

# New leadership paradigm: promote 'relationship' people

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Happiness at work was the focus of a workshop in The Bahamas last week, and one of the featured presenters – Alexander Kjerulf of Denmark – recently gave *Guardian Business* his prescription for a new leadership paradigm, suggesting that prevailing models of promotion in the workplace need to be re-examined.

Kjerulf was in The Bahamas to participate in the “Happiness at Work: Lessons From Festivals” seminar hosted by his fellow presenter, Roosevelt Finlayson. Finlayson is the creator of Festival in The Workplace, a curated experience designed to use Junkanoo principles to create a high-performing organization.

Speaking with *Guardian Business* following the seminar, Kjerulf pointed out that Finlayson's work on inculcating some of the Junkanoo "shack" principles into the workplace and his own field of happiness at work—Kjerulf styles himself "chief happiness officer" of his company Woohoo inc.—mesh very well together.

## New leadership paradigm

Kjerfve addressed the perennial problem of promoting a high-performing individual away from the thing they love to do and are so skilled at: the teacher who is “promoted” to administration, the software engineer who is “promoted” to management.

"What we need to realize is that we need to promote a different kind of leader, a different kind of person to leadership. Our model for what makes people happy at work

Alexander  
Kjerulf.

he said.

Kjerulf agreed that empirical data is important to support assertions like the one he makes about happy workplaces outcompeting unhappy ones, and said it is “fairly well established by now that happy workplaces do make more money.”

"There are massive individual differences and some miserable workplaces are still really, really profitable, and happy workplaces can still lose money obviously, but on the whole statistically there is an effect, and there is actually quite a large effect depending on what industry you are in," he said.

Industries like hospitality are heavily affected by the level of happiness in the workplace, Kjerulf said, as are the creative workers – IT, designers, architects and the like. He added that some research is even suggesting that when a hospital is a happy place, people get better sooner.

"On a very fundamental level, there is some neurological research that looks at what happens to us in certain situations, and generally speaking, being happy - feeling good, experiencing positive emotions - has some very positive effects on us," he said.

"For instance your mind is more open, so you're more likely to notice what's going on around you when you're in a good mood than when you're in a bad mood. You are more open to people, so you're more helpful, generous, empathetic and also you are more resilient to problems, setbacks and crises," he continued, adding that a good mood means more creativity, productivity and better communication.

"It is fairly well established that we feel better, and we do better work when we're happy. And we're better people overall when we're happy," Kjerulf said.



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