

Leading the way into 2011

Is Leadership and Management the key to sustainable employee engagement and wellbeing in 2011 and beyond?

It's a recurring theme at all our workshops and many conversations with colleagues: the role of leaders and managers in ensuring employee wellbeing and engagement.

As our wellbeing consultation drew to a close with a final strategic-level event in December 2010. Feedback from participants once again highlighted the importance of leadership and management at all levels: from the key relationship between line-managers and employees, to the role of senior leaders in both providing authentic, valued-driven leadership, and providing the strategic level commitment to drive the staff engagement and wellbeing agenda forward. You can read more about the consultation on p. 2-3.

Our feature article (p.5-7) also looks at the important role of line managers

in preventing and reducing stress at work, and supporting return to work following long-term sickness absence.

The end of 2010 also saw the completion of our new improved resource section at www.wellbeing.ac.uk/resources. The changes will make it easier for you to find the information you are looking for and will prepare the way for us to add new resources being developed by the project. It also enables us to add more links to external resources bringing a wealth of information into one easily accessible resource bank.

Look out for details of a new series of our popular workshops in March-April 2011. Workshops will feature case-study presentations on a range of subjects plus the opportunity to discuss current issues and ideas. Full details at wellbeing.ac.uk/events

Get involved

Call for presenters – We are looking for presenters for our forthcoming workshops (March– April 2011). Do you have a case study you would like to present?

Contribute your case studies - If your organisation has done some interesting work related to staff wellbeing and engagement we'd love to hear from you. We can also offer support in writing up your case study.

Please contact Fiona Livermore at f.m.livermore@adm.leeds.ac.uk

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Wellbeing Consultation

Our national wellbeing consultation drew to a close with a high profile event on 3rd December – here we give an initial summary of discussions and insights

Between September and November 2010, a series of consultation meetings were held with a diverse group of stakeholders. The following questions were discussed:

- Is employee wellbeing more than health?
- What is a resilient university?
- How do you create engagement with the university (rather than only the discipline or school/department)?

The responses were collated and presented at an event, on December 3rd, to a group of senior stakeholders. They were asked to discuss the findings, how they link with work in their own areas, and identify priorities moving forwards.

Attendees at this final debate, included vice-chancellors, senior trade union and funding council representatives and leading experts such as Dame Carol Black (author of the Department for Work and Pensions commissioned 'Working for a Healthier Tomorrow') David MacLeod (author of the Department for Business, Information and Skills commissioned 'Engaging for success') and Judith Hackitt (Chair of the Health and Safety Executive).

Taking a broader approach to wellbeing

The consultation showed that wellbeing should be seen a broad concept. This can be summarised as a holistic approach - creating a positive environment and culture of mutual trust, fairness and respect where:

- our people are supported, valued and recognised as individuals with different needs
- our people are encouraged and

enabled to fulfil their potential and engaged in performing to the best of their abilities

- our people are part of a university community - proud to work for their institution, see how they are contributing and want to be part of creating a successful future
- the importance of health is recognised and our people are supported to make healthy choices.

This then contributes to a strong, agile and sustainable, high performing organisation, which is resilient in the face of challenge and change.

Participants felt strongly, however, that activity in this area (across the sector) is currently inconsistent and limited. This is often due to senior manager perceptions of wellbeing as 'soft and fluffy', solely health related or a 'nice to have luxury'.

The strategic group endorsed the holistic approach and, in particular, highlighted the importance of:

- ensuring that employees feel valued and listened to
- effective change management
- promoting resilience building
- building a sense of trust
- authentic leadership/ leading with integrity
- effective implementation of the HSE Management Standards for Work Related Stress
- recognising and celebrating success
- transparent decision making
- employee involvement

They also noted the need to make the shift, so that the engagement and wellbeing of employees, is

recognised as core business.

It was agreed, though, that the term wellbeing remains problematic and that other words such as engagement and resilience would be more readily accepted.

The group endorsed the need to recognise the diversity of institutions and different staff groups, as well as individual needs. The importance of treating different staff groups with parity was also raised as extremely important.

