

Does employee happiness matter for employer branding?



I've always loved to get involved in discussions around employee happiness versus employee engagement, and whether one over the other should be a primary focus for a company. Just recently, my team was discussing this very topic and it reminded me of a [post I wrote a while back](#), wherein I said that employee satisfaction (happiness) is a desired outcome of an engaged workforce, but should not be the sole focus of any employee engagement or employer branding strategy. I still believe this.

What's the difference, you ask?

Employee satisfaction — or *happiness* — is the extent to which employees are happy or content with their jobs and work environment.

Employee engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the company and feel connected to their work, and willing to put forth discretionary effort.

Let's face it.

Every company would *like* its employees to be happy. However, happy employees are not necessarily the same as engaged employees. There's no proof that happy employees will do anything great for your company. It is entirely possible to have an employee who is satisfied with their work who is not engaged— someone who shows up for the paycheck or who is content with the status quo. Think of it as more of a **physical commitment**: *I'll show up to work every day, but that doesn't mean I'll do more than I have to.*

On the other hand, employees are motivated (or inspired) to do more than the minimum needed in order to keep their jobs. They are passionate about their work and go above and beyond the core responsibilities outlined in their job descriptions, innovating and thinking outside the box to move their company forward. Think of it as an **emotional commitment**: *I'm passionate about what I do and I believe the company cares about me, so I'm willing to go the extra mile.*

And how does this relate to employer branding?

Employees are more engaged when a company has an employee value proposition (EVP) that they believe in. The EVP is a handshake where the company and the employee agree to a partnership that has mutually beneficial outcomes. The path to getting employees to believe in — and understand — the terms of this partnership is through the employer brand.

Here at The Hartford, we often say that we don't offer tangible goods to our customers. Instead we provide a "promise."

A solid employer branding strategy is the articulation of a company's promise to its employees. Does employee happiness matter? *Of course.* But the promise is more than just about making employees happy... it's about ensuring they understand the value they get from entering into a partnership with you — that you, as a company, care about their well-being as an individual, that you will provide them with the tools and resources to grow and develop their skills, and that what they do matters — not just for themselves, but for the company and for the company's customers.

When you achieve this... *then* you will have employee happiness.