

What We Love, Hate and Desire In Our Digital Media Jobs

*Q1 2013 Digiday State of the Industry Job Satisfaction / "Happiness" Survey with
NextMark*

By Melinda Gipson, Digiday, April 5, 2013

Research commissioned by:



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Introduction

Being creative. Being an agent of change on the cutting edge of both culture and technology in a business that is constantly evolving. Being more productive and fulfilled than we could ever have imagined, and learning something new every day. These are all the upsides of working in today's digital media and marketing business. Then, too, come the long hours spent cajoling, educating, creating and compensating for the inevitable gaps in technology and understanding that occur in a workplace perpetually on the edge of what's doable in a given 60-hour work week.

In short, we love, love, love our jobs in media– and occasionally hate them too.

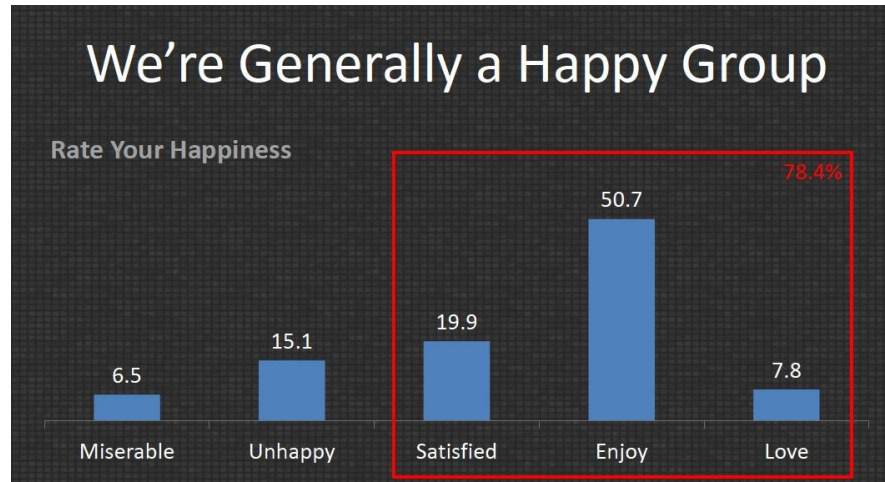
What do we love and hate, and what would we change if we had a magic wand? Being Digiday, we asked you – our readers and those of you who have opted into our “State of the Industry” survey pool. But we couldn't have even conceived of how to measure such endlessly subjective things as how we feel about working in digital media without the inspiration of NextMark's creative CEO and founder, Joseph Pych and CRO, Chris O'Hara.

With Pych's assistance, we conducted one of our most open-ended State of the Industry Surveys ever: the “Digital Media Job Satisfaction Survey;” or, the “happiness survey” for short. Some 601 respondents weighed in, providing more than 1,500 open-ended observations about their jobs, and more than a few metrics we were able to quantify with the help of John Ruth, CFA; two bright students from the Tuck School of Business: Mukul Kumar and Nishant Mehta; and Meenakshi Menon, an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Maine.

So, How Happy Are We?

Asked to rate our happiness at work, the majority of us say we really enjoy our jobs. More than 78 percent of us rank our happiness at work at greater than “satisfied,” and more than half

of us really enjoy what we do. To top it off, we seem to be getting a bit happier at work, all things considered.



While the largest portion of respondents said they're equally as happy as they were this time last year, nearly as many (36 percent) say things are either better or “much better.”



What Do we Love About Our Jobs?

Sifting through 538 open-ended responses to the question, “What do you love about your job in digital advertising?” presented some obvious categorization issues. Some things we both love and hate about our jobs – e.g. “the boss,” in both cases – aren’t unique to the digital media industry.

But what does seem to set our business apart from the rest is the fact that things are always changing in this extrinsically creative business. There's always something new to learn; things are constantly evolving. The people employed by the industry seem smarter, better educated, and more motivated to succeed than average. The most creative way we could use to adequately express these concepts was a word cloud from Wordle.



What do We Hate About our Jobs?

Not surprisingly, some of the same things we love are those we hate. The constant evolution of the industry means never feeling settled, and always having to hurry to catch up. The technology on which the business relies either forces people to run to keep up, or lets us down because it hasn't evolved fast enough to meet our needs. With all it's promise – and over-promise in some cases – grunt work remains, forcing creative people to do many mindless tasks for which they have little patience.

Speaking of patience, the incessant drumbeat of social media, emails and being continuously connected makes it seem to many like work never ceases. And, in some cases, that's true, with many citing the long hours, low pay, and scant appreciation of clients who are resistant to change or novel ideas. Here again, a picture's worth 1000 words.

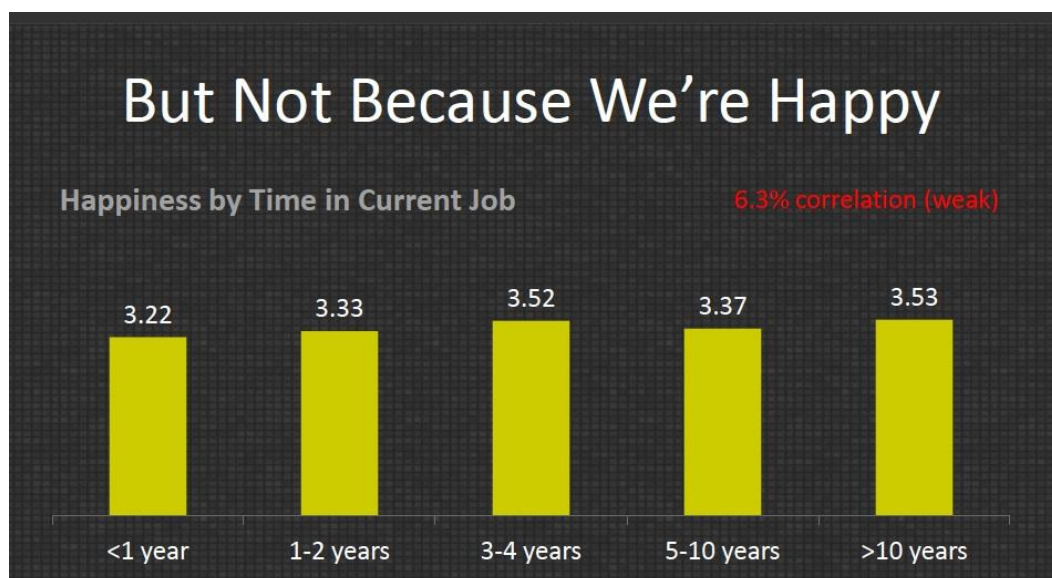


How Long Have We Worked for our Current Employer?

Even as the digital advertising industry enters its third decade, it's a bit surprising that there's as much loyalty to our employers as evident in response to a question about how long you've had your current job.



But if the majority of workers have been at their currently employer for three years or longer, it's not because we're particularly happy. As you can see in the chart below, there's a very weak correlation between employee happiness and the time they've worked for their current employer.

