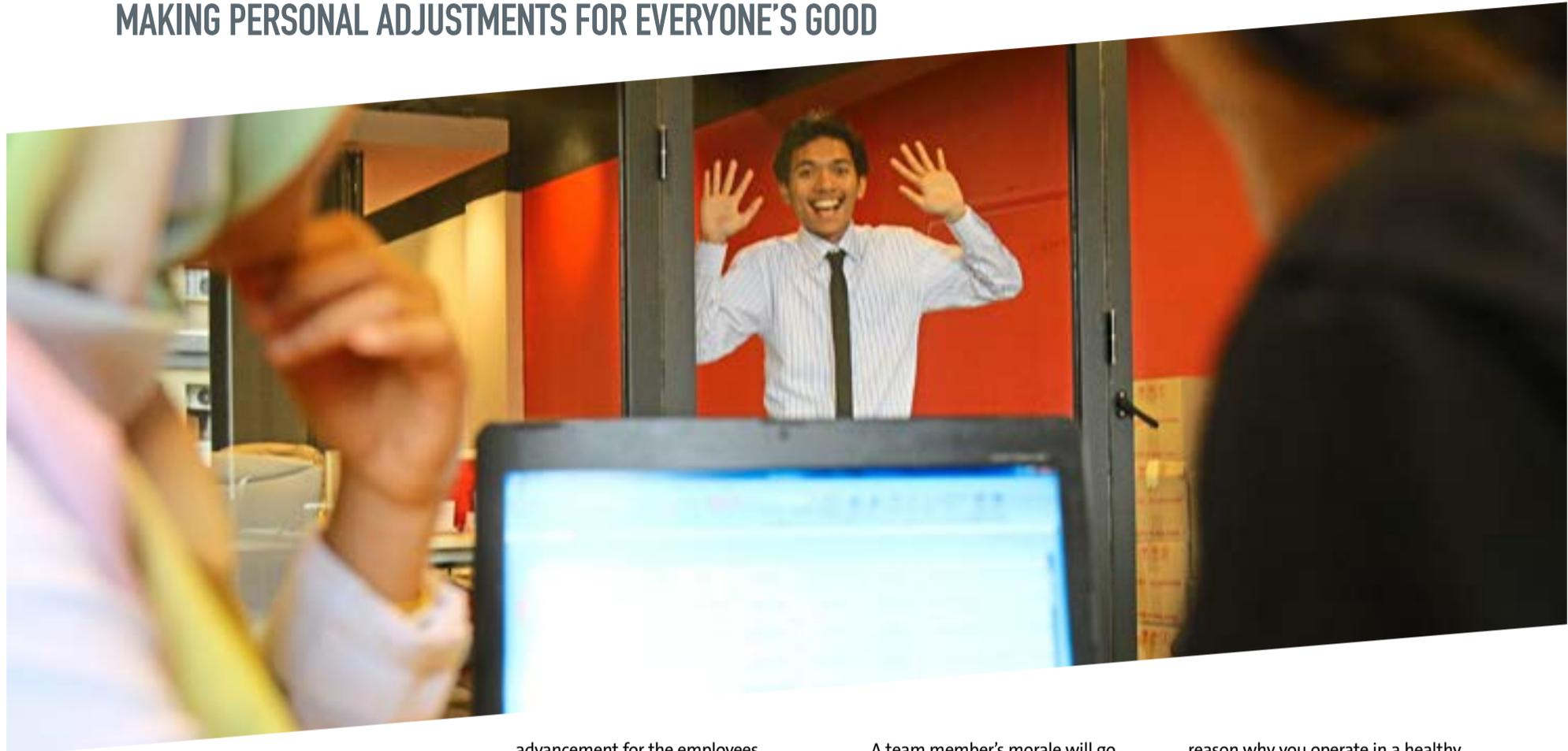


4 CORNERSTONES OF SOLID WORK RELATIONSHIPS



MAKING PERSONAL ADJUSTMENTS FOR EVERYONE'S GOOD



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YOU know what? I love my colleagues. There. I said it. It has always been how I operate; I just enjoy trying to make friendships at every company I go to.

While you can't spend all day talking by the water cooler, I feel that it's easier to be passionate about your company's success when you care about the team who will be affected by it.