Making the business case

Although there is significant evidence (from outside the sector) showing the business benefits of wellbeing and engagement, the consultation confirmed that a Higher Education specific business case would be essential if we are to build senior level commitment and ensure a strategic approach.

Although the national project will begin to develop this evidence base, more institutions will need to carry out consistent evaluation over a longer period to build upon this further.

However, amongst the strategic group, there were mixed views about the importance of making HE specific business case. Whilst the majority of participants felt that that the existing business case information (from outside the sector) would not be specific enough to convince some senior managers in Higher Education, others felt that this existing body of evidence should be sufficient and that the sector needed to move forward with putting theory and evidence into action.

Wellbeing Consultation

One of the challenges raised was the measurement of performance in HE. As this varies significantly across the sector, it would be important to agree the criteria for measurement.

Although the link to performance was felt to be very important, it was recognised that this is also about creating a positive staff experience and broader corporate and social responsibility.

Leadership and management

The consultation identified excellent leadership, at all levels, as a crucial enabler for success but also a major area for development. In particular, authentic, valued-driven leadership, with senior managers acting as role models, was felt to be of high importance.

Strategic level commitment, within institutions and across the sector, was also felt to be essential if we are to build and sustain commitment for this cultural change.

It was noted that many of the findings from the consultation programme could actually be seen as a description of good practice in leadership and management. It was, therefore, questioned what made this agenda distinctive.

Further exploration of the links with the work of the Leadership Foundation was felt to be important.

Sustainability

Stakeholders confirmed the importance of the wellbeing and engagement agenda going forwards. The need for continued support, at a sector level, was also raised as crucial, especially as institutions face challenging times and significant change. In particular, facilitating learning from across the sector and beyond, was identified as essential, if universities are to avoid duplication and increase efficiency.

The strategic group recognised that the sustainability of this agenda was a significant issue. Although it was recognised that individual institutions should be able to take ownership of it, and implement it themselves – the group felt that sector level guidance and support would be essential to make this happen.

With finite funding for the current project, the group felt it would be important to agree continued ownership at a sector level. The roles of Universities UK (UUK) and the Association of Chairs of Council (CUC) were felt to be particularly important.

Next steps

The consultation process revealed a wide range of views from a diverse group of stakeholders.

In order to clarify and consolidate the results, we are now holding further discussions with senior stakeholders. These discussions we will be used to define focussed outcomes and actions to drive forward the wellbeing agenda within the Higher Education sector and shape the future work of the project.

As a result of the feedback from participants, we are also exploring further partnerships with parties involved in the consultation.

Details of the final conclusions will be published in the next enewsletter in Summer 2011.

Further information

Further information and filmed interviews from the final meeting on 3rd December will be available at www.wellbeing.ac.uk this spring.

Queries about the consultation should be sent to Kim Shutler-Jones, Project Manager at k.shutler-jones@leeds.ac.uk

Free morale and resilience tool

Robertson Cooper Ltd has launched part one a new free online tool: 'Building morale and resilience - the key to surviving difficult times'. Providing evidence based research, tools, tips and advice, this guide offers information on how to maximise morale and resilience during difficult times; while minimising the risk of losing your best people.

The guide includes sections looking at:

- Morale: what is it and why does resilience matter?
- How pressure affects morale
- Morale and resilience essentials – advice for all organisational contexts
- Access to a free morale and resilience check-up tool

For more information and to download your copy visit <http://resilience.robertsoncooper.com/>

Research and resources

Useful resources to inform and support your practice

The human voice of employee engagement: understanding what lies beneath the surveys

Jonny Gifford, Liz Finney, Jo Hennessy and Sharon Varney, Roffey Park, October 2010

In brief: This study of employee engagement drills below the quantitative data of staff surveys to the human interactions and experiences that lie beneath them.

Where to find it:

<http://www.roffeypark.com/whatweoffer/Research/reports/Pages/Overview.aspx>

Shared purpose: the golden thread?

