



# VYNAMIC

*A Philadelphia healthcare industry management consulting company demonstrates how small changes in corporate culture can add up to large-scale success.*

Dana Nae Garcia had been working as a management consultant for seven years; she'd gotten used to eating dinner out of a vending machine at midnight and flying to four different cities in one week, hardly seeing her two small children. She understood that sometimes her health and home life had to take a hit in favor of her career.

"My career was going really well, but my life had gone off track," she recalls. She was overweight, and her toddler was having separation anxiety and was behind on his developmental milestones.

As partnership came closer and closer to within her grasp, Nae Garcia realized that if she attained her goal of making partner, it would lock her into the same grueling lifestyle for another decade, or more.

Then she got a job offer that promised a healthier work-life balance and time to focus on her health and family without sacrificing her ambition, or slowing down her career. "I allowed myself to question for a moment whether I wanted to continue down that path," Nae Garcia says, "or whether I wanted to take a chance and focus on personal growth



**Vynamic employees on the company's walking track. (Photo by Shira Yudkoff)**

and happiness. It felt like a risk worth taking.”

Since she took that new job at Philadelphia-based healthcare management consulting firm Vynamic in October 2014, she’s lost 50 pounds with the help of an on-staff health counselor, her son has developed the coping and language skills appropriate to his age, and, she says, she hasn’t had to make any professional sacrifices. It was all a matter of balance and of Vynamic’s commitment to creating a healthy, happy work environment.

And Nae Garcia isn’t the only one — Vynamic employees are, quantifiably, happier than most. They’re in the top 15th percentile in the United States for happiness at work, according to [Happiness Works’](#) survey of more than 90,000 people at over 500 companies. The survey measures overall life satisfaction as well as happiness in the workplace, with questions like “Do you feel the job you do is worthwhile?” and “In general, would you say your overall health is good?”

So what exactly is Vynamic putting in the Kool-Aid?

The company's vision is to be "the healthiest company in the world," a goal founder and CEO Dan Calista admits is "aggressive," but he and the rest of the team work toward accomplishing it with a swath of initiatives suggested and launched in group effort. In addition to the colorful, ergonomic office — complete with a "living room," Vynamic's comfortable, non-fluorescent answer to the break room — they have a weekly healthy hour, offering free yoga classes, guest speakers or even chair massages. The Fitbit challenge — employees' weekly steps are logged on a big board in the office and top steppers are entered into raffles to win gift certificates to Whole Foods or new Lululemon workout gear — is a big hit, with light-hearted, competitive smack talk shared around the office.



**Vynamic CEO Dan Calista (Photo by Shira Yudkoff)**

Vynamic also has a "be your best self" program, in which employees set personal goals — losing weight, learning a language, training for a marathon — and then work toward them with the help of an on-site counselor. In addition to the support of the counselor, they receive financial support from Vynamic in the form of up to \$100 of reimbursed expenses per quarter.

Calista says he's always looking for new ways to improve the work-life balance and overall happiness at Vynamic — and such changes often start at the top. He recently

removed the email app from his cell phone after noticing how frequently and compulsively he was checking his email. The change is a test run to see how it affects his work and life if he limits himself to only checking email when at a computer. He'll test run this himself before deciding whether to encourage his nearly-100 employees to do the same.

So far, it's working. "I'm so much more present!" he says. Though, he admits, some people look at him like he's crazy and ask questions like, "What, you don't check your email anymore?"

There was also resistance when he first suggested that nobody send work-related email between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. or on weekends. Everyone was so accustomed to the corporate "telepressure" to be constantly working, constantly available, that they didn't know how to unplug. But they got used to it, and now "zzzMail" is a Vynamic-wide policy, and one of the most popular.

In an initiative Calista calls the "moveable CEO," he's opted not to have a fixed office, or even a fixed desk, but to work in different areas of the workspace every day. Everyone at Vynamic rotates around the office, sometimes sitting on an ergonomic exercise-ball chair at a round table in the middle of the room, sometimes at a walking desk by the window. The idea behind this constant movement is to give people fresh perspectives, to keep them communicating with and learning from as many colleagues as possible, and to use the space more efficiently. "If this was my office and I was gone half the day, it would be really inefficient if nobody was allowed to touch it," Calista says, gesturing around the big conference room. "We have the space. Someone should use it."

Of course, every experiment comes with challenges. This roaming system sometimes makes it logistically difficult for coworkers to find each other when they have something to discuss. "And sometimes on busy days, I can't find a place to work," Calista admits. They're still working out the kinks, but they feel the benefits outweigh the logistical challenges.

The biggest challenge right now, Calista says, is to find a way to "scale the culture," or to maintain the philosophy of health and happiness as Vynamic expands. They recently opened their second office, in Boston — a decision that was put to a vote before the entire company, like all big

decisions at Vynamic, and passed with 80 percent of employees approving. Calista is looking for ways to translate the company's culture to Boston without enforcing a wholesale franchising of the policies and initiatives. "What people in Philadelphia want to do might not be what you do in Boston," he says. Expanding the philosophy without making it stagnant is a delicate balance he refers to as "shared values, local vibe."



**Vynamic employees at work. (Photo by Shira Yudkoff)**

"It's not all about chair massages and free food," Calista adds. "It's a business model at the end of day. Creating a healthy work environment puts people at ease to do the work to their fullest ability."

Vynamic's well-rested, health-conscious team has enjoyed a steady growth rate of 15-20 percent every year for the last five years, and currently have a score of 9.2 out of 10 on their regular customer satisfaction surveys.

The focus on a healthy work environment is also a strategy to attract and retain the top talent in the industry. "We want to get the best people, and we want them to keep working at Vynamic and do the best work they can," Calista explains. "It just seems logical, then, to create an environment they want to work in."

Vynamic's attrition rate has remained consistently low — around 10 percent last year — in an industry famous for

OpenWork sparks fresh thinking through sharing the stories of organizations reinventing how work gets done fast burnout and high turnover.

“The results speak for themselves,” Calista says. He hopes that when other companies realize that investing in a happy, healthy work environment doesn’t take away from productivity but actually increases it, more will adopt his approach.

“I hope one day all companies will have a zzzMail policy,” Calista says. “I think that’s the way we’re headed.”

