

WHY HAPPINESS MATTERS

How the new science of well-being can help people, organisations and societies to thrive

Dr Mark Williamson

Director, Action for Happiness

The logo for Action for Happiness features a red banner with the text "ACTION FOR HAPPINESS" in white, uppercase letters. The banner is attached to a thin green vertical line that has a small green circle at the top. The entire logo is set against a light blue background with a green ground area at the bottom and a green cloud-like shape on the right.

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

About Action for Happiness

- A **movement** of people and organisations committed to building a happier society for everyone
- Launched in April 2011 and already has over **17,000 members** from over 100 countries
- Provides **evidence-based resources** to enable practical, positive action at home, at work or in the community
- Ultimately aims to trigger a **cultural shift** towards prioritising “the things that really matter”

What do we mean by happiness?

Key components of subjective well-being:



Positive emotion

Feeling good right now

+



Life Satisfaction

Feeling that life is going well overall

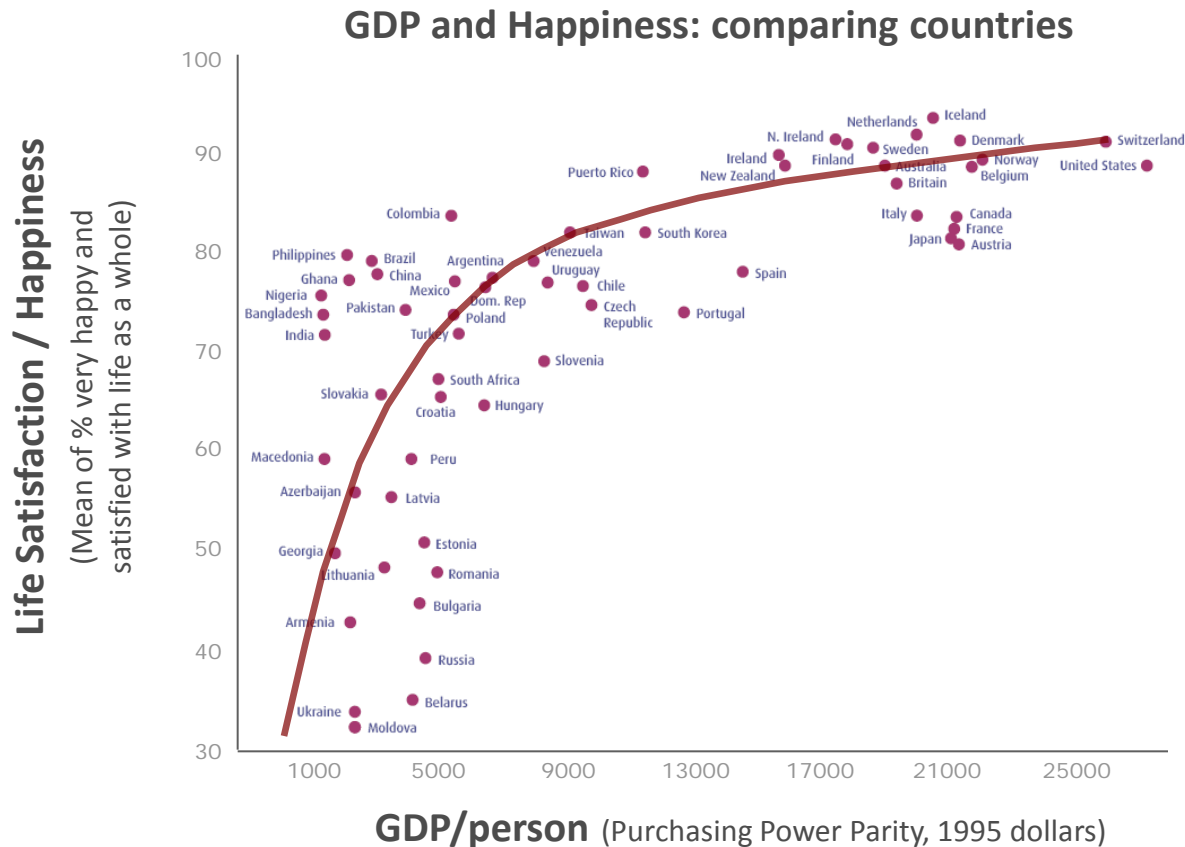
+



Meaning & Purpose

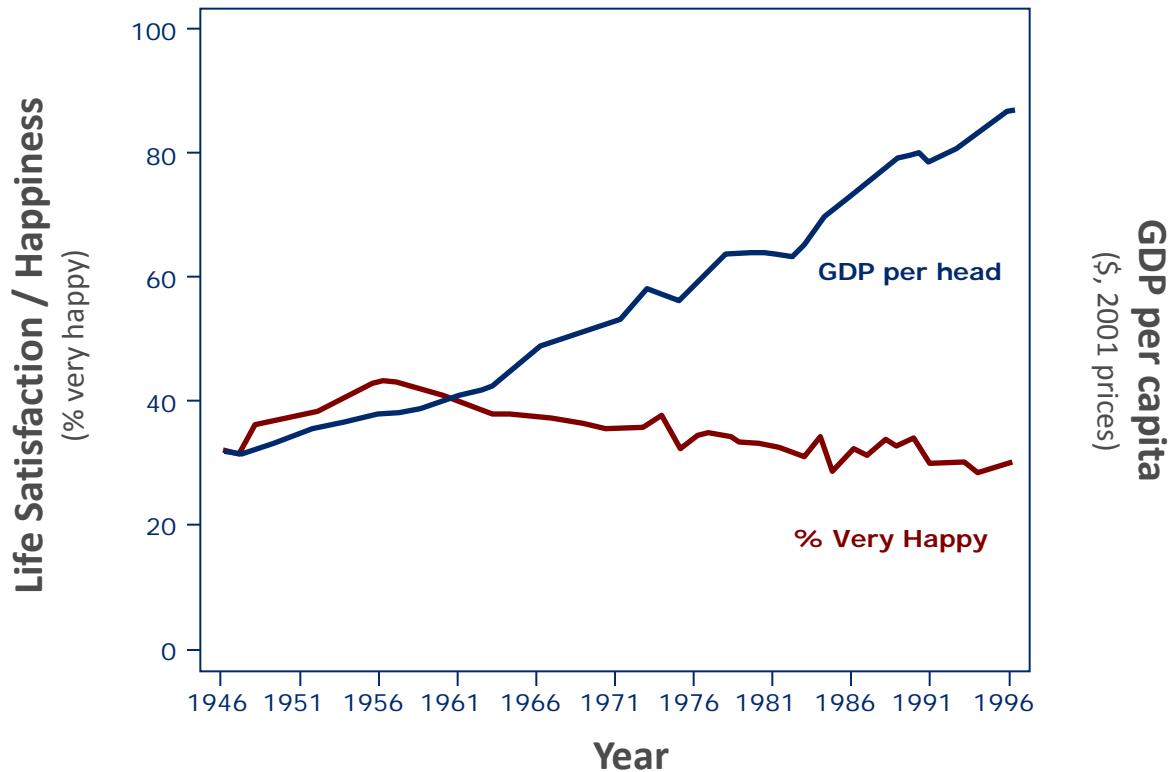
Feeling that what you do is worthwhile

Higher GDP doesn't always mean greater life satisfaction



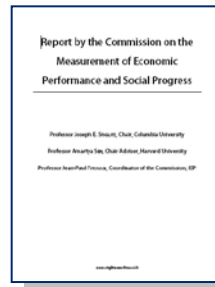
Countries have been getting richer but no happier

Changes in Happiness and GDP over time



There has now been a big shift in mainstream thinking

In 2008, Nicholas Sarkozy asked eminent economists Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi to create a “Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress”.



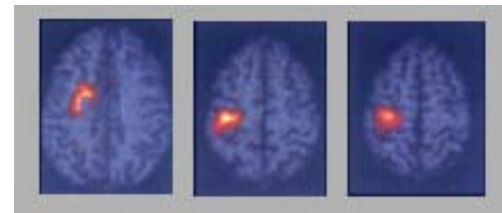
The commission made important recommendations, including:

- **Improvements to existing measures of economic activity**
(e.g. give more weight to distribution of wealth not just average income)
- **Shifting emphasis from economic production to wellbeing**
(e.g. include objective and subjective measures of people’s wellbeing)

