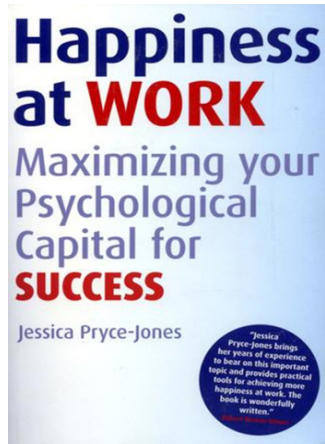




# BEST SUMMARIES

enlightenment | balance | growth



## Happiness at Work

Maximizing Your Psychological Capital for Success

Jessica Pryce-Jones

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### *the big idea*

Pryce-Jones defines happiness as “a mindset which allows you to maximize performance and achieve your potential. You do this by being mindful of the highs and lows when working alone or with others.”

Happiness at work has five major components, called the 5Cs:

**Contribution:** what a person does in the workplace and her view of it.

**Conviction:** a person’s ability to stay motivated.

**Culture:** how well a person fits within the ethos and dynamic of the workplace.

**Commitment:** a person’s general level of engagement with his work.

**Confidence:** a person’s level of self-belief and how well she identifies with her job.

The 5Cs are accompanied by three supporting themes: Pride, Trust, and Recognition.

When these elements come together, it is possible to realize the core of happiness at work: the feeling of achieving one’s potential.

*the author/s*

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*book features*

**Estimated Reading Time: 5-7 hours; 220 pages**

**Happiness at Work** is intended for the business population as a whole, not simply business leaders. Numerous interviews were conducted as part of the research, and excerpts from interviews with business leaders, explorers, academics, and others appear as sidebars in topically appropriate places. Occasional case studies are also supplied, and some concepts are illustrated with diagrams or graphs. Each chapter concludes with a list of key concepts that can be quickly absorbed by a time-pressed reader. The book concludes with exhaustive references and the dramatis personae, the list of individuals interviewed for the book, along with some personal information about them. It is possible to target specific sections of Happiness at Work, and the “Top Take-aways” feature at the end of each chapter facilitates this.



*nutshell*

**INTRODUCTION**

The old saw says that money cannot buy happiness. But what about the reverse? Does happiness contribute to success in business? Does happiness matter in the workplace? In *Happiness at Work*, Jessica Pryce-Jones confronts the common assumption in the business world that happiness is a woolly concept, one that has no place in the discourse of companies or the professional lives of employees.

According to Pryce-Jones, happiness at work is a matter that should be taken seriously. Her research shows that happy employees are more successful in a variety of indicators, including promotion, motivation, efficiency, and health. Happy employees contribute more, stay in their positions longer, and are better to work with. Furthermore, happiness is neither mysterious nor intangible—there are numerous strategies that individuals and businesses can adopt to enhance the happiness of their workplaces. In today's economic climate, everyone in business should be looking to tap into this vast, often poorly understood human resource.



## **WHY HAPPINESS? THE THREE MYTHS OF BUSINESS HAPPINESS**

There are three basic myths that prevent happiness from being taken seriously in the business world. The first is the notion that a business need only be concerned with its financial capital, or its “shareholder value.” According to Pryce-Jones, this idea overlooks the fact that a business needs to actually perform well in order to reap financial success, and more than just financial capital is required to do that. In short, financial capital is in part a product of human capital: the ability of the company’s employees to do their jobs.

An individual’s ability to perform her job well is heightened when both her environment and herself is in good working order. Human capital therefore depends on two other elements, which can be called social capital and psychological capital. Social capital refers to the strength of the working relationships within the organization and the unity of purpose and values among employees—essentially, having a strong team. This is only likely to happen when the individuals who comprise that team deliver a strong supply of psychological capital: a group of resources such as resilience, motivation, hope, and energy.

The second myth is that happiness is equivalent to job satisfaction, or engagement. The truth is that job satisfaction is not dynamic enough to capture all that is involved in the happiness of the modern worker. Engagement, far from being identical to happiness, is in fact an element contained within it. In addition, happiness is something for which the employees themselves are responsible; they are partners with their workplaces in achieving success.



