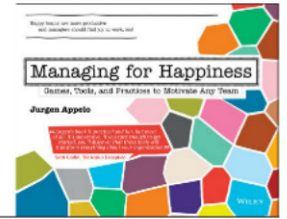


Managing for Happiness

By Jurgen Appelo



This book's colourful cover, pictures and drawings, which successfully combine entertainment with learning, make it obvious that it has been designed as a fun read. Author Jurgen Appelo is clearly enthusiastic about the subject of motivation and it shines through - each page either raises a smile or stimulates the mind.

Using quotations from writers, established experts, artists and others, the work neatly draws together a range of theories and practice to provide a compelling view of what happiness could look like within an organisation. For these reasons alone, anyone keen to motivate themselves or others should buy it.

The book also provides useful reflections on how theoretical approaches to motivation can be applied within the workplace. The links made between the work of management theorists and suggestions for action are quite clear.

But in many respects, the book is too idealistic. There is an implicit, rather than clearly stated, acknowledgement that it is aimed at people in creative environments who conform to the *MacGregor's "Theory Y" way of thinking*. The concept of the psychological contract is sidestepped, as is the notion that impossible managers, bad leaders and dysfunctional organisations really do exist.

While a common sense approach is encouraged (Want to improve collaboration? Put people together, p42), some suggestions are vague: "Somehow, you must optimise both" or "people try to find an optimum between two extremes". There is also the statement: "No complex system will ever really be optimal" (p153), followed in the next paragraph by "Try raising

a family!" which hints at the fact the writer actually understands the real problems faced by organisations.

Pros and cons

But at times, Appelo lets himself down by an apparent frustration that people do not all think the same way. One section (p256), which is about highlighting cultural differences to managers, states: "But you'd be an idiot...to see this as an obstacle". Which seems a bit harsh.

Moreover, although he invokes the work of other writers such as *knowledge management expert Professor Ikujiro Nonaka*, more pointers would have been helpful to ground the book and make it clearer what the links between them were.

The work also fails to advise how to make any of its ideas or approaches sustainable over the long-term. In this respect, it avoids confronting the issues identified by *organisational learning expert Chris Argyris*. He stated that people revert back to their 'normal' behaviour once they are back in the workplace – and the same may well hold true for people reading this book. ■

Review written by Mark Northway, director and courses co-ordinator, *Deltic Training*.