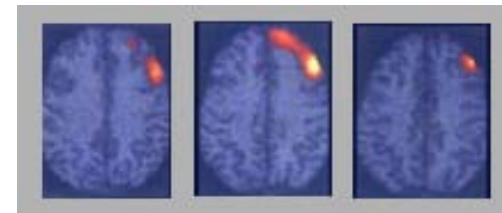
Research is uncovering the full potential of our brains

- Although happiness is subjective it can be measured and correlates well with objective measures of **brain activity**
- Although our genes and circumstances affect our well-being, a significant portion of our happiness comes from our **conscious choices and behaviour**

Positive emotion



Negative emotion



Examples of measured brain activity

GREAT DREAM: Ten Keys to Happier Living

GIVING



RELATING



EXERCISING



APPRECIATING



TRYING OUT



DIRECTION



RESILIENCE



EMOTION



ACCEPTANCE



MEANING



We're failing a crisis of untapped human potential

Individuals



- More than half of employees are **unhappy** at work
- **69%** say increasing **levels of stress** have been an issue for them in the last three years

Organisations



- Anxiety and stress cost the UK economy **£26 billion** each year
- 41% of managers and 53% senior managers are seriously considering **leaving their jobs**

Happiness underpins wellness, engagement and satisfaction



➤ **Wellness:** focus on physical health, working conditions, work/life balance etc



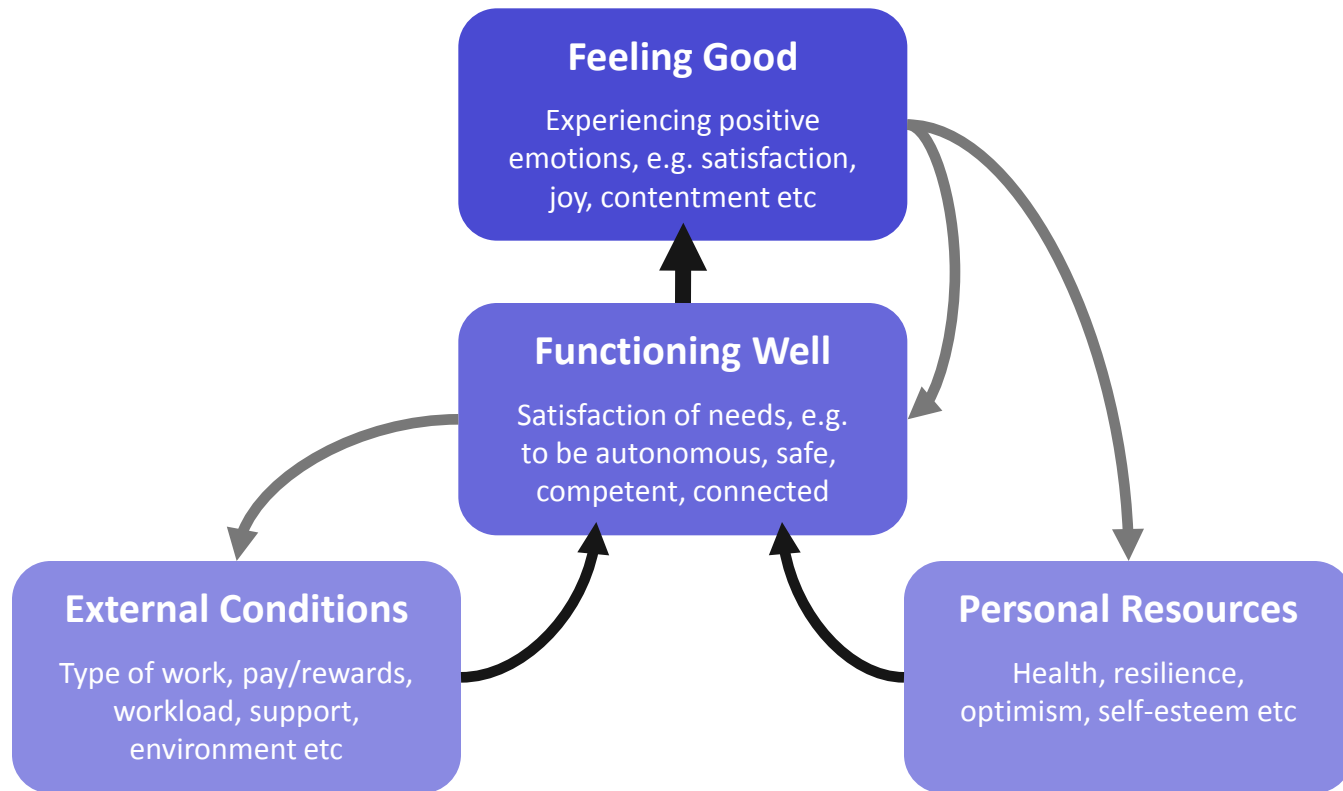
➤ **Engagement:** focus on how to get people to “go the extra mile” for their organisation

