

Employee Happiness Data Report

Effects of covid-19 on employees and managers



WHY SHOULD YOU READ THIS REPORT?

HR managers and organizational leaders are at the beginning of a major challenge. In recent months they have experienced how employees and managers deal with a crisis: the covid-19 pandemic. It is now time to learn from the past and look to the future. A future in which the data-driven and people-oriented (HR) professional has an indispensable role.

Due to the outbreak of the covid-19 virus, we suddenly entered a period of fear, uncertainty and remote working. We have been forced to experience the advantages and disadvantages of these changes and learned from them. In the Netherlands, provided there is not another wave of the virus, we are moving into the next phase. Are we going back to the old office and way of working? Do we work completely online and remotely? Or do we become hybrid organizations that partially work from home?

This phase is only the beginning for (HR) managers. They will have to redesign parts of their organizational culture to reflect the new standards, but in particular to provide employees with the best possible working atmosphere. This is also the advice of the Dutch covid-19 think tank: "Employers, investigate the remote employee experience". Companies need to regain energy and positivity in the (virtual) working environment, to achieve successes and business growth!

In 2019 and 2020 (during the covid peak in the Netherlands from mid-February to mid-May), more than 40 organizations in different sectors have gathered data on the happiness of their staff. Every week, an average of 2,800 employees and managers answered a short online survey via the 2DAYSMOOD pulse tool. We can draw valuable lessons from this aggregated data, at employee and manager level.

For example, we see that paying attention to trust and (mental) well-being has helped organizations through the first difficult phase. But the connection with colleagues is under extreme pressure. Which topics are important in the next phase? And how do we act in the event of a new outbreak? This report can assist (HR) leaders in planning scenarios and designing a future-proof culture.

So keep reading and do take advantage of the analysis of 2DAYSMOOD!

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A MANAGER'S VIEW

The data from the Crisis Monitor really helped us. The atmosphere is good, despite this special period of working from home. By measuring continuously, we can stay away from the assumptions that our employees are stressed. We now have a reliable source to demonstrate our happiness during work and keep an eye on it at all times.

Ineke van Cleef, Univé
Team manager

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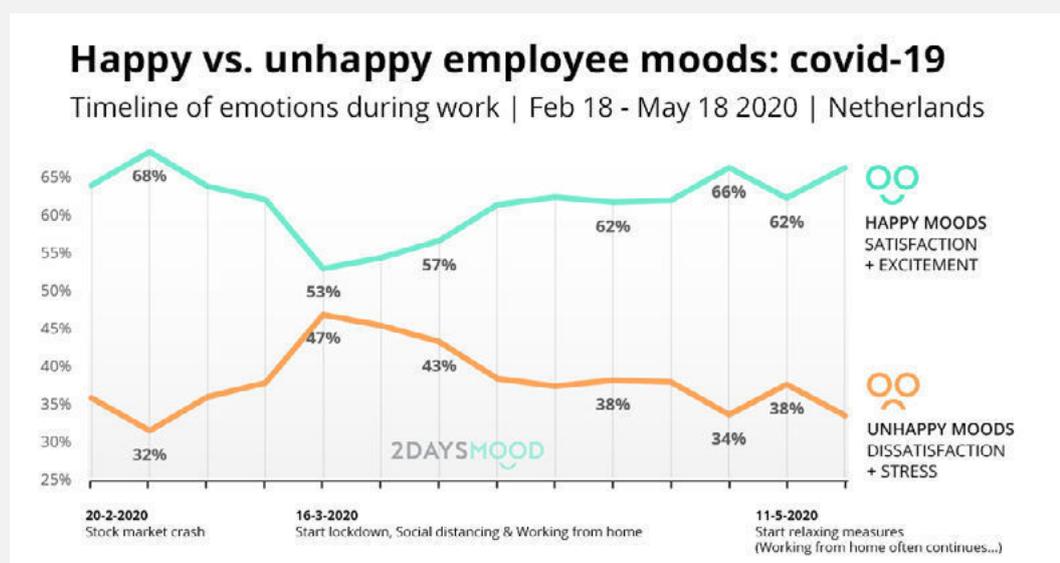
AN EXPERT'S VIEW

It is safe to say that (part-time) remote working will remain. As a result, the enthusiasm and energy of employees is under enormous pressure. But managers seem to have a larger energy buffer. It is up to them, now more than ever, to apply servant leadership. Ask employees what they need and implement it. The feeling of being really listened to will increase enthusiasm.