It should go without saying that building and maintaining strong relationships, whether in our personal or professional lives, is vital to our overall happiness and success.

Therefore, it's no surprise that co-worker camaraderie appears to be the key ingredient to job satisfaction.

LinkedIn's recent *Relationships @Work* study revealed that 46% of professionals worldwide believe that work friends influence how happy they are at work.

When you're in an environment where you feel safe and supported, you'll view your job and the people you work with in a more positive light.

Moreover, you might even be happier when you leave the office, as studies suggest that being happy at the office can lead to higher marital satisfaction.

And, if you've ever had a colleague with problems at home, you know that it can easily spill over to affect work productivity.

When you have friends at the office, you can be more confident knowing that people have your back – this makes it much easier to share your thoughts and opinions if you've already established open and honest communication.

Unfortunately, many businesses suffer due to a lack of rapport among employees, which (in my experience) translates to lower long-term market success for the company and stunted career

advancement for the employees.

So, if you're looking to change the office environment to make it more 'connected', here are four helpful tips:

1 SHOW AN INTEREST IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES

A 2012 study by Gallup uncovered that one in two workers who had a best friend at work indicated they also felt a strong connection to the company they worked for.

Compare that to one-in-10 without a best friend at work. Pretty stark difference, no?

Showing genuine interest in a colleague's personal life is a great way to create a stronger bond between the both of you.

Everyone has (or at least should have) hobbies outside of work, so if you take the time to connect with your colleagues on a personal level, you will not only build their trust, but will also experience less job stress and burnout because you have someone to confide in.

If you're unsure how to connect with someone, the *Wall Street Journal* reveals the key to effortless conversation:

"People love to talk about themselves and often will think you are a great conversationalist if you talk about them and not yourself."

2 BE THEIR SCHEDULE'S BEST FRIEND

This one in particular is something I've been guilty of and am working to get better at. It's probably one of the easiest to pay heed to, yet the most difficult to master.

While some people are more obsessive about their schedules than others, I've noticed that even the most relaxed co-workers will get bent out of shape if another colleague keeps disrupting their schedule.

After all, disruptions lead to lower productivity, which leads to lower job satisfaction. In short, it's a downward spiral.

A team member's morale will go downhill if he or she feels like you're making it harder for them to meet their outside-of-work personal obligations.

As a colleague – or manager – you never want your teammates feeling resentful because their schedules have been disrupted.

Is there a project that's going to require late nights? If so, give as much advance notice as possible, and try to pitch in rather than leave early.

Even on a day-to-day basis, try to schedule meetings when your colleagues prefer them rather than forcing them to adapt to when it will be convenient for you.

If you're a manager and can give a little flexibility, try to allow responsible employees that latitude so that your direct report can take a longer lunch break for yoga twice a week.

If you can help teammates keep happy outside of the office, that will almost always lead to better workplace productivity.

3 GIVE CREDIT WHEN CREDIT IS DUE

Try to think when the last time you've said something along the lines of "good job" to someone you work with. Was it last week? Last month?

Now, try to think if that compliment would have been justified over that time period.

If you didn't manage to compliment anyone yet you think it was warranted, why not try to work them into conversations more often?

A major part of career satisfaction is feeling appreciated and acknowledged for your hard work.

Moreover, acknowledging others is contagious. If you help create a culture in which compliments are given, then others will see it as a green light to give compliments as well.

It's a virtuous cycle that will benefit everyone. Over time you'll be part of the

reason why you operate in a healthy, happy work environment.

Hence, a simple thank you or acknowledgement of a co-worker on a job well done will go a long way.

4 BOND OUTSIDE OF THE OFFICE

A study led by Christine M. Riordan, published in the *Journal of Business Psychology*, uncovered that even the opportunity for friendship boosts worker happiness and productivity.

The connection that we share with those around us – especially colleagues we see on a daily basis – not only impacts our health and well-being, but also makes us more productive in the workplace.

It can be something low key like grabbing coffee together in the morning or a drink at happy hour.

If you're the boss and you're considering doing this with a subordinate, just make sure that it's a casual offer that your employee doesn't feel commanded to oblige.

This is about connecting as peers, after all, and not as manager and direct report.

The important thing is to show your colleagues that you are investing in your personal relationship with them as well as your professional one.

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