A Ten-Step Guide to Working More Human
Lessons Learned from workhuman 2015
The world of work is changing. More than ever, workers are looking for meaning, fulfillment, and camaraderie in their work. Leading companies understand this and are focusing on creating more human work cultures, imbued with purpose, happiness, appreciation, and respect.

At the heart of this change is a realignment in the way we interact with one another, the way we focus on recognizing and rewarding each other, and the way we build and nurture relationships at work.

At our recent WorkHuman 2015 conference, we brought together writers, academics, and thinkers from all areas of organizations to reflect on ways we, as culture curators, can actively encourage this shift, and make work (and subsequently our lives) more fulfilling, more productive, and more human.

Here is a collection of some of their ideas.
Put on your own oxygen mask first

The very first step to taking care of a team or a culture is to lead by example and first take care of yourself. Often, as Arianna Huffington observes in her book *Thrive*, “We think, mistakenly, that success is the result of the amount of time we put in at work, instead of the quality of time we put in.”

But if we, as leaders, are burnt out and disengaged, we have no ability to inspire others. As was continually observed at the WorkHuman 2015 conference, an empty bucket cannot refill anyone’s cup. If leaders are not taking care of their own emotional wellbeing and engagement, they cannot hope to inspire and engage others. WorkHuman speakers such as Arianna Huffington, Rob Lowe, Pandit Dasa, and Catherine Flavin all directly observed the need to set priorities and limits on our own energy, and remain true to the principle of working—and living—human.

Three Tips for Self-Preservation

1. **Set and respect** your own personal limits and life-work balance.
2. **Schedule time to unplug** and disconnect from digital tools.
3. **Consider yourself a mentor**, and model well-being for your team.

— Arianna Huffington, Co-founder and editor-in-chief of The Huffington Post
Measure and Manage Happiness

Happiness is a choice, says positive psychologist Shawn Achor. And we all have the capability to re-wire our brains, and also to encourage more happiness in others. The time has come, he tells us in his book *The Happiness Advantage*, to take happiness more seriously at work. “Each one of us is like that butterfly in the Butterfly Effect,” writes Shawn, “And each tiny move toward a more positive mindset can send ripples of positivity through our organizations, our families, and our communities.”

Focusing on the good, says Shawn, “isn’t just about overcoming our inner grump to see the glass half full. It’s about opening our minds to the ideas and opportunities that will help us be more productive, effective, and successful at work and in life.” His advice to leaders: “If you want to set the tone or mood, make sure you get some of the first words in [and set a positive tone.] Then sit back and watch how people’s engagement and motivation improve in response to your power lead. It’s one of the most effective tools in [my] book.”

Five Ways to Improve Your Happiness

From Shawn Achor’s Goodthink, Inc.

1. **3 Gratitudes:** Write down three things you’re grateful for that occurred over the last 24 hours.
2. **The Doubler:** Spend two minutes writing down every detail about one positive experience in the last day.
3. **The Fun Fifteen:** Do 15 minutes of a fun cardio activity every day.
4. **Meditation:** Every day take two minutes to stop whatever you’re doing and concentrate on breathing.
5. **Conscious Act of Kindness:** At the start of every day, send a short message praising someone you know.
Get the **Right People** on the Bus

Wharton School professor Adam Grant sees the workplace as made up of three kinds of people: givers, takers, and matchers. Takers are trying to get as much as possible from others. Matchers are all about reciprocity. But givers are those who go out of their way to support and help others. They are also those who benefit in the long run. And offering employees the opportunity to give to one another, Adam writes in his book *Give and Take*, actually increases their commitment to the company.

If you want to build culture of givers, however, Adam told the audience at WorkHuman 2015: “Don’t hire givers. Screen out the agreeable takers instead.” One way to do this, he suggested, is to ask job applicants how they have improved the lives of others. It’s important, he says, to keep the wrong people off the bus. “If we create networks with the sole intention of getting something, we won’t succeed. We can’t pursue the benefits of networks; the benefits ensue from investments in meaningful activities and relationships.”

---

**Five Ways to Build a Culture of Givers**

Adapted from the writing of Adam Grant

1. Do not insist on quid pro quo.
2. Screen out agreeable takers.
3. Offer employees the opportunity to give to one another.
4. Build a culture that encourages help-seeking.
5. Reward those who help others succeed.
Practice Gratitude

Gratitude is something we care deeply about at Globoforce—and it is equally vital for our clients, some of the leading companies in building a human workplace. Psychologist Robert Emmons is the world’s foremost scholar on the topic of gratitude, and he has found that being grateful is integral to our well-being—at home and at work. The practice of gratitude, writes Dr. Emmons in his book *Thanks!*, can increase happiness levels by around 25%.

