

# Creating Customer Happiness

54 Things You Can Do to Leverage  
the Power, Passion and Positivity  
of Your Workforce

by  
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# Creating Customer Happiness:

## *54 Things You Can Do to Leverage the Power, Passion and Positivity of Your Workforce*

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**A collection of “how-to” writings for businesses that are ready to activate the link between positivity and profitability.**

Remarkable customer experiences, customer loyalty, and profits are what you get when a number of workplace factors come together in the right combination – the value proposition, the employees’ ability to consistently create positive and memorable customer experiences, and each customer’s own disposition toward loyal behaviors.

As research continues to validate the pursuit of loyalty as a sound and successful long-term business strategy, it also shows that employee engagement and happiness are inextricably linked to customer happiness and loyalty. As I’ve been telling my clients for years, loyalty is an *emotional* connection. When you know how to consciously and consistently activate positive feelings in your staff, your staff is better equipped to create the kinds of experiences for customers that keep them happy, returning to your business to purchase more, and telling their friends and colleagues about you.

*\* Study by Towers and Perrin*

Involved and engaged employees go out of their way to create better experiences for customers and go the extra mile for the company. They are passionate about their work and are willing to take risks, be more creative and help the company innovate and thrive in today’s competitive-marketplace. A growing body of evidence proves that these are the kinds of employees who help grow the organization, yet these dedicated employees represent *less than one quarter of the global workforce!*\* This means there is a *lot* of untapped potential out there - probably right before your eyes!

To create a team whose superb customer skills bear out in retention rates and revenue, the first thing organizations need to do is to look *within*, to take an objective look at their culture and uncover what needs to be done to boost levels of engagement and participation. The articles I’m sharing with you in this compilation offer a variety of effective ways to help you succeed in this dynamic, ongoing process.

*Positive, customer-focused leadership must be centerpiece of any organizational culture intending to succeed in business with loyalty as a long-term growth and profit strategy.*

Despite what some organizations think, I believe people long to be engaged in their work in a way that is meaningful. Our old leadership models – the legacy of a time when information was available only to the people “at the top” - still carry the implication that the people at the “bottom” don’t have valuable ideas, thoughts or opinions. Our old leadership models focus on fixing weaknesses rather than building on strengths. Thankfully, we are clearly in a time of transition, of turning that model inside out as the customer takes charge and rewards the value-driven companies that hold dear each precious employee and customer.

As a leader there are many, many things that YOU can do daily, minute by minute, to invite people to “bring all of their best selves to work.” This collection of five of my very favorite “How-to” articles will give you hands-on, “do-it-now” suggestions to help

you create a positive culture where your engaged, participative workforce (a.k.a. “internal customers”) will help you grow your company.

Positive, customer-focused leadership must be centerpiece of any organizational culture intending to succeed in business with loyalty as a long-term growth and profit strategy. These articles will give you a great start in becoming a leader who grows a culture where individuals flourish and the organization thrives.

For more ideas and advice, check out my articles and sign up for my fr\*e customer care tip on [www.ReturnOnHappiness.com](http://www.ReturnOnHappiness.com). You can also invite me to speak at your next company meeting, facilitate a coaching teleclass or host a webinar to get your whole team passionate and fired up about creating more positive experiences for customers and co-workers. Enjoy!



**JoAnna Brandi & Company, Inc.** is in business to help you create a positive-customer caring company that thrives, where your employees are motivated, your customers are loyal, and your competitors are nervous!

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JoAnna asks: "Is your customer care EXQUISITE?" Not sure?

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## 21 Tough Questions

### *Critical Questions to Get a Grip on Employee Engagement and Identify the Vital Changes Needed in Your Organizational Culture*

By JoAnna Brandi

In the beginning of the iconic movie *The Graduate*, there's a scene where new college graduate Benjamin Braddock (played by Dustin Hoffman) rises up from the waters of a built-in pool to receive a one-word piece of career advice from a neighbor perched on the patio: "*Plastics.*"

Today I'd give anyone entering the job market (college graduate or not) two words of advice that will stand the test of time in any profession: "***Employee engagement.***"

After more than two decades of mergers, acquisitions, restructuring, downsizing, bubble-bursts and shut-downs, the business world has finally noticed that stressed-out, burnt-out, fearful employees are not exactly able to function at peak performance. That's been a real wake-up call for businesses as they realize it's pretty darn hard to grow customer relationships if employees are too frazzled and distracted to create those relationships in the first place.

