

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORK(PLACE): CLIMBING MASLOW'S PYRAMID

Work harmony is a delicate balance of the great, the good, and the tolerable—because, of course, nothing in life is perfect. It's not the result of an environment that creates happiness at every turn, promotes mastery of a single skill, or allows employees to coast along on a sea of low demands and even lower expectations. Rather, work harmony is the product of an environment that pushes employees to their best while simultaneously meeting personal needs and strengthening connections to the company and its mission.

Like most employers, Elwood strives to achieve workplace harmony. We seek to compile a workforce of internal staff members and associates that values both its work and Elwood as an employer. We want a team working in sync to accomplish one mission. We desire to always push the limits of our tagline, “the better people, people®”. And we're constantly learning how to do this—*which is a good thing*—by listening to the very people we aim to empower.

We are lucky to sit in the driver's seat as one of the largest staffing providers in the nation, because we have thousands of opportunities to build upon our knowledge base each year through our internal staff members and associates, and we do this via routine surveys and constant research.

You may be wondering what we've learned when it comes to building a workforce full of completely fulfilled employees. Let us share our findings.

While there very obviously isn't a single definition of “harmony” that applies to every person, we've cultivated a list of reasons—backed by a little math and a little psychology—why employees are able to experience work harmony.

A LITTLE MATH

If you've read even just one or two of our white papers or research reports, you know we are overt proponents of the Net Promoter SystemSM (NPS[®]) and its employee-centric spinoff, the employee Net Promoter System (eNPS). The Net Promoter System is a simple method to gather basic intelligence and gauge engagement, and we employ it in almost every satisfaction-related survey we conduct.

We believe an employee who promotes his or her employer as a place to work has reached a state of harmony—he or she is so fulfilled personally and professionally that he or she believes the employer can make others equally fulfilled. To that end, we define reaching a state of work harmony as strongly agreeing with the following eNPS statement (scoring the statement a 9 or 10, where 10 indicates the respondent “strongly agrees”):

I would recommend employment at my employer to a close friend.

Of course, that single rating doesn't answer the “what.” As in, “*What creates such a state of harmony that you'd recommend employment to a friend?*”

Knowing Elwood tracks the eNPS ratings of its corporate employees through our annual all-employee survey, we set out to discover what creates work harmony. Lucky for us, the other eight questions on our annual survey¹ capture that.

Between 2011-2014, we tracked the NPS scores associated with the survey's eight questions. We then calculated the strength of the correlation of those NPS scores and the scores to the above eNPS statement for the same time period. We found a very strong correlation between variables in four of the eight statements, indicating the way an employee scores the statements below is very strongly correlated with whether he or she would

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORK(PLACE): CLIMBING MASLOW'S PYRAMID

recommend employment to a friend (see chart for full list). The following have the greatest impact on work harmony:

1. *Safety is a top priority of the company*
2. *Opportunities for advancement*
3. *Confidence in the executive leadership of the company*
4. *Feelings of value and shared goals*

We then analyzed comments captured by our Associate Engagement team during personal interviews with 6,300 associates at nearly 100 client companies over the past few years to determine if there are additional factors that affect the employment experience. We isolated and identified three common themes cited at more than half of participating facilities²:

5. *Communication*
6. *Training*
7. *Treatment/inclusion*

These seven factors are important to workplace harmony; they are the very items an employer must overcome to create an environment that allows employees to reach a state of employment “bliss.”

A LITTLE PSYCHOLOGY

Are you surprised by the factors that hold the greatest influence over workplace harmony? Maybe, maybe not. Perhaps you're looking at this and wondering why basic factors such as pay are not highly-correlated with work harmony. It's an interesting question, but one that is easily answered by studying Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and adapting it to the workplace. Maslow's famous research from the 1940s contends that people are motivated to reach a state of “self-actualization” (the top level of the pyramid, or, in our case, “workplace harmony”), but can only reach that state by fulfilling the needs in the lowest levels of the pyramid in succession first.³

In the context of the workplace, basic needs—like receiving adequate wages—can be met by almost any employer. Once an employee fulfills his basic needs, he seeks to fulfill the next levels in the pyramid; as each need is met, he aims higher, always striving to reach “workplace harmony.” So, it only makes sense that the needs at the top of the pyramid have the greatest influence on a worker's state of being, because they are unique to each

How Strongly Correlated are the Scores of the Following Statements and the Scores of the eNPS Statement “I would recommend employment at Elwood Staffing to a close friend”?