Gratitude has moved into the mainstream of organizational psychology. Studies have shown that consistently grateful people have better emotional well-being, are healthier, more energetic, achieve more, are more resilient to trauma, and are less likely to be depressed, stressed, and lonely.

Gratitude interventions and training, says Dr. Emmons, have proven to significantly move the needle on all of these metrics, increasing social connections and producing long-lasting results. It also amplifies the value of future rewards, thus extending the power of emotional connection, reward, and recognition.

Four Tips for Building Gratitude
Adapted from the writing of Robert Emmons.

1. **Keep a Gratitude Journal.** Spend a few minutes every day to write down what you’re grateful for.

2. **Remember the Bad.** Remember the hard times that you have experienced. This contrast is fertile ground for gratefulness.

3. **Ask Yourself Three Questions.** Use the Naikan meditation technique, and reflect on three questions: “What have I received from _?” “What have I given to _?” and “What troubles and difficulty have I caused?”

4. **Go Through the Motions.** Go through grateful motions like smiling, saying thank you, and writing letters of gratitude to trigger gratitude.
Recognize & Appreciate Others

Recognition is a core way for companies to leverage the power of gratitude and giving, and recognition and appreciation are the lifeblood of a more human workplace. As Eric Mosley and Derek Irvine observe in their book, *The Power of Thanks*, “We believe that the foundation of a great workplace starts with the power of thanks and recognition. When employees feel appreciated, they not only work harder, they trust each other and their leaders more. It creates lasting bonds between employees that infuse this trust into all areas of the business.”

Recognition, Eric Mosley argued in his WorkHuman 2015 keynote, is a way to meet nearly all of the higher level needs in Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. Yet companies too often focus most of their efforts on base-level needs such as base salary, insurance and healthcare, and ignore the critical higher needs that make our lives rich—such as social, self-esteem, and self-actualization.

Seven Tips For Great Recognition

1. Be specific about what they did
2. Talk about their results
3. Consider your words
4. Make it individual
5. Use their name
6. Tell a story
7. Say “thanks”
Prioritize for **Well-Being**

We wear burnout like a badge, says Arianna Huffington, and sleep is especially under-rated. She writes: “Like airlines, we routinely overbook ourselves, fearful of any unused capacity, confident that we can fit everything in. We fear that if we don’t cram as much as possible into our day, we might miss out on something fabulous, important, special, or career advancing. But there are no rollover minutes in life. We don’t get to keep all that time we ‘save.’ It’s actually a very costly way to live.”

Power and money are not enough to measure success. The solution, Arianna told the audience at WorkHuman 2015, is to be kind to ourselves, take care of our bodies, and introduce a third measure of success that consists of four pillars: well-being, wisdom, wonder, and giving.

---

**Five Tips for Improving Well-Being:**

1. Get 30 minutes more sleep every day.
2. Practice meditation and focused breathing 5 minutes a day.
3. Take planned time out from digital devices.
4. Move your body more often.
5. Make kindness and giving a habit.
Make Room for the Unexpected

One of the themes of this year’s WorkHuman conference was making room for the new and unexpected in our work philosophies. More and more, companies are recognizing the need for play and surprise in our work, and that realization is leading organizations down new and rewarding paths.

As suprisologists Tania Luna and LeeAnn Renninger state it, in their book *Surprise: Embrace the Unpredictable and Engineer the Unexpected:* “On one side of the seesaw sits the sensation of too much surprise—brought on by change, uncertainty, and ambiguity. [...] On the other side of the seesaw sits the problem of too little surprise. It is brought on by routine, structure, and comfort. A lack of surprise triggers hypostress, the near opposite of anxiety. Hypostress is the stress of understimulation. To use LeeAnn’s most dreaded word: it’s boredom.” The antidote, they say, is to find a balance where you are often pleasantly surprised. This not only breaks up the boredom, but helps you develop the resilience to handle bigger surprises. Play, says author Brigid Schulte in her book, *Overwhelmed,* is another critical and often under-rated way of driving happiness in work and life. “Make time for leisure when the spirit seizes you,” says Brigid.