Customers today are more powerful than ever. With a few keystrokes at the computer they can choose you, drop you, very publicly thrash you or very publicly sing

your praises. With minimal time searching they can learn about other people's experiences with your company, and make extremely informed decisions about whether or not to even give you the time of day (which is great if your customer care is great. If not, then not so much).

On one hand, we have exhausted, disheartened, jaded employees delivering service. On the other we have customers whose loyalty (a highly profitable business strategy) has become increasingly harder to foster and maintain. Put them both together and what have you got...?

I'll tell you what you have: You have an opportunity to look closely at your organizational culture and ask questions while considering those all important words:

***"Employee engagement."***

Take a look at your own morale as an employee. Do you come to work ready to do and be your best, or have you been going through the motions, your engagement in what you do under par? Then there's the morale of the people who work with each other, care for customers, and go above and

***When workers feel their needs are met, the easier it is and more willing they are to meet the needs of the customer. If you create more value in the workplace, you'll be able to create more value in the marketplace.***

beyond for customers - or don't.

You may notice that some people on your team are innately engaged in anything they do – they seem naturally wired to be cheerful, empathetic and caring. They come equipped with genetically pre-programmed positive employee morale. That's awesome! But the majority of folks need something more; as members of a shared culture they and their work environment need attention and direction from their leaders. To have a healthy culture filled with engaged employees, their work experience needs to be rewarding - even fun!

Little by little, as we dismantle the hierarchical "institutional" environments of business past, and as managers get closer to their workers and customers, the workplace is becoming more humane. And empathy begets empathy. When workers feel their needs are met, the easier it is and more willing they are to meet the needs of the customer. If you create more value in the *workplace*, you'll be able to create more value in the *marketplace*.

So here are my **21Tough Questions** for you to take to your next management meeting; use them to raise consciousness and stimulate discussion about these critical issues. The answers to these questions will give everyone a sense of what the culture is *really* like these days (which may not reflect the party line in your promotional materials), how engaged employees are, and what you can do moving forward to create value in your workplace in such ways that everyone – the employees, the customer, and the organization – will win.

Pick one or two or ten and use them

provocatively to get honest thoughts, feelings and observations on the table and get everyone's blood going – you may even observe a little conflict, and that's ok. A successful "21st century business mind" questions old assumptions and models and looks for ways to continuously improve. Employee engagement – that which comes from within yourself, that which you learn and that which you foster in your people – can only benefit you in any endeavors.

1. Is the level of trust in our organization high or low?
2. How do we help individuals cultivate a feeling of pride in their work?
3. When we delegate responsibility, do we also delegate authority along with it?
4. Is a participative process in place that encourages employees' input in matters that affect their future?
5. Knowing that creativity and innovation are critical in a globally competitive economy, is training and development an important part of our strategic plan?
6. What methods do we use to show people we appreciate them and their work?
7. What mechanisms are in place to reward the kinds of customer-caring behavior we want to see repeated?
8. Do employees really believe that open and honest communication on their part will not damage their careers here?
9. What are we doing to encourage people to constantly think: "Continuous improvement"?

10. What flexible work practices are in place to accommodate workers' growing needs for family balance? Are people able to use these options without fear of recrimination? Are people who believe balance is important still considered serious candidates for advancement?
11. What are the five most important values in our organization? How do they get demonstrated by our management and staff every day?
12. On a scale of 1-10, how much real, honest-to-goodness fun are people having in our organization?
13. What five things do we have in place to support wellness in our organization?
14. What are we doing to foster "emotional literacy" in our management team? (Remember, customer loyalty is an *emotional* attachment.)
15. If we ask our employees to take risks, are we wholeheartedly accepting their failures (learning experiences) and efforts in addition to their successes?
16. Do we really believe our employees are capable of being fully empowered? If not, what's missing?
17. Are there negative consequences when someone makes the decision to please the customer rather than please the boss?
18. Have we changed our corporate

definitions of success to encompass some non-monetary benefits like job satisfaction and individual growth? If so, how do we measure it?