This leads to Pryce-Jones's refutation of the third myth: that a person's happiness is determined by genetic variables, and is thus independent of agency. Essentially, this myth argues that people cannot change how happy or unhappy they are. In reality, research points to happiness being at least somewhat under the control of the individual. A person's genes may place him into a certain "happiness range," but he can considerably affect where in that range he will fall at any given time, or over a stretch of time.

This is supported by Pryce-Jones's working definition of happiness: "Happiness is a mindset which allows you to maximize performance and achieve your potential. You do this by being mindful of the highs and lows when working alone or with others." Taken together, these points suggest that happiness in the workplace is indeed a matter of importance for companies concerned with being successful in uncertain times and a quickly changing world. Happiness is a matter for action, and it has not been sufficiently understood in business until now.

To improve understanding of this topic, Pryce-Jones and her team conducted an extensive study of happiness in the workplace, using focus groups and interviews to develop a comprehensive questionnaire. Their hypothesis was that a self-assessment of happiness would demonstrate a definite link to productivity and other key outcomes such as amount of sick leave, number of discretionary hours, and length of time in a role. The 125-question survey, completed by more than 3,000 people across the globe, confirmed their hypothesis: The happiest group of respondents was 47 percent more productive in terms of the time that they spent on-task than the least happy group. The study concluded that organizations have a significant interest in ensuring the happiness of their employees, and a corresponding interest in learning what happiness is, what contributes to it, and what can be done about it.



## THE 5 CS

According to Pryce-Jones, there are five main factors of happiness in the workplace, dubbed the 5Cs: Contribution, Conviction, Culture, Commitment, and Confidence. These factors form the core of happiness at work, which the author calls “achieving your potential.” These factors are associated with three additional themes: Pride, Trust, and Recognition. When the 5Cs come together in an employee, it is likely that she will be happy at work and that her productivity will be substantially higher. The major task for business leaders is to understand these major themes and how they can work toward achieving them.

## CONTRIBUTION

The first and most important of the 5 Cs is Contribution, defined by Pryce-Jones as what a person does in the workplace and what his view of it is. An employee’s sense of Contribution is shaped by both the employee (Inside-Out Contribution) and his colleagues (Outside-In Contribution).

### *Inside-Out Contribution*

Inside-Out Contribution has four main components, the first two of which relate to getting things done. First, a strong sense of Contribution will result when a person reaches the big goals that she sets for herself in her working life, such as getting the promotion she wants, landing her ideal job, and so forth. Pryce-Jones warns that it is important to set goals that are not only realistic but also in harmony



with the larger aims and values of the company; happiness at work must occur within the context of a working community. However, it is also important for a businessperson to ensure that the goals she is working toward are goals in which she truly believes. If the goals are not really hers, then she will have a much harder time sticking to them, and consequently she will suffer from a reduced sense of Contribution.

The happiest people stretch themselves with challenging goals that answer to their talents and interests; they are genuinely committed to those goals as ends in themselves; and they find pleasure in the tasks necessary to achieve those ends. This crucial aspect of Contribution requires great self-awareness and the discipline to identify the right goals. These goals must be clear and concrete enough to determine the objectives that need to be reached along the way.

Having clarity about objectives—the steps a businessperson needs to take to reach his goals—is the second main component of Inside-Out Contribution. For example, if a businessperson's goal is to become an executive, then good objectives would include earning an MBA, taking on higher-profile projects in his current position, and so forth. According to Pryce-Jones, goals and objectives need to work together. Without clear objectives, goals remain abstract and frustratingly distant. The goals must also be appealing enough for a businessperson to pursue objectives that she may not find very attractive.

The third component of Inside-Out Contribution is the ability to address any issues with one's colleagues and employers. Happy employees are more likely to make suggestions and address problems that matter to them, thus providing more open, honest communication and Contributing to social capital.



Honest communication leads directly to the fourth component: the feeling of job security. Lack of open communication can lead to gossip and uncertainty, resulting in a decline in Contribution. This can be avoided when individuals have enough confidence in their colleagues to raise issues honestly and expect direct answers. Job security also demands that businesspeople make an effort to be mindful of their job situations, objectively considering the requirements of their position and their ability to meet them—and if necessary, discussing the situation with colleagues or bosses. Good communication provides businesspeople with concrete metrics on their performance and prevents them from feeling uncertain about their positions. Like the other components of Inside-Out Contribution, this helps to ensure that they remain on-task and focused on their work.