Arjen Banach, Speaker
and Organizational
Futurologist

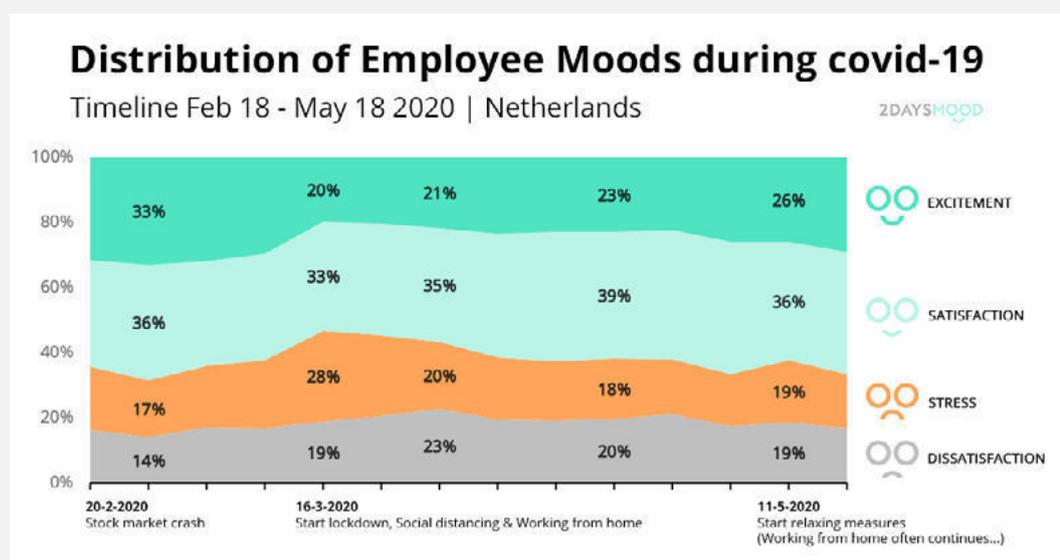
CHAPTER 1: HOW DO EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS FEEL DURING WORK?

Moods are the driving force behind our thoughts, attitudes and actions. In the work context, mood is therefore the most important indicator of well-being, happiness, and consequently the level of performance of employees. By asking the question 'how do you feel today' every week, using a quick and simple emotion model, organizations gain insight into how stressed, (dis)satisfied and excited their teams are. Continuous monitoring ensures that they can now also see the impact of the covid pandemic on employee mood. We have aggregated all anonymous measurement results. With these we can present a representative picture of moods during work in the Netherlands.



HEAVY EMOTIONAL IMPACT REQUIRES LONG-TERM RECOVERY

March marked the start of the covid-19 virus outbreak in the Netherlands. Positive emotions, especially cheerfulness and enthusiasm, give way to negative emotions. We experience sadness and stress. That seems logical, because our financial prospect and well-being, both in the working environment and at home, have suddenly become uncertain. How will my work change in terms of content and experience? Will my job continue to exist? As renowned psychotherapist Esther Perel puts it: "Work is our source of income, self-esteem, pride, identity and the ability to take care of ourselves and our loved ones." When threatened, we react violently. In addition, the period of (involuntary) working from home and social distance starts. A reassuring insight is that most leaders communicate empathically and clearly, which instigates adaptability, a sense of togetherness and resilience. The positive emotions therefore increase again at the end of March, but the high energy level is still lagging behind.



