

EXCLUSIVE: Craig Naicker talks Happy Friday



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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[CWDi has been rebirthed as Happy Friday](#) by reinventing the agency model - for staff and clients alike.



Craig Naicker, group managing director at Happy Friday

Happy Friday's group managing director, Craig Naicker, says, "You are only able to grow a sustainable business when you take care of the people within it". This is the thinking that frames the "Happy Friday" concept because, for Happy Friday, change begins on the inside.

Naicker shares more about the refresh...

weren't happy,
our ad agency
changed it.
hould too.

CWDi rebirths as Happy Friday

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How did the concept of Happy Friday come about?

Firstly, we knew that the advertising industry was broken and there was an urgent need for a people-centric agency that puts their people before profits.

Secondly, as a business, we were already on a journey to solidify ourselves in the TTL space and wanted to be a different type of TTL agency. To do this, we knew that it was important to ensure that the talent in our business was happy because we all know that happy people make happy work – and then your clients are happy.

Thirdly, we wanted to use this concept as a case study for the business by showing our creative thinking and our ability to solve business challenges.

■ ***Covid acted as a catalyst of change for many. What processes were put in place for staff during the pandemic?***

Working from home was one of the first things that we did, by ensuring everyone had adequate resources. We then ran an internal campaign called MD for a Day, where the team was asked what would they do if they were an MD for a day.

The suggestions that they made were invaluable. As the leadership team, we made the decision to implement them. There were about 16 in total, below are some of them:

- 25 leave days
- No business related WhatsApps or emails after 6pm
- No meeting Fridays (Internal or External)
- We will support your side hustle
- Four-and-a-half-day working week
- A counsellor on call
- Human Library

■ ***Would you say Happy Friday was a result of the Covid-19 pandemic or were these changes a long time coming?***

These changes have been a long-time coming and not just for the advertising industry but for all other sectors of employment. What Covid has done is amplified the mental and physical strain people are going through at work, without even looking at the direct impact it has on their personal lives.

■ ***Happy Friday's agency model just recently got a refresh. How confident are you that this concept will work?***

When we started the process of the refresh, or as we call it, a rebirth, we made one commitment that these changes won't just be words on a page, and no matter the pushback we get, we will follow through with our beliefs and actions.

The road ahead might not be easy but if we stay true to our people and our word, who knows? It might be a new road for other businesses to ride along.

■ ***Have you gone through a trial-and-error process before implementing these changes? What do you forecast in terms of the productivity rate of staff?***

Yes, we have, and we still continue to go through it. The team and our clients are slowly adapting to this new and improved way of working.

Research shows that when people are happy at work they are more productive, authentic, more committed and driven to succeed. The idea of productivity is not about making sure that the teamwork their full hours each day, but rather about the

quality and positive energy of the work that comes out of the agency that determines productivity.

■ ***With this new agency model, will anything be changing? (Business objectives, strategy, management structures, etc)***

The culture and values in our business have always been amazing, so we want to ensure that we don't lose those. We want to focus on being more collaborative internally (team) and externally (clients).

We have a great business proposition for all those challenger brands out there. This proposition is going to change the way clients and agency work from a commercial point of view.

There are lots of other strategic opportunities we are looking at and we will introduce them as the journey progresses. The one thing we do want to say is, it's okay to allow younger talent into your exco and manco meetings. You will be surprised at what they can offer and teach you.

■ ***How has the agency responded to this news?***

They were part of the process that helped shape the Happy Friday brand, so they are extremely excited about the journey we are embarking on.

■ ***What do you think the industry thoughts to this new approach will be?***

We believe it's what a lot of people within the advertising industry have been crying out for, so we hope it will have a positive response and be instrumental in effecting a positive change in our industry.

When it comes to the owners and leadership teams, there might be a mixed reactions. Some leaders still prefer the old way of leading and won't want to move out of their comfort zones.

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