CIPD, December 2010

In brief: Research shows that having a strong sense of organisational purpose that is shared by all employees is linked with engagement, satisfaction and sustainable business performance and that shared purpose is the 'golden thread' to which an organisation's strategy should be aligned.

This report explores the findings of a survey of 2,000 UK employees to understand their views on shared purpose and how it impacts them.

Where to find it:

http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/corpstrtg/general/_shared-purpose-golden-thread.htm?IsSrchRes=1

Engaged staff: What do they look like and why might you want them?

Emily Lawson, McKinsey & Company, The Good Work Commission, May 2009

Organisations with highly engaged employees perform better than those without. Somewhat surprisingly, financial reward is not a main driver of engagement; more important are factors such as the nature of the job and the trust and integrity that pertains in a workplace. If you treat staff with respect even in the hard times, they will respond better to the challenges faced.

Where to find it:

<http://www.goodworkcommission.co.uk/Reports>

The Business Case for Employees' Health and Wellbeing

Stephen Bevan, The Work Foundation, February 2010

In brief: Emerging from a recession, the UK needs to find ways of increasing productivity. This report puts forward the compelling case for making employee health and wellbeing a higher priority in UK workplaces.

Where to find it:

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/publications/publicationdetail.aspx?oItemId=245>

Are leaders' well-being, behaviours and style associated with affective well-being of their employees? A systematic review of three decades of research.

(Skakon, J., Nielsen, K., Borg, V., & Guzman, J. (2010).

This review of nearly 30 years worth of empirical research explores whether there is an association between leaders' wellbeing, behaviours and style and the wellbeing of employees.

Where to find it:

Skakon, J., Nielsen, K., Borg, V., & Guzman, J. (2010). *Work & Stress*, 24, 107-139.)

Body and Soul: Exploring the connection between physical and mental health conditions

Katherine Ashby and Robin McGee, The Work Foundation, September 2010

In brief: This report explores the inter-relationship between long term physical and mental health conditions and the impact these conditions have on productivity and work participation and also recommends how to reduce the burden of these conditions on the UK economy and workforce.

Where to find it:

<http://www.theworkfoundation.com/research/publications/publicationdetail.aspx?oItemId=260>

Supporting line managers in their vital role in employee wellbeing

Emma Donaldson-Feilder, Rachel Lewis and Jo Yarker, of Affinity Health at Work, provide a summary of the findings of two research programmes that provide guidance on what line managers can do to enhance employee wellbeing.

Think about your line manager... can you think of things that person does that impact on your wellbeing? Perhaps the way their positive feedback gives your confidence a boost and helps improve your sense of wellbeing; or maybe the fact that they are so disorganised means that you end up having to do work at the last minute, putting you under pressure and making you feel tense and anxious.

Most of us intuitively know that line managers, and the way they behave, are vital for the wellbeing of those they manage: this is backed up by research. For example, Tepper (2000) found that line manager-employee relationships were a commonly reported cause of stress at work and Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe (2001), amongst others, have shown a link between particular management/leadership models and the wellbeing of those being managed.

When dealing with employee ill-health, too, the manager's role is significant. Labriola et al (2006) found that the risk of long term sick leave increased with lower support from the manager and poor management quality. Rick and Thompson's (2004) study showed that line managers have a crucial role in the rehabilitation of employees following work related stress and suggested that this may hold true for rehabilitation following other types of ill health.

While the evidence for the impact of line manager behaviour has become ever stronger in the last decade or so, there was, until recently, little research providing details of exactly what a manager needs to do to enhance wellbeing and manage ill-health in their team. Those studies that had been conducted used a-priori measures of management or leadership, developed in the context of managing performance, so risked not capturing all the aspects of management that impact on wellbeing. Further research was needed to identify the full range of relevant management behaviours.

Emma Donaldson-Feilder



Emma Donaldson-Feilder is a Director of Affinity Health at Work and a Chartered Occupational Psychologist. In addition to her roles as researcher and practitioner, working to improve employee wellbeing and engagement, she is the author of numerous publications, a regular conference presenter, and a media commentator on issues relating to health at work.

