

Employees Bring Bad Moods Home, But They Disappear By Morning

December 5 2004

A good night's sleep may be the remedy for a bad day at work, suggests a new University of Florida study on the unexplored relationship between job satisfaction and the shifting moods of employees.

Employees who have stressful days bring their negative moods home with them at night, but in most cases they disappear by morning, said Timothy Judge, a UF management professor who did the research.

“The boundaries between work and family are pretty permeable, and this is one more piece of evidence that people do tend to take their work home,” said Judge. “The one comfort is that the effect is short-lived and gone by the next day.”

The findings can give insight to employers trying to develop workplace environments that lead to enjoyment and satisfaction on the job, which boosts employee performance, said Judge, whose results are published in the August edition of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

“If employers care about the work-family balance achieved by their employees -- and there is reason to believe that they should -- they can contribute to positive moods in both work and family life by the way they treat employees,” he said. “For employees, this spillover effect provides further evidence of the importance of being in a satisfying job. As far as we know, no one has ever looked at the spillover of job attitudes to mood at home that same day, and then followed it the next day (at work) as well.”

Judge and Remus Ilies, a management professor at Michigan State

University, in East Lansing, surveyed 55 UF employees who had access to both a computer at work and at home. The participants were selected through an e-mail letter soliciting participation sent to a random sample of employees listed in the university e-mail directory. The sample included personnel with typical administrative positions, such as secretary and office manager.

The participants logged on to a Web page, and completed job satisfaction surveys and mood surveys at 9 a.m., noon and 3 p.m. each day during working hours for two weeks, as well as once each night during the evening hours at home.

To assess mood, participants used a six-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “extremely much” to report how strongly they felt about statements such as “right now each minute of work seems like it will never end,” and “right now I find real enjoyment in my work.”

The study found the amount of spillover employees experienced both at home and work depended on whether they were introverts or extroverts. Extroverts were more likely to go home and talk about the day’s experiences than were introverts, who tended to keep their frustrations bottled up, he said.

“There is evidence to suggest that introverts do this because they are naturally more stimulated, and so need less environmental stimulation and social interaction,” he said. “Extroverts are deficient in this and need more stimulus. They actually perform better on tests if they have caffeine.”

Judge said he did the study because he believes the emotional experience at work is important to many employees and should be to employers as well, because research is showing that emotions experienced at work have repercussions for employee behavior on the job, such as helping

other employees and customers.

Fortunately, most surveys reveal that people are relatively pleased with their jobs, Judge said. In general, research has shown that employees are satisfied with their jobs on average about 70 percent to 80 percent of the time, he said.

Expressing how one's day has gone may provide a catharsis for people, Judge said. By getting things off their chests, they are able to deal with them and move on, he said.

“We know that moods are fairly ephemeral or fleeting so that even though we are affected by these experiences, our mind has the ability to digest them and reset by the next day,” he said.

Susan Seitel, president of Work and Family Connection, a Minnetonka, Minn., company that helps employers create supportive and effective workplaces, said Judge's study confirms that the work-personal life link is “unmistakable.”

“We've always known that when a person brings home the stress of his or her work day, there's an impact,” Seitel said. “Things don't go smoothly when mom or dad aren't relaxed; relationships suffer, kids react, people are hurt and angry. The result is more stress.”

She said companies can help by giving employees “more flexibility, more control over how, where and when work is done, and by being clear about what a day's work really is.”

Source: University of Florida

Citation: Employees Bring Bad Moods Home, But They Disappear By Morning (2004, December 5) retrieved 18 April 2024 from

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