19. Have we recently surveyed the staff to find out how they really feel about working here, and whether or not they really have what they need to take "exquisite" care of customers?
20. Many changes have occurred over the past few years, both reactive and proactive, so what are we doing to support the people who have been (and will be) upset by the changes? What system do we have in place to help people through the change process?

And here's one more question to shake things up at your next management meeting:

21. If the most important factor in gaining a customer's loyalty is the "customer experience," which is their perception of the value they received, what are we doing to coach our team to the highest level of skill necessary to create that branded experience consistently?

Understand that the real challenge of leadership is not to have all the right answers but, rather, to ask the right questions. These questions should take you and your team in the right direction. Remember, if you want to create more value in the marketplace, you need to create more value in the workplace. You must have *employee engagement*. Now get to it!



# 5 Confidence Building “Positivity Pointers” to Boost Your Leadership Skills

By JoAnna Brandi

There’s no doubt about it: Customer loyalty is *key* to profitability. A mere five percent increase in your customer retention could as much as *double* your bottom line profits! On the flip side, it costs anywhere from *6-30 times more* to get new customers than it does to keep the ones you have!

The key to customer loyalty? Creating *consistently positive experiences* time and time again. That involves delivering value-laden service basics brilliantly, knowing your customers’ expectations, and something that is too often overlooked: *Maintaining an upbeat, can-do positive attitude throughout every interaction and at each customer touch point.* With that in mind, here are five ‘positivity pointers’ to put you in the know about positivity, and to help you create more “exquisite” experiences for not only your customers, but also your co-workers and yourself:

## 1. Positive thinking is a habit.

Some people are born with a positive outlook; others have to work hard at shifting their focus away from depressing media stories and from the things that are going wrong in their own lives. The great news for

those born ‘attitude-challenged’ is: You *can* prevent yourself from being tossed about by the winds of worry and negativity. How? By making positive thinking one of your *good habits* – it’s just like exercise and eating right! Science tells us that experiencing the positive emotions that come as a result of your positive thinking makes you healthier, smarter and even more socially adept.

## 2. Positive thinking is a choice.

As with the creation of any new habit, the first step is to *choose* to do it - to *commit to and intend to be positive.* At first, figuring out what keeps you in a positive state of mind (and remembering to make time to remember those things) can be challenging – especially when you’re focused on professional or personal goals that require a lot of your time and energy. Sometimes it will probably

feel easier to stay stuck in a negative place than to break the cycle, brush yourself off, take a breather and consciously change your state of mind. That’s because we all love our comfort zones, even when it’s in our best interest to outgrow them.

Here’s what you do: Think back to past commitments you made to yourself that you

*Positive, life-affirming, optimistic people attract goodness to their lives. They attract positive people and circumstances, and they achieve great results.*

kept. Think about what motivated you and sustained you as you reached your goals. Can you apply some of those strategies and techniques to becoming a positive thinker? Next, think about what would help you remind yourself to do frequent attitude checks and, if necessary, make adjustments. Would sticky notes help? Setting your phone alarm to chime every 45 minutes? A daily phone call from a supportive buddy? The extensive rewards of positive thinking (which you're about to get a peek at) are worth these efforts.

### **3. A positive attitude makes change easier to take.**

Change happens all the time in every aspect of life – and it's happening especially fast in today's business world. If we don't keep up, we fall behind – and no business today has that luxury.

Some changes feel welcome and comfortable; others elicit resistance as they push us out of our comfort zones. *The fact is, retaining a positive attitude about change makes change much easier to flow into.* Example: Think back to when the Internet began to catch on as a 'must have' form of communication. Those who embraced the technology, or who were at least positive about it, had a much easier time adjusting than those who resisted. They unlearned their old habits and learned new ones more quickly, and benefited from the changes earlier than later.

To stay positive during times of change, remind yourself of past changes in your life that pushed you out of your comfort zone

and into an even better situation than you had imagined. Remain open to the idea that change can continue to create all-new possibilities and opportunities. Think about how your self-esteem and self-confidence have grown every time you've risen to whatever changes a challenging situation called for. Just thinking back to those moments can make you feel *great!*

### **4. Positivity is chock-full of benefits!**

Optimistic people – people who believe the world is inherently 'good' - are healthier than pessimists. Let's count the ways:

- They have higher energy levels, stronger immune systems and, no surprise, tend to live longer.
- Their optimistic viewpoint stimulates fresh and creative thinking - it gives the brain the go ahead to stretch and to play with different solutions and options.
- Sure they feel the fear of change or of trying something new, but they have more energy to act despite the fear. You might say their faith is larger than their fear and they have more courage!
- Their faith in themselves enables them to more quickly learn from their mistakes and to be more confident.
- They interpret problems as challenges - not obstacles. That means they experience less distress and more easily access the emotional boost they need to get through tough times.