Dr Joanna Yarker



Joanna Yarker is a Director of Affinity Health at Work and a Chartered Occupational Psychologist. She has previously held posts at Goldsmiths, University of London and the University of Nottingham. She writes regularly for academic and trade journals, and offers guidance and training to public and private sector organisations focused on improving workplace health.

Dr Rachel Lewis



Rachel Lewis is a Director of Affinity Health at Work, a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and a lecturer in Occupational Psychology at Kingston Business School. She combines her academic career with regular conference speaking, consultancy and training, focusing on the links between leadership, management and employee well-being.

Affinity Health at Work



Affinity Health at Work is a specialist consultancy that provides a wide range of bespoke consultancy and research solutions and services to improve the health, wellbeing, morale and engagement of staff.

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Over the last five years, we have conducted two different research programmes in this area, one looking at the line manager's role in preventing and reducing stress, the other at the line manager's role in supporting return to work following long-term sickness absence. The following is a summary of the findings from each of these programmes. Full details of the research, plus guidance based on the findings, are available for free download – see the web-links provided.

The line manager's role in preventing and reducing stress at work

The 'management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work' research aimed to explore the specific manager behaviours that prevent and reduce stress in the team, in order to produce guidance for employers and managers. Funded by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Investors in People, we conducted a three phase research programme. This revealed four broad themes of line manager behaviour that are important for preventing and reducing stress in employees:

- *Respectful and responsible: managing emotions and having integrity* includes acting with integrity, managing emotions and being considerate.
- *Managing and communicating existing and future work* includes proactive work management, problem-solving, keeping employees informed, and encouraging participation.
- *Managing the individual in the team* includes being personally accessible, being willing to be sociable, empathising with employees, and recognising that every individual is different.
- *Reasoning and managing difficult situations* involves managing conflicts effectively, taking responsibility for resolving issues, and seeking advice from others when necessary.

While these behaviours could be described as general good management, many management frameworks currently used by organisations include only a subset (Yarker, Donaldson-Feilder, Lewis, & Flaxman, 2007). This means that behaviours relevant to employee wellbeing may not be included in a particular organisation's HR and management development activities.

The research also produced a questionnaire, designed to measure whether a particular manager shows the behaviours identified, and explored how to help managers demonstrate these behaviours. It showed that it is possible to change managers' behaviour, particularly when they have development needs in this area. It also suggested that providing managers with upward feedback, so that they understand how their behaviour is perceived by their team, may be a key factor in helping them make changes.

The line manager's role in supporting return to work following long-term sickness absence

This research programme aimed to identify both the positive manager behaviours needed and negative behaviours which should be avoided, in order to bring about an employee's successful return to work following long term sickness absence due to stress, anxiety and depression, back pain, heart disease or cancer (these are the four most prevalent causes of long term sickness absence). Funded by the British Occupational Health Research Foundation and supported by CIPD, HSE and Healthy Working Lives, we conducted a combined qualitative and quantitative research programme.

This revealed four broad themes of behaviour that are important for a manager to show while an employee is absent and when the person returns to work in order to ensure that their return is successful:

Free downloads: research reports, guidance resources and further information

Preventing and reducing stress at work

Guidance leaflets for managers and HR professionals:
http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/_lnstrswrk.htm?IsSrchRes=1.

Full scientific research reports:
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/_preventing_stress

www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr633.htm

www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr553.htm

Self-report version of the questionnaire:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm>

Online learning for managers and materials for practitioners:
<http://preventingstress.hse.gov.uk>

Supporting return to work following long-term sickness absence

Guidance leaflets for managers and employers:
http://www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/hrpract/absence/_manager_support_long_term_sickness

Full scientific research report:
<http://www.bohrf.org.uk/projects/rehabilitation.html>

- *When the employee is off:* the manager needs to communicate regularly with the individual, encourage others to stay in touch, reassure the person and prevent them from returning to work too soon.
- *During the initial return to work:* the manager needs to give the person lighter duties and a phased return where appropriate, remain objective, explain processes and changes and help make the return as low-stress as possible.
- *Negative behaviours to avoid:* the manager needs to avoid losing patience, displaying aggressive actions, questioning the person's every move, going against their requests for adjustments or making the individual feel like a nuisance.
- *General supportive behaviour:* the manager needs to manage the team and how the individual fits in, take an open and sensitive approach by listening, being accessible and responding to the person's needs, and ensure they have the relevant legal and procedural knowledge for managing return to work.

The research suggests that effectively supporting return to work is more about good people management than being knowledgeable about particular health conditions. Significantly, it is also about showing good people management not just at the point when the person returns to work, but also during their absence and even before they go off sick: a good pre-existing relationship with the individual prior to their absence puts the manager in the best possible position to manage their absence and return.

Conclusion

Line managers are vital to employee wellbeing. In the specific cases of preventing and reducing stress at work and supporting return to work following long-term sickness absence, there is now research-based guidance on what manager behaviours are important. We hope that this will help managers enhance their skills and thereby improve employee wellbeing.

References

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- Rick J & Thompson L (2004). Managers' roles in rehabilitation for work-related stress. Proceedings of the Division of Occupational Psychology Conference 2004.
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- Yarker, J., Donaldson-Feilder, E., Lewis, R., & Flaxman, P. E. (2007). Management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work: Identifying and developing the management behaviours necessary to implement the HSE Management Standards. HSE Books: London.

Wellbeing events

27th January 2011, London
9th February 2011, Manchester
CIPD Employee Engagement Conference
<http://www.cipd.co.uk/employee-engagement>

2nd February 2011
CIPD Well-being and Resilience Conference 2011: Building high-performing cultures through well-being
Hallam Conference Centre, London
www.cipd.co.uk/well-being

8th - 9th March 2011
Health and Wellbeing @ Work
National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham
<http://www.healthatwork2011.co.uk/>

31st March 2011
Health and Well Being: Improving Productivity Through Employee Wellbeing
Central London
<http://www.insidegovernment.co.uk/health/health-and-wellbeing/>

10th May 2011
BITC Workwell Summit
The King's Fund, London
<http://www.bitcworkwell.org.uk/>

17th - 20th May 2011
UHR National Conference
Renaissance Hotel, Manchester
<http://www.eventsforce.net/riley/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=14928&eventID=47>

Project Events

Spring workshops

Look out for a further series of regional workshops in March - April 2011.

Save the date!

The project's closing conference will take place on **Friday, September 9th 2011** at The University of Leeds.

The conference will include opportunities to learn about the findings of the project, attend workshops and hear from keynote speakers.

Further details will be published as available at www.wellbeing.ac.uk/events

The view from...

Howard Scott, Health and Safety Manager
The Grimsby Institute of Further & Higher Education



Howard Scott
Health and Safety Manager
The Grimsby Institute of Further
& Higher Education

After serving 22 years in the Army Howard gradually progressed into Health & Safety. He worked for several years as Health and Safety co-ordinator and Manager for a national food production company before joining the Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education as the Health & Safety Manager in 2002. Howard's main background lies in Engineering, Logistics, Facilities and Management.

“It is very important to invest in wellbeing – we want our people to be at work, stay at work and be happy at work – if this is the case, then they will be more motivated and work to the best of their abilities. All of this is ultimately to the benefit of our students and that is what is really important.”

What does wellbeing mean to you?

Wellbeing is about being able to do your job in a supportive setting which includes conditions, benefits, rewards, the type of work and whether this is well suited to you. Having good wellbeing means putting all of these together – having a good job where you are challenged, properly resourced, supported and helped in a caring environment. This makes you more resilient as well as more productive and happy in work.

How does wellbeing fit with your role at Grimsby?

Employee wellbeing is very important – my role would be much more difficult if employee wellbeing was worse. Therefore, our approach at Grimsby is a joined up one which sees wellbeing as a crucial part of Health and Safety, and Health and Safety as a crucial part of wellbeing.

Being responsible for Health and Safety Management systems inevitably involves us in change. In environments where levels of employee wellbeing are good, employees are better able to adapt to change, for example due to new legislation.

It has also been observed that poor change management leads to increased accidents and that good wellbeing leads to fewer accidents. It is difficult to show a causal link but in my role I have seen that when employees feel valued, supported and motivated they work more safely. There is also a correlation between sickness absence levels and accidents where the number of accidents reduce at the same rate as a reduction in sickness absence.

What is your approach?

Our emphasis at Grimsby is on team work. Health and Safety can't take on wellbeing in its entirety but is a crucial part of a team addressing this agenda. A core team which includes Health and Safety, HR, Occupational Health and our physiotherapist meets on a weekly basis – alongside monitoring of sickness and attendance data, this group also discusses Health and Wellbeing issues and updates on ongoing initiatives. The group also co-opts specialists, for example fitness staff or the Student Health and Wellbeing coordinator when appropriate.

Why should institutions invest in employee wellbeing, during challenging times?

I think it speaks for itself. At the moment we are all facing funding cuts, job uncertainty and people are worried. There has always been some degree of uncertainty in the public sector and good wellbeing helps to cushion against this by increasing resilience.

It is very important to invest in wellbeing – we want our people to be at work, stay at work and be happy at work – if this is the case then, they will be more motivated and work to the best of their abilities. All of this is ultimately to the benefit of our students and that is what is really important.

For me, it's a no brainer – a win-win situation – you have motivated, resilient staff doing their best, the best teaching for students and good business results. So it's a moral, financial and business case.

The view from...

What do you see as the role of health and safety managers in moving this agenda forwards? - Will this mean changes to current working practice?

I think there is definitely a need for change. Health and Safety managers in colleges need to think more in terms of the bigger picture. We need to be more open to the wellbeing side of our role – motivated, happy staff adapt better to Health and Safety systems than those who are worried and stressed.

The HSE is increasingly moving its focus towards wellbeing so preparing to deal with these issues now is a smart and necessary move to pre-empt this change in focus.

How can health and safety practitioners address employee wellbeing proactively?

A good first step is to get more involved – become part of a health and wellbeing team or working group, go to briefings, become more aware and get involved. The most important thing practitioners can do is to get out and about, talk to people and see what the issues are.

In my role, I try to link in wellbeing whenever possible, for example when I'm running training courses on manual handling or use of fire extinguishers, I will find a way to link

it in – I believe that the more you talk about wellbeing, the more it becomes a part of how you work and embedded in the organisation.

At Grimsby we have changed our risk assessments and annual inspections to include health and wellbeing – we ask staff if they are aware of health and wellbeing services, support and benefits as well as what issues there are then use this information to see where the shortfalls are and how we can address these.

A natural progression to this is to gain credibility for your expertise through a certified course such as the wellbeing course offered by NEBOSH.

What might be the barriers and how could they be overcome?

The biggest challenge to addressing wellbeing is for Health and Safety professionals to adapt to the changing agenda and open up their mind to wellbeing as a crucial part of health and safety and vice versa.

The other main barrier is lack of buy-in – it's our job to persuade managers at all levels that this is a vital area to invest in - I think that this will be greatly aided by increased credibility and using the business case for investment.

Wellbeing by numbers

Leadership and Management

56%

Of leaders weren't engaging those they lead and only 26% were creating an engaging environment that encourages high performance. (Hay Group, 2007)

86%

Young people want progressive management to inspire them - 86 per cent of the younger generation put approachability at the top of the list when it comes to desirable management traits, followed by letting staff 'get on with the job' (66 per cent), being team-focused (47 per cent) and consultative (47 per cent). (ILM, 2006)

85%

85 per cent of public sector leaders think that engaging and motivating staff is the best way to improve productivity.

Only 30 per cent think their senior teams are effective at building collaboration.

Only one in five think they effectively engage the workforce or have a performance culture. (Hay Group, 2008)

1 in 6

Nearly one in six UK managers cite inadequate management and workforce training as key barriers to improving productivity. (Proudfoot Consulting, 2008)

Contact us

Sharing information and experiences across the sector is a vital part of this project.

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