Nine Tips for Engineering More Fun & Surprise

*Adapted from the work of Brigid Schulte and LifeLabs NY*

1. Create to-do lists for work, love and play.
2. Schedule a day to say “yes” to new things.
3. Create systems to reinforce surprise in your life.
4. Expand your social circles.
5. Observe and collect sensations.
7. Get to the pot of gold on the other side of awkward.
8. Keep a “surprise opportunity log”.
9. Let go of the guilt of not being perfect.
Cultivate Relationships

It is the people we work with who determine the quality of our work lives. As we noted in our Fall 2014 Workforce Mood Tracker® report, we spend more time with our colleagues than our families, and 95% of workers have made friends through work. More than this, 89% of employees say that work relationships matter to the quality of their lives.

Connecting colleagues in a culture of positivity, says Eric Mosley, is the best way to create a great workplace. But mapping and cultivating those relationships, he notes, can also give you the means by which to measure and manage culture. “In the cadence of today’s workplace,” he writes, “people form Work Circles™—a term we use to describe the mini-communities that form around a project instead of an organizational chart.” Data gleaned from social recognition, says Eric, is the key to mapping those circles, unlocking insights about them, and helping to grow them.

5 Tips to Encourage Connections Among Employees

1. Encourage storytelling in your organization.
2. Empower everyone to give recognition and appreciation.
3. Find a way to visualize connections among colleagues.
4. Amplify and celebrate your own culture.
5. Encourage mentoring and cross-pollination.

— Eric Mosley, CEO and co-founder, Globoforce
9 Offer Positive Feedback

One of the great underestimated forces in modern business is the power of positive feedback—from managers, peers, and even direct reports. We all want to feel flow, as Catherine Flavin shared during her WorkHuman 2015 talk, and flow is equal parts feeling challenged, feeling successful, and getting positive feedback that reflects that success.

The advent of Millennials in the workplace is one of the key factors driving a renewed interest in giving and receiving positive feedback. As WorkHuman speaker and Millennial expert Lindsey Pollak puts it: “One of the things Millennials thrive on in the workplace is feedback — and lots of it. They like to know where they stand and what their managers think about their performance and progress. [...] It’s essential to learn to deliver effective feedback well and make time to do so frequently if you want to engage your Millennial employees and motivate them to do their best work.” But it isn’t just Millennials who crave feedback on their work, adds, Catherine, but all of us who benefit.

3 Tips for Giving Better Feedback
Adapted from Lindsey Pollak

1. Encourage employees to seek feedback from many sources.

2. Set expectations for when employees can expect feedback.

3. Take a coaching approach, with a friendly, motivational style.
Curate Your Culture

Good company culture does not create itself. And good company culture does not curate itself. Culture, we learned from all of our speakers, is something we must co-own with our employees. Which means we must provide them with meaning and encourage them to partner with us in creating a healthier, more human place to work and thrive. A great company culture can not be imposed from the top, but good culture must be modeled from the top in order to thrive. Business Romantic author and speaker Tim Leberecht sees this already happening in many companies. “Firms have begun to explore flexible schedules, telecommuting, different models of leadership development, family-friendly benefits, and other reforms that help integrate work and life, and adjust traditional structures to a more socially progressive, mobile, and demanding workforce,” he writes. “Humans may survive robots at the workplace, but we will only thrive if we keep investing in what makes us inherently human: vulnerability, empathy, intuition, emotion, and imagination.”

But culture must be visualized to be measured and cultivated. Said Ly Bui from Intercontinental Hotels Group during her WorkHuman 2015 panel discussion, “Don’t just tick off the recognition ‘boxes’—connect the dots, analyze, drive insight.” Humanity and insight, then, are the keys to culture curation.

5 Tips to Create a Culture of Meaning

Adapted from Tim Leberecht

1. Value what you can’t measure, too.
2. Add a sense of learning and adventure to the workplace.
3. Give people more control.
4. Give more than you take.
5. Constantly rekindle your own passion.
Recognition is the lifeblood of a healthy organization.

There are many threads that run throughout the advice shared here:

1. The imperative that we focus on quality of life and well-being for ourselves and our teams.
2. The notion that we should be including elements of the unexpected and adventurous into our workplaces.
3. The reality that our work relationships are critical to our happiness.
4. The idea that we should spend more time in observation and in enjoyment.
5. The advice to focus on and coach personal sustainability and stop beating ourselves up for not engineering ourselves and our teams into burn-out.

But one clear, universal thread for building a more human workplace is the role of recognition and appreciation—gratitude and giving—which have clearly become critical components of a functional, healthy, and productive work culture.

Recognition is the easiest, most immediate, and most actionable first step in the journey toward creating a more human workplace.

At Globoforce, we know that the power of thanks is something that can elevate company culture, deepen and grow work circles, and drive the very best business result. But it is also something that makes our work lives worth living, and our organizations more human.
Learn more about the power of social recognition to build a more human workplace.