Clearly, we can alter and enhance our lives - both professionally and personally - by altering our attitudes. Positive or negative, it's a choice. Choose the rose-colored glasses - the ones that brighten up the view!

#### **5. No one likes you when you're grumpy.**

Let's be real, of course the people who love you still love you even when you're grumpy. But that doesn't mean anyone *likes* you while you're in a foul state of mind. Customers don't like a grump, co-workers don't like a grump, bosses don't like a grump...nobody likes a grump!

Positive, life-affirming, optimistic people attract goodness to their lives. They attract

positive people and circumstances, and they achieve great results. And why wouldn't they? They're a joy to interact with!

Whether they're waiting on your table, checking you into a hotel, repairing your computer, writing you a check for your new mortgage, selling you a new network or solving a billing problem at your credit card company, *in that moment* an optimistic person can make a genuine difference in the quality of your life by treating you with a positive, up-beat and can-do attitude. And *you* can do the same for *your* customers. It's so much easier to keep customers and create profits when you give your attitude some altitude!

# 8 Powerful Practices for Creating Workplace Happiness & “Business Resilience”

By JoAnna Brandi

Want a more positive workplace where you and your co-workers feel happy and motivated? Want to make customers happier so that their loyalty - and your profits - grow? Want to work more efficiently and effectively – and actually improve your health?

As an Authentic Happiness Coach, and a Customer Loyalty expert who’s been in the business for 22 years, I’m delighted to share tips for transforming these wants into “haves.” Because here’s what I know with complete certainty: Happiness creates resilient employees who, in turn, create resilient, thriving companies.

*Happiness creates resilient employees who, in turn, create resilient, thriving companies.*

As an Authentic Happiness Coach, my goal is to give people the tools they need to raise the amount of happiness in the world - especially in the workplace. What's happiness got to do with customer care and loyalty? *Everything*. The level of happiness you feel is largely in your control. When you're happy, it's much easier to create happiness for the customer.

According to Dr. Martin Seligman, the “Founding Father” of positive psychology with whom I studied to become an Authentic Happiness Coach, there's plenty of research-based evidence that happiness

and well-being have far reaching business benefits. A recent issue of the *Harvard Business Review* makes the case well with its cover story: “The Value Of Happiness: How Employee Well-Being Drives Profits.”

Here’s a very simple explanation of how that works:

Positive feelings reduce stress, build up the immune system and enable people to think more holistically - to be open to new ideas and solve problems more quickly, efficiently and intelligently. Positive emotions dial up the learning centers in the brain and make us more creative. They produce biochemicals in our bodies that reduce pain, help us sleep better, and make us more socially adept - which makes it easier to bond with others.

Positive emotions create “psychological capital” in the form of hope, optimism, efficacy and resilience.

Employees who feel happy have a broader range of options to draw from; they are more creative in finding solutions and more apt to go above and beyond the call of duty for customers. As such, they are better equipped emotionally to create happy, loyal, referral generating customers.

Ultimately, happy employees are more resilient, and resilient employees form the backbone of resilient companies - ones that can withstand the challenges of an ever changing, increasingly competitive marketplace.

To start adding happiness skills to your customer care tool kit, it helps to practice the following eight happiness factors that are in your control. No matter what personality you were born with, no matter what your circumstances are, you *can* boost your feelings of happiness by taking charge of these eight factors:

1. **Optimism.** Despite what people say, *optimism can be learned*. It's about perspective, how a person chooses to interpret and explain to himself what he experiences throughout the day. We're continuously making choices about how we explain the world to ourselves. If something challenging occurs and you think, "Just my luck. Bad things always happen to me," you are reducing your happiness. You can increase your happiness simply by choosing to think, "Hmmm. There must be *something* good about this situation - what could it be?" The power of optimism is not to be minimized - evidence shows that optimists live seven to nine years longer than people who are not optimistic!
2. **Gratitude.** Consciously, willingly and deliberately take moments throughout the day to feel gratitude and express it to others. To get businesses on board with this idea, I've advised them to start an "employee gratitude journal" in which everyone is encouraged to write down something for which they're grateful every day. They're always amazed at how powerful this inexpensive, quick and easy exercise is in creating a positive work environment and helping to transform the culture. You can also use gratitude to open and/or close a meeting. For example, at the end of a meeting you might ask: "What's one thing about today's meeting for which you are grateful?"
3. **Forgiveness.** When you choose to let go of ill will toward others and oneself, surrender resentments and regrets, and make peace with the past, you clear the way for feeling the emotion of happiness more often and more deeply.
4. **Improve your self-talk.** It's important to transform your self-talk from negative and punishing to positive and energizing. When you make a mistake and find yourself thinking, "You idiot," you know it's time to take a deep breath and ask yourself a question like, "How can I use my smarts to make this better?" Positive self-talk diffuses stressful situations, and when the brain relaxes it is more creative and better at problem solving.
5. **"Flow."** Is there any activity, interest or hobby you enjoy so much that you lose all track of time when you're engaged in it? That state of being where you forget about everything else and "feel at one with the music," so to speak, is called "flow." Being in a state of flow actually increases your happiness. Make time for the things that put you in the flow. (And

yes, it can be work that does it.)

6. **Savor.** Savoring is about being "in the moment" and enjoying it. The great thing about savoring is that you can do it *before* an activity by happily anticipating what's to come, you can do it *while* you're enjoying the activity, and you can savor your memories *afterward*. Savoring is a powerful tool!
7. **Reframe.** This is another tool for shifting your perspective. Look at a stressful situation as if it were an actual photograph, and think about the dozens of ways you could reframe it. You can crop it, enlarge it, make it smaller. Whatever you do, you're creating a different view and perspective of the same picture while reducing stress and overwhelm, which can help you to transform negative feelings and

responses to a situation into positive, happier ones.

8. **Build on Your Strengths.** Research shows that enduring happiness comes from spending time in and building on one's strengths - having the opportunity to do the things one does well even better. Identify your strengths, and then deliberately and creatively build on them. Evidence shows that over time, this skill works better at creating lasting happiness than antidepressants!

When you choose to be happy you're choosing to create and work with a powerful business tool. Happiness restores humanity to the workplace so that everyone thrives in every way. The emotional well being of employees and customers is directly linked to a company's profitability and resilience. Be happy and enjoy the rewards!

# 11 Ways to Create a Positive, Upbeat, Can-Do Workforce and Dazzle Customers with Your Caring!!

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By JoAnna Brandi

Given the choice of relying on a positive, upbeat customer care rep who has a "can-do" attitude or dealing with one who is disgruntled, distracted or disinterested, which would you choose? No contest, right?

Customers always want the best experience possible, to walk away from an interaction feeling (at the least) as if they'd just had a pleasant, easy encounter with your company.

Enter the real challenge of Relationship Management:

The relationships customers have with your employees. *The people.* In every interaction feelings are being created. In every interaction, employee performance counts! Whether answering the phone, fixing equipment, selling a product or reconciling an unpaid invoice, *the quality of the interaction* between one human being and another *is what will be judged by the customer* to determine how much you care about them and their business.

If your organization's relationship skills do not equal or exceed your sales and marketing skills, your "lifetime" relationships with customers are in

danger. My self-study course, The Customer Care Coach® defines the Customer Experience as “the sum total of the *feelings* evoked as a result of *any* interaction that takes place at *any* touch point in your organization. It's based on the *perception of the value delivered*, both tangible and intangible”.

*The Customer Experience is the sum total of the feelings evoked as a result of any interaction that takes place at any touch point in your organization. It's based on the perception of the value delivered, both tangible and intangible.*

Survey after survey reports that people prefer to do business with a positive, upbeat, can-do person who does their best to make things easy – but you already know that just from your own experiences as a customer. It's easy to tell when service providers enjoy where they work and what they're doing. It's easy to tell when someone genuinely cares about

helping you solve a problem or achieve a goal. That kind of customer care can delight you, dazzle you and almost always unfailingly bring you back for more!

