

The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda

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Introduction

The relationship between individual wellbeing and personal performance is well established. In the main, people who feel well perform better than those who feel ill. People who feel ill tend to under-perform because of the manifestation of the illness (for example feeling pain, feeling nauseous) or the cause of the unwell feeling (for example the breakdown in a relationship). Concentration is lost and personal performance deteriorates as a result. At work, this diversion from the job means lower personal and, consequentially, organisational performance. People who feel unwell may, also, not undertake any work and stay away from the workplace. This can have severe financial and reputational consequences for the individual and the organisation, particularly if the individual has intermittent or continuous periods of feeling unwell. Staying away from the workplace is known as absence; staying at work whilst under-performing is known as presenteeism, or 'the Iceberg Effect' (i.e. below the surface rumblings of psychological distress, or mild symptoms of physical illness).

People who feel well perform better than people who feel ill

Wellbeing is as much a personal perception of wellness as it is an objective assessment. People who suffer physical and/or mental illness or disability may perceive themselves to be well and able, even though they may be objectively assessed to be ill or disabled. Their

personal sense of psychological wellbeing will be such that they may feel OK and perform at a high level. Conversely, they may feel unwell without being objectively assessed as being unwell or disabled, and they may move from feeling well to unwell and back again quite frequently. This is the stuff of everyday life.

Ambiguity is the norm. Individuals have different thresholds of tolerance of physical and mental ill health. One person's pressure is another person's stress. One person's sense of hopelessness may be another's trigger for new found energy. Much depends on the psychological resilience that individuals possess within themselves that they can draw on in times of challenge. Even the strength of resilience will depend on personal mood and vary during periods of ill health and wellbeing.

Ambiguity is the norm

It is this ambiguity that makes employers flounder and seek some form of authoritative decision about an individual's capacity to work. This is often the task given to a medical practitioner, who under new guidance has the task of determining the level of potential and actual performance at work of those acknowledged or assessed to be unwell.

The idea of wellbeing is personal and private and often misinterpreted by others, giving rise to false attributions. Many people interpret other people's adverse events, psychological, physical ill

Other people's interpretation of another's sense of wellbeing is almost always wrong

health, and disability in terms of their own perceptions of wellbeing, not in terms of the person experiencing the event. This can have the effect of placing the individual in the position of being both a victim and the recipient of misunderstanding by

others about the impact the illness has on the individual. When someone is labelled as having an illness, but feels well, the potential for misunderstanding how the individual actually feels can be great as others often make the assumption that the label equates to some kind of norm of wellbeing for that illness. This is almost always incorrect.

There is, also, the difficulty of those who say they are feeling well, when they are exhibiting signs of being ill. It is not uncommon to be shocked by a suicide of someone who successfully camouflaged severe depression, by showing only few signs of the illness of total despair. At work, the camouflaging of poor wellbeing is often associated with presenteeism or 'the Iceberg Effect', when people stay at work continually under-performing or being counter-productive, because they are not well, but say they are 'well enough' to work.

Wellbeing, and by association, performance are, therefore, heavily idiosyncratic. This impacts on how individuals and organisations respond to adverse events. Trying to anticipate individual resilience to events and their reaction is difficult. Much depends on personality, previous experience of similar events, and degrees of tolerance that individuals can stand. Individual 'breaking points' vary between people, and within each individual. Someone who builds resilience should be able to tolerate more easily a similar event in the future compared to their reaction in the past. This is the basis for most [training programmes](#) – to provide tips, guidance, advice and the ability to open minds to approaches in dealing with unforeseen future events that may or may not occur.

The central influence is behaviour. Whilst many wellbeing programmes focus on nutrition and

Our behaviour and the behaviour of others is central to our sense of wellbeing

physical activities to build our sense of wellbeing, little is being provided to modify behaviours in ways that promote *psychological* wellbeing. This is a fundamental omission, placing at risk the prospect of sustainable change in the wellbeing of people at home and at work.

