintang – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

Wiking explains the concept of the course is to make you think about why some people are happier than others and how to improve on your quality of life by buying coffee for strangers, amongst other things.

Having now completed the course, I’ve seen the method to the ‘madness’ and I’m now brimming with interesting insights into happiness itself as well as how to up the levels with relation to relationships, health, money, freedom, trust and kindness - especially in the workplace.

For example, did you know there’s a [Hedonometer](#), which measures the daily global mood on Twitter? Or that the UAE has a government official, Ohood bint Khalfan Roumi, with the official job title of Minister of Happiness? Or that anything over a 15-minute commute to work dramatically decreases happiness? Cue me and pretty much the rest of the SA workforce!

And yes, of course money can buy you happiness to an extent, as we learned from the Mastercard ad campaigns:

But it’s not the ‘be all and end all’, especially when it comes to work. The fact that we live in this modern world, with all kinds

of pressure and 'attention spam' means spending too much time or focus on anything is going to make us unhappy.



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Leigh Andrews 8 Jan 2018



So it was interesting that as part of the supplementary happiness masterclass course content, I watched Dan Pink outlines three things that make or break our happiness with work – not surprisingly, it's one of the most-watched Ted talks ever. In it, Pink shares that work happiness goes beyond the obvious salary to include autonomy, mastery and purpose.

Erik du Plessis of Kantar Millward Brown shares that while these are all factors of happiness, happiness, in turn, causes good health, wealth and good relationships, and says:

“ For companies, it is also true that happy staff are productive staff. ”

At the end of the day, he says happiness is a choice and something to actively work on.

And so, Du Plessis wrote an app titled Mi Happi Wall which allows you, and your friends, to post events that makes you happy every day, as “Just the process of thinking about what made you happy releases dopamine and affects your mood positively.”



## Free happiness

Erik Du Plessis, Kantar 14 Mar 2018



Try it out. Whether your focus is on your own personal happiness or upping the happiness levels of your employees, I hope you end the day with a satisfied smile on your face!

You can join the conversation on Twitter [@HappinessRpt](#) using the hashtag #Happiness2018, [click here](#) for more on Kantar Millward Brown and you too can complete [The Happy Course](#) through 42 Courses, as I did. Here are a few more tips on making your workplace happier for employees.



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## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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