Thrive

Developing a Wellbeing Strategy

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A truly successful wellbeing strategy and culture requires engagement from everyone within the organisation. Whether you sit at board level or on the front line, your need to feel safe and supported at work is paramount, not simply a "nice to have".

To secure ownership for wellbeing across your organisation, stakeholders need to be able to see that wellbeing initiatives are making a difference and have a meaningful impact on both performance and wellbeing.

How can you best ensure that your wellbeing programme is creating real impact?

We have developed the following process that we have found most effective:

REVIEW
Improvements
Stuck points
Data pulse

PURPOSE

#ACTION
Link to data and values

KNOW YOUR PEOPLE

STRATEGY & PLAN
Team by team vs Organisation wide

GET DATA

DAWSv1SE

1. IDENTIFY YOUR PURPOSE

To quote Simon Sinek, many organisations are able to clearly articulate WHAT they do and HOW they do it, but their WHY, which sits at the core of their business, is often unknown or unclear. This same principle applies when establishing or reviewing your wellbeing programme. Identifying a clear purpose will form the foundation for success. This step may be easy for you – you may already know – or you may want to have conversations with your people to help you to be clear about your purpose:

• What's your end goal in developing a wellbeing strategy and programme?

• Why do you want a wellbeing programme?

• What do you hope this programme will achieve?

• Is your goal aspirational? For example, Dominic Price at Atlassian asks, "Do you want to send your people home in a better state of wellbeing than when they got to work?"

For some organisations, fulfilling a legal duty of care to protect the mental health and wellbeing of their people may be the primary goal. For others, achieving the business benefits of increased employee wellbeing may be key. For organisations already convinced of the legal and business case, supporting wellbeing may simply be because it's the right thing to do.

At Umbrella, we do hold an aspirational goal – we want wellbeing strategies and programmes to enable people to flourish. To support people to be their best selves and for organisations to foster a culture which makes this possible.

A definition of flourishing that we like, which captures the essence of how we think about it, is this one adapted from psychologist Corey Keyes:

Flourishing is a state where people experience positive emotions, positive psychological functioning and positive social functioning, most of the time, and live within an optimal range of human functioning.

Once you are clear about your purpose – what next?

2. KNOW YOUR PEOPLE

While this might sound obvious, in our experience, this step is often overlooked. Before we do anything to progress a wellbeing agenda, we need to know where people are at. In terms of wellbeing, how confident would you be right now to predict:

• How are your people doing? Are they flourishing or languishing or somewhere in-between?

• What factors are positively and negatively contributing to your people's wellbeing (considering both work and life factors)?

If you are sure, that's great, carry on. If you're not confident, how do you find out how your people are doing?

3. GET DATA

Good data will help you know your people and get an accurate measure of levels of wellbeing.

Many organisations assume their people leaders are good at "taking a pulse" on how their employees are doing. However, this approach is not always accurate or reliable. Firstly, human perception is not always the best judge of how others are doing. Plus, leaders may be too busy or overwhelmed themselves to notice other's wellbeing, or people may mask how they are or not feel safe enough to show signs of distress or ineffective performance. Other sources of commonly used wellbeing information include sick leave, staff turnover and EAP usage. These can be useful, but are also rather indirect, rudimentary measures of wellbeing. Such measures can also be inaccurate. People may use EAP or a sick day in a helpful, preventative way, a sign of being proactive not of languishing.

An accurate and comprehensive assessment of the mental health and wellbeing of all employees requires good data - asking all employees directly about their health, mental health and wellbeing, as well as workplace factors that may be wellbeing-supportive, or sources of stress.

What do we mean by good data?

From an extensive literature search of best-practice research, there are some key factors to include. For each person, and across all different business groups, we need to know:

- The hours people work and levels of absenteeism
- Non-work "life" stressors – for example, family, commuting or financial pressures
- How good or poor are people's health behaviours and habits – sleep, eating well, exercising?
- Individual resilience – do people feel they have the skills to cope with life and work challenges?
- Levels of psychological distress - fatigue, signs of anxiety, depression or difficulty coping.

As well as these important individual factors, using best-practice methodology means we also need to assess organisational factors such as:

- Work-related factors – How is workload perceived, do people feel supported by their leaders, feel they have some autonomy in their roles and role clarity, and do they feel consulted about organisational change?
- Organisational climate – Do people perceive their organisation as a good place to work, are they committed to the workplace, do they feel recognised and rewarded for their work?
- Organisational support for resilience and wellbeing – Are employees supported to lead a healthy work-life balance and stay physically healthy? Does the organisation prioritise wellbeing?

Collecting and analysing this data from your employees will then enable you to action the next step of our process.

4. STRATEGY AND PLAN

Use this detailed knowledge of your people's wellbeing and associated organisational factors to inform and tailor a unique wellbeing programme for your people.

For example, you may find that some business groups need specific wellbeing support because people are in front-line roles and managing high emotion labour demands. Or particular team factors are impacting people more than are broader organisational factors, so providing clarity about team work roles, workload demands and more team leader reward and recognition will create more benefits than an organisation-wide focus.

Next, you can take action!

5. #ACTION

Actions may mean isolated interventions or a comprehensive programme. The collected data will have informed you of the top work challenges facing your people and enable you to consider how to mitigate or improve these challenges. You will also know the top life or non-work challenges your people are managing and be able to consider what support may ease these challenges, or at least to acknowledge them, so people feel able to bring their whole selves to work, including the parts of their lives that may be creating stress.

6. REVIEW

Lastly, it's important to review, before circling around the process again.

A re-assessment or data pulse will accurately identify improvements, stuck points and areas for further attention or intervention.

In our next article, we will report on some case studies to showcase examples and great actions of this model in practice.