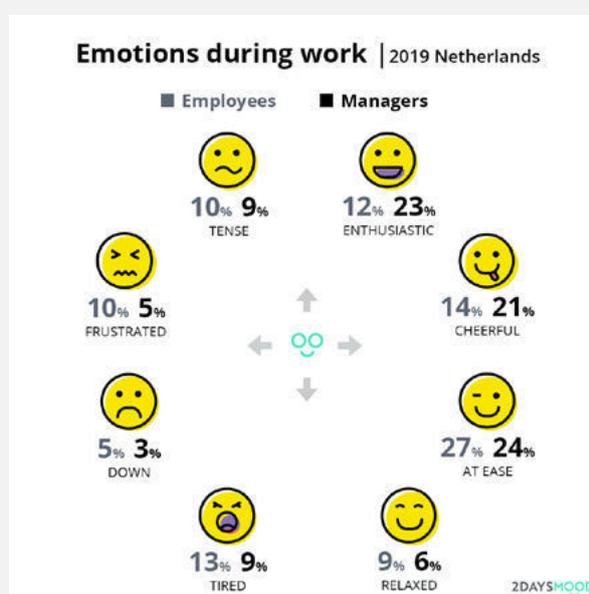
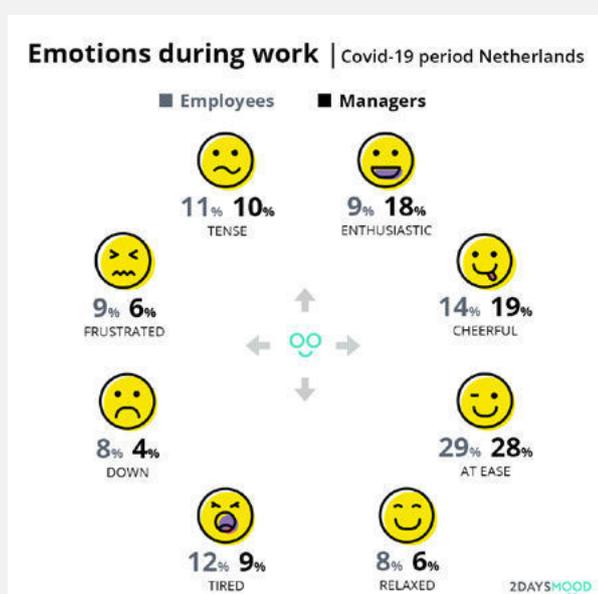
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS

After the sharp drop in mood, recovery occurs quite rapidly. That is why it is also interesting to look at the average results in the “covid peak period” (Feb-May 2020) and compare them with 2019. How did we experience this difficult first phase? What is remarkable in this comparison, is that the mood differences are generally small. But the differences between employees and managers are definitely something to take into account. In general in 2019, managers experience more work happiness (excitement + satisfaction): 74% of the time, for employees, this is 62%. But the excitement of managers is hit harder in this crisis. A consequence of the responsibilities and leadership role they have to take on?



DIFFERENT EMOTIONS THROUGH ENERGY AND PLEASURE

If we delve deeper into the mood quadrants, we see the emotions of employees divided over the axes: *energy* and *pleasure*¹. The two together lead to excitement: a source of innovation and creativity. When energy decreases you reach the level of satisfaction, which in behavior often leads to productivity and stability. This how we get to the formula: *excitement + satisfaction = work happiness = more successful organization*. It is threatened if stress or satisfaction turns into (long-term) dissatisfaction. A short stress period is not that bad, and even helps with deadlines. However, the desired mood balance appears to be a positivity ratio of 3:1. In this balance teams and relations function best.² In 2019 we do see that ratio, but only among managers. The pleasant emotions of managers on the right side of the model together make up 74%. During covid things change, pleasure decreased slightly. We see that both managers and employees feel “down” and “tense” a bit more often. However, the biggest decrease is in energy. Our “enthusiasm” gives way to “ease”. The home working environment may not be the most motivating workplace.



¹ The 2DAYS MOOD emotion model is based on Russell's Circumplex model of Emotional Classification (2003)

² Mood positivity ratio 3:1 for teams and relationships, according to research by Barbara Frederickson (2009)

CHAPTER 2: WHICH FACTORS INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS (IN TIMES OF COVID)?

Employee happiness is not just about a positive mood during work. This experience has various drivers. 2DAYSMOOD has validated 15 universal factors and incorporated them into the Employee Happiness model¹. But where HR and Management were still busy with the ‘war for talent’ in January, their concerns and priorities have completely shifted. Employees also tried to cope with workload, stress and uncertainty during the covid peak, while they have to miss the connection with the office and colleagues. How do they stay as healthy, engaged and happy as possible in those circumstances? The topics that influence their happiness at work are different now!

2DAYSMOOD and Empatix therefore conducted research in February and have been offering organizations a Remote Experience Monitor². This enabled (HR) managers to accurately measure and improve employee happiness and the underlying drivers. We identified fifteen topics and collected the following data. The research and monitor are still relevant, now that many teams (partly) continue to work remotely. And with an impending economic crisis or covid relapse, we are not yet out of uncertain times.



POSITIVE FEEDBACK AND LESSONS FOR LEADERS

Looking at how satisfied employees are with the topics, we see that managers receive a big Δ for *giving employees trust, transparent communication and showing interest in their well-being*. These topics are important in more ways than one.

