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Happiness consultancy report

MACS325, “Happiness: investigating its causes and conditions”

Autumn session, 2011

Media and Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong

Subject coordinators: Chris Barker and Brian Martin

The happiness consultancy assignment had two parts. For details of the assignment see http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/MACS325_11outline.pdf

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

Bede Crasnich, Elise Harden, Kelly Jubb and Millie Robinson, working as a team, prepared a report for Access Community Group, in the form of a handout and a slide show. The handout begins on the next page. The slide show is a separate file.

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

Kelly Jubb's reflections are a separate file.

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

Community, Engagement and Happiness

How engagement with Staff, Space and the Business Community impacts upon workplace Happiness at Access Community Group

Upon first meeting with Access one of the first identifiable themes that related to most aspects of the community sector in which Access operates, was *engagement*. Access engages with its clients through programs and services on offer, engages with local and business community in Corrimal in building partnerships and potential donors. Engagement is also present amongst fellow staff members as they go about their various roles at Access and in the in the day to day interactions within the current workplace space. The definition of Engagement that we draw upon can be found below:

Engagement can be defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work.

Bakker and Demerouti (2008, 209–210)



1

Feedback from meetings:

- Staff reported very high happiness levels, those who completed surveys reported an average score of 8.4 in judging how happy they felt in Access' workplace.
- Job satisfaction was high mainly due to inter-staff relationships and meaning and purpose drawn from the job role.
- Money matters were cited as the greatest single factor causing dissatisfaction and unhappiness. These pertained to insufficient resources to offer clients, poor facilities and

¹ <http://rhweb.files.wordpress.com/2008/10/cartoon-facebook.gif>

space to work with and the stress of having to regularly adapt to various funded programs or resubmit for funding.

- Routine stress of having to constantly fill in paperwork and reports with statistical outcomes proved to be a great source of dissatisfaction.
- Job security and intermittent lack of staff support were also issues.
- Space was mentioned to be in great need of an upgrade to improve comfort, usability and engagement.
- It was felt that more could be done to improve business relationships, the general feeling being that whilst being aware of Access and its services, local community bodies and businesses were not necessarily practical in providing supportive partnerships via, for example, work placements for clients, encouraging donations, funding or volunteerism and were not always well informed regarding the mission and outcomes of Access and its programs.

So what can be done to impact upon the issues of engagement relating to staff, space and community and improve overall happiness at Access?

Access needs to be recognised for the positive and enhancing life skills it brings to clients- not just via increases in employment status. If outcomes can be communicated in ways that acknowledge the improved social skills that youth gain from these programs the holistic approach that Access offers in their services can be more widely recognised and appreciated in the local community. We suggest that client case studies feature on the website, in newspaper articles or on community radio and that youth be approached with the idea that they share their stories (for example at Spring into Corrimal) relating their experienced benefits of the programs on offer.

With resources focused mainly on benefiting the youth and clients of Access, marketing strategies have come to a stand still. Rebranding and repackaging Access in new and creative ways may make it more sellable and promote interest from local business' and willing volunteers. It also seeks to refresh and promote more confidently Access' image and services. We suggest that the website could be updated to be more interactive and structured to reinforce the holistic ethos of Access. Partnerships could be formed with other non-profit organisations who could support Access in their goals and a marketing student could offer their skills via an internship that could be organised via the University of Wollongong.

The current workspace at Access could be greatly improved to encourage an engaging and happy workplace. A focus on creating a more comfortable work space will improve employee mentality, productivity and engagement levels. We suggest that to improve temperature levels an efficient air conditioner could be installed. To encourage a more productive and versatile workplace existing cubicles could be removed or rearranged to lessen obstructions, barriers and segmentation and to ensure minimal clutter "clean-up-hours" (or days) could be organised. It is also an option that the current premises be purchased and renovated.

We would like you to know that it has been a pleasurable, interesting and beneficial experience for us to engage with the staff members at Access and we thank you for participating so openly and willingly in our project and for the time that you put aside amongst your busy roles to communicate with us. We hope that our report and recommendations have reinforced the positive values that currently exist at Access and also provided some thought provoking ideas that may stimulate your appetite for effective engagement to enhance and build on the happiness already present within your team. We sincerely wish you all the best and much success in your current and future endeavours, Bede, Elise, Kelly and Millie.