

Building Emotional Capital

# RocheMartin® WhitePaper

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## Why Happiness Is Good for Business

Three decades of research has established clear links between specific emotional skills and our health, wealth and well-being. High levels of emotional capital lead to increased productivity, and as many studies show, happy people are more creative, solve problems better and more quickly, live longer and enjoy high levels of leadership influence. In other words, when people feel better they perform better.

### WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

Over the past thirty years, hundreds of thousands of people have been studied in over seventy countries and a large number of results have been published. We now know a great deal about what happiness and emotional well-being is.



"day155/ singing in the sun..." by the half-blood prince (www.flickr.com)

Everyone experiences happiness differently. Some people describe moments of deep peacefulness in nature. Others describe the excitement of anticipating a long awaited event such as the birth of a child, or a personal victory. Still others talk about the thrill of doing something significant and meaningful for others.

In all these experiences there seems to be two conditions: (1) the feeling of positive emotions, (2) the absence of inner conflict and a peacefulness of mind. In fact, research confirms that

positive emotions and a peaceful mind are the foundations of health, wealth and well-being.

Neuroscientists and psychologists (and Buddhist monks and Greek philosophers!) have provided some vital clues to building emotional wealth – which just may be the best investment you ever make.

### HOW CAN WE FEEL HAPPY MORE OF THE TIME?

Three big findings have emerged from the research into happiness ...and they may surprise you.

#### 1. Not the Usual Suspects

First, external conditions and other general factors are much less influential than you might imagine.

Take wealth, for instance. A number of studies have shown that once your basic needs are met, additional income does little to raise your sense of satisfaction with life. Obviously, for those who are without the basics, money becomes a means of survival, but beyond a relatively low threshold, extra wealth does not increase satisfaction. So, for most of us, it seems that money can buy many things but happiness isn't one of them.

What about your IQ? Are smarter people happier? Apparently not, since the research suggests neither education nor a high IQ leads to greater happiness.

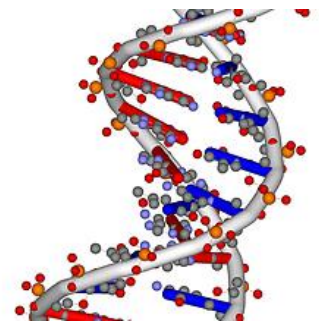
What about the excitement of youth? No, in fact older people are more consistently satisfied with their lives than the young, and they're less prone to depressive moods.

Being in a committed relationship? A complex picture: people in partnerships are generally happier than singles, but that may be because they were happier in the first place.

In fact, taken together, these outward conditions and general factors account for no more than 10 to 15 percent of the factors that contribute to your life satisfaction.

#### 2. Genes Are Not Destiny

Second, although there is some level of genetic predisposition for being happy or unhappy, our future life satisfaction is not set in stone.



DNA by ghutchis (www.flickr.com)

We know that genes influence such traits as having a positive, easygoing personality; dealing well with stress; and feeling low levels of anxiety and depression.

However, a systematic study of 4,000 sets of twins, in which life satisfaction data was compared for identical vs. fraternal twins, concluded that only about 50% of life satisfaction comes from genetic programming.

This means that half of our future happiness rests in our own hands, as identified long ago by the ancient Greek philosophers who established

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a clear link between happiness and right action:

**“Happiness is the consequence of a deed. Happiness isn’t a coincidental or divine gift but is given to him who makes optimal use of the available possibilities.”**

Aristotle.

In other words, we are neither at the mercy of our moods nor our environment, but rather our emotional well-being is more in our control than we ever imagined.

### 3. Masters of Our Moods

This view is consistent with the third discovery of research into well-being and happiness – that we can exert considerable influence on our experience of happiness and unhappiness by the way we live and think, how we perceive life’s events, and how we react to them.

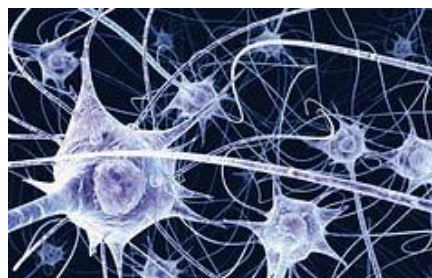
Two fairly recent insights for brain research provide startling new insights into how this works.

One concerns the parts of the brain that produce a sense of well-being: our brains have special circuitry for enjoyment, pleasure, and euphoria – we have a happiness system.

Negative and positive emotions are constantly opposing each other. We can take the edge off the negative feelings, however, by directly by awakening positive feelings. In other words, we often have more freedom than we realize to improve our *perception* of a situation – even when we can’t directly change the situation itself.

The other still more surprising discovery is that the adult brain

continues to develop and change. These changes are triggered by thoughts, but even more by emotions. Therefore, much as we can learn a new sports skill, we can train our natural aptitude for positive feelings and increase our capacity for emotional wealth.



“Neurons in the Brain” by Benedict Campbell (from flickr.com)

### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PREDICTS HAPPINESS

A number of studies show that emotional intelligence significantly differentiates happy people from unhappy ones. According to recent research, happiness goes hand in hand with several emotional and social skills.

**Self-Reliance** – is the emotional power to accept responsibility, back our personal judgment, and be self-reliant in planning and making important decisions.

This skill enables you to have the courage to do what matters to you. Emotional wealth in the long run has less to do with finding the best idea, organisational structure, or business model, than with discovering what matters to us as individuals and having the courage to back ourselves.

This skill gives us the ability to exert control over our lives. Unhappy people tend to believe themselves to be at the mercy of fate. It would

seem that the more an individual is capable of controlling her environment, the happier she is.

Extraordinary people, teams and organizations are simply ordinary people doing extraordinary things that matter to them.

**Self-Confidence** – is the ability to maintain self-respect and personal confidence. Emotional capitalists don’t rely on the approval of others to pursue their course of action. They have the courage to take the initiative despite social pressures. They are more emotionally committed to doing what they love than being loved by others.

Ironically, there is a natural lack of ego in genuine self-confidence. This creates a peacefulness that cannot be threatened by external circumstances or inner fears.

I call this the Mandela Model. During captivity Mandela was threatened many times and offered incentives that would compromise his integrity. After 27 years he emerged to lead his nation through difficult circumstances while demonstrating a remarkable degree of humility and emotional well-being. Mandela remains today an authoritative and influential world leader as a consequence of his emotional integrity and self-belief.



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**Optimism** – is not just ‘the glass is half full’, but optimism as a strategy – a way of dealing with difficulties and sensing opportunities.

Emotional capitalists look on the brighter side of life and sense opportunities even in the face of adversity. The brain’s expectation system releases a sense of anticipation as soon as we set a goal and we experience triumph when we reach it. Thus, optimistic activity of this kind almost always leads to positive feelings.

Optimistic people are also resilient. They often have a history of significant failures, losses, and bitter disappointments, but display a remarkable resiliency: an ability to bounce back from adversity.

But if we give in to negative emotions like disappointment or sadness, we not only fail to ease them, but we actually reinforce them. Repeated emotions like joy or sadness act like drops of water on a rock. Each one evaporates quickly, but over time many drops carve out a channel.



“As found” by Bitterjug (www.flickr.com)

Fortunately, it is not only negative emotions that can become entrenched with regular use – optimism, too, can become a habit.

**Self-Actualization** – Love it or lose it. Emotional capitalists are passionate and know how to manage their reserves of emotional energy. Loving what you do is a necessary condition to maintaining your emotional well-being.

Passionate people spend twice as much time thinking about what they’ve accomplished, how doable the task ahead is, and how capable they are of achieving it. The persistent frustration of not loving what you do makes you a difficult character to be around and has been clinically proven to damage your health. When you take a moment to shift your attention from the stressful stuff to something uplifting and apparently unrelated - particularly if it’s one of your passions – your state of mind improves.

**Relationship Skills** – describe the knack for establishing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships characterised by positive expectations.

A 2002 study conducted at the University of Illinois found that the most salient characteristics shared by the 10% of students with the highest levels of happiness and the fewest signs of depression were their strong ties to friends and family and commitment to spending time with them.

People with friends live longer. In fact, social relationships have on average as least as much impact on life expectancy as smoking, high blood pressure, obesity, and regular physical activity. Based on the literature, it’s no overstatement to equate emotional wealth with friendship and love. Being skilled at

building relationships with others builds your own emotional wealth.

## HOW TO BECOME HAPPIER

The most fundamental finding from the science of happiness is that almost every person feels happier when they’re with other people, especially when they are contributing to others.

Practicing kindness, compassion and other virtues lifts your stocks of emotional capital. Giving makes you feel good about yourself and it creates meaning in your life. You have a sense of purpose because you matter to someone else and feel more connected to others.

Happiness makes you more effective because building your emotional capital goes hand in hand with your capacity to maintain peace of mind. When your mind is peaceful your mood lifts, you take in information effectively and your mind becomes agile and creative. A consistently positive mood also enables you to foster positive feelings in the people whose cooperation and support you need.

Learn more about Emotional Capital and how you can be happier and more effective

For more information on how the Emotional Capital Inventory can help you build emotional capital contact RocheMartin:

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