We discovered a number of interesting correlations. They show us that employers and managers should not only empathize in times of crisis, but also project trust, appreciation and stimulate autonomy. In addition, attention to well-being can lead to a learning effect: if this is a priority for the organization, it will also receive more attention between employees. Finally, we see a striking change in communication. Where this topic scores only ‘sufficient’ in 2019, we now see a ‘good’ rating in the covid period. More frequent communication and more openness can be causes for this.



When employees experience more trust from their managers, we see that optimism about the employee’s future within the organization is greater.



When an organization is interested in the well-being of employees, we see that they (1) go the extra mile to take on challenges and (2) experience more mutual support.



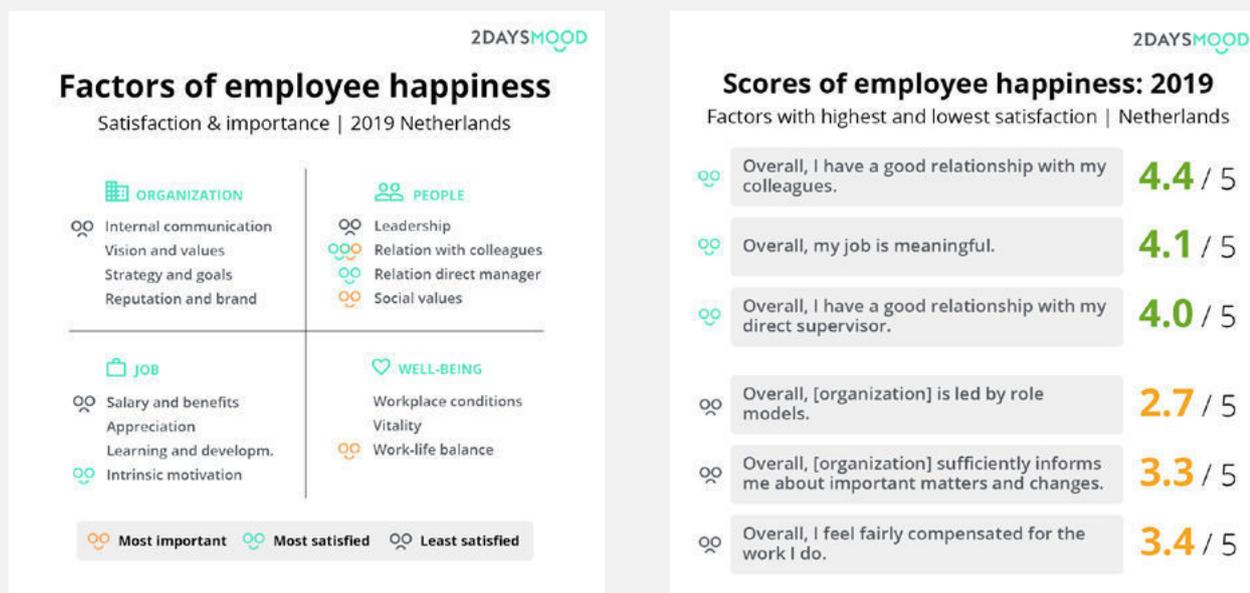
When an organization is transparent about developments and changes, employees report significantly less often unhappy emotions, especially “irritated”.

¹ This model has been scientifically validated by 2DAYSMOOD and Utrecht University. 2daysmood.com/us/employee-happiness-model

² This monitor was developed after extensive meta-research by 2DAYSMOOD and Empatix. 2daysmood.com/us/remote-experience-monitor

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK AND INSIGHTS FROM 2019

In 2019, 2DAYS MOOD customers also conducted extensive research into the 15 universal drivers of employee happiness (Employee Happiness Model). Both satisfaction and importance are assessed in these measurements. This helps to make a relevant data analysis and to set priorities at organizational and team level. The scores offer an interesting view at the new “covid period data”.



What is remarkable is that, among other things, the *good relationship with colleagues* is mentioned by employees as one of the most important drivers for their happiness at work in 2019. Unfortunately, this is also the theme that is hit the hardest in the covid period. In ‘school grades’ it drops from an A+ to a B+. Not surprising of course. Due to the obligatory working from home and the social distance, the Friday afternoon drinks, joint lunches, office humor and water cooler talks disappear. Virtual communication cannot completely replace these human ‘office benefits’. We see this mainly in a drop in positive energy (which is not yet at the old level). In addition, connectedness is definitely a subject that HR and team leaders should keep a close eye on. We also discovered interesting correlations around this theme.



When employees feel more connected to people around them (colleagues, family or friends), they can deal better with stress. This connection is even stronger than that between “attention from managers or the organization” and “dealing with stress”.



When employees feel more connected to people around them and also experience clarity about their tasks, we see that they get more fulfillment from their work. Being able to meet expectations and a sense of solidarity seem essential.

A second factor for employee happiness that is clearly affected in the new remote working situation is the *work-life balance*. This theme is also in the top 3 of most important drivers in 2019. But now that the personal living environment has also become the professional working environment, it costs energy and adaptability. Surely, we have experienced the advantages of remote work: less travel, more freedom, autonomy and focus. However, the disadvantages seem to weigh more heavily in our perception of happiness during work: a harder time “switching off” after work resulting in overwork, a lack of structure and therefore having to motivate yourself, too few breaks, less movement and (social) stimuli, having to take care of family or children, an uncomfortable workplace, etc. The sum of these disadvantages could be the cause of the topic with the very lowest satisfaction score during the covid pandemic.

That topic is the experience of work pressure, it gets an insufficient grade. In terms of satisfaction, we do not have any comparison material from 2019 on this subject. So a message to every team leader, HR manager or director: know that work pressure must always be on your radar. Burned-out or absent employees cause a situation in which everyone loses!

CHAPTER 3: ARE EMPLOYEES AMBASSADORS FOR THEIR OWN ORGANIZATION?

The biggest compliment you can get as an employer is employees who speak about their job and organization in their inner circles with pride and enthusiasm. These ambassadors spread priceless 'word of mouth' that can arouse (potential) customers, stakeholders and employees. But in the negative case, when employees do not experience good employment practices, the word of mouth can seriously damage the company and its reputation.

Would your employees recommend your organization as a good employer? That question is essential, especially in times of uncertainty and change. A lot is now demanded from employees: flexibility, patience and extra effort. It is easy to measure whether employees are actually ambassadors via the internationally used *employee Net Promoter Score*. In our aggregated eNPS data, we discover a notable transformation before and during the corona crisis.



REALITY CHECK FOR EMPLOYERS:

PAYING SINCERE ATTENTION TO PEOPLE IS APPRECIATED AND WORKS WONDERS FOR YOUR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REPUTATION.

In 2019, the average eNPS was 1. The score can range from -100 to +100 by reducing the percentage of promoters by the percentage of detractors. Promoters recommend their employer with a 9 or 10, detractors give a 0 to 6. An eNPS of 1 is therefore not particularly high. But during the covid peak (Feb-May 2020), the eNPS increased by 15 points! The number of detractors in Dutch organizations fell by 8%, while promoters grew by 7%. This appreciation of employees can be well explained by the extra attention from the organization and managers for people, as we read in chapter 2. Attention to transparency, well-being and trust was essential in this. Employees are also becoming more aware of the luxurious position they had in the 'war for talent'. The home office offers less comfort, gadgets and atmosphere than the office building. People might start missing those things now they don't have them anymore.



REALITY CHECK FOR MANAGERS:

AS A ROLE MODEL AND CONFIDANT, YOU PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN HOW POSITIVELY THE EMPLOYEE VIEWS THE EMPLOYER.

CHAPTER 4: EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS IN THE FUTURE

With all the insights from the previous data, only one important question remains for HR leaders: which subjects need attention in the future, to achieve the highest possible level of happiness during work? The biggest external factors in this are remote working, a possible new covid-19 outbreak and the dip in our economy that could turn into a recession.

Most organizations and employees will continue to partly embrace working from home, thereby creating a hybrid work culture. But how does that work exactly? After all, we have also seen that the lack of connection and deteriorated work-life balance can be a major risk for well-being and work performance. That is why we (and other experts) believe that the following themes will be high on the agenda of the HR manager and organizational leader.

1. PERSONAL WELL-BEING AND VITALITY

Do employees feel mentally and physically fit enough to get the best out of themselves and put it into their work? Can they learn to deal better with work pressure and stress in a remote working situation? Do both employees and employer take responsibility for this?

Expert tip: neuropsychologist Erik Scherder [explains in this video \(use English subtitles\)](#) how physical and mental fitness can strengthen us in times of crisis.

2. AUTONOMY AND PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

Are employees able to steer and motivate themselves when they often work remotely? Are they able to set the right priorities and are they continuously “aligned” with the strategy and goals of the organization? And as a condition: are executives able to convey enough trust?