The following 11 ideas will infuse you and your team with can-do consciousness and customer relationship building finesse for lasting business success:

1. **The best teacher is a good example.** First examine your own behavior and become aware of your own language. Are you walking the positive talk or are you mumbling (beneath your breath), "Just three more days 'til Friday..."? Do you frame things in the positive, or do you often start your sentences with the word, "No"? Do you say, "Yes, *but...*" a lot, negating the first half of your sentence with your last? If so, I highly recommend you purchase a copy of *Learned Optimism* by Martin Seligman for your corporate library, and promptly inhale it before passing it on. Whether you are a manager or a team member, your *genuine* optimism from day to day, in word and in deed, *matters*.
2. **Learn (and teach) the power of positive *self-talk*.** Ever notice how negative our internal chatter can be? Pay attention to the negative chatter you notice within yourself and start reprogramming it with positive thoughts. In addition, listen carefully for signs of negative self-talk in others. When you hear someone saying something like, "Boy am I stupid," gently coach them away from that attitude, "You're being so hard on yourself, you're not stupid. You may have made a bad decision, as we all do from time to time. Let's talk about what you've learned, and how to avoid making the same mistake in the future." Keep in mind that the body responds to self-talk; you might say it obeys the commands of the chatter. So if you tell yourself you are disorganized, you are likely to behave that way. Tell yourself, with conviction, you are an organized person, and your behavior will begin to change for the better.
3. **Ban whining.** One whiner in the group can bring everyone down. A whiner is like an infection – the ill will spread. Add one strong whiner to a group, and chances are you'll have an instant pity party. Stop whining at the source! Learn to spot whiners during the interview process. Don't hire them in the first place, unless you are prepared to keep vigilance over their behavior and attempt to change it. Good luck with *that*; whiners *love* whining. Perhaps posting a "No whining" sign on your door will help!
4. **Teach people the art of "Win/Win."** In our competitive society we have a win/lose mentality. That may be a good way of thinking at a sports stadium, but it's not a good way to run a company. Helping people to understand the concept of "Win/Win" opens up the possibility for new solutions and ideas. In the 21st century, it's innovation and creativity that will give us a competitive edge – and those qualities come from positive, open minds and "possibility thinking" about how everyone can benefit from a situation.
5. **Dump the drama. Dump the drama.** Drama sells tabloids and gets people to watch reality TV, but in your company all it does is sap valuable creative energy. Management from crisis to crisis is passé, melodramatic, wasteful and destructive. If you've been using



"crisis management" as your modus operandi, get out of the office, read a few good books, and learn a new management style. (Check out my [Positive Leadership courses](#), too.)

6. **Learn, teach and reward "Time-Out" stress management techniques.** A Harris poll says that 90% of all Americans live in a state of chronic stress. *YIKES!!!!* No wonder customers get treated so poorly. Make sure people understand the role they play in controlling their own stress. We can't always control our circumstances; what we *can* control is how we perceive them. Whenever necessary take a deep breath, count to ten, walk away (physically or mentally), and call a "Time-Out." Learn, practice, teach and reinforce ways to short-circuit stress before it settles in. Acknowledge others as they catch on, "Bob, I noticed how well you reacted with that angry customer yesterday. I was glad to see you take a deep breath and not react defensively - good job! You saved a valuable customer, and your own health as well. I'm proud to have you on the team."
7. **Encourage people to live in the "now."** Dwell on the past only long enough to figure out what you want to learn from it, and then move on. Stop talking about "the good old days." What is important is what's happening right *now*. Give your fullest attention to exactly what you are doing in this moment. Do it well, do it right and enjoy it. Customers can always tell if

you are giving them your undivided attention, and they really appreciate it when you do.

8. **Start a list called "The 10 Best Things about Working Here."** Let people add to it and watch it grow. It's fun, positive and a great way to focus people on what's going *right* at your organization. After the list is finished start one called, "Ten More Best Things..." You get what you focus on!
9. **Get psyched!** Recognize that almost 80% of what the average person takes in is negative, so you've got a real job to do in creating a positive sanctuary in your workplace. Develop a corporate library that includes all kinds of motivational literature, audio and videotapes. Play audio clips and videos in lunch and break rooms, keep inspirational books around, start positive discussion groups. Create positive energy, and people both inside and outside the company will feel it and come back for more.
10. **Don't worry, be happy.** Playing upbeat music helps lift your spirits. Challenge the staff to develop the "Happiest" of happy music tapes, a collection of tunes that will keep people smiling and whistling while they work. (They make great 'coming to work' and 'going home' tapes, too.)
11. **Smile.** When you activate the smiling muscles in your face, you activate the "happy" brain chemicals that help you feel good. You can't be depressed when you are smiling, and smiles are

contagious. Smile 'early and often!'