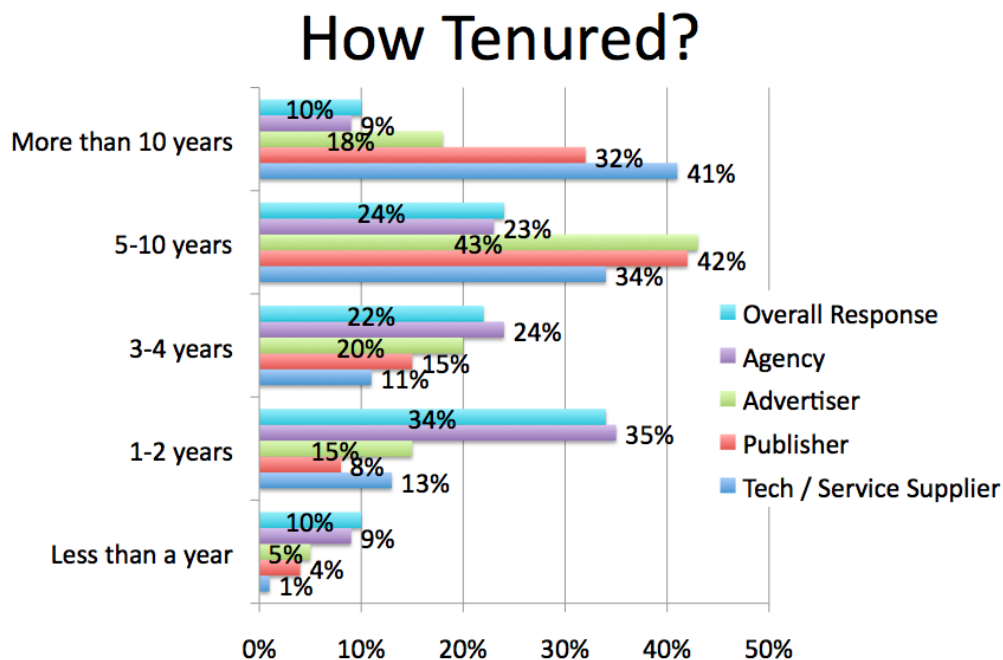


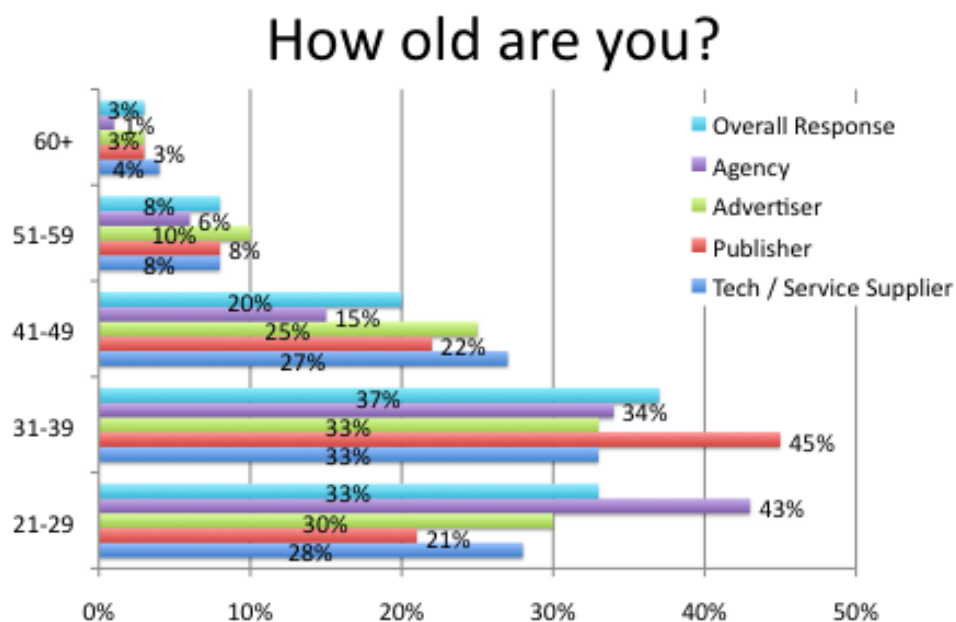
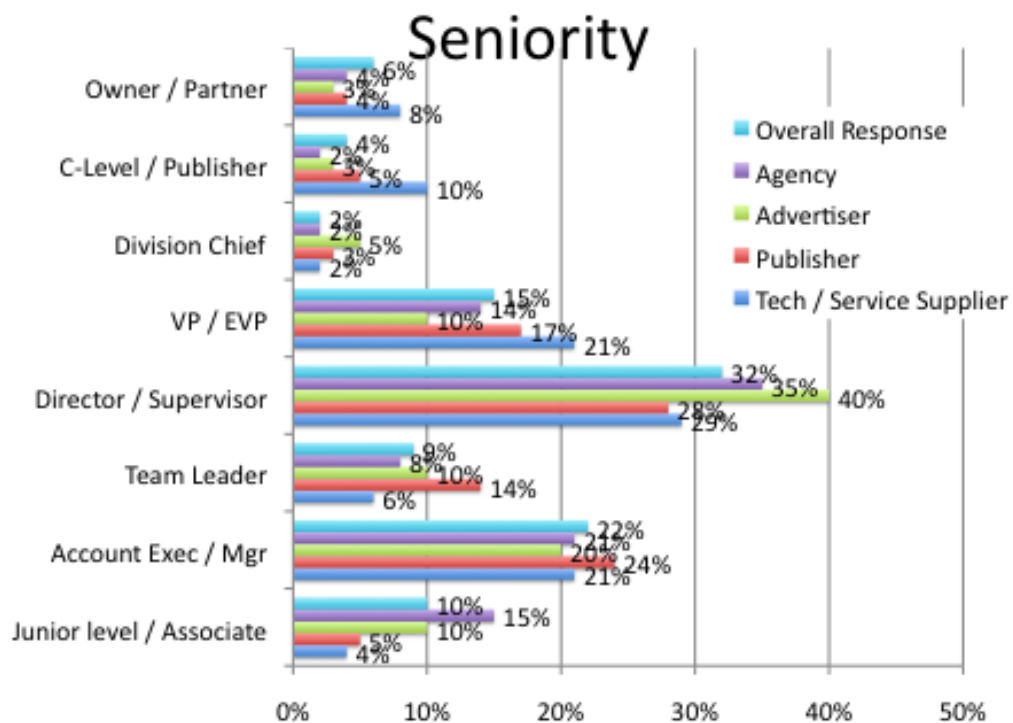
Another way to look at the tenure of employees in the digital advertising industry is that fully 44 percent of survey respondents have worked for their current employer for two years or less. The constant emergence of new, or the consolidation, restructuring and acquisition of older companies in our start-up crazed culture may be a factor.

But so is the fact that we're staffed by the young – people with the stamina to keep up with the pace of change, and the newly acquired skill-set to keep up with the breakthrough technology that often provides the margin of success in our competitive industry.

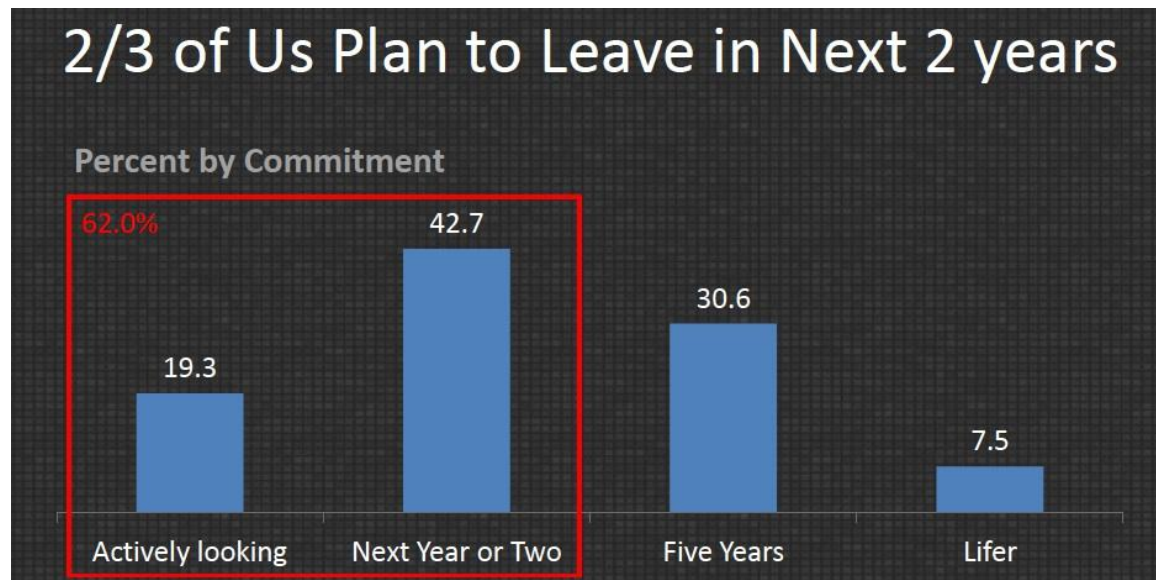
Entrepreneurial companies tend to be smaller, providing more opportunity for responsibility at a younger age. That may help to explain why, even with the brevity of tenure, respondents in our study skew higher in seniority. Even so, agencies stand out as having the least tenure in their current company. Whether this is due to high industry mobility, inexperience or a combination of both, we're unable to say.