### *Outside-in Contribution*

While the four elements of Inside-Out Contribution are the well-spring of Contribution, they are complemented by the four elements of Outside-In Contribution. Outside-In Contribution begins where Inside-Out Contribution leaves off—namely, with the feeling of being heard by colleagues and bosses. As a component of Contribution, listening makes the most noticeable difference. According to Pryce-Jones, those who feel most heard have a much higher sense of overall Contribution than those who do not.

Cultivating listening skills in the workplace will build the Contribution of colleagues. A person with good listening skills will:

1. heed what the other person says.
2. interpret non-verbal signals to arrive at an understanding of what is implicit in the conversation.
3. affirm the other person at the same time.



This level of listening ability requires a great deal of mindfulness and discipline, but it brings substantial rewards in terms of psychological and social capital.

The second element of Outside-In Contribution is the reception of positive feedback, or what the author terms “positive feedforward.” In order to be effective, positive, encouraging comments must be specific to an individual’s work; they must focus on what that person does well (what he should keep doing); and they should be frequent but not regular enough to seem automatic and disingenuous. Businesspeople should also make an effort to ask others for positive feedback, not only to receive it but also to confirm the acceptability of doing so, creating a climate friendly to “feedforward.” Like listening, this is a particularly difficult skill to develop.

The final two components of Outside-In Contribution are the feeling of being appreciated at work and the feeling of being respected by one’s boss. Appreciation and praise are clearly linked, but appreciation tends to result from effort—how hard one tries — rather than ability; it recognizes that someone has good intentions and has made sacrifices. A CEO pausing to thank an employee by name for keeping the floor clean would be an example falling under appreciation.

Respect, according to Pryce-Jones, seems to emanate from one’s demeanor and general way of being with others. Body language, eye contact, and attentive engagement all indicate respect. Perhaps the most important part of showing respect is taking care with basic manners, such as saying thank you and hello. These habits can further the sense that a businessperson respects her colleagues, and she is likely to earn respect in return. This fosters an atmosphere of respect throughout the company.



## CONVICTION

Conviction has the second-strongest correlation to happiness at work. Conviction means that a businessperson thinks he performs well in his job, and that he is motivated to keep pressing on even when circumstances are difficult, as he ultimately thinks he is making a difference.

At the core of Conviction is motivation, or the ability to persevere with the work. According to Pryce-Jones, motivation is innate in human beings, but certain conditions need to be met in order for a person to maximize it. Self-Determination Theory states that motivation is comprised of three elements:

1. Competence: engagement in something a person likes and can manipulate effectively.
2. Connection: participation in healthy working relationships.
3. Choice: the freedom to choose activities that accord with one's interests.

Using these three elements, it is possible to gauge a person's motivation level and identify where it may be lacking. A businessperson's competence can be gauged by identifying how often she experiences moments of "flow": the extremely satisfying times when she is so engaged in her work that she hardly notices time passing. Connection can be assessed by the level of reciprocity that she enjoys with her colleagues, or the likelihood that a favor will be returned. Choice is measured by the attitude that a businessperson has toward her job; is it a burden, or does she go the extra mile instinctively? If a businessperson is not interested in the work



to begin with—that is, if the work is not something that she truly values—then she must force herself to make personal sacrifices. A bad attitude is a sign of lack of Choice. Only when all of these elements work together are people able to tap into their full capacity for motivation.

Resilience is another essential component of Conviction, as it keeps a businessperson going during difficult times. A person's resilience depends heavily upon his nature and experiences. For instance, people who grew up during the Depression were found to be much more resilient than those who grew up in economic booms. However, there are some strategies that can be used to improve one's resilience, regardless of past experiences. The most effective of these strategies is proactive coping: being mindful of what difficulties might occur in the future so that one can be prepared; interpreting events in a positive light whenever possible; and viewing risks as opportunities rather than as evils.

