

MORTGAGE INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT



"The days of hustle and bustle are still among us—yet there is a shift of people wanting to have more work-life balance."

Happy and Healthy Employees

By Kerry W. Elam

Do you want happy and healthy employees? Do you want to be a part of a great working environment? How do you foster a culture that embodies happiness and health?

The answer is to look at your employees as a whole person ... not just as an employee. You must understand that all parts of their being want to be nourished and inspired.

The days of hustle and bustle are still among us—yet there is a shift of people wanting to have more work-life balance. There is a trend towards more teleworking. Global Workplace Analytics stated in September 2013 that "Self-employed and non-self-employed work at home grew by 29.4 percent from 2005 to 2012."

More firms are offering wellness

programs and people are striving to take better care from a health perspective. Data on wellness programs is limited; however, it is common sense because if you promote overall health and well-being at the individual level you are going to have happier and healthier employees and see a decrease in absenteeism and sickness and an increase in productivity, and employee morale and loyalty.

What does it mean: Seeing the whole person?

To look at the whole person, you must look at all aspects of their day. This is a simple concept that can be achieved by reminding your employees to take care of themselves and foster an environment in which you care about each person as an individual.

The five key aspects of a happy and healthy day are looking at:

1. Breath
2. Movement
3. Nourishment
4. Communication
5. Accountability

of calm and peace where the issues or stresses at hand will not seem so large.

The list below provides some examples which are super simple to implement, yet hard to remember in the moment. For each scenario, take a few long inhalations and exhalations before you take action.

- Maneuvering through a difficult conversation
- Responding to a challenging email
- Trying to get your point across
- Waking up in the morning
- During transitions of tasks throughout the day

All you need to do is to remember when you have a free moment of quiet is to focus on your breath to bring you into each moment fully. You may even try taking a few breaths before the start of an important meeting to get yourself ready to have a successful and productive meeting.

Movement

We are not meant to be sitting behind our desk on computers, reading documents, texting and using our iPads all day every day. Each moment needs a counter balance to keep us balanced physically. The theory is that opposites heal. Therefore, for each 10-15 minutes you are typing or reading your body will feel better if you take a moment to stretch your body in an opposite direction. For instance, your hands and arms absorb a lot of stress, which in turn makes your neck and shoulders tense from typing. Take a few minutes to do wrist circles, point and flex your wrists, shake out your arms. For your shoulders and neck, do shoulder circles forward and backwards as well as complete arm circles to help to open up your back and provide some relief.

Get up and walk around each hour to give your body a break. Every chance you get, move your body, provide some juice to stay going all day long.



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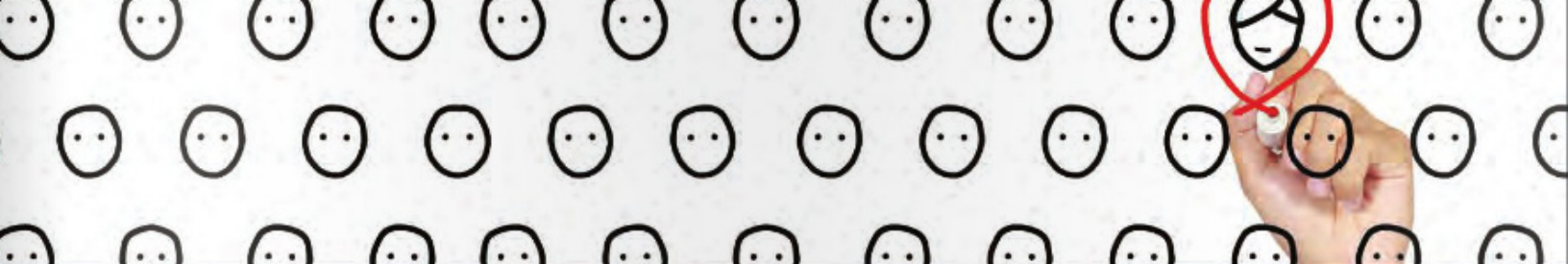
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A SPECIAL FOCUS ON

MORTGAGE INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT

Exxon Mobil has a focus on safety first and they have a program by Microsoft called RSI Guard that makes their employees take a break after a certain amount of keystrokes on the computer. This approach reminds their employees to think about doing something other than being heads down in their work.

Nourishment

There are more allergies than ever in the United States. According to a study released in 2013 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, allergies among children increased approximately 50 percent between 1997 and 2011. Food and Allergy Research and Education reports that every three minutes, a food allergy reaction sends someone to the emergency room—that is more than 200,000 ER visits per year.

For nourishment, the most effective way to support your employees is to offer healthy and whole foods during the day and events. In the office, get rid of vending machines with chips and cookies and offer more wholesome options like granola bars, nuts and dried fruits. If you desire, you can offer fresh fruit, herbal teas and coffee free to your employees. The key is to lead by example and provide an environment in which everyone can be successful. The team morale of all being on a healthy track can be very powerful.

At Actualize Consulting, after implementing a wellness program and offering healthy food options at meetings, within a few months, one third of their staff lost 30-plus pounds per employee.

"I supported the implementation of the wellness program, yet had no idea how popular and motivating it would be to employees," said Actualize Consulting Partner Matt Seu.

Instead of sugar highs and lows—you can help to enable balanced and healthy employees. You can also offer this as part of your wellness program. Have experts come in and talk about nourishment or have a nutritionist available to speak to your employees as needed. Another option that some firms have is to give wellness dollars to each employee to utilize how they see fit. One

employee might use towards a gym membership, while another may use to see a nutritionist and yet another may use for smoking cessation. A healthier person is a happier person and a happier person is a more effective employee.

Communication

We communicate our thoughts, ideas, concerns and issues through our words, tone, posture and gestures. And in our electronic age, so much of that communication is done through e-mail where our tone, posture and gestures are perceived. Encourage face to face communication for difficult conversations or at least pick up the phone.

For effective communication to take place, each person needs to be heard. We all have times when we get caught up in "I am right" and blaming others for a problem or our feelings. Yet, we all want to be happy and enjoy our relationships both at work and outside of work. Some tips on effective communication:

- Take personal accountability
- Treat others as people
- Be self-aware
- Allow time to understand
- Have compassion
- Breath

Accountability

As mentioned above with communication, it is easy to place blame versus taking accountability for your role in situations. Yet having a culture in which you empower others to be in charge of outcomes can be very inspiring for your team. In the book, *Leadership and Self-Deception, Getting Out of the Box* by The Arbinger Institute, the story portrayed is how their executive team teaches accountability and taking ownership of each and every situation. Some ways to promote accountability among your employees is to take a top down approach. The management team must promote that blaming others is not acceptable by not feeding into the stories of he said/she said. Each employee takes accountability for:

- Managing career progression
- Taking ample time off to refresh and rejuvenate

- Building strong relationships with boss and peers
- Bringing ideas to management
- Providing ideas for resolution for any compliant they have
- Offering ideas to resolve conflicts with others

You will save time and energy with focusing on the areas to build and grow your team. The water cooler talk and gossip will decrease. Your employees will be uplifting each other—working as a team.

In closing, look for ways to enhance your day each day—take ownership of how you feel—do the things that bring you joy to ensure you balance each day with a little something just for you. The words below can help serve as a reminder.

I use my breath to transition from task to task, I use movement to keep my body fresh and strong, I nourish my body with wholesome foods, I listen to understand and truly communicate with others. I take full accountability of making the most of each day.

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