We can observe is that, looking at industry segments individually, publishers and technology providers appear to have the most experience at their current jobs, followed by advertisers in the 5- to 10-year span. Agencies lead in lack of tenure in groups less than a year, 1-2 years and 3-4 years.





As to age, here again agency employees are among the youngest. A full decade separates the average publisher and agency employee – a factor that may figure in the enmity that publishers sometimes feel for agency reps, as we'll point out in a later slide. Advertiser ages are more uniform across the spectrum.

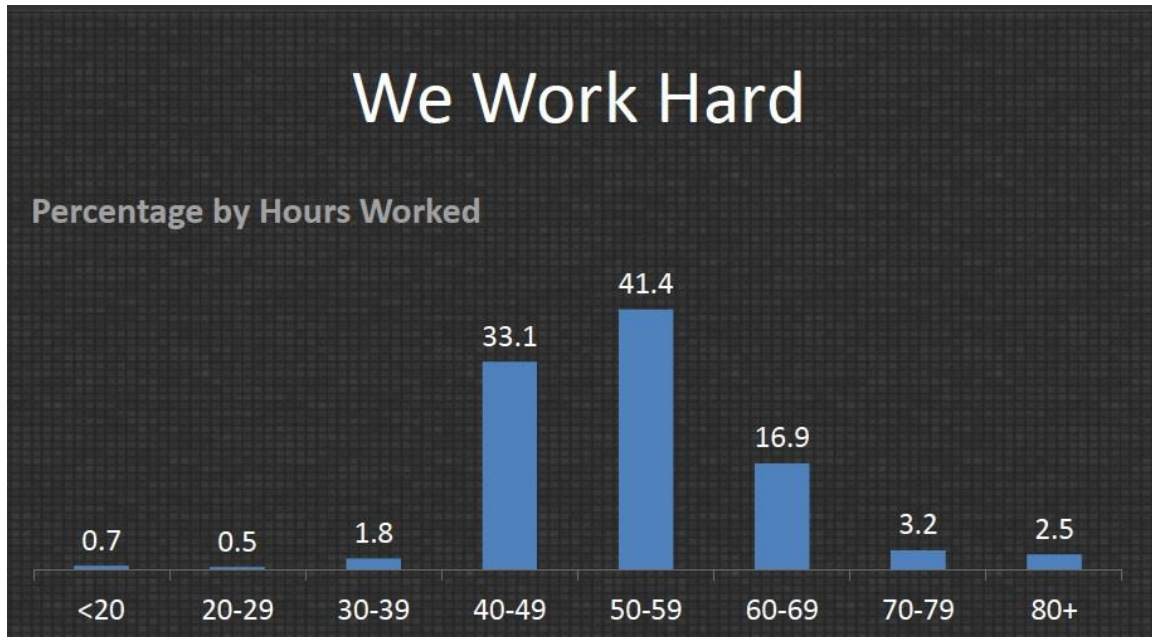


Industry mobility, comfort with change, a wealth of opportunity and perhaps a higher than average, innate creative “itch” may all combine to keep our resume’s fresh and our LinkedIn profiles current. But the sad truth is that there is a high correlation between this propensity to move on and our unhappiness at work.

