

PR15 0044 WOW Focus Area Videos – Emotion - Peter Jordan
(Duration 2 min 47 sec)

Why do we study Emotion in the workplace?

For many years organisations have been thought of as very rational places and people have tried to dismiss emotions from the workplace. I think the reason that we study emotions in the workplace is because workplaces are full of human beings and human beings have emotions and they bring these emotions into the workplace and there can be massive advantages in terms of enthusiasm and pride that we'd like to encourage in our workers.

Why is it important to understand Emotion at work?

Emotions are important to understand at work because emotions impact on how people behave in organisations. There's some clear evidence to show that in terms of decision making we can't make a decision unless we understand the emotional element to it. There's got to be an emotional reaction for us to make a decision. So on that basis understanding how emotions impact on our behaviour is essential at work.

How do we study Emotion at work?

We study emotion at work using both qualitative and quantitative methods so we use interviews, we use focus groups, we use surveys, we use experimental designs where we test how people respond in specific circumstances. One of the recent techniques that's being used in organisations to study emotions is experience sampling, where we follow people with smart phones and get them to respond on a momentary basis how they're feeling within organisations. And one of the interesting outcomes of this has been a challenge to what we call the happy worker/productive worker thesis where workers are seen to be productive if they're happy. So managers spend lots of time trying to get people to be happy. What the outcome of this research showed is that happy workers are not productive workers, it's actually productive workers are happy workers. So managers should really focus on productivity not happiness in terms of getting the best outcomes in organisations.

What challenges does the study of Emotion address at work?

There's lots of challenges for the study of emotion at work. In particular, there's probably three levels that we can look at emotions. There's within **person level**, how we manage emotions on a day-to-day basis. Certainly we go to work and we experience a range of emotions throughout the day so how we manage those will determine how successful we are at work. But there's also **interpersonal emotions** so how I deal on an emotional level with other people in the organisation. And certainly relationships and dealing with conflicts are a part of that. And then finally there's a third level which is a team level of emotions in which we're looking at this concept called **emotional contagion**, so if you have a happy person in a group that can be contagious and other people in the group can be happy or they can be enthusiastic. But that also works in reverse, so if you've got a disgruntled person in the team then that level of unhappiness

can also spread to other members of the team, so managers need to be aware of that in order to manage it properly.