

## Employee Happiness: The Influence of Providing Consumers with an Experience versus an Object

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**Abstract :** Much of what happens in the marketplace revolves around the provision and consumption of goods. Recent research has advanced a useful categorization of these goods—as experiential versus material—and shown that, from the consumers' perspective, experiences (e.g., a theater performance) are superior to objects (e.g., an electronic gadget) in offering various social and psychological benefits. A common finding in this growing research stream is that consumers gain more happiness from the experiences they have than the objects they own. By focusing solely on those acquiring the experiential or material goods (the consumers), prior research has remained silent regarding another important group of individuals—those providing the goods (the employees). Do employees whose jobs are primarily focused on offering consumers an experience (vs. object) also gain more happiness from their occupation? We report evidence from four experiments supporting an experiential-employee advantage. Further, we use mediation and moderation tests to unearth the mechanism responsible for this effect. Results reveal that work meaningfulness is the primary driver of the experiential-employee advantage. Overall, our findings suggest that employees find it more meaningful to provide people with an experience as compared to a material object, which in turn shapes the happiness they derive from their jobs. We expect this finding to have implications on human development, and to be of relevance to researchers and practitioners interested in how to advance human condition in the workplace.

**Keywords :** employee happiness, experiential versus material jobs, work meaningfulness

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