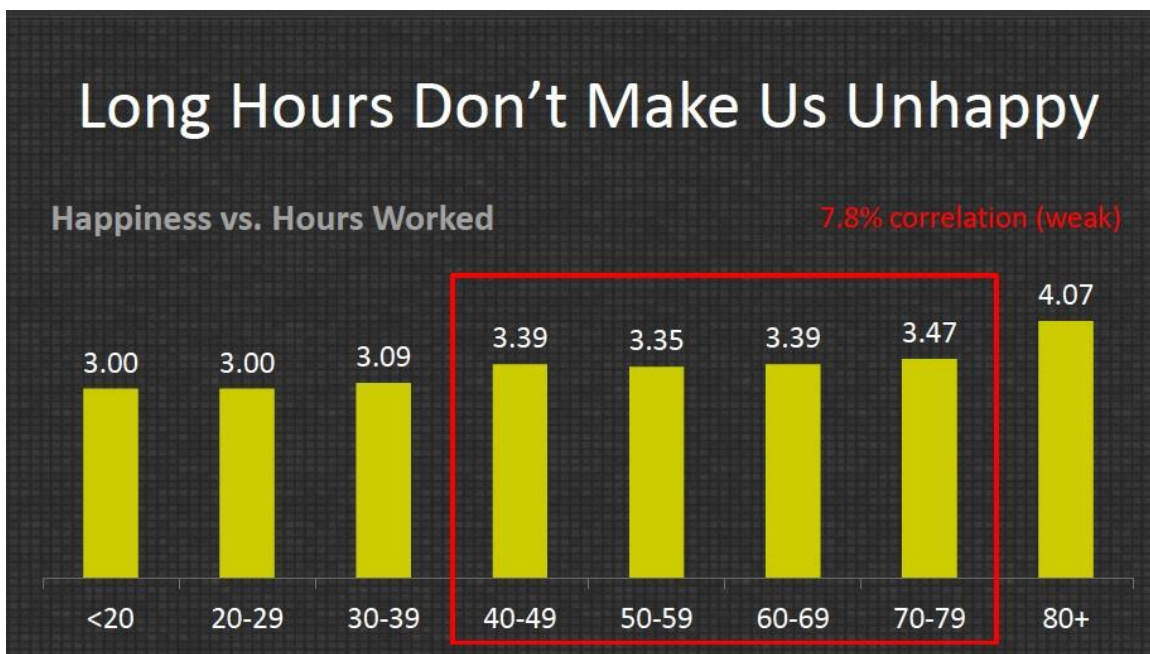


Surprise! Hard Work Doesn't Make Us Unhappy

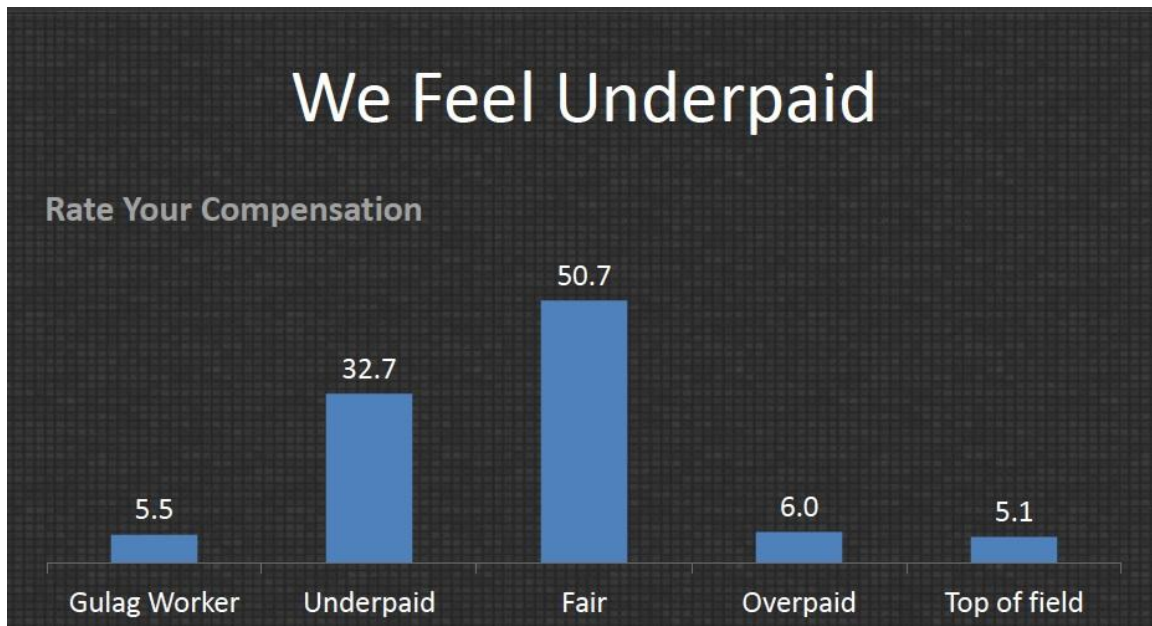
Men and women are equally happy in their jobs. We all work fairly long hours; only 3 percent of respondents say they work bankers hours. One third are likely to work 40-49 hours per week, and the majority – 58 percent – put in between 50 and 70 hours a week.



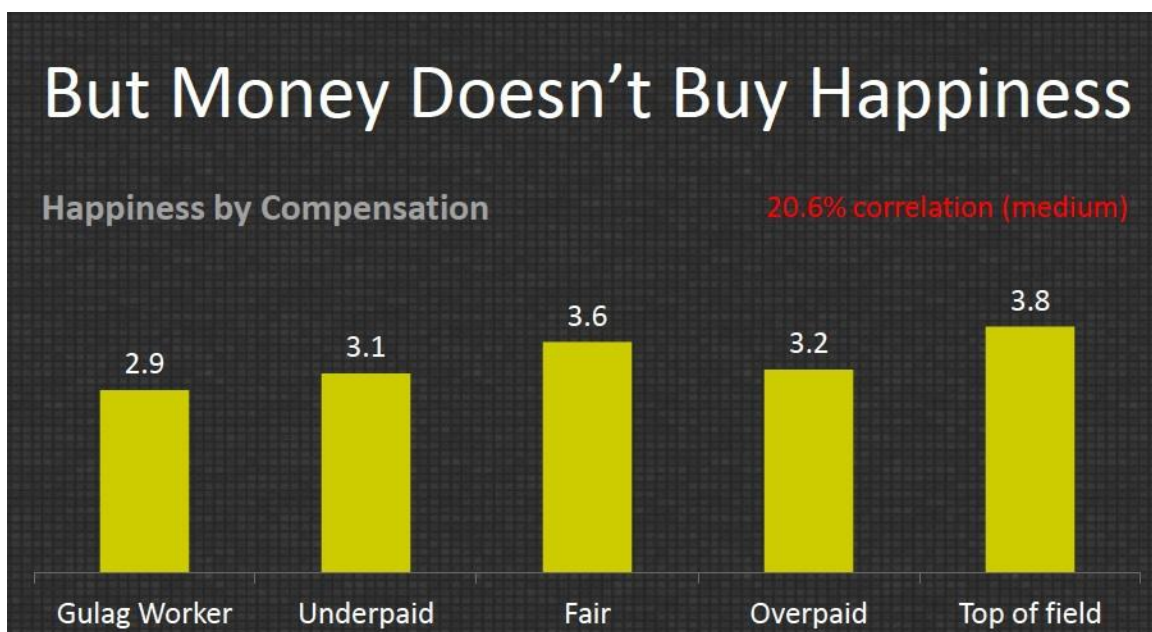
Yet there's no strong correlation between long hours and unhappiness at work. People can feel fulfilled, and enjoy what they do, even while working up to double the traditional 40-hour work week.



And, although 38 percent of us feel underpaid, it doesn't appear that money alone can buy us happiness.

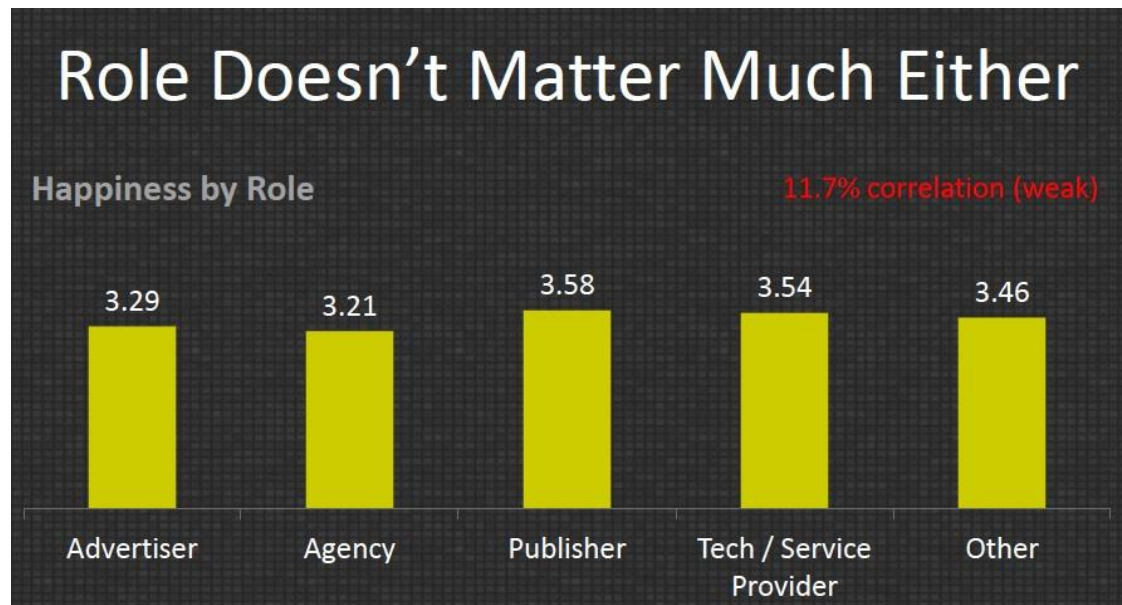


There's only a moderate correlation between those who are happy at work, and compensation levels. Put another way, it isn't only the paycheck that contributes to our happiness.



