

Annie West

Happiness consultancy report

MACS325, “Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions”

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Media and Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong

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The happiness consultancy assignment had two parts. For details of the assignment see http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/MACS325_12outline.pdf

1. A report for an organisation, prepared by a team of students.

Stacey Lyons and Annie West, working as a team, prepared a report for BioGill, in the form of a slide show. The slide show is available separately.

2. Reflections on doing the consultancy, written separately by each member of the team as an individual task.

Annie West's reflections start on the next page. As requested for the assignment, she used a pseudonym for her team member Stacey.

This document is located at <http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/MACS325tops/>.

Workplace Happiness Reflection

In order to decide a group with whom to conduct our consultancy, we discussed that the ideal situation would be to choose a group in close proximity to where we live. We also decided to choose a group that would be easily accessible and one that would be willing to provide us with their time in order to produce a successful consultancy. After creating a list of potential groups around our area, Hannah* and I chose to study a business called BioGill. BioGill is a small environmental business located approximately 15 minutes from where Hannah and I both live, and employs approximately 20 people in various roles ranging from executives to factory workers. My parents are founders of the company, and therefore Hannah and I were able to access all areas of the business at any time that suited us. We first made contact with the group by emailing all staff members and explaining the purpose of our research and the conditions under which we would be conducting our research. We asked for volunteers who wanted to partake in the research and found eight employees who were willing to assist us in any way that we required. The only condition that we were given by management was that our research and our consultancy report was not to upset any employees, and we therefore decided to not include any interview questions that discussed financial payments or personality conflicts within the workplace.

Information was obtained through observation, interviews, and a survey. Hannah and I believed that we should conduct as many types of research

methods as possible, as not every staff member works on the same hours on the same days, meaning relying on a small amount of research methods could create a number of difficulties. After requesting involvement in our consultancy from eight employees, Hannah and I observed the employees in a variety of departments before discussing our observations with each other. Following the observation, Hannah and I devised a series of questions that we felt would provide us with answers that would give us more information regarding the current level of happiness of the employees, and ways in which they might be able to improve their happiness levels. We both agreed that these questions should be asked in an interview in order to obtain as much detailed information as possible. Due to not all staff members being available at the same time, Hannah and I agreed to each interview four employees on different days, and record our interviews on our iPhones. After each interview was conducted, we typed a transcript of the key answers given to us by the employees and sent them to each other via email. The final way in which we obtained information was through a survey one week after we presented our PowerPoint presentation to the employees involved in the research. We conducted a survey in order to see any impact that the consultancy had on the employees, and felt that it was a simple and fast method to obtain our final information.

After conducting all of the interviews and observing the employees, we found that the majority of staff members believed that being productive through achieving goals and completing various tasks made them happy. Lack of activity, lack of communication, and high amounts of stress were the most reported causes of unhappiness in the workplace. Hannah and I decided to use the theme of physical activity to try to raise happiness levels for all employees. Prior

knowledge allowed us to realize that physical activity aids productivity and therefore goals are more easily attainable. It is also widely accepted that physical activity reduces stress, and is a good way to communicate with others when carried out as a team.

A number of difficulties emerged whilst conducting the research. The main difficulty was the inconsistent hours that the employees worked. The fact that everybody wasn't in the same vicinity at the same time meant that we had to arrange specific times to suit each employee and had to make multiple journeys to and from the office. Moreover, one employee in particular was not as enthusiastic as the others in assisting us in our research, despite volunteering her time. The interview with this particular employee generated very closed answers to open questions, and created a sense of discomfort as Hannah and I did not want to ask any employees to participate in the research if they did not want to.

I was particularly surprised at the amount of employees who believed that their job did not allow them enough time to exercise. Only three employees stated that they had enough time to engage in regular physical activity, although almost all employees admitted that it would be possible to participate in physical activity whilst at work if they wanted to. Hannah then had the idea that we create a pack for each employee that would give them ideas about how to fit exercise into their daily work routine, or to help them to find the time to conduct physical activity either before or after work. The same employee who provided closed answers was the only person out of the eight employees who said that engaging in physical activity would not make her any happier. Although this was surprising to both myself and to Hannah, we decided that we would try to prove

to her that research supports the correlation between physical activity and happiness.

We presented our report in the form of a PowerPoint slide show. Before presenting the slide show to all members of staff, we showed operations manager Glenn Dearing in order to revise the presentation to ensure it would be successfully delivered. Glenn was very enthusiastic about our research, as he had completed courses on the importance of physical activity in the workplace, as it was required of him at his previous employment. Glenn stated that the colours that we originally used for the PowerPoint slides made the writing difficult to read, and the amount of effects that we used were very distracting. Glenn liked the content of the presentation and thought that giving employees a pack to assist them in physical activity was a great idea. Hannah and I simplified the slides by changing the colours and reducing the number of effects used.

Hannah and I were happily surprised about the positive impact that our consultancy had on the staff members. Through the use of a survey, we learned that all of the employees found the content of our presentation easy to understand. Moreover, every employee reported that they were excited to receive their pack to help motivate them to exercise. When returning to BioGill to collect the surveys the week following our presentation, we noticed that all of the employees had installed the foot pedals, and the majority of them reported using them regularly. Hannah and I were told by Glenn that all of the staff members had used the pedometers that we provided, and Glenn had created a competition between the staff members for who could take the most steps in a day. Glenn also dedicated an area in the factory for skipping, and three employees were using the area regularly as they believed it was a good way to

increase their productivity when they felt mentally exhausted. All employees had downloaded the yoga application, but none of them felt comfortable practicing yoga in the workplace. The table below shows which employees had attempted our suggestions, and which employees believed they would continue to use the items provided to them by us.

	Liz	Michelle	Glen	Shayne	Louise	Mitch	Joan	Mark
Pedal Exerciser	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Only works in factory	✓	✓
Gym	✓			✓				
Skipping	✓			✓		✓	✓	
Yoga App	✓			✓			✓	
Pedometer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[Table 1: Employees that attempted the elements of their pack]

	Liz	Michelle	Glen	Shayne	Louise	Mitch	Joan	Mark
Pedal Exerciser	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Gym	✓			✓				
Skipping	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Yoga App	✓							
Pedometer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[Table 2: Employees that plan to continue using the elements of their pack]

Hannah and I found it difficult to accurately determine how effective our presentation was, as three employees were already engaged in regular physical activity. These employees, however, reported that they benefitted from the

consultancy as communication between staff members increased following our intervention.

There are a few things that I would do differently if I were to do this assessment again. I would definitely choose a group where all participants were available at the same times on the same days to reduce the amount of travelling that Hannah and I had to do. As some of our participants were executives, we relied on observation more than what we predicted as we didn't want to interfere with employees more than we had to. For this reason I would choose a group that were more available than employees of BioGill. Furthermore, I would have communicated with Hannah in person more than through phone conversations and emails, as when we had physical interaction with each other our communication was more successful and thorough.

Relevant to my own life, I learnt that productivity is a factor that results in my own personal happiness. Hannah and I alleviated stress and anxiety by beginning the assignment early and completing the required interactions with our chosen group over a long period of time. This led us to enjoy completing the consultancy. I also learnt that I enjoy group work more than I thought I did. I really value the opinion and assistance of others and this assessment gave me the opportunity to engage with not only another student, but also other people who provide me with respect and encouragement.