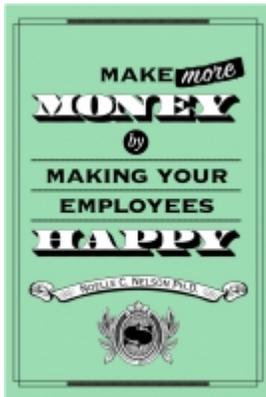


SGC Interviews: Dr. Noelle Nelson, Author of “Make More Money by Making Your Employees Happy”

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Interview by Raul Candeloro, Executive Director, Small Giants Community

Here at the Small Giants Community we are always looking for new ways to help you make employees happier. It's no coincidence that Paul's book is called "Why is Everyone Smiling?" So I was thrilled when I found out about "Make More Money by Making Your Employees Happy," written by Dr. Noelle Nelson.

"Make More Money by Making Your Employees Happy" uncovers how successful companies make their employees happy beyond the paycheck--and reap the profits that automatically ensue from engaged employees-- increased productivity, high employee morale, excellent retention and decreased absenteeism.

The book breaks down in simple to use concepts just how easily small changes in the behavior of managers and supervisors can drastically improve workplace productivity.

Grounded in the research of Martin Seligman (positive psychology) and David Cooperrider (appreciative inquiry), it also provides practical tools and examples to bridge the gap between academia and front-line supervisors.

Here's our exclusive interview with Dr. Nelson for the SG Community:

SGC: Let's begin by talking about Make More Money by Making Your Employees Happy. With so many books out there about company culture, what new information does your book offer?

Dr. Nelson: The book's most fundamental message is that when you truly value what your employees value, they, in turn, will value what you (and your company) value. Instituting this basic principal within your company inevitably leads to higher profits. The book also offers very specific free and low cost ideas to make your employees feel valued, productive and happy.

SGC: Could you give us an example out of your book that reflects your main idea?

Dr. Nelson: Worker safety is a prime example of connecting what workers value with company profits. In the book, I use Alcoa as an example. When profits fell, the then new CEO Paul O'Neill announced that his sole priority was to increase worker safety. This so shocked investors that some pulled out of Alcoa immediately. That was a big mistake. O'Neill's intense commitment to worker safety transformed the company so within a year, Alcoa's profits hit a record high. Employee productivity soared as accident rates decreased from one accident per week in just about every Alcoa plant, to some plants going years without losing a single workday to an accident. By the time O'Neill stepped down some 13 years later, Alcoa's annual income was 500% larger than before he arrived.

Alcoa didn't offer their employees more money--what many businesses think of as the main way of motivating productivity--Alcoa addressed in actual, meaningful terms what really mattered to their employees: worker safety, critical in an environment where workers dealt with molten metal and extreme temperatures on a daily basis. There was no clearer way to declare to workers: you matter, you count, you are important.

SGC: What other authors or consultants have influenced you the most in this area? Any books you would recommend?

Dr. Nelson: What influenced me the most in this area are the examples of successful companies that "get" the valuing concept, companies like Southwest Airlines, Amazon, FedEx and Starbucks. It always amazes me that most businesses, large and small, don't follow the path of these innovative, successful companies.

SGC: In a short sentence, what kind of small business owner should read your book? What kind of advice should they be looking for? Or what kind of problem should they be looking to solve?

Dr. Nelson: All kinds of small businesses can gain by reading the book--from service providers to manufacturers. The book provides solutions to the problems facing most all types of small businesses: high employee turnover, high absenteeism, low productivity, low morale and less than stellar profits.

SGC: On the other hand, who shouldn't? What will small business owners NOT find in your book?

Dr. Nelson: Small business owners who insist that the best way to get the most from employees is through punishment probably won't find this book to their liking. This is not a book on how to be lean and mean.

SGC: What's the first thing you would like a small business owner to do after reading your book?

Dr. Nelson: Dig deep to find what your employees actually value. The answers can be varied: more resources, better training, flextime, pay for performance, childcare, better job safety. Take time to really listen to your employees.

SGC: What is the biggest mistake you see small business owners making in this area?

Dr. Nelson: The biggest mistake small business owners make is taking for granted their good employees and then overload them with work. In essence, they punish their good employees.

SGC: What suggestions would you give them to improve? Where should they start?

Dr. Nelson: Catch your employees in the act of doing something right. Acknowledging how your employees are doing something right is a far more successful path to work excellence than pointing out what they are doing wrong. Psychology has long proven that people respond far better to positive feedback than to negative. By staying positive, you keep employees on the right track since people are likely to repeat behaviors they have been praised for.

SGC: What about managers? In general, what do you think they should STOP doing if they wanted to improve their team's morale/results?

Dr. Nelson: Instead of criticizing, look for reasons for praise. Instead of micromanaging, provide better guidelines at the beginning of a project and then step back.

SGC: Anything they should start doing more?

Dr. Nelson: Maintain a genuine open-door policy. If you ask for your workers' opinion, really listen to their answers. Don't pay lip service to their concerns and input.

SGC: Based on all your experience in this area, what kind advice you see out there that you disagree with - think is wrong and makes you mad when you hear someone giving it?

Dr. Nelson: I hear that Millennials are lazy and Boomers are outdated and slow. A lack of appreciation of the talents of each generation and each individual hurts us as individuals and business in general.

SGC: Any additional comments or thoughts for our Small Giants Community members?

Dr. Nelson: Appreciate! Remember, if you value your employees, they will value you.

SGC: Thank you!

To Contact Dr. Noelle Nelson visit www.noellenelson.com / On Facebook:

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This interview series is conducted to provide members of the Small Giants Community with exclusive discussion and access to the latest in practices and theory for building great companies with purpose. To experience more of what the SGC has to offer, visit www.smallgiants.org