	CORRELATION	total positive correlation
Safety is a top priority of the company	0.9959	
I believe there are opportunities for me to advance in the company	0.9861	
I have confidence in the executive leadership of the company	0.9376	
I feel like a valued member of my team working towards a shared goal	0.9158	
The training and development provided by the company allow me to do the best I can	0.8338	
I have a good relationship with my supervisor	0.6426	
The pay and benefits provided by the company are fair	0.141	
We provide high quality service to our customers	0.0778	

Employment Experience Influencers and the Percent of Facilities Reporting the Influence*

TRENDS	FREQUENCY
Communication	72%
Training	61%
Treatment /inclusion	57%
Overtime expectations	41%
Pay	37%
Conversion opportunities	37%

*To be included in the facility count, at least 20% of interviewed associates must have cited the influence during personal interviews. The chart can be interpreted in this manner: In 72% of facilities, at least 20% of interviewed employees cited “communication” as an influence on their employment experience.

²Gauging Employee Engagement through the Employee Net Promoter System.” Personal interview. As of June 2015, 6314 associates at 94 individual client facilities had participated in interviews.

³McLeod, Saul. “Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.” Simply Psychology. N.p., 17 Sept. 2007. Web. 23 June 2015.

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORK(PLACE): CLIMBING MASLOW'S PYRAMID

employee and therefore the hardest for just any employer to fulfill. An employer who allows an employee to reach the highest level of the pyramid is hard to replace; thus, as both our math and Maslow's psychology proves, the categories in the upper levels should indeed have the most influence on one's overall employment experience or ability to achieve workplace harmony.



*Safety as a Priority of the Company refers to the way our internal employees feel about the emphasis Elwood Staffing places on putting associates into safe work environments. As such, this represents a feeling of pride or esteem relating to the social implications of their jobs, not the safety of their immediate environment (which would be indicated in Level 2 of the pyramid).

CONCLUSION

Given today's employment landscape—recruiting and retention are tough—it's time to turn your focus to meeting the social and esteem needs of your workforce. If you're struggling to satisfy the basic needs of employees, you're likely struggling to keep them. At the risk of beating a dead horse, you may recall from other reports we've published, we believe *all employers* can and should be meeting the most basic needs of employees by paying in the upper half of local starting wages and paying at least \$2.25/hr more than the local minimum wage, which paves the way for focusing on the aspects of employment that *make the difference* between hiring workers who probably won't stick around and hiring workers who are personally and professionally fulfilled and committed to you and your mission.

This document was researched, analyzed, written, and prepared by Elwood Staffing®, one of the largest light industrial staffing firms in the United States. Since its founding in 1980, Elwood has attracted millions of candidates, made hundreds of thousands of placements, and served tens of thousands of clients. Each and every day, our interactions with job seekers, workers, and employers generate valuable data we continually develop into actionable insights that guide better business decisions. We love data, and we love to share our knowledge to help employers like you make informed decisions. We are committed to finding new and consistent ways of sharing the valuable insights we gain, and we hope you look to us as an advisor with the knowledge and capabilities to help you get ahead.

View more of our publications at www.elwoodstaffing.com/BRC

This publication is proprietary and confidential and intended for general purposes. Nothing contained, expressed, or implied herein is intended or shall be construed as legal advice, and no attorney-client relationship is formed. If you have questions about any law, statute, regulation, or requirement expressly or implicitly referenced, contact legal counsel of your choice.

