

## TITLE OF THE CASE STUDY: Chief Happiness Officer – The most after-sought profession of 21. century

Name of the organisation:

**OPTIWEB**

Country and sector of the organisation:

**Slovenia, digital marketing**

Type of organisation:

- **Business company**
- Public organization
- Private organization
- NGO
- Other:

Size of the organisation:

- small
- **medium**
- large

Brief description of the organisation:

Optiweb is a medium company qualified for digital marketing, namely innovative websites, efficient eCommerce shops and creating powerful digital marketing strategy.

Short description of the case study (500 characters)

CHO – Chief Happiness Officer at Optiweb is a person who is in charge for happiness, motivation and commitment of employees. Person in this position is committed to promotion of personal growth, care for individual satisfaction, creation of respectful relationships with each other, building strong teams, CHO's role is key to maintaining our health, both physically and mentally. Especially when it comes to win – win a situation where both employees and employers win, because the satisfaction and commitment of employees is reflected in the company's performance.

Key words:

**Happiness, respect, satisfaction, gratification**

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

“Happiness at work provides a key competitive advantage of today's business world – personal satisfaction with the pursuit of work, committed employees, being a sought-after employer and operating and communicating at all levels on a "human-to-human" basis,” say Petra Božič Blagajac and Maja Lončar from Paleta znanj.

Companies in Slovenia are mostly just now discovering the meaning or benefits of happiness at workplace. There are not many of CHO's – Chief Happiness Officers, even though it is a profession that is among the most sought-after in the 21st century. Companies just now realise that they have to take some responsibility for co-creating an excellent work environments and become a recognisable brand in the labour market - an employer to whom people will want to come to and stay there. Urška Stanovnik (CHO – Chief Happiness Officer in Optiweb) states: “The mindset that employee satisfaction in the workplace is also quite linked to their motivation to work and, consequently, to the success of the company, is becoming more and more prevalent. Employees who are satisfied in the workplace are healthier and more productive, and the rate of leaving the workplace is significantly reduced.”

Company Optiweb puts a great emphasis on employee satisfaction and motivation for work. Urška Stanovnik – Chief Happiness Officer – has an important function in this field, which in addition to human resources also deals with the satisfaction of employees. In her opinion the most important personal characteristics for CHO are empathy, compassion, the joy of working with people, know how to listen and patience.

The profession CHO is most often associated with the human resources department, but not as it used to be, CHO's function is much more strategically oriented, than just administrative. On the one hand, the CHO is a partner of a director/leader and on the other hand, CHO is a partner of employees, therefore CHO is a bridge between management and employees. Some tasks are of a more strategic nature, such as introducing a recruitment system, onboarding (organisational introduction of new colleagues) or development, others are more straightforward aimed to influence employee motivation – for example, shared breakfasts, massage at work and collectively recreation. Tasks and work vary from day to day and the workplace requires a great deal of flexibility. It is a fact, that without the other employees, especially the leaders, the position could not exist. Desired results could be achieved only through cooperation.

For Optiweb's CHO the most important part is a support from CEO and that employees see an advantage in her work and their willingness to participate and be involved. In addition, team leaders play an extremely important role, they are in contact with employees on a daily basis and have a good overview of what is happening in teams. According to this information, they determine the necessary activities, adjustments and meetings. They encourage both, team leaders and employees, to communicate as transparent as possible so that they can take appropriate action if something is not right.

## RATIONALE

The crucial moment for CEO was his recognition, that is more expensive to search and qualify a new person than to keep “an old employee” in the company.

From the very beginning, it is important in Optiweb that employees feel good at work. All rooms are also designed to ensure the well-being of employees. Miha Lavtar (CEO in Optiweb) initially himself dealt with measures to increase the motivation of employees. As the number of employees increased, he decided to hire a person to help him – a CHO. This person is focused on satisfaction of employees in the workplace, that they like to come to work and, as a result, do their job well. Together, the CEO and CHO are looking for new ways to ensure employees have even better working conditions.

The company, of course, monitors performance, if the projects make a profit. In return for the workers working well and being loyal and committed to the company, they offer them the highest quality working environment and care for well-being culture.

## GOALS

### **Open communication**

The development of a culture of communication triggers several important shifts. One of these is the understanding that the information is effectively transmitted only when each recipient understands it as the data provider intended to.

Open communication is the basis for everything. The company has a rather non-hierarchical and democratic established leadership strategy, everyone needs to accept responsibility for his/hers work. Teams are consisted of rather young employees, therefore team leaders are not always perceived as authority. Communication is indirect, which affects at bigger effectiveness of team members.

In relation to motivation, communication is essential; when employees feel they are being heard, if they dare to say their thoughts, remarks, comments and they know that no one's going to look at them badly, it empowers them. It is always necessary to leave open channels for the free flow of information: open and active communications is a vital element of a living collective and an efficient enterprise.

## IMPACT

One of the most damaging causes of an underdeveloped culture of communication in companies is the belief of management that some information is not for everyone. At Optiweb each employee has a structural meeting with CHO every six months. That serves as an opportunity when everyone can tell if anything has changed and if they see their professional path somewhere else.

On these meetings, employees pointed out that they would like to be better informed about what is happening at the company. This feedback launched weekly meetings of all employees of the company, "whazzup". In meetings, each team presents their work, presents the innovations in the company. The meetings are also intended to praise each other and highlight the mistakes that occurred during that week. This measure has proved to be a very positive thing that further motivates employees.

Employees often take part in various training sessions, both in Slovenia and abroad. They also carry out certificates that are important for their functions. The possibility of education is certainly one of the greatest motivators. This shows that management cares for them.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### **Giving and receiving praise**

Praise has a very positive impact on motivation. Many employees pointed out that praises are more motivating than financial rewards.

On their internal communication program, they also have a "bragger" channel, through which anyone can praise someone for something they have done well. Even on "whazzup," employees have the opportunity to praise a co-worker if he did something well.

### **Giving critics and argument**

On the field of giving critics in the company are working to give as many as possible, to be as constructive as possible and to learn how to accept them as such. It seems that Slovenians often find it difficult to accept criticism, so they pay a lot of attention on that matter. Over time, the person gets used to the need for criticism and that it is usually well-intentioned.

## MATERIAL



**Gold Thread Award, 2017** (source: [www.optiweb.com](http://www.optiweb.com))



(source: [www.optiweb.com](http://www.optiweb.com))



**Urška Stanovnik – CHO at Optiweb**  
(source: [www.optiweb.com](http://www.optiweb.com))

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Conversation with CHO in Optiweb – Urška Stanovnik