

CHASING HAPPINESS



AS A CULTURE, WE ARE MASTERS OF CONTINGENT HAPPINESS.

We delay it. We place a price of entry on it. For those of us in the business world, that price of entry is often strongly tied to business success.

As a business owner, it may not be about promotions or raises, but it's about hitting a certain market share, seeing a certain number in your retirement account, or laughing maniacally in a pile of money while your competitors woefully throw in the towel and close up shop.

(Too far? Yeah, that was too far. Sorry.)

Anyway, too many of us think — no, we firmly believe — that we'll be happy once we tick a certain set of boxes.



THAT'S PROBLEMATIC FOR TWO REASONS:

- 1) It means you're not happy now; and
- 2) Sean Achor says it means you might never get to be happy. Or successful.

WHO'S SEAN ACHOR AND WHY IS HE SUCH A DEBBIE DOWNER?



Actually, he's not a Debbie Downer. He's the author of *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology That Fuel Success and Performance at Work*, and he's basically an ambassador for happiness.

Achor asserts that success does not bring us happiness; rather, the exact opposite is true. **Happy, optimistic people are more likely to achieve success.**

This isn't just Achor's opinion, either. It's based on exhaustive scientific research. A meta-analysis of more than 200 studies—featuring almost 275,000 people—reveals that, "happiness leads to success in every domain of our lives."

ONE SMALL EXAMPLE:

A longitudinal study found that college freshmen who demonstrated empirical happiness had higher incomes 19 years later than their less happy counterparts.

We all have a happiness set point, and if your set point is a bit on the negative side, don't worry. You're not

doomed. Achor says that your mindset is actually malleable. You really can change your outlook, your attitude, and your overall happiness — no matter how old and/or curmudgeonly you are.

We'd like to think that striving for happiness today, in spite of your circumstances, would be a reward in itself. After all, who doesn't want to be happy? But in case you need a little extra motivation, it's nice to think about the possibility of present happiness opening up the door to future success.

How can training your brain to seek out and embrace happiness make such a difference? It's partly about the way other people respond to you, but a lot more about how you see and approach the world.

Perhaps not surprisingly, gratitude is a big part of adjusting your outlook.

The book describes another experiment in which people were asked to envision the following scenario:

You're at your local bank branch. There are approximately 50 other people there. An armed robber comes into the bank and fires his weapon once. The bullet hits you in the arm.

What's your reaction to this scenario?

CATEGORY 1:

Some of the people in the experiment expressed a version of: *That stinks. I was just there to do an errand, and I get shot?! And out of 50 people in the bank, the ONE bullet that was fired hit me? What awful luck!*

CATEGORY 2:

Others, however, said: *Wow, how incredibly lucky that I was only hit in the arm. I could have been killed. And there were so many other people there, maybe including children. How fortunate that no one else was hurt.*

If you fall into the first category, that doesn't make you a heartless jerk. It just means your set point might be a bit on the negative side.

And, again, you can change it.

- If you're in a boring meeting, challenge yourself to see if you can learn something.
- If you're stuck in traffic, view it as a mental break during which no one is asking anything of you.
- If you're overwhelmed at work, seize the opportunity to delegate artfully, freeing up time to focus on what you really care about.
- If a vendor or partner takes advantage of you, (silently) thank them for showing their true colors before you invested more in the business relationship.

Ahhh. We feel happier already. We expect to see the results of that happiness on our quarterly statement.

OWL BELIEVES TWO THINGS ABOUT SMALL BUSINESS MONEY:
 > It should be stable and secure.
 > There should be more of it.