

Good morning, everybody. Dennis Engelbrecht with our legacy series of Digging Deeper.

I was reading a long article the other day about happiness, and one of the interesting things about being happy is they found that one of the traits that the folks in this long study, which has been going on I guess over 60 years now, trying to determine why people are more happy, is the happier people strive more. They're usually striving to do something, to achieve something, to get somewhere, to do something. And that striving makes them feel more whole, gives them a purpose for their lives. So that whole concept of striving, I started thinking about it and started thinking back to the places I've worked, and the people I've worked with. And if people are striving, they're trying to achieve something, they're working diligently towards something, and you can almost see that. If you walk into an office and you look at people and what they're doing, you can probably tell if people are striving or whether they're just doing their day-to-day duties and going through the motions and getting through the day, and then going home, blah, blah, blah.

And you've probably been in situations in offices, or even job sites, where you've seen both of those. You go to a job site, and everybody looks like a busy bee. They're moving from here to there, they walk with a pace, they look determined, you can see it on people's faces. They're striving. They're striving to do something, to achieve something, to gain whatever. A level of productivity, quality, complete a project, whatever it is. So, think about this, your company productivity, your quality, your success, your relationships, all of those people are probably tied to the extent to which you and your team are striving. So, does that happen naturally? Does everyone just show up and strive naturally? Maybe to some extent, but I think to a great extent it does not. And even where it is to some extent, I think it comes and goes. It comes and goes with mood, and what's happening at home, and how you feel about yourself that day, and all of those things.

So as a leader, what can you do about that? What can you do to make sure that your people are striving on a more consistent basis or striving every day? And I think there are two very quick things there that you as a leader can do. First of all, make sure you are striving and make sure you're striving is visible to other folks. If you just go to your desk and you put your head down all day, and you're typing on the computer or the moving figures around, or whatever you're doing, nobody knows what you're doing. And if you're walking around lethargic, without purpose, people will notice that. So, what's your pace as you go from place to place? What do you look like? Are you sharing the work you're doing so people know you're striving? So, you may be typing away at the computer, but if people know that what you're trying to do is write up your proposal to win this next piece of work, all right, they get it, you're striving to do something. "Yeah, I'm with that, I see that you're doing that. I should be doing that too."

The other thing is with your people, for you to be able to set some purpose, goals, benchmarks, things for them to strive toward. In a lot of cases, I think particularly as you go to the back office, and possibly even assistant project managers or folks lower down, I guess, in the organization, they're not always sure what the purpose is of their day-to-day. What are they striving for? Is it just a bunch of things they have to put a check mark and get done? Or is there a higher purpose to getting it done well, getting it done quicker, getting it done on time, whatever it might be. But sometimes they're not very good at setting their own goals or their own standards, so they need leadership to set that for them. Of course, if their work is connected and tied to the overall goal, that helps as well. That gives something bigger for people to strive toward. And if they can connect the work, let's just take an accounts payable person and they're processing an invoice and they're looking, "Well, let's see, do I have all their paperwork in so I can process their check?"

Or do they do that more positively and say, "Ooh, I'm missing this piece of paperwork, I should call them so that we can get them paid on time and they'll be a happier subcontractor or supplier, and we might get their better price next time." Because all of those are connected, and then you can get more work because you pay your people better. But if the person in accounts payable hasn't connected what they're doing to the purposes, they might just be going through the motions. So, striving is one of the keys to your company's success, it may be a hidden key that you haven't thought about. So, make sure your people are striving, make sure your striving is visible. Dennis Engelbrecht, Digging Deeper.