

TNS in South Africa take three of the four awards at the annual SAMRA conference

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A winning culture saw speakers from the TNS stable walk away with the three top awards at the annual 2008 South African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA) Conference held in Swaziland in the last week of May, 2008.



Nicky, Lydia and Joanne with their awards.

At the gala dinner, Lydia Rolando, Director: People and Culture at TNS Research Surveys, who had just won the award for the Best First Time Presenter's Award, was called up to receive the elegant glass SAMRA trophy for the overall Best Paper. Her paper titled "*Health, harmony and happiness - testing the vital new ingredients in the employee commitment recipe*", showed that what is on the conventional HR menu (money, position and power, reward and recognition) is not sufficient to create (or are even the most important in creating) happy, committed and productive employees. She demonstrated the advantages of having happy people at work (happiness being defined in terms of engagement, health and well-being (after Seligman)), showing that these have a greater impact on commitment than traditional, 'old world' approaches - of the top 22 factors driving commitment, 15 relate to one of the three happiness factors.

There are any good reasons why workplace happiness makes good business sense. Besides being more productive, happy people are good team players, healthier, provide good customer service, are less likely to move and help spread the 'happy' word.

Second place went to Nicky Liddle and Joanne Campbell of TNS Customer Equity Company for their paper entitled "Why brands succeed: Luck or Skill?" which introduced the concept of cumulative advantage.

This is the second year running that TNS has won most of the awards: at the 2007 SAMRA conference, TNS Director Mark Molenaar also won the award for the best paper as well as Best First Time presenter.

The key points of Lydia's paper

Many large companies, including some in South Africa, are making concerted and creative efforts to build relationships with their employees that foster both well-being and productivity. At a glance, the 2007 list of Best Employers in South Africa share a number of distinctive features. Employee development features high on their list of HR priorities, as do a surprising number of well-being and work/life balance factors. At number one on the list, Shell prides itself on generous maternity benefits, flexible working arrangements, a strong emphasis on the greater good, and contribution to the community at large.

Others on the list including Microsoft, Vodacom and Ernst & Young, pay far more than lip service to the common-sensical awareness that physically healthy employees are also happy employees. Microsoft has an on-site gym with personal trainers available morning and evening, as well as meal allowances for employees and a philosophy that work should be an extension of home.

Vodacom places emphasis on work/life balance, allowing employees to work from home. In support of wellness, it sponsors employee sporting activities. Netcare believes that the nursing shortage cannot simply be addressed by increasing nurses' salaries, and Edcon emphasises values, including valuing people and treating staff like customers. Lydia's own work here at TNS Research Surveys on improving our people's general health and well-being has already had a measurable effect and is set on being rolled out to other TNS companies.

What can be done to improve happiness? Three areas upon which to focus

- Engagement and relationships - people change managers more often than companies. By improving manager's EQs, they will be better equipped to help their staff.
- Meaning and purpose - companies need to provide more positive values for their staff to share. It's not just a case of corporate social responsibility and investment, but rather allowing staff at ground level to get involved in their communities. Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that self-actualising people are involved in activities outside their own skins.
- Health and wellbeing - new ideas of co-responsibility with employees for keeping themselves and the company healthy are being adopted. It's not about the number of days one is off sick, but creating closer partnerships with staff.

Research Abstract

Traditionally, the measurement of organisational success or 'wellness' could be summed up in one word- profit. However, contemporary business has begun to acknowledge the importance of employee commitment and its potential impact on profit. New worldwide trends have led to a more holistic approach whereby organisational wellness is a product of physically and psychologically healthy employees. Thus, the physical and psychological well-being of employees (health, harmony and happiness) is now being seen as integral to the success, and indeed survival, of many organisations.

For copies of Lydia's full paper as well as the two other papers presented by TNS Research Surveys people at the conference, please visit our website www.tnsresearchsurveys.co.za.

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