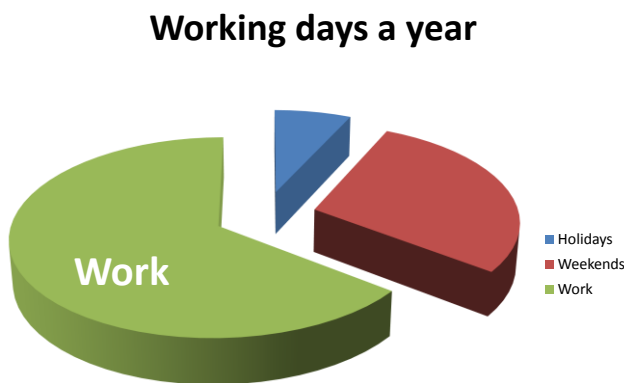
Wellbeing and Performance at Work

However, whilst wellbeing and performance may be idiosyncratic, the context or environment in which individuals live and work has a major and significant influence on how individuals respond to their own feelings of wellbeing. A culture at work that turns a blind eye to days taken as sick leave will create the culture of individual expectation that taking days off work is the norm. A front line emergency worker will normally work in a culture that expects individuals to sacrifice their own feelings and sensations in preference to those who need their help. A culture that condones excessively long working hours will promote the context for individuals to feel guilty about working normal hours and effectively force them to work long hours. Each of these examples illustrates the potential for impaired performance due to the sub-optimal environment for wellbeing. The idiosyncratic choice of feeling well or unwell is heavily constrained by the culture within which the individual works.

Our behaviour is heavily influenced by the context or culture in which we behave. Culture has a major and significant impact on individual perceptions of their wellbeing.

The workplace is normally a controlled community that has similar characteristics as social communities – a purpose, structure, rules and expected behaviours.

Those in full time work spend as much time at work as on any other single activity. A third of each day is normally spent at work, with a further third spent sleeping or preparing to sleep and preparing to be awake. This leaves travelling time to and from work, and the remainder in social activities, including family focused activities such as parenting.



We spend about 242 days a year at work, out of an available 365, depending on how much holiday we take.

As we spend large amounts of time in the workplace it becomes a place that should provide the ingredients to make individuals feel fulfilled. These ingredients will be different for each of us but may include strengthening social relationships, meeting challenges, relaxing with humour, working in teams or groups, and earning money. Feeling well at work optimises those opportunities. Feeling unwell diminishes the opportunities

of fulfilment. Feeling fulfilled adds significantly to feeling well.

Our perception of our own wellbeing at work influences our sense of wellbeing outside of work, and the other way round. If we have a strong sense of wellbeing at work it raises our resilience against adverse events outside work; the reverse is also the case – if we have a strong sense of wellbeing outside work it raises our resilience against adverse events in work.

Employers often raise questions as to their responsibility for the care of staff who experience events outside the workplace that influence their performance at work. The employer who believes he/she has no responsibility misses the point; if anyone feels unwell their performance is impaired; it is, therefore, in the interests of the business or service to mitigate the feeling of ‘unwellness’ so that the employee may regain a sense of wellbeing and performance, and contribute fully to the performance of the organisation. The ‘ripple effect’ of strengthening resilience against events outside work will be felt as a bonus for the individual, raising their level of commitment and engagement towards their workplace, thereby increasing still further their personal level of performance at work.

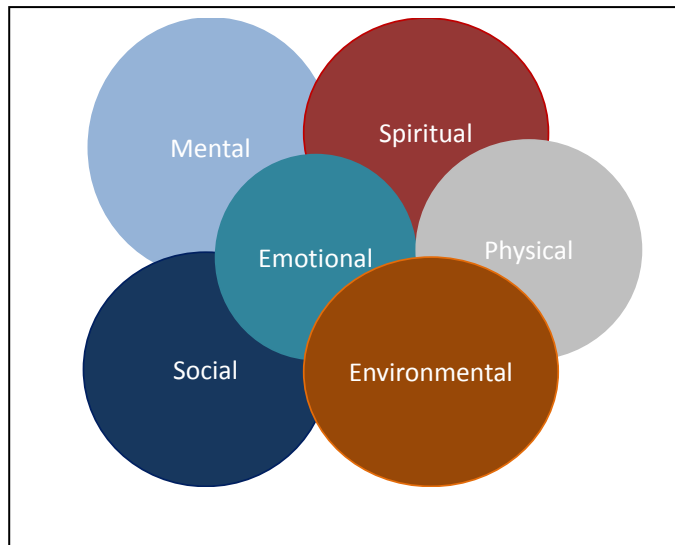
What is wellbeing and how can we influence it?

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (WHO 1948)

The main influences on health and wellbeing are genetics, behaviour and nutrition. These headlines provide us with a focus for further exploration. Leaving aside genetics, our behaviour may be seen to influence the nutritional balance that we consume, as well as providing the trigger for adopting positive actions to build and sustain a sense of health and wellbeing.

Behaviour is a manifestation of the workings of the mind that includes our emotions. Drilling down into behaviour we can identify six groups of influences, as shown in the diagram.

Each of these inter-plays with each other to some extent. It is an iterative process. We respond to our environment depending on what is contained in it. We respond to the social networks in the environment in which we live and work. The ways in which we respond will be determined by our mental, emotional and spiritual states, which, in turn, will be influenced by the environment and social networks we experience. Last, we will derive a sense of wellbeing from our physical activities as much as from all the other influences. If no influence impacts on individuals, the personal sense of wellbeing will be diminished or be absent.

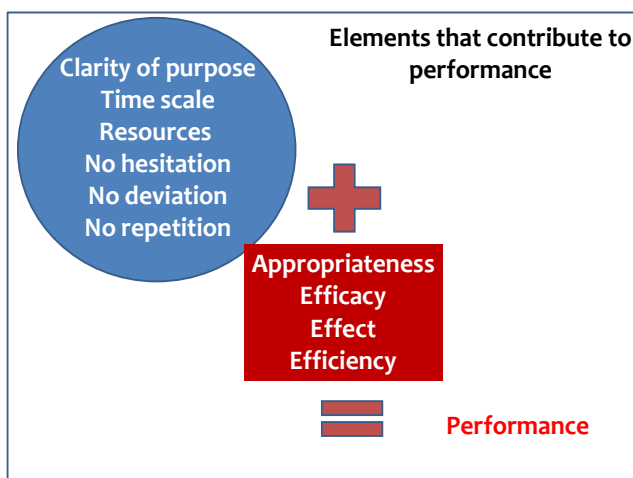


The only ways in which we can modify the influences is to take personal control over them and be active in manipulating them to personal advantage. This is a significant challenge as we are more comfortable reacting than being active; responding to others than taking the initial action. If the context in which we live and work is hostile towards individuals, the challenge of taking personal control of our own wellbeing becomes ever more difficult.

The kind of action that is needed includes constructing environments that promote wellbeing; forging social relationships that are supportive in times of crisis; being active in building physical health; building spiritual wellbeing for those who seek explanations beyond the rational and emotional. The behaviours involved are those that build and sustain psychological wellbeing.

What is performance and how can we influence it?

Performance is realising our potential to function at our best for most of the time. The essential unknown is our potential, which only becomes identifiable once we have been stimulated or self motivated to grasp opportunities that might expose whatever the potential might be.



Performance is also influenced by the skills, knowledge and experience of the individual. If these match the requirements of the task there is a reasonable expectation that the task will be performed. How well the task is performed depends on the ingredients in the 'Just a Minute Model'.

The ingredients in the 'Just a Minute Model' include a purpose, time and resources to fulfil the purpose; and achieving the purpose without deviation, repetition or hesitation.

There are other features that need to be added to the basic model. These are - appropriateness of the goal or purpose, the efficaciousness of the actions in pursuing the goal or purpose (i.e. will the actions produce the desired effect) the effectiveness of the actions taken to achieve the goal or purpose (i.e. the impact of the actions), and the efficiency with which the action achieves the goal or purpose (i.e. the minimum input to the process with maximum achievement – often associated with lazy, intelligent managers who find the short cut to success!)

Poor performance can be identified easily in someone who isn't clear about what they are doing, doesn't adhere to any timescale, runs out of resources as a result, is left wondering what to do, is easily diverted, and goes over old ground. Good performance can be measured by the degree of focus on the task at hand, the justification of the appropriateness of action, the efficacy and effectiveness of action, and the efficient manner in which the task is accomplished.

The principal ways of influencing performance, in addition to ensuring the plan of action is clear, and the skills, knowledge and experience of the individual are up to the task, is to ensure a focus on the task - no hesitation, deviation nor repetition. For this the individual needs to be able to concentrate – for all elements of psychological distress to be eliminated.

Characteristics of organisations, wellbeing and performance

The matrix below provides four categories against which organisations can compare themselves.

<p style="text-align: center;">High personal wellbeing Good business performance</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear purpose Commitment, Trust, Engagement Effective recruitment practices Good terms and conditions Team working; staff involvement Adaptive leadership and management Customer and staff focus Low sickness absence Low staff turnover Low costs/high profits 	<p style="text-align: center;">Average personal wellbeing Poor business performance</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambiguous purpose Poor recruitment practices Average terms and conditions Mismatched skills to jobs Laissez-faire management practices Few company wellbeing programmes Average company benefits Average sickness absence High staff turnover High costs/ low profits
<p style="text-align: center;">Poor personal wellbeing Average business performance</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear purpose Average terms and conditions Limited alternative employment Transactional management Incentive and bonus schemes High levels of sickness absence High number of tribunals Limited wellbeing programmes Average staff turnover Very high costs/Minimal profits 	<p style="text-align: center;">Poor personal wellbeing Poor business performance</p> <p>Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambiguous purpose Poor terms and conditions Lack of Commitment, Trust, Engagement Coercive, competitive and bullying culture High level of presenteeism High numbers of tribunals High levels of sickness absence High staff turnover High costs/Low profits

Successful organisations where wellbeing and performance are linked and embedded in the workforce have the following characteristics:

Psychologically healthy organisations have:

- a clear, unambiguous **purpose**, expressed as a simple ‘big idea’, an idea which all the staff relate to closely, and are proud to discuss with friends and colleagues.
- an atmosphere of **confidence**, where all the staff are interested in each other, **support** each other, and project this confidence towards clients and customers.
- staff who behave **respectfully** towards each other, value each other’s views and opinions, work in teams which are places of mutual support, where anything is debated **without a hint of humiliation**, where the critique of individual and team work is welcomed, discussed and where lessons are learnt and implemented.
- staff who ‘**go the extra mile**’ by providing unsolicited ideas, thoughts, stimulus to each other, and where their interest in their customers offers something more than is expected, beyond courtesy, and beyond service, offering attentiveness and personal interest.
- **challenges** for their staff, that provide opportunities for personal development through new experiences, and which treat everyone with fairness and understanding.
- staff who are **personally driven** towards organisation and personal success - intellectually, financially, socially and emotionally.

The aim of a Wellbeing and Performance Agenda is to help organisations achieve the ‘high personal wellbeing/ good business performance’ quadrant in the diagram above. This requires attention to the characteristics of healthy organisations and is achieved through a mixture of consultancy advice, coaching, workshops, and other processes of behaviour change, including Corporate Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CCBT)

Threats to wellbeing and performance

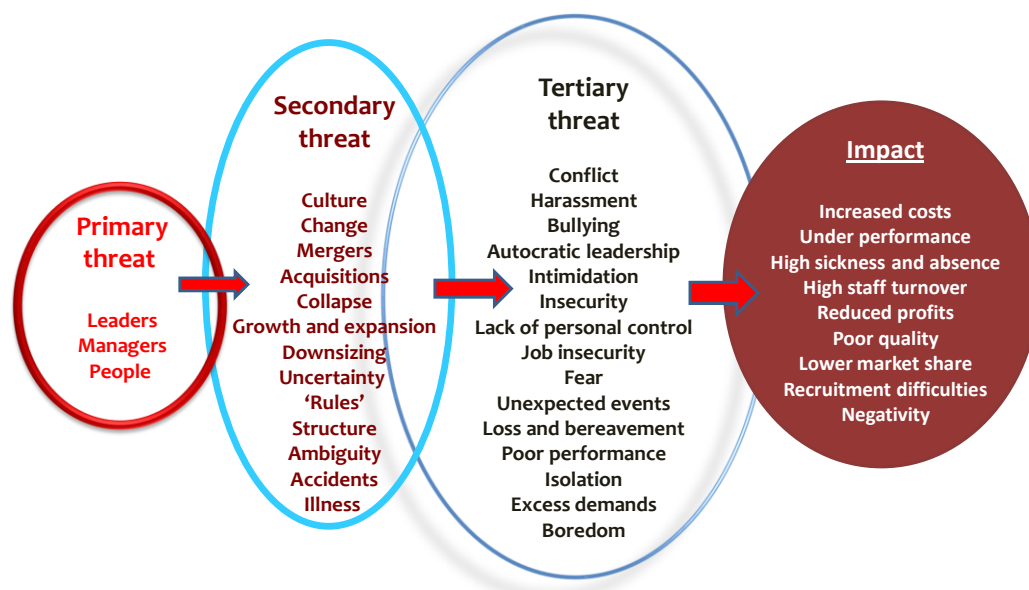
Organisations survive or decline according to their ability to respond positively to internal and external threats. External threats are those relating to the market, its demands, changes in requirements, and the degree of competition. External threats to public services include changes in policy, restructuring of services and reduction in available resources.

Internal threats normally involve the workforce. They include changes in structures, changes in products and services, and the impact of external threats on the workforce.

Combining internal and external threats together, the workforce faces continuous threats, and needs to remain resilient and healthy to overcome them and move forward.

There are, generally, three levels of threat. The first is ourselves, and relates in particular to the behaviour we exhibit towards each other. We are, also, in the position of making choices, and deciding on actions that can lead others to feel psychologically well or unwell, depending on the way in which we interact with others and how we communicate.

Threats to wellbeing and performance



The second level threats come from ordinary activities – those that we can expect to experience at least once in our lives. They are adverse events or circumstances, such as organisations merging, downsizing, expanding, or an adverse organisation culture. Unless managed in ways that aim to mitigate against psychological distress, these events and circumstances can create a negative impact on individuals that causes a ‘ripple effect’ of negativity that lowers performance resulting from individual lack of personal wellbeing. Managers, however, can be trained to prevent these events from causing psychological distress.

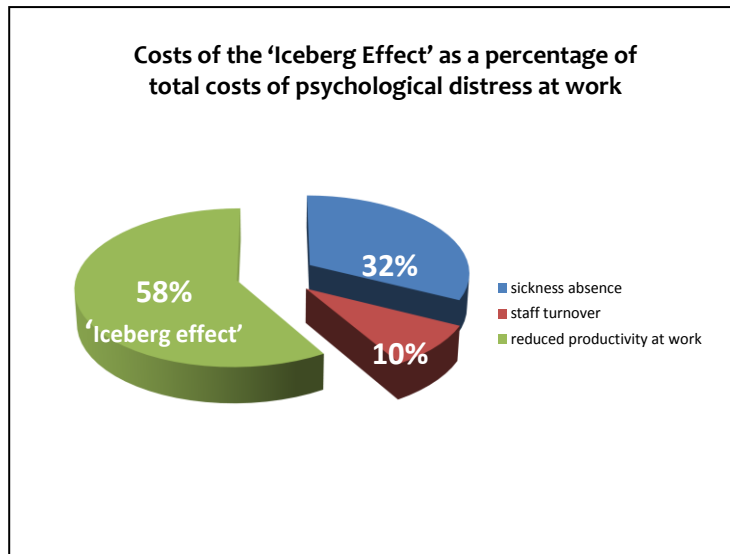
The third level threat comes from those events at work (and at home) that generally occur between individuals, which are almost always caused by ourselves, and may be caused by the second level threats. They generally result in conflict, which, if left to fester, cause widespread disruption, lowering wellbeing and poor performance. Managers and staff can be trained to prevent the third level threats from escalating into negativity and widespread disruption. (see <http://www.derekmowbray.co.uk> for some useful training options). It is the third level threats that can lead to legal action and tribunals, and about which various regulations (Health and Safety Management Standards) and legislation exists.

The costs of poor performance resulting from lack of wellbeing at work

The costs associated with poor wellbeing at work are constructed around the costs of sickness absence and staff turnover. In addition, the costs of those who are in work but who underperform or who are counter-productive incur the greatest cost arising from low performance.

The diagram sets out the proportions of costs allocated to sickness absence, staff turnover and presenteeism or ‘The Iceberg Effect’. This highlights the stark contrast between the different cost centres. In addition, those going off sick or leaving will have endured a period leading up to their sick leave or decision to leave the job, and would have been part of the presenteeism costs.

The costs associated with lack of wellbeing are high. The national headline costs are so high they fail to make the impression on individual organisations that would be expected, as the figures seem unreal. However, individual organisations can estimate their costs by reporting the numbers of people who are on sick leave, the costs of replacing staff who leave, the costs of engaging agency staff in place of absent staff. These costs are estimated to be 42% of the costs of poor wellbeing; the remaining 58% of the costs being attributed to presenteeism – the poor performance of people in work but under-performing or being counter-productive.



In broad terms the estimated costs of sickness absence is around £750 per employee, and staff turnover costs vary between £8000 and £12,000 per person. These crude estimates do not capture the disruption costs caused by staff being absent or leaving; nor do they include the costs of presenteeism.

Return on investment scenarios

Investing in wellbeing programmes generally has the aim of reducing the costs of sickness absence and staff turnover. There are two scenarios.

The first are programmes that promote wellbeing of people at work, and normally comprise of training, opportunities for physical exercise, massage and other relaxing techniques and opportunities for nutritionally balanced diets. In addition, managers may implement services that respond to people feeling unwell, for example employee assistance programmes, occupational health services and absence management systems. All these programmes have some impact on the baseline sickness absence and staff turnover rates, but there remain doubts concerning their sustainability, as they do not address the prime causes and threats to wellbeing and performance. In many respects the first scenario is similar to the approach of the National Health Service, which exists to respond to people being ill, but has little impact on the numbers of people who fall ill in the first place.

The second scenario plays on the fact that workplaces are controlled communities and is about investing in a culture of wellbeing and performance that includes building and sustaining a positive work culture. The investment entails a revision of purpose, structure and cultural 'rules'. This is supported by [leader and manager development programmes](#), and programmes for staff that focus on the behaviours of people and how they interact, encourage and support each other. These have sustainable impact on levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and presenteeism, are used by the successful organisations around the world.

Introducing wellbeing and performance into organisations

Many organisations find it a challenge to invest in wellbeing programmes because of the ambiguous nature of the subject and the uncertainty of the outcome.

There are constraints placed on organisations that require some form of wellbeing programme to be in place. In addition to the Duty of Care placed on management, there are regulations and legislation that need to be followed. These are blunt instruments at best, but they remain a requirement. In addition, there is growing interest amongst insurance companies concerned with income protection to ensure that everything can be done to reduce the risks of accidents and psychological distress at work.

However, the biggest driver for introducing wellbeing and performance programmes is the performance dividend that results from sustainable wellbeing at work. People who feel well will perform well. With the appropriate managerial behaviours in place people will become committed and engaged with their work, and will trust their organisation. This results in motivated, enthusiastic and committed employees, who build their levels of wellbeing on the back of their success individually and corporately.



The wellbeing and performance agenda should not be regarded as a quick fix. As the agenda requires commitment from senior management to drive forward the agenda over time it is often necessary for champions of wellbeing and performance to embark on a programme of raising awareness amongst senior managers of the benefits of a wellbeing and performance programme.

The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda

The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda has the purpose of building and sustaining Wellbeing and Performance in organisations and in individuals. The Agenda takes organisations, managers and employees through a series of steps that bring cultural and performance change to the organisation.

There are three interlocking aspects to the Agenda – the context within which managers and staff are expected to behave, the behaviours that managers and staff are expected to exhibit, and the actions that managers and staff are expected to take.

The overall approach adopts *Corporate Cognitive Behaviour Therapy* (CCBT) that seeks to replace the generally ambivalent and negative thinking of leaders and managers towards their workforce with positive thoughts relating to a positive work culture. The therapist in the application of CCBT is normally a combination of internal champion (HR, Occupational Health, Health and Safety specialist, Wellbeing Practitioner) with an external expert working together.

Agenda item 1 – engaging top management in the Wellbeing and Performance Agenda

Senior management influences the behaviours of those below them, and senior management set the tone for the organisation. The culture of the organisation is heavily determined by the personalities and characteristics of senior managers, and their own determination in promulgating a wellbeing and performance culture. As suggested above, this will normally

necessitate the champions of wellbeing and performance to raise awareness of the arguments, and issues relating to wellbeing that this paper sets out. [Consultancy, Seminars, workshops, coaching are all methods used in raising awareness.](#)

Agenda item 2 – undertaking an analysis of the current levels of wellbeing and performance

A survey of staff provides the benchmark against which the effect of various wellbeing initiatives can be measured. A year on year [assessment](#) of progress can be made, and those initiatives which show least impact can be dropped in favour of those with greatest impact. Various surveys exist with different purposes. At the least, all organisations that employ 5 or more people are obliged to demonstrate they comply with the Health and Safety Management Standards. More comprehensive surveys examine the health and wellbeing of staff, the quality of working lives of staff, the intention to leave or stay amongst staff, and the assessment of the organisation in relation to commitment, trust and engagement. The results of a survey provide the information to focus attention of specific actions that are needed to build and sustain a culture of Wellbeing and Performance.

Agenda item 3 – establish a steering group

Many organisations are made up of different divisions and departments, with different purposes. They will have different managers and perform differently. In order to promote a wellbeing and performance culture, it may be necessary to [establish a steering group](#) to oversee and take responsibility for this project. A steering group needs to have decision makers on it, as there will be decisions about resource allocation that will be necessary.

Agenda item 4 – develop a strategic framework for action

A strategic framework provides the focus for action, and a map against which progress can be routinely measured. A suggested framework embraces

- a) promoting wellbeing and performance and the prevention of risks of psychological distress and other forms of ill health and accidents;
- b) preventing deterioration amongst those who suffer distress;
- c) restoring those with psychological distress back to their normal level of performance and beyond;
- d) supporting those with chronic conditions and
- e) sustaining wellbeing and performance.

In addition, a strategy will need to consider the [services](#) and training required to implement a wellbeing and performance programme. Suggested topics are in the diagram.



Agenda item 5 – Building a culture for wellbeing and performance

The culture of the organisation embraces the features that influence how people behave. In building a culture of wellbeing and performance the features need to be those that promote commitment, trust, engagement and a strong psychological contract – the idiosyncratic unwritten contract that individuals have between themselves and their organisation based on personal notions of fairness. Most psychological contracts are based on the behaviour that managers and employees exhibit towards each other that denote trust, value, and reliance, where each party engages fully with each other and builds trust between them. For this to

happen, the context in which behaviour takes place needs to be promote values that accord with the values of the employee.

The steps to be taken in building a culture of wellbeing and performance are:

Clarity of purpose

The clarification of the purpose of the organisation and its sub divisions in ways that are simply expressed, and that staff and the public can understand and relate to.

The structures

The design of structures that enable staff to be engaged in decisions about themselves and their work.

The 'rules'

The rules are the policies and procedures that are expressed (often in writing) that describe how the organisation is meant to work. Among the topics that are known to influence trust and commitment are:

Recruitment

- The recruitment of managers and staff based on the convergence of clear and unambiguous expectations of the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the job and those of the applicant.

Training and development

- The training and development (the acquisition of skills, knowledge and experience) of all staff based on meeting the needs of the organisation and those of the trainee; the training is based on sound learning principles, and applied in practice.

Challenge

- The provision of challenges and stimulation in the work employees and managers are expected to perform.

Teams

- The building of teams with people who are sufficiently trusting of each other that they can critique each other's work without fear of humiliation or retribution, and in the knowledge that lessons can be learnt and applied.

Communication

- The provision of excellent communication – the process of engaging people in communication, interpreting messages, conveying them intelligibly, seeking responses, and reacting to them positively.

Involvement

- The involvement of staff, organisations and customers/clients in the processes and decisions that affect them.

Performance appraisal

- The provision of regular and routine performance appraisal of staff as part of the bloodstream of management, together with providing appropriate supporting resources to raise performance where needed.

Career development

- The provision of career development opportunities through nurturing and developing staff to use wider skills, knowledge and experience in practice.

Security

- The protection of tasks, projects and assignments from termination in advance of their completion.

Encouragement

- The encouragement of staff in their work, and in taking calculated risks intended to contribute to the performance of the organisation.

Worklife balance

- The motivation to respond positively to domestic crisis.

Openness

- The maintenance of transparency in all aspects of management.

These 'rules' need to be formulated in consultation with managers and staff, and implemented into the bloodstream of management through a range of devices that reinforce the 'messages' of trust, commitment and engagement.

Agenda item 6 - The ethics and behaviours that produce wellbeing and performance

The behaviours that managers need to demonstrate are those that build and sustain trust, commitment and staff engagement. These behaviours are the building blocks for a Wellbeing and Performance culture. The headlines are in the diagram.

Attentiveness

- Politeness
- Courtesy
- Personal communication
- The Use of Body language
- Addressing needs
- Empathy

Intellectual flexibility

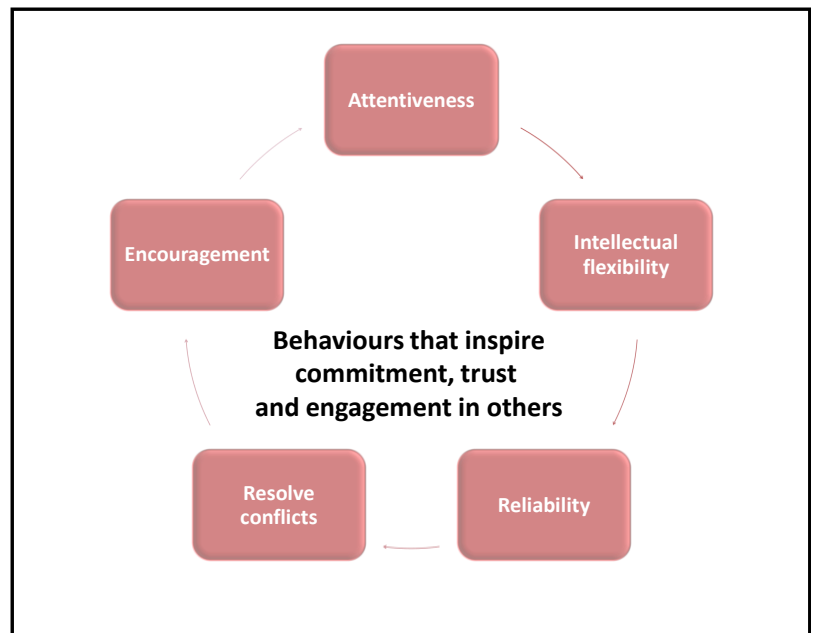
- Emotional intelligence
- Negotiation
- Sharing

Reliability

- Honesty
- Clarity
- Fairness
- Humility

Resolving conflicts

Encouraging contribution



These behaviours can be developed in every manager and staff member using Corporate Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CCBT) approaches, in a coaching or group workshop setting. This involves replacing ambivalent thoughts about people at work with positive thoughts that promote the benefits of positive interaction, and the benefits that accrue from gaining commitment, trust and engagement between staff and managers.

Agenda item 7 - The actions that produce wellbeing and effective performance

The actions required from managers who wish to implement the Wellbeing and Performance Agenda are divided into the classical purposes of management. They are:

Decision making

- Justification for decisions based on appropriateness, evidence, experience, timeliness and feasibility.

Direction

- Providing direction based on analysis and with committed ambition.

Co-ordination

- Integration of the mosaic of available resources to achieve a declared aim.

Control

- Reaching an agreed goal within agreed boundaries of time and resources.
- Keeping resources at his/her disposal within agreed boundaries.

These classical purposes of management are normally the basic training for managers. There are both technical and psychological aspects to their application to practice. The psychological aspect embraces the ability to follow the 'Just a Minute Model' of performance, that seeks to ensure that actions are taken without hesitation, deviation or repetition, and that the decisions are appropriate, efficacious, effective and efficient.

Conclusion

Adopting the Wellbeing and Performance Agenda will lead to improved performance in individuals and their organisations. People who feel well will perform better than those who feel ill.

The market for improved wellbeing and performance is currently a saving of several £b which, for individual organisations, may reach as much as 70% of their lost costs spent on staff sickness absence, staff turnover and reduction in presenteeism. A modest gain of 20% savings year on year is a more realistic aspiration, and requires intensive attention to the culture and behaviours of managers towards their staff.

The approach is not a quick fix. It requires the reinforcement of behaviours within a positive work culture, so that the ways in which people at work interact with each other becomes part of the bloodstream of the organisation. This approach is not the adoption of a wellbeing programme, such as a physical fitness, massage or nutritional programme, helpful though these are, nor the provision of employee assistance programmes, absence management programmes and occupational health services, helpful though these services are, but a fundamental change in the way people behave towards each other.

The approach requires a re-assessment of the purpose, architecture and 'rules' of organisations in the context of wellbeing and performance, together with suitable training, coaching and support for staff and managers in developing and sustaining behaviours that promote commitment, trust and engagement.

Several methods can be adopted. These include reinforcing events, such as regular review days where the Wellbeing and Performance Agenda is reinforced with brief sessions with managers; campaigns such as 'the courtesy campaign' that constantly reinforces the need for everyone to be courteous to others; a performance review process that examines the levels of sickness absence, staff turnover as well as brief questionnaires to managers and staff about their perceived levels of wellbeing.

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