

## 'FORWARD-THINKING COMPANIES' PRAISED

# Development coach: Workers need to get happy

Staff Report

America may be a wealthy country, but it's apparently not a happy one. According to a Gallup study at <http://info.healthways.com/wbi2013>, the well-being of Americans hasn't improved in the past six years and actually declined slightly in 2013.

Other reports finds that 85 percent of Americans are unhappy in their jobs. According to the World Health Organization, one out of three Americans is diagnosed with depression, and more than 75 percent suffer from chronic stress and are unaware of it. This does not account for the percentage of unemployed who are struggling to find their place and offer their talents.

Jackie Ruka, author of "Get Happy and Create a Kick Butt Life!" and founder of the Get Happy Zone (GetHappyZone.com) said she believes she may have found a solution, particularly for the business world.

"As a society we've gotten it backwards: It is happiness that leads to success not vice versa," Ruka said. "The 'failure is not an option' mentality is an old belief system based upon fear, insecurity and competition, which results in working too much for fear of job and income loss. But this state of mind can literally kill us.

"Conversely, a happy workforce leads to increased productivity and meaningfulness at work in addition to a more fruitful and meaningful personal life," she said. "It's a cycle. There are multiple scientific studies proving that we are, in fact, the ambassadors of our own happiness in that we have full control over this enviable state of mind, which is a powerful precursor of success in terms of the true meaning of the word and how it impacts the human experience."

Employers have started to take note that emotional well-being is a mission critical aspect of business growth.

Ruka credited "forward-thinking companies," such as Zappos, Google and Pfizer.

"They foster happiness as part of their company culture by offering mindfulness programs and by instituting practices that help preserve work-life balance," she said. "Of course, we

should not become dependent upon corporate America to usher in this sorely needed paradigm shift. The more individuals recognize that we are each responsible for our own happiness, the closer we are to seeing that collective happiness manifest, resulting in improved relationships, careers, finances and both physical and emotional health."

Ruka offers this list of 10 scientifically proven happiness strategies:

- » Savor ordinary events.
- » Avoid comparisons to others.
- » Put money low on the list of priorities.
- » Have meaningful goals.
- » Take initiative at work.
- » Make friends and treasure family.
- » Fake until you make it by smiling even when you don't feel like it.
- » Keep a gratitude journal.
- » Get moving with exercise.
- » Serve others through volunteer work or donations of goods.



Professional development coach Jackie Ruka is founder of the Get Happy Zone, offering tips on how workers can become happy. GET HAPPY ZONE PHOTO