These ideas for dazzling customers and creating relationships are practical, easy and mostly free, so there's no excuse for not putting them into action! You may have a quality product at a fair price, but if you

don't have an upbeat person to provide the service related to the product, then the value you offer is compromised. Whatever role you may have in your organization, you can always help to create an experience for customers that has "value" written all over it.

# Power Up Performance:

## *9 Ways to Keep Employees Engaged*

By JoAnna Brandi

(A Perennial Favorite!)

Are your employees *engaged* in their work, or are they *estranged* from your company's mission and their role in making it happen? Mounting stats in journals like *The Harvard Business Review* (Jan-Feb, 2012) suggest that the more engaged employees are in what they do, the better their performance and the higher the rewards for *everyone*. The key is to have managers who are skilled at creating employee engagement.

Assess the state of your teams' engagement by asking yourself: Are our employees giving our customers 'their all?' Do they believe that what they're doing is important? Do they feel appreciated? Do they show up for work each day with passion and purpose?

If you answered "no" to any of those questions, a red flag should go up. That's a signal that management is not taking the best possible care of employees. Ultimately, this means the organization is missing out on significant cost-savings and profits. Check it out:

- Gallup International reported that businesses in the top 29% of employee engagement had less turnover and remarkably higher percentages of customer loyalty, profitability and revenues.

- Extensive studies by HayGroup revealed powerful links between employee engagement and productivity, which ultimately impact the bottom line. For instance, in a job that requires mid-level skills productivity can go up over 30% when an employee is engaged in the work.
- Workplace values expert John Izzo has abundant proof that this 'generation' of employees is more conscious of their own needs and of their place in the world

For business leaders in companies of all sizes, the writing is on the wall: You can make and save money by keeping employees engaged. It's never been more important for business leaders to stop dismissing internal customer care as 'soft and unimportant.'

Beyond that, think about this: Employees are not just humans 'doing;' they're human *beings*. Today's managers must make it a priority to get to know employees so they can provide whatever is necessary to keep their teams fully engaged in what they do. This creates wins for everyone! To create those wins, here are my nine tried and true management tips for creating and sustaining employee engagement:

1. **Let go of any negative opinions you may have about your employees.**

Approach each person as a source of unique knowledge who has something valuable to contribute to the company. Remember that you are co-creating the achievement of an organizational vision with them. If it's hard to let go of those feelings, make a list of at least five positive aspects about that person and keep your focus on them.

2. **Make sure employees have everything they need to do their jobs.**

Remember when, as a child, you prepared for a new school year by getting all new school supplies? Why not build just such an opportunity into your department simply by asking each staff member, or the team as a whole, "Do you have everything you need to be as competent as you can be?" Remember, just as marketplace and customer needs change at daily, so do your employees' needs change.

3. **Clearly communicate what's expected of employees** - what the company's vision and values are, and how the company defines success. Employees can't perform well or be productive if they don't know what it is they're *really* there to do – what their part is in the overall success of the company. Be sure to communicate your expectations - and to do it often.

4. **Get to know your employees** - especially their goals, their stressors, what excites them and how they each define 'success.' I'm not suggesting you pry too deeply or start 'counseling' your team members. What I am suggesting is

that you show an interest in their strengths, joys and well being and that, when appropriate, you do what it takes to enable them to feel more fulfilled and better balanced.

5. **Make sure they are trained - and retrained - in problem solving and conflict resolution skills.** These critical skills will help them

interact better with you, their teammates, customers and suppliers. It's common sense - better communications reduce stress and increase positive outcomes.

6. **Constantly ask how YOU are doing in your employees' eyes.** I know it can be

difficult for managers to request employee feedback - and it can be equally if not more challenging for an employee to give the person who evaluates them an honest response. To get strong at this skill and to model it for employees, use conversation starters such as, "It's one of my goals to constantly improve myself as a manager. What would you like to see me do differently? What could I be doing to make your job easier?" Be sure to accept feedback graciously and to express appreciation.

*A manager's ongoing commitment to keeping people engaged, involved in and excited about the work they do and the challenges they face must be a daily priority.*

7. **Pay attention to company stories and rituals.** Are people laughing *at* each other or *with* each other? Do they repeat stories of success, or moments of shame? Avoid participating in discussions that are destructive to people or the organization, and keep success stories alive.
8. **Reward & recognize employees in ways that are meaningful to them;** that's why getting to know your employees is so important. And remember to celebrate both accomplishments AND efforts to give employees working on long-term goals a boost.
9. **Be consistent for the long haul.** If you start and then stop an 'employee engagement initiative' then your efforts will backfire, creating employee estrangement. People are exhausted and exasperated from 'program du jour'

initiatives that engage their passion and then fizzle out when the manager gets bored, fired or moved to another department. There's a connection between an employee's commitment to an initiative and a manager's commitment to supporting it. A manager's ongoing commitment to keeping people engaged, involved in and excited about the work they do and the challenges they face must be a daily priority.

Ultimately, remember that employees are a company's greatest assets. Their collective ideas, feedback and enthusiasm can help your business thrive. Some people are naturally wired to give their all and do their best no matter where they work. But most people require the guidance of skilled managers who welcome their ideas, ask for feedback and generate enthusiasm in order to sustain a sense of purpose and energy over time.

## End Note from JoAnna

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*So there you have it – 54 Things You Can Do to Leverage the Power, Passion and Positivity of Your Workforce to Create Customer Happiness.*

We all know that happy customers spread that happiness around to others, say nice things on their blogs and consumer-owned evaluation sites, share their happiness with their friends, and are more likely to come back and buy from you again. It's actually a pretty simple concept – just not always easy to implement consistently.

We're here to help you take the actions you need to move your Employee Engagement and Customer Happiness to the next level. Please join us at [www.ReturnOnHappiness.com](http://www.ReturnOnHappiness.com) where you can find out more about our workshops, keynotes, research, consulting and all the many self-study products, like the Customer Care Coach®, which will give you the tools you need to educate, enlighten and enliven your staff to deliver happiness and not just service.

Sign up for our Free [Customer Care Tip](#); enroll in [Monday Morning Motivation](#) or [visit our store now](#) for tools you can use to strengthen all your relationships!

**If you are ready to activate the link between positivity and profitability through exquisite customer care, call us today (561) 279-0027.**



## About JoAnna Brandi

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JoAnna Brandi has been in business since 1990 helping to create more Positive Customer-Caring companies that *Thrive*, where the employees are motivated, the customers are loyal, and the competitors are nervous.

Her lively, enthusiastic and energetic style of teaching encourages people to find and use their “inner game” of caring and connecting to others. She helps companies focus on “Positivity” and teaches leaders to build “Positive Capacity,” both of which, with focus, drive Customer Happiness.

Through her speeches, workshops, books and newsletters, JoAnna has motivated, inspired and trained tens of thousands of people worldwide to care for their customers more consciously, more positively, more competently and with more care.

She has designed and facilitated processes that have changed corporate cultures, saved clients hundreds of thousands of dollars, increased profitability, and sparked creative ideas for building both customer

She is the Publisher of the Customer Care Coach® a self-study “bible” on customer care leadership. The “Coach” teaches the "The Art and Science of Exquisite Customer Care" to companies of all sizes, in all industries. She is the creator of Monday Morning Motivation – Positive Self-Talk for People Who Care About Customers.

She is the author of two books on customer loyalty, “Winning At Customer Retention: 101 Ways to Keep ‘em Happy, Keep ‘em Loyal and Keep ‘em Coming Back,” and “Building Customer Loyalty- 21 Essential Elements in Action.” Her illustrated book on positive thinking is entitled, “54 Ways to Stay Positive in a Changing, Challenging and Sometimes Negative World.” She is currently working on new book, The Feel-Good-at-Work Factor<sup>sm</sup> with a colleague.

She is a graduate of Dr. Martin Seligman’s Authentic Happiness Coaching program – one of only 850 trained worldwide, and is one of the Founders of Positive Workplace International, a group of happiness coaches who develop practical workplace applications from the latest scientific findings in Positive Psychology.

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You can find JoAnna online at [www.ReturnOnHappiness.com](http://www.ReturnOnHappiness.com)

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