➤ **Job satisfaction:** focus on what people think about their work (e.g. pay, progress, responsibility)

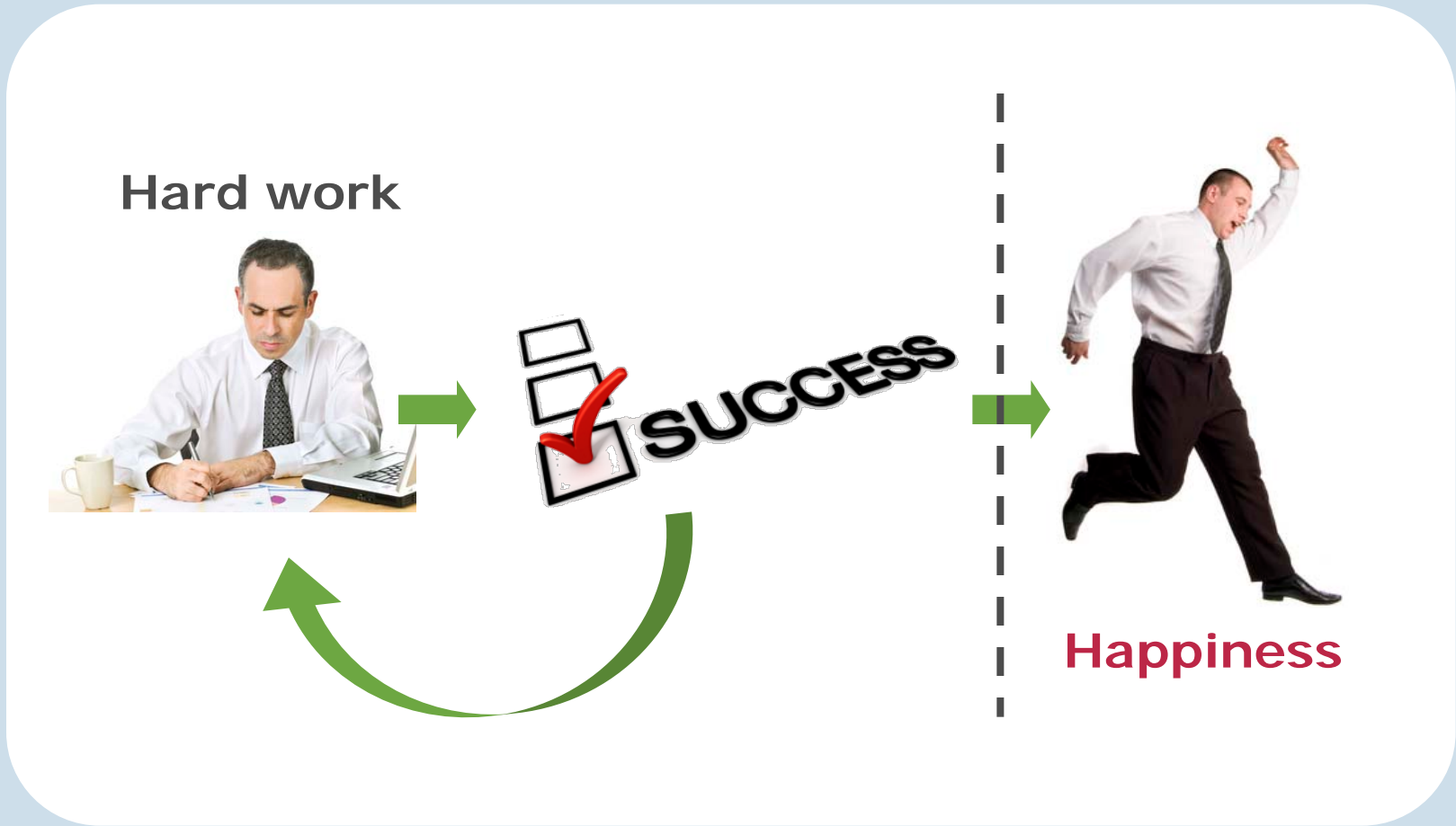


➤ **Happiness at work:** focus on how people feel overall about their work. This includes their wellness, satisfaction and engagement but also has crucial **emotional** and **psychological** dimensions