People with high levels of Conviction feel that they are contributing to the betterment of the world through their work. Therefore, one way to develop a sense of Conviction is to be aware of the impact of one's work.



## CULTURE

The third element of the 5Cs is Culture. It refers to how well a businessperson fits within the ethos and dynamic of the workplace.

The Culture of a business can be represented by a continuum between “fixed” Culture—meaning that there are more rules and the work is structured—and “fluid” Culture—meaning that there is more variety and freedom for the individual, and roles are more dynamic and loosely defined. Depending on his personality and the type of environment he is actually working in, a businessperson will either find the business culture more enabling (in which case he will find the Culture either “systematic” or “organic”) or more restrictive (in which case he will find the Culture “static” or “chaotic”).

Within this continuum, Culture can be broken down into several elements. On the more fluid side—that is, among the elements that are more variable and less determined by top-down structure—is a businessperson’s love for his job and his relationship with colleagues. The degree to which a person loves his job depends on whether he is in the right role and whether the business’s place in the fixed-fluid continuum suits his personality. A person’s relationship with his colleagues depends on both the person and his colleagues, and how effective they are in forging relationships with one another.

The more fixed aspects of culture—the ones that vary less—are related to the values of the organization, the fairness of the company’s work ethos, and the amount of control employees have over what they do. These factors are determined by parameters that the company sets. This is especially true of fairness: if employees are systematically treated unfairly, there is not that much an individual can do. On the other hand, it is possible for one employee to have some effect on other employees. For instance, a businessperson



can make an effort to be mindful of what her values are, and to think about how her values might coalesce with those of the company. Likewise, a businessperson can achieve more control in the workplace by learning to say “no” to people, or by seeking more responsibility (and thus more influence) on decision making.

## **COMMITMENT**

The fourth C is Commitment, which refers to an employee’s general level of engagement with work. Commitment can be broken down into two elements: believing in what one does, and having positive feelings related to one’s work.

People who are happy at work find their work more meaningful and more interesting; they are more in tune with the purpose of their company; and they feel more positive emotions. Individuals have some control over each of these aspects, but they require a good deal of reflection and self-knowledge. Specifically, an employee needs to identify what she sees as her overall purpose (or what she is trying to achieve in her work) and then find work that is meaningful in a corresponding way. This will be most effective if the employee can identify a calling for herself, something that she is deeply interested in for its own sake.

Another factor in enabling strong Commitment is the effectiveness of the mission statement of the organization. Companies will have much more success recruiting and retaining committed workers if they have a clearly articulated, concrete, and distinctive vision. In addition, their employees will have a better chance of feeling that they are doing something worthwhile and interesting. They will also be able to link their role in the firm with their sense of calling, and they will be more likely to experience positive feelings, or emotional highs.



## CONFIDENCE

The fifth and final C is Confidence. Confident employees believe more in themselves, are more productive, and are significantly more energetic than those who lack confidence. Confidence is comprised of three parts:

1. high productivity
2. strong self-belief
3. good understanding of one's role

High productivity is the more solid, dependable part of Confidence. If a businessperson has a history of completing tasks, then it will be difficult for any momentary doubts or difficult events to shake his Confidence. To achieve happiness at work, it is therefore extremely important to learn strategies of self-control and to avoid or manage procrastination as much as possible. The more things a person gets done, the higher his core level of Confidence will be.

Self-belief relates to a businessperson's perception of his ability to perform tasks and achieve goals. A businessperson's self-belief is formed by:

- observing evidence that encourages the perception that he can get things done.
- seeing co-workers who seem to have things in common with him succeed.
- encouragement from others.
- refusing to panic and interpret his experiences in a negative light—for instance, by reading signs of nervousness as a measure of personal failure rather than of stressful circumstances.



The final part of Confidence, understanding one's job, means that the businessperson feels her job has not been a disappointment; that it aligns with the vision she has for her career; that she wants to keep doing it; and that she would refer the company to a close friend.

In order to achieve strong performance, these three elements need to be exhibited in moderation—over-confidence can be as big a problem as lack of Confidence. It is therefore necessary for businesspeople to seek out challenges that will stretch them and build their level of Confidence, while simultaneously preparing for situations that might undermine it. They can do this by making sure they have the right strategies and support to minimize the impact of problematic situations on the more vulnerable elements of Confidence.