Expert tip: Harvard Business School professor Teresa Amabile found in her research that resulted in ‘the Progress Principle’, that autonomy is an essential catalyst of better work. She explains in [this TEDx talk](#).

3. PURPOSE AND FULFILLMENT

Are all core values of the organization still tangible and feasible for employees after all the changes? Can they still identify with the company vision and purpose? Do they still get fulfillment from their work? Even if there is less connection with colleagues and the organization?

Expert tip: Muel Kaptein, partner at KPMG and professor Business Administration wrote an [interesting article](#).

4. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Do employees receive enough new incentives in a remote or work from home situation? Can they (continue to) develop themselves sufficiently? Can they act flexibly in uncertain times, when organizations have to take different paths or dare to make sudden choices? And do they have the knowledge and (soft) skills to do this?

Expert tip: management guru Ben Tiggelaar signals the risk of a lack of new incentives in a long-term “work from home” situation. Newness makes for more fun and better learning ability, he explains in [this column](#).

5. COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

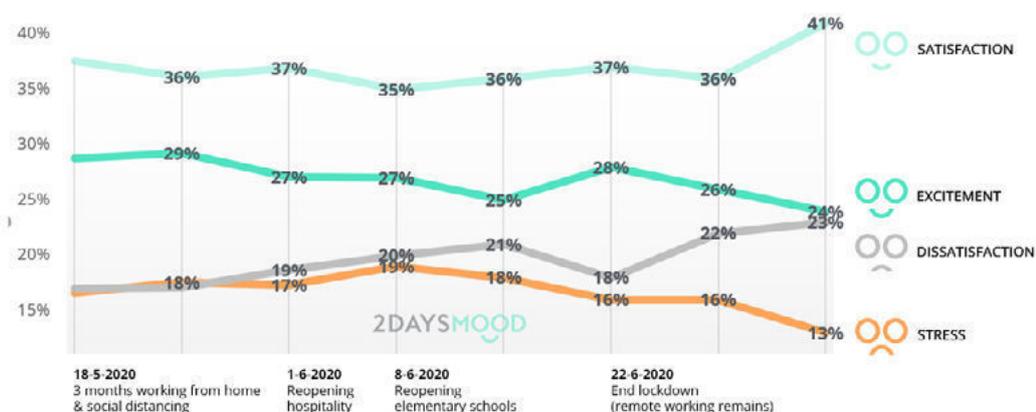
Can employers and managers maintain their (due to covid) improved communication style? How do they keep a good balance between listening to feedback and communicating a clear message themselves? How does the (virtual) communication between departments and teams also remain energetic and effective?

Expert tip: Harvard Business School professor Frances Frei tells [in this podcast](#) how leaders can create a culture of trust through communication that is authentic, logical and empathetic.

END NOTE: THE MOST RECENT MOOD DATA

Employee Moods: easing covid measures

Timeline of emotions during work | May 18 - Jul 6, 2020 | Netherlands



Due to the covidvirus pandemic, we have been in a major transformation for some time now, but the end is not yet in sight. As organizations, we must remain flexible and be able to respond, together with our employees, to the changes or new challenges that come our way. Employee happiness remains a priority. In our most recent data, we see that pleasure and energy fluctuate strongly during work and seem to set in a declining mood trend. A possible explanation is that the “novelty” of working from home is now gone. Is the balance of online working and physical connection in harmony? Are our different work environments well equipped to allow employees to flourish? In addition, we must take into account a possible new virus outbreak. What scenarios have you prepared as (HR) manager, to deal with that backblow? Mentally and physically healthy employees are essential to survive!

FROM DATA TO ACTION

2DAYSMOOD helps organizations develop the most positive and productive working climate in a data-driven and people-oriented way. Together with the world’s first culture coach | sultancy firm, Delivering Happiness [DH], and their proven culture roadmap, we are creating thriving organizations worldwide with happier, more successful teams.

[PLAN A FREE MEASUREMENT](#)

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WHY HR MANAGERS WORK DATA-DRIVEN

Continuously gaining insight into my company culture, getting targeted feedback and seeing trends, that is really valuable to grow.

- Royal Rotra Group

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WHY CULTURE EXPERTS WORK DATA-DRIVEN

We uncover the culture challenges holding our clients back and empower teams to perform their best. Utilizing 2DAYSMOOD's online feedback provides valuable insights into the strategic actions needed for a WOW-culture for employees and customers.

- Delivering Happiness