Happiness at work: functioning well and feeling good



Our conventional model for success is incomplete



Evidence shows that happiness actually leads to success



*“Study after study shows that **happiness precedes** important outcomes and indicators of thriving, including fulfilling **work**, satisfying **relationships**, superior **health and longevity**”*

Source: S. Lyubomirsky et al (2005)

Happier people are healthier and live longer

A recent review of over 160 different research studies showed:

- Happy people experience **better overall health** and **live longer** than their less happy peers
- Anxiety, depression, pessimism and a lack of enjoyment of daily activities are associated with **higher rates of illness** and **shorter lifespans**



Source: E. Diener et al (2011)

Positive emotions enhance creativity and learning

- Positive emotions broaden our awareness and encourage novel, varied, and exploratory thoughts and actions



“Fight or flight”

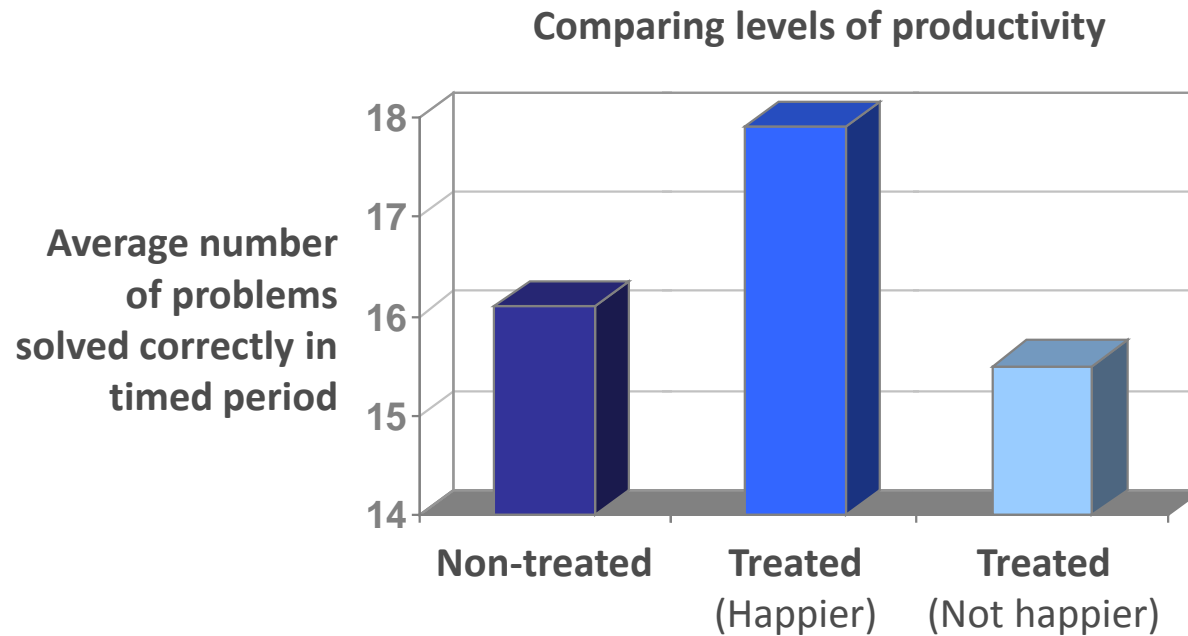
VS



“Broaden and build”

Source: B. Fredrickson (2001)

