Your expectations play a role in workplace happiness

Employees, seek your best life and the careers and employers who most fulfil you. PHOTO | FOTOSEARCH

By SCOTT BELLOWS

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What is the meaning of human life? What makes us happy? How do we determine how satisfied we are with our lives? People around the world grapple with core issues of human happiness and life satisfaction.

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Many of us studied the Enlightenment of the 18th century in secondary schools and universities whereby the pursuit of happiness became a central value.

Prior to the 1700s, the whole concept of life satisfaction did not cross the minds of average world citizens.

In modern times, clearly all of us desire to lead the most fulfilling satisfying lives possible. However, multitudes of well-intentioned people fail to fully meet their own self-prescribed potential.

We do know some expected outcomes supported by data. People who hold more power in their lives also hold more general life happiness.

Social trends by the Pew Research Centre show that managers retain higher perceptions about their own life satisfaction even outside of work, including about their family lives.

However, unexpected results also permeate the research with citizens in developing countries, like Kenya, on average actually proclaim more happiness with their national economies than nationals of developed countries with far larger GDPs per capita hold more negative economic views.

Our own personal satisfaction with our lives plays a moderating external role pushing against our opinions about our own workplaces.

If someone is embarrassed by a divorce, saddened by a familial death, or downtrodden from circumstances, then their own motivation and satisfaction in the workplace may also falter no matter how good the company or the managers provide for employee psychological and financial needs.

So employees with low life satisfaction can cause poor job satisfaction.

Conversely, one’s job satisfaction also inevitably contributes significantly to their overall life satisfaction.

So the two satisfactions, job and life, exist in an endearing circle in behaviour research on organisations.

Now contemplate about gender differences in causes and effects of life satisfaction. Would men or women psychology relate their job satisfaction with their own life satisfaction?
Researchers Robert Rice, Janet Near, and Raymond Hunt uncovered that a man’s satisfaction with his job contributes 40 per cent more to his life satisfaction than a woman.

Underlying secret

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So, a woman’s job satisfaction plays an important, but less critical, role in her life satisfaction. So when a man faces troubles at his workplace, it is more likely to devastate his entire perception about his life.

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So gauge your life satisfaction by asking yourself the following five statements that represent how much you agree with each proclamation.

Take each declaration and judge it in your mind on the following 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 point scale whereby each number represents your following opinion of your workplace as: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Somewhat Agree (5), Agree (6), Strongly Agree (7).

In most ways my life is close to my ideal. I am satisfied with my life. The conditions of my life are excellent.

So far I have got the important things I want in life. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. (5).

Now add up the numbers for each of your answers. Take your total and divide it by five (5) to give you your average response.

If you scored a 5.0 or higher, then you thrive at a good place in your life with positive congruence from your job’s influence into your life.

If your average results came in between a 3.0 and 5.0, start scrutinising the role that your job plays in making your life palatable but less than exhilarating.

If you sadly rated your life satisfaction on average as below 3.0, then experts recommend that you commence an immediate and comprehensive search for a new job and dig deeply into your life with friends, family, and professional help to uncover and correct your dismal satisfaction.

Finally, what is the underlying secret that a plurality of psychologists claims to be the secret to life satisfaction and happiness? Essentially, how do humans decide whether their lives are good or bad?

Manage the expectations for your life. If you dream of owning 10 houses in the upmarket Karen suburb of Nairobi, then the probability of you achieving such a goal is extremely small and you will never feel fully satisfied or happy with your life.
However, if you instead expect your life to include raising your family in a small but comfortable safe apartment in Kileleshwa, then you become far happier when you actually achieve and maintain your dream than holding unattainable delusions.

Look at the developed nation citizen example above. Such individuals hold too high expectations and compare themselves too often with the best in the world, not the average in the world. So when they fail to achieve the best, their satisfaction quivers.

Employees, seek your best life and the careers and employers who most fulfil you. Do not get comfortable in situations that foster mediocrity for your life, but break through and live happier and more satisfied.

Managers, do not ignore the external life factors that influence your employee's motivation and satisfaction in your office. Integrate workplace understanding of employee life satisfaction needs and desires.

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The Business Daily next Thursday continues assessing more variables in Business Talk to ascertain whether you should quit or stay at your job.

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