Strong self-belief and a good understanding of one's role are points of vulnerability for Confidence. When troubles surface, a businessperson will feel these two elements drain away first, leaving him doubtful and indecisive.

## **PRIDE, TRUST, AND RECOGNITION**

According to Pryce-Jones's research, Pride, Trust, and Recognition are also closely connected with happiness—in fact, they correlate to all the elements that fall under the 5Cs.

The first two of these themes, Pride and Trust, are complementary: the more Pride businesspeople have in working for their company, the more likely they are to find the organization and the people they work with trustworthy, and vice versa. Recognition, on the other hand, is independent and relies on specific actions of bosses and colleagues, such as praise and non-financial rewards.



In order for a businessperson to feel proud of her organization, she needs to feel that she is genuinely a part of it and that she is satisfying her vision of who and what she would like to be. Businesspeople who are Proud of their jobs are eager to answer people when they ask where they work and what they do. In addition, they feel a bond with those they serve through their work. Businesspeople can enhance these factors by mindfully considering what good their job does, and for whom; why they are in that position; and whether their expectations for the company are really feasible.

The counterpart to Pride—Trust—is particularly difficult to cultivate, as Trust tends to deteriorate rather than grow. In order to maintain Trust in one's organization, it is vital for businesspeople to have realistic and well-communicated expectations of one another; to assign resources reasonably and with personal consideration for everyone; and to be prepared to tackle mistrust with frank discussion. In order for Trust to flourish, everyone in the company must constantly work together toward these aims.

In addition to feeling Pride and Trust, happy workers feel Recognized for their efforts. This can be demonstrated in a number of different ways, but the most effective displays are specific to the person being appreciated. Leaders need to get to know their employees in order to determine the best token of recognition. According to Pryce-Jones, financial rewards do not play a part in Recognition. Instead, it is comprised of more personal signs, which can be as formal as an award or promotion, or as casual as sitting down for coffee and conversation.



## ACHIEVING YOUR POTENTIAL

When all of the elements explored above—the 5 C’s, Pride, Trust, and Recognition—come together, it is possible to realize the core of happiness at work: the feeling of achieving one’s potential. The benefits of this include high levels of energy, the use of innate and acquired resources, the acquisition of new ones, and the satisfaction of solving problems and besting difficulties.

The most remarkable effect of happiness is on energy: the unhappiest employees report feeling a lack of energy 250 percent more often than the happiest do. Those with less energy are less productive, and they also contribute less to the social capital of the organization. Thus, it is important for a businessperson to be aware of what gives her more energy in the workplace, and then adjust her habits accordingly.

To achieve one’s potential, it is important for her to feel that she is engaging her strengths and skills when responding to the challenges of the work. Here, mindfulness and self-reflection are essential, as they not only identify one’s strengths (or potential strengths) but also determine whether one is using them. It is also important for businesspeople to maintain awareness of their weaknesses and to recognize when they are overly reliant on a particular strength.

Finally, it is essential for businesspeople to always strive to learn new skills, as they will inevitably face new, difficult challenges that require them to rise to new levels. After all, a businessperson will only know that he is achieving his potential if he can identify the limits of his potential, and he can only do that by expanding them as far as he realistically can.



According to the author, most skills can be perfected by anyone with sufficient practice (usually about 10,000 hours, according to research by Anders Ericsson), and learning is the fastest route to actualizing and expanding one's potential. In order to do this, and to manage those difficult work-related challenges that will push a businessperson to fulfill his potential, he will need to be mindful of his situation and the resources at his disposal, and he will need the help of both friends and colleagues.

## CONCLUSION

Happiness at work is comprised of the 5Cs, which break down into various components, all of which relate to and are supported by feelings of Pride, Trust, Recognition, and the achievement of one's potential. Working together, these elements make a massive, positive difference in the workplace, as psychological capital flows through the company in the form of social and human capital. According to the author's research, happy workers are 180 percent happier with their lives, 180 percent more energized, and complete 50 percent more work than those on the other end of the spectrum. Happiness at work means better work and better business. With such rich rewards, employers should be eager to tap into this resource.

