

Contact:
Diane Rumbaugh
Rumbaugh Public Relations
805-493-2877
diane@rumbaughpr.com

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Encourage Open Brain Thinking By Your Employees

Los Angeles, Calif.—Employees will perform better when bosses encourage them to think of how they will succeed instead of focusing on how they can improve, says [Dr. Noelle Nelson](#), author of "[Make More Money By Making Your Employees Happy](#)."

Nelson points to ongoing research by [Professor Richard Boyatzis](#) at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western on how differently our brains function when we're coached based on our dreams and desires, rather than on our failings.

"When we hear positive feedback, our brain opens, we becomes more receptive and are motivated to do good work," says Nelson. "Boyatzis' research shows that when we hear criticisms, our brain closes, making us anxious and defensive."

In his book, "Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence," [Daniel Goleman](#) quotes Boyatzis: "Talking about your positive goals and dreams activates brain centers that open you up to new possibilities. But if you change the conversation to what you should do to fix yourself, it closes you down."

Nelson suggests using an open brain style when interacting with employees. For example, bosses should ask an employee at review time, "If everything worked out perfectly for you, where do you see yourself in a year? According to Boyatzis' research, this makes it easier for the employee to think in terms of improvement rather than if he or she heard the more typical "Where do you think you need improvement?"

"This second approach immediately suggests there's something wrong with the employee, which in turn tends to shut down the employee's ability to think constructively," says Nelson. "We humans are a bundle of emotions. A boss can help employees succeed just by inspiring 'open brain' thinking."

For more practical workplace tips, go to <http://www.noellenelson.com>, on Facebook at [Facebook.com/HappyEmployeesEqualProfits](https://www.facebook.com/HappyEmployeesEqualProfits) or at [Twitter.com/HappyProfits](https://twitter.com/HappyProfits).

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