Happiness in the workplace increases creativity, productivity and ultimately, profitability. So how do you create a happy work environment? A good place to start is by examining a company known for having happy employees. Google has topped Fortune magazine’s list of best companies to work for year after year. What makes Google employees so happy? How can you make your veterinary clinic more like Google?

Could it be the scooters people use to get around? Or the ping-pong tables in the break room? Or the fact that you can a slide down instead of the stairs? Or the free hip hop dance classes? While a veterinary clinic may not be able to offer these perks, it can follow in the spirit of Google’s footsteps by promoting the wellbeing and happiness of its employees. Google believes that ensuring that its employees are happy “supports their ability to be innovative and creative,” while promoting health and fitness “supports their ability to focus and maintain high cognitive function.” So let’s look at ways you can emulate Google and make your employees happy about coming to work.

1. **Start with yourself**
   As the veterinarian, you are the de facto leader of the clinic. You may not realize it, but your attitude and behavior sets the tone for everyone else. Practice what you preach. Remember to be positive and happy and avoid being negative or moody. While you can’t control everything, you can control how you react. Waking up to a flat tire and being late to work can ruin your day. Choose to make lemonade when life gives you lemons.

2. **Be approachable**
   Workplace issues are inevitable. The best way to prevent them from growing into bigger problems is by being approachable. Otherwise, little problems can turn into big problems that can ruin everyone’s morale.

3. **Hire happy people**
   The best way to create a happy workplace is to start with happy people. Choose people who are positive and happy themselves. Avoid hiring people who are negative or overly critical. A negative person can bring down the clinic’s morale as much as a positive person can raise it. Stack the deck by hiring positive people.

4. **Promote healthy lifestyles**
   Encourage employees to eat healthy and be active. Healthy employees are not only happy, but also good for business. Studies show that healthy employees are more productive and take less sick days off. Example of what you can do include:
   - A. Offer healthy snacks such as fruit bowls, whole grain snacks, nuts, and protein bars, and water, tea and coffee instead of soda
   - B. Encourage your staff to participate in fitness events, such as organized walks, races, and dog walks
   - C. Promote biking to work, walking to lunch, even going outside during breaks for a stretch and breath of fresh air
   - D. Set up a workplace challenge, such as a pedometer contest to award the person who is walking around the most at work

5. **Give praise freely**
   Everyone needs affirmation and employees are no different. They need to know when they are doing a good job and want to be recognized for their hard work. Unfortunately, most bosses are good at pointing out mistakes or telling their employees they are not working hard enough and they are not good at giving praise. Recognize your employee’s efforts with verbal praise, thank you notes, certificates, or rewards. There is nothing like an incentive or feeling appreciated to encourage people to work harder.

6. **Encourage professional growth**
   The International Social Survey Programme asked people what they wanted in a job and they reported opportunities for advancement among the top five. Encourage your staff to attend conferences and learn new skills. Set-up lunch-and-learn meetings so they can share their newfound knowledge and skills with everyone else. Continuing education not only keeps them sharp, but also strengthens their self-esteem and sense of worth.
7. Foster team spirit
Organize events to promote staff bonding, like going to happy hour, having dinner parties, or just going out to lunch together. Creating enjoyable experiences with the staff outside of work will transfer to workplace as these promote camaraderie and goodwill. Your staff will be more effective at work if they can work as a team that enjoys being together.