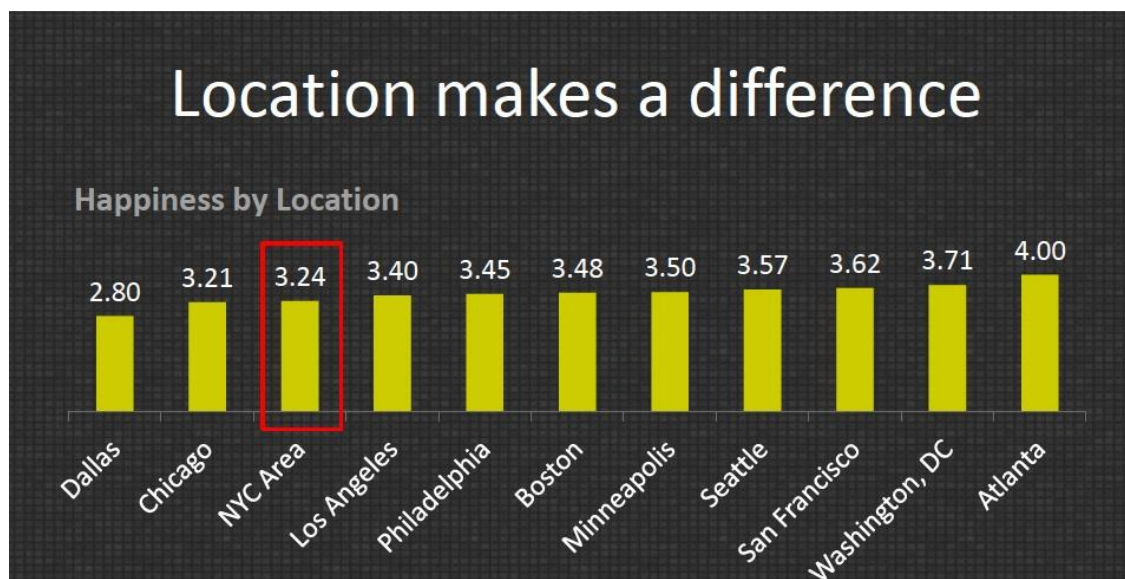
And "resting on your laurels" doesn't happen in this business. Tenure doesn't have much of an impact on how happy employees are at work. People working less than one year in the business, and people with more than 10 years under their belts

expressed nearly the same level of happiness. Despite the differences that we've already highlighted in tenure and age in the digital advertising industry, the same differences don't impact how happy people are to be employed as an advertiser, agency, publisher or technology provider. Any of these professions can offer the same degree of happiness.

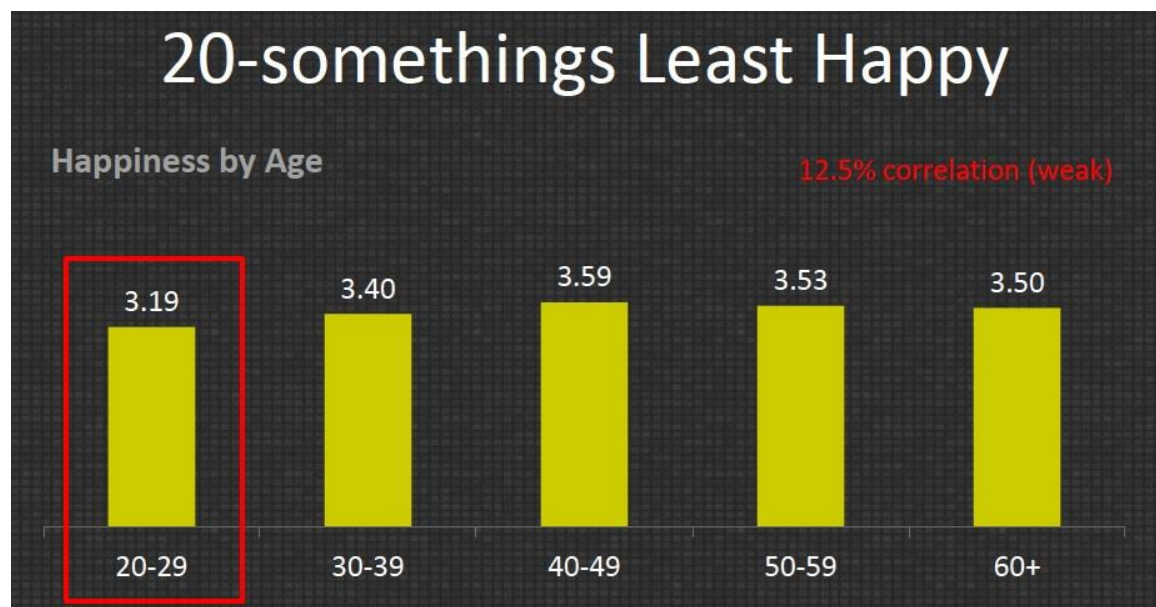
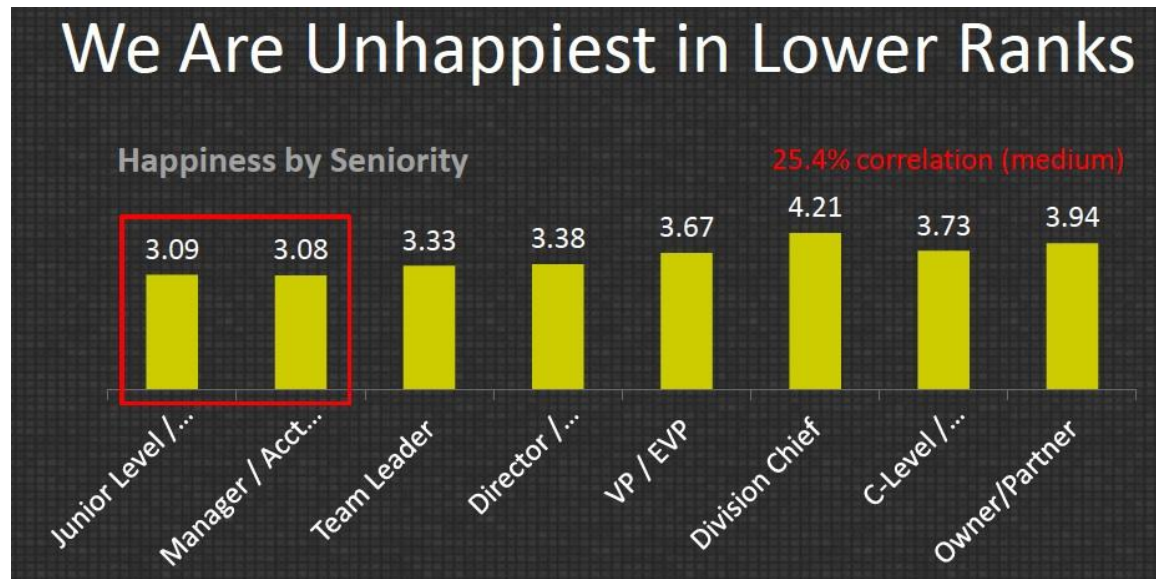


'Where' Matters to Happiness – Both Geographically and On the Totem Pole

Hurricanes and black-outs aside, notoriously dour New Yorkers might actually smile to know that employees in the digital media and advertising industry are even grumpier in Dallas and Chicago. We're happiest in San Francisco, Washington, DC, and Atlanta.

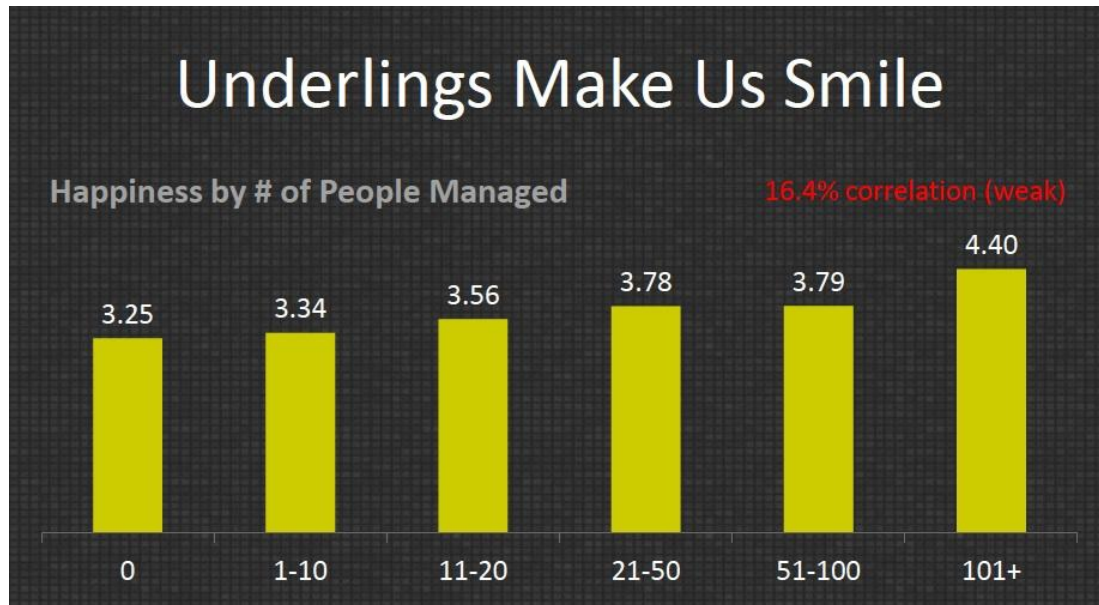


Not surprisingly, our location on the totem pole also impacts our happiness, with unhappiness more common in the lower ranks. Notice, too, that there is a stronger correlation between our positions in our company and happiness than there is between age and happiness. Younger workers clearly can be nearly as happy as mid-level employees, so long as there's a higher level of authority or advancement involved.



Having underlings does put a skip in our step. Happiness rises in slight correlation to the number of people we manage, though the biggest jump is clearly felt on the high-end (those with more than 100 employees under management). In this case, the army of intellect we can marshal may have less impact on our happiness than

the feeling of accomplishment in attaining a senior position. The fact that the correlation is weak, combined with our findings about the much higher importance of understanding one's career path, suggest that it's the ability to determine our own fates that really makes us happy.



How to Make People Happy

We certainly can't control our age, or in many cases even where we live and work in digital media and marketing, but a couple of things stand out in our survey as things managers could do to make their workers happier – starting with training. Comfort with change is one thing, but employees don't enjoy being thrown into the deep end or feeling like they need help just to accomplish their daily tasks.



But the strongest of all correlations we uncovered between what makes us happy and things employers may control, is the ability to provide employees with opportunity for advancement in their company. People are markedly happier anywhere in a range of sensing that they “will eventually get promoted,” if they believe it is “easy to get promoted if they work hard,” or, best yet, “guaranteed with reasonable effort.”



Tuck’s graduate analysts went even deeper into cross-correlations of happiness and seniority, arguing that three factors stand out as important predictors of job satisfaction in the digital advertising industry: commitment, advancement opportunities and preparation for the jobs employees are asked to do.

Providing additional skills training for mid-level staff, and engaging more with junior staff on morale questions are two opportunities that stand out for managers to be able to improve the happiness of their work forces, and so their employee retention.

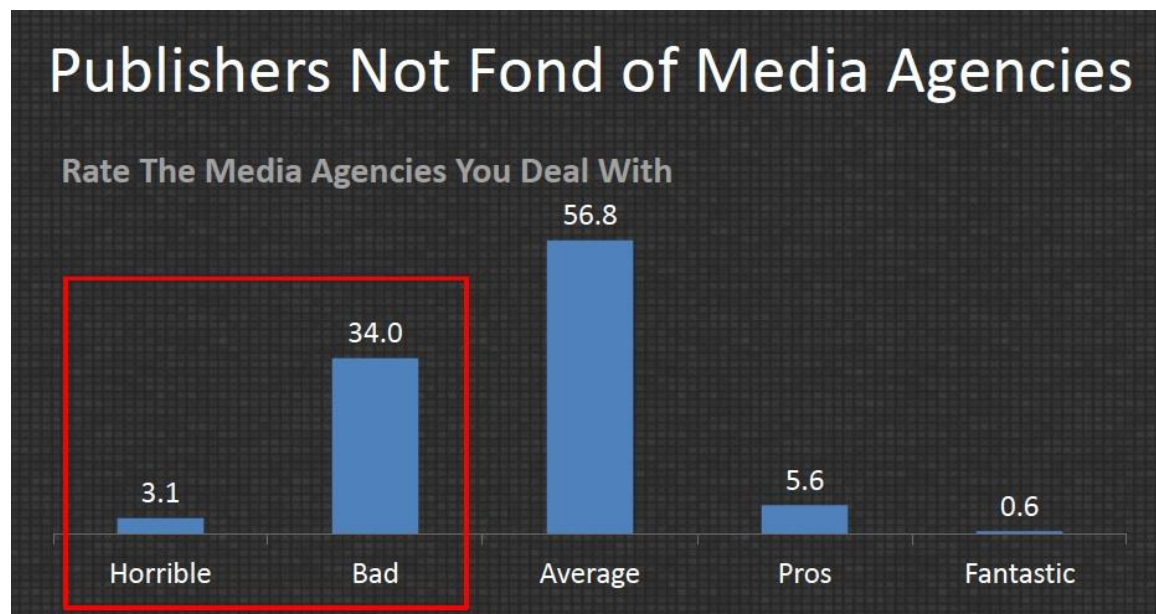
Waving A Magic Wand

What would agencies change if they had a magic wand? In a word, “clients.” Yes, more strategic planning, less reliance on Excel (better tools generally) and fewer hours worked would all contribute to happier agency employees, but the combination of the words “client” and “clients” pretty much says it all.

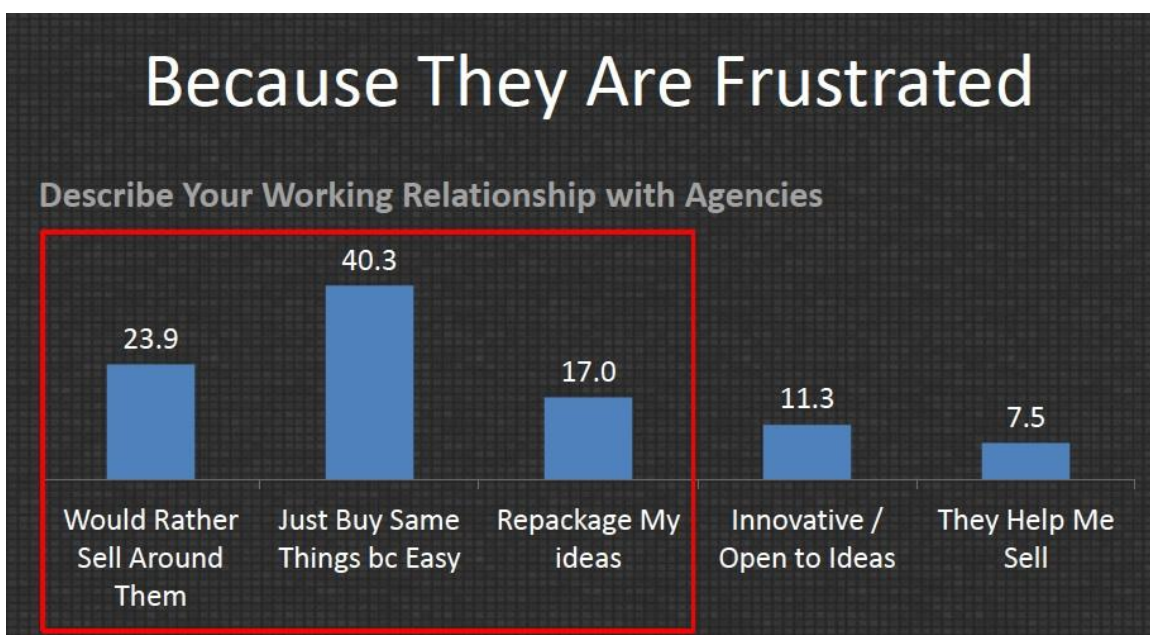
If clients were only more appreciative, involved, more inclined to partner in the process of transforming their marketing communications creatively for the digital age, agency workers say they’d be much happier.

more nimbleness. One advertiser commented that what he really wants from his agency partner is, "To have them come up with custom solutions instead of trying to force us into the same box they use for their other clients."

The same could not be said by publishers. Publishers, quite frankly aren't fond of media agencies they deal with, the largest portion of them rating agencies as "average," and more than a third rating them as "bad" or "horrible."



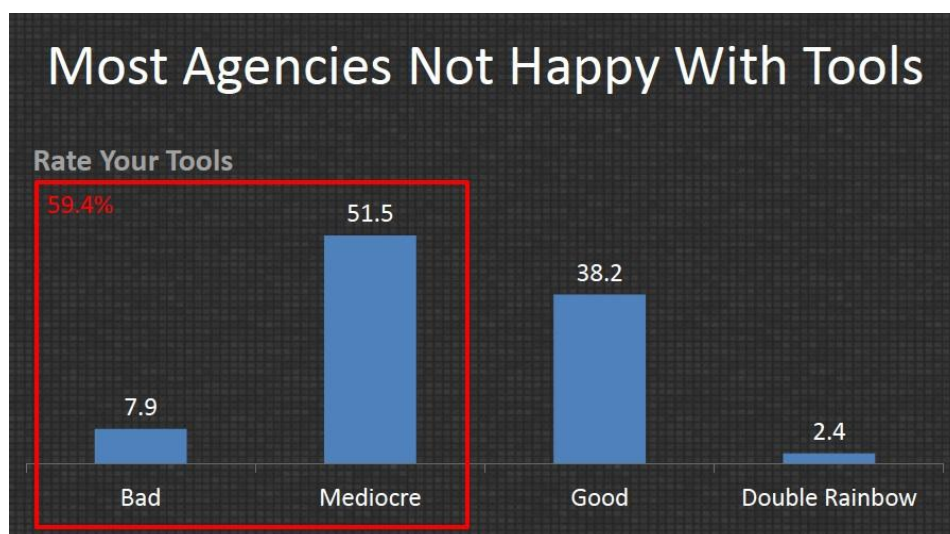
Asked to describe their working relationship with agencies, the majority of publishers say they'd rather "sell around them," that they "just buy the same things because it's easy," or "repackage my ideas." Just under 20 percent lauded agencies for being innovative and open to new ideas or willing to help publishers sell their inventory into their clients' campaigns.



Publishers want agencies to be creative, understand, and communicate

Fixing the Tool-set

Archimedes once famously remarked that with a lever and a place to stand, he could move the Earth. In their own efforts to change the world of advertising, agencies would settle for something to replace Excel.

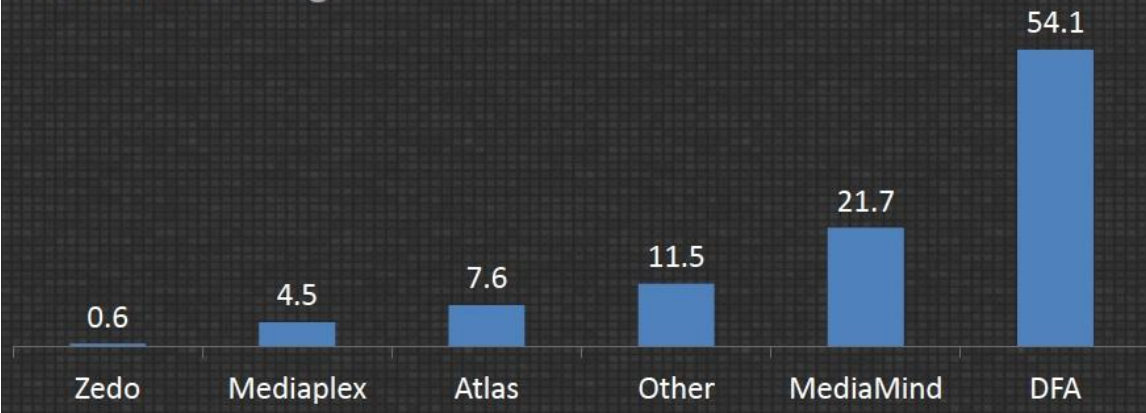


Asked to rate their tools, more than 59 percent of agencies say they range from bad to mediocre. More than half use Google's Dart for

Agencies for ad serving, 70 percent use comScore for research, and 76 percent use Excel to make their media plans.

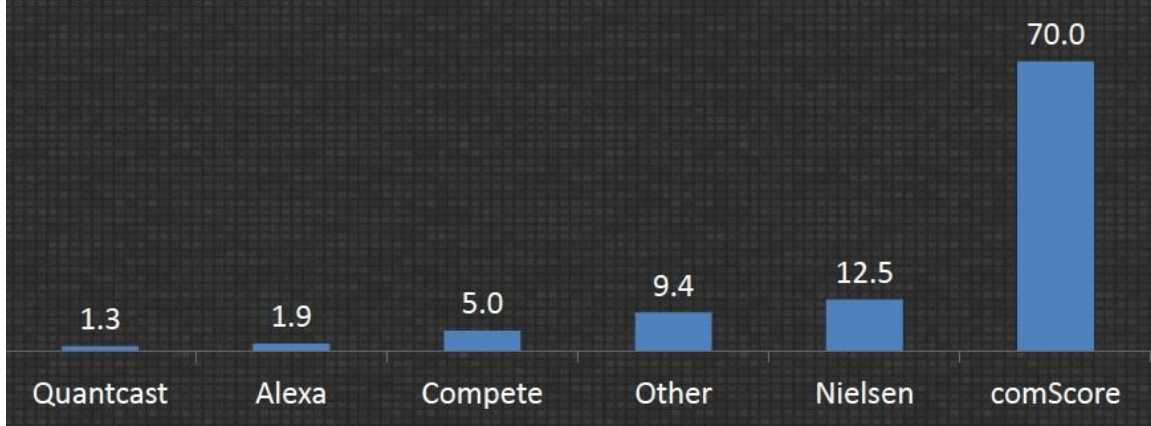
Agencies Use DFA for Ad Serving

Tool for Ad Serving



Agencies Use comScore for Research

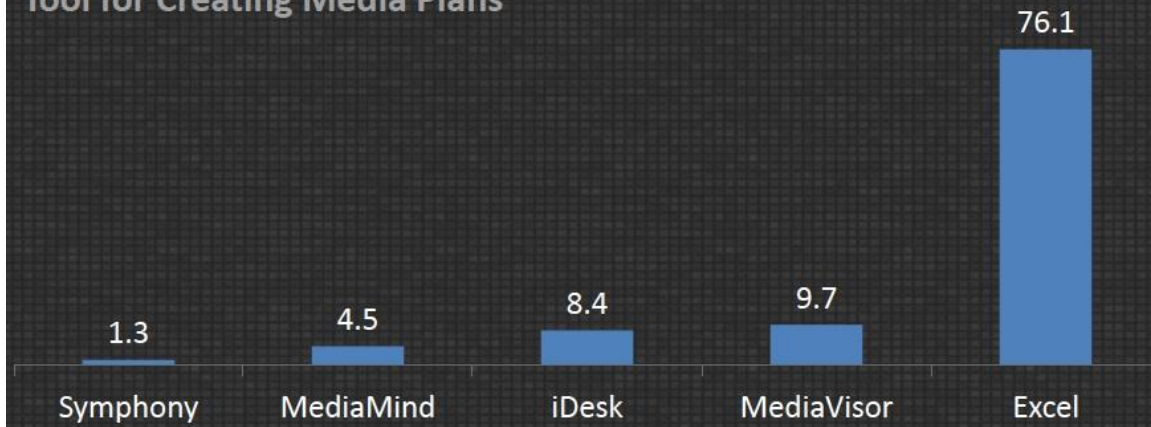
Tool for Research



In fact, agencies are so enamored of Excel, more than half of agency employees use it 1-4 hours per day, and a third use it more than four hours per day.

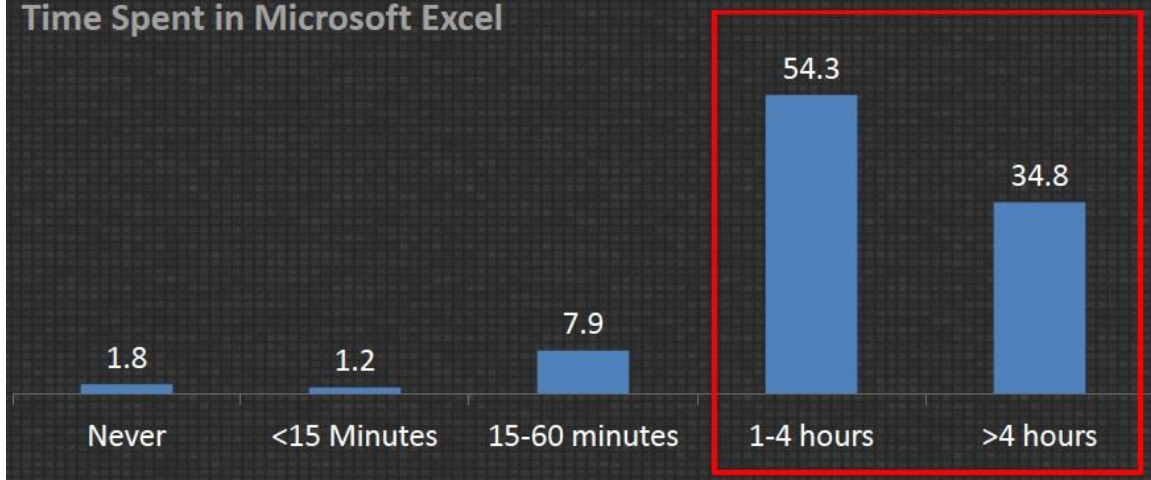
Agencies Use Excel to Make Media Plans

Tool for Creating Media Plans



Agencies Love Microsoft Excel

Time Spent in Microsoft Excel



In an industry where what people love about their jobs is the opportunity to effect change and be creative, you can imagine how happy this makes the average agency worker.

Conclusion: What Would Make Us All Happier?

There are a number of quantifiable things that would make people in the digital advertising industry happier.

1. **Make the work matter.** We're an industry not only comfortable with change but addicted to causing it. Conversely, we become quickly frustrated when the hype surrounding new technology or tactics fails to meet our expectations, or when we're called upon to "fix it" on our own time. Our survey results indicate that it isn't the long hours that we hate; it's the long hours that are made longer by mindless tasks – things that keep us from creating and innovating – that make us crazy. If something is important enough to spend more than four hours a day doing, make sure whoever is doing it has the best of all possible resources to accomplish that task as efficiently as possible. Certify, in short, that there really isn't a better way.
2. **Couple Change With Training.** Repeatedly, respondents told us that one of the things they love about our industry is that there's something new to learn every day. This same feature of our business, however, can snowball, making it difficult to keep up with the pace of change, combined with the competitive pressure to succeed by operating at a high level of proficiency. In other words, having the right tools and techniques must be matched by the training to use them expertly. Something as simple as making sure your mid-level employees have the freedom to ask for and receive training when they need it would be a positive step towards their feeling of well-being. These managers in turn are better able to make sure that more junior-level associates receive the kind of indoctrination they need to succeed. Training is a key job benefit in an industry where people appear to be looking for their next job the minute they acquire one. Agencies are more than willing to complain when clients supposedly lack the digital education needed to fully appreciate their efforts, but that blade cuts both ways. The more highly trained the digital workforce, the better able they will be to cope with the change we don't yet see coming.
3. **Communicate career opportunities.** We're an industry sorely in need of tenure and expertise. While it's the entrepreneurial (a.k.a. "start-up") nature of the business that many find attractive, the sheer lack of institutional knowledge can frustrate the very bright people we employ. Smart people sometimes lack the patience to find their niche at a given company, when they can just as easily try something new, somewhere else. If someone is attractive enough to HR to hire, surely he deserves to be given some inclination of what his career path might be at your company if he works hard and demonstrates an aptitude for innovation.

4. **A little listening goes a long way.** Agencies, little realizing how well they are esteemed by their clients, seem to think that they'd be more appreciated if their clients were more digitally savvy. Certainly publishers feel like they could be more successful if agencies only took the time to better understand their value propositions. Agencies, meanwhile, want publishers and technology providers to pay attention to their individual needs and not waste their time with mundane or inappropriate suggestions. We respectfully suggest that just valuing the input of everyone with a role in making the digital advertising industry work would go a long way towards shattering stereotypes and making everyone a better partner.

Study Methodology

In conjunction with its executive-level summits for digital media and advertising professionals, Digiday regularly conducts State of the Industry Surveys on topics of burning interest to our attendees and readers of our publications. Topics typically focus on either a new, untapped opportunity or something that could be seen to hold the industry back from our best days. The goal of our Job Satisfaction Survey was to determine the drivers and effects of job satisfaction in the digital media industry. Digiday polled its opted-in base of leading digital media and marketing pros, offering the incentive of a chance to win one of five \$100 American Express Gift Cards and full results to all survey participants. Responses were gathered over three weeks, from Feb. 11-March 3, 2013, then submitted for analysis to of John Ruth, CFA; two bright students from the Tuck School of Business: Mukul Kumar and Nishant Mehta; and Meenakshi Menon, an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Maine.

About NextMark

NextMark takes the expense and hassle out of digital media planning with its new Planner system. Get your free account at <http://www.NextMark.com/planner>.

Founded in 1999, NextMark provides systems for media planning, ad sales, and ad operations. More than 2,000 leading agencies, publishers, brokers, consultants, and rep firms use NextMark's patented technology to buy and sell more than 90,000 media programs in 15 online and offline channels. NextMark is headquartered in Hanover, NH with offices in New York City and Edmond, OK and on the web at <http://www.NextMark.com>.

You can learn more about NextMark's efforts to help turn more "grunt" workers into "knowledge" workers by checking out the company's "[Happiness Project](#)." A video of Pych's presentation to the Digiday Agency Summit March 20, in Scottsdale, AZ, is available [here](#).

About Digiday, The Authority on Digital Media, Marketing and Advertising

Digiday is a media company and community for professionals who work in the digital media, marketing and advertising industry. Our mission is to connect the industry with insightful analysis and perspective, as well as each other. We provide key insights and information through our online publications and conferences that cover the changes, trends -- and why they matter. The focus is on quality, not quantity, and honesty instead of spin. We cover the industry with an expertise, depth and tone you won't find anywhere else. The entire team at Digiday is driven to

produce the highest quality publications, conferences, and resources for our industry. See Digiday.com to read or subscribe to our publications or for information on events; join Digiday LinkedIn or Facebook groups; follow us on Twitter @Digiday; or tune into live-streamed and archived video coverage of our events on our [Vimeo channel](#).