

APRIL 29, 2019

Paul Krismer on happiness and the bottom-line

Best-selling author and speaker shows how happiness leads to business success

by Tom Morin, Creator of [Work Feels Good](#)

Best-selling author and sought-after, keynote speaker, [Paul Krismer](#), is taking his happiness message and method around the world.

The first question I asked Krismer was, “What do you tell someone when they ask you what you do?” Without hesitation, he said, “I say that I teach people how to be happy. Then, after a little dramatic pause, I say, I really do.”



Paul Krismer leading one of his popular workshops focused on increasing positive emotion in the workplace.

Krismer’s response triggered my skeptical mind. I thought, I’m a happy guy and I’m sure no one has taught me how to be happy. I also know that some of what makes me happy—intensity, solitude, and pursuing goals that may be impossible for me to achieve—are not things that make most people happy. But, when I asked Paul to define happiness, his answer turned this skeptic into a believer.

What is happiness?

“Happiness is our own assessment of our subjective wellbeing. But that definition isn’t much help.” It’s helping me, I thought. Then Paul said, “I prefer Barbara Fredrickson’s definition that describes happiness as some combination of one or more positive emotions. Emotions like joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love. But what’s difficult for most people to accept,” Paul continued, “is that happiness is what creates success. It’s not the other way around.”

It’s exactly that message—that success is actually an outcome of happiness—that resonates with Krismer’s audiences and clients.

Paul Krismer speaks from experience

In a speaking and consulting landscape dotted with leadership and workplace “experts,” some of whom have neither led people nor worked in organizations, Paul Krismer stands out.

Paul’s early promotions to senior leadership roles in large organizations put him on a steep learning curve. “I felt totally unqualified for those jobs,” Krismer recalls. “Soon, I had over 150 staff, we were collecting over a billion dollars in revenue, and I was managing one of the largest IT projects we’d ever done.”

To give himself the best chance for success, and because he’s a self-described geek, Paul was always learning what business leaders had to offer in their latest books. But Paul was also a skeptic, “There is a lot of experience and opinion out there, and a lot of it is helpful, but I wanted to know what the science had to say.”

Paul’s quest for facts led him to the research on positive psychology and its application in the workplace. Soon he was integrating positive psychology interventions into his own leadership practice. The change was immediate. And, during his last few years of organizational employment, Paul acted as an internal consultant focused on ramping up employee engagement.

Fast-forward to the global stage

Krismer’s book, [Whole Person Happiness: How to Be Well in Body, Mind & Spirit](#), has become a best-seller. Today, he speaks to audiences around the world, consults with business leaders across industries, and still takes on individual clients who want to learn how to be happy. The [Keynotes & Workshops page on his website](#) showcases his wide range of offerings.



Paul Krismer speaking about happiness to a global audience in Bogota, Colombia.

Positive emotion leads to business success

“It’s a tragedy,” was the first thing Krismer said when I asked him to explain the relationship between happiness and work. He cited the many studies that show employee disengagement and job dissatisfaction in North America ranges between 30-50%.

Then, Paul talked about study after study that show many of the measures of organizational health—measures like organizational citizenship, employee engagement, and innovation—are correlated to increased positive emotions in the workforce. “If you deliberately engage to improve mood in an organization, you will see a number of changes. Things like more creativity, better customer service, and fewer absences. All this translates into better, bottom-line results.”

3 things every business leader needs to know about happiness

Whether you’re running your own business or leading teams within a large organization, there are three things that Paul Krismer wants you to know about happiness in the workplace.

#1: It’s not frivolous

Krismer’s experience has shown him that few workplace interventions have as much impact on improving bottom-line results as increasing positive emotion. “If your only motivation is to make more money, then you should still do this.” Happiness is not a nice-to-have. “The payback on increasing happiness is huge.”

#2: It’s practical

“People often tell me that they don’t know how to start making people happy. But we all know how to start,” says Krismer. Just like initiating any new intervention in the workplace, it often starts by doing a little research and engaging an external expert. In his workshops, Paul teaches a number of simple, practical ways to increase positive emotions in the workplace.

#3: It’s the right thing to do

When Krismer says, “It’s the right thing to do,” he’s not moralizing, he’s being practical, again. “If you’re going to spend the next four years working at a company, wouldn’t you want to wake up in the morning and be excited to go to work?”