Positive emotions have strong causal effects on productivity

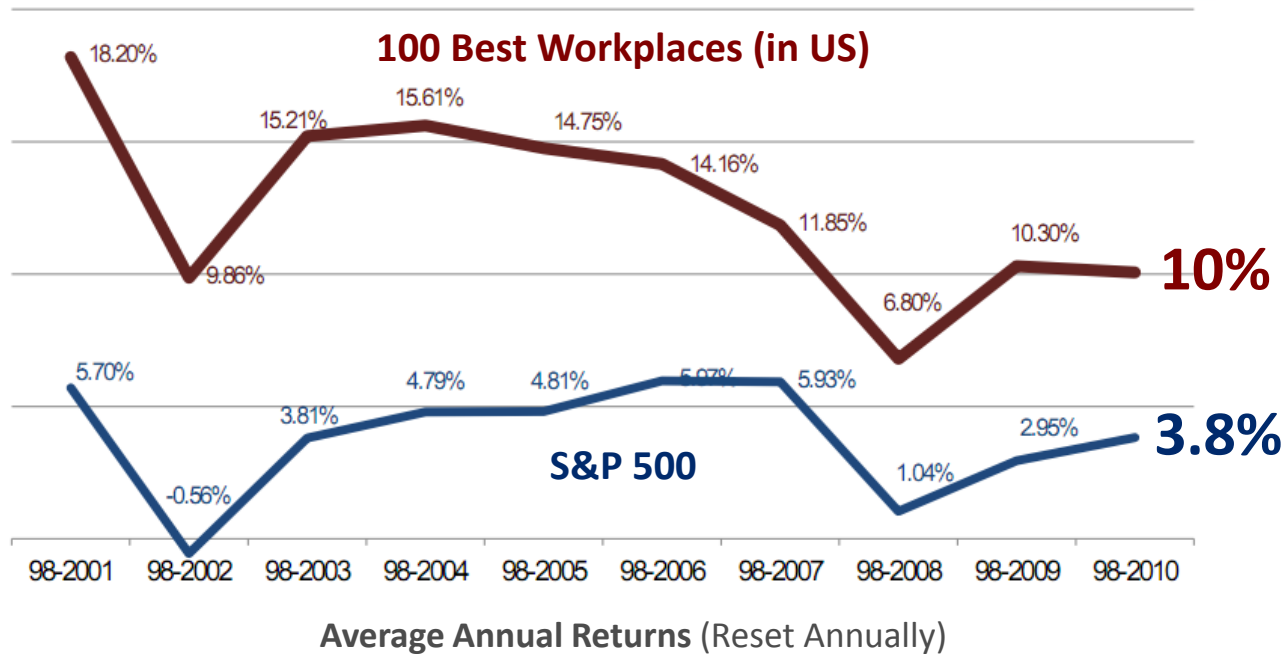


Source: Oswald, Proto and SgROI (2011)

Case study: Nando's



Happier organisations outperform their competitors



Source: Russell Investment Group for Fortune Magazine (2011)

Get the right ratio of positive to negative

- **Losada ratio:** the ratio of positive to negative interactions in a team
- **Successful teams** need a minimum ratio of **3:1** and **ideally 6:1**
- Teams with **encouraging** managers shown to perform **30% better** than those with less positive managers



Sources: B. Fredrickson & M. Losada (2005), S. Achor (2010)

Focus on intrinsic (not extrinsic) motivation



MAKE
A
DIFFERENCE
!

A stack of several colorful sticky notes (yellow, orange, and red) is shown on a textured, light-colored fabric surface. The top sticky note is bright green and has the words "MAKE A DIFFERENCE!" written on it in bold, black, hand-drawn capital letters. The exclamation point is particularly large and stylized.

Find people's strengths and play to them



Recruit for attitude



Notice the good things

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, white rectangular card. The card is held horizontally and features the word "Thanks" written in a bold, pink, sans-serif font. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger gripping the top edge of the card. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light beige color. The overall composition is simple and focused on the message of gratitude.

Thanks

Happiness at work is about taking a more human approach

People as capital assets



- Rational
- Extrinsic motivation (driven by incentives)
- Focus on process

People as human beings



- Rational & Emotional
- Intrinsic motivation (driven by purpose)
- Focus on relationships

In summary...

People are at their best when they **feel good** about themselves and what they're doing



Find out more...

Join us at: www.actionforhappiness.org



facebook.com/actionforhappiness



@actionhappiness



youtube.com/actionforhappiness



Support us by **donating £10** now
Text **AHAP01 £10** to **70070**

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS