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 FEBRUARY 13, 2014  ANNICK STAHL

A few weeks ago I wrote about how [Henry Ford developed the one worker = one specialist](#) idea and put it to use in his Model T assembly line. I compared his innovative thinking to automating parts of receivables processing — the part that takes the least amount of real thinking: keying in data.

This got me thinking: If you pluck someone from a somewhat mindless job (again: typing data into a machine hour after hour, day after day) and train him to do something else, something that may encourage him to really think, will it make him a happier, more productive employee? Will it offer him higher job satisfaction? Personal satisfaction? Will it erase all his fine lines and bad memories? But seriously: What about the company's bottom line? Does feeling useful and challenged directly translate into better productivity?



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With so many questions, it's good that people do studies on just this sort of thing so that we can get answers. In October of 2012, the [Society for Human Resource Management](#) published a study in which more than 30 aspects of employee job satisfaction and engagement were examined, including career development, relationship with management, compensation and benefits, and more. The study concluded that the number one contributor (63 percent) to employee job satisfaction is *opportunities to use skills and abilities*. And it makes sense, right? When you're valued, when you know that you're doing something unique, something worthwhile, your happiness index goes up and boredom goes down.

Think about it in terms of cash application: Traditional methods involve a team of people, most of them with their heads down, mindlessly keying in data, trying to make their quota. While super-efficient data keying could be considered an art form, there really isn't much thought involved. Honestly, it's not a nice way to work and besides, with the availability of an [automating solution](#), it's totally unnecessary.

So free up your key-punching, stultified data entry workers and give them — and in turn, your company — new life by repurposing them and harnessing the qualities you hired them for in the first place. A long-time data entry worker, who probably knows the ins and outs of A/R, holds in her head a lot of knowledge about many of — if not all — your customers. And because of her experience, she's bound be great at other things such as research, analytics, and more. Think of it as being green because in essence, you're recycling.



Bread and roses

As Rose Schneiderman, a prominent labor union leader, said, “[The worker must have bread but she must have roses too!](#)” In this case, the roses in this scenario is job satisfaction, a feeling of being valued for work well done. And it only stands to

reason that if your employees are using their critical thinking skills, their productivity will shoot up, and as productivity rises, so does your bottom line, your yield, and your harvest — no matter what industry you’re in.

Engagement in one’s work is not the same as satisfaction but they do seem like two sides of the same coin. Don’t you want to make sure you’re getting the most out of the people you’ve hired? Surely the majority of them can do more than punch numbers into a machine. Imagine the gold mine of ideas that can come from a mind that’s free to explore.

What makes you happy at work?

“Employees make the best dates. You don’t have to pick them up and they’re always tax-deductible.” — Andy Warhol

