

# Adopting joint productive and healthy workplace practices:

## What impacts success?

- What's the best way to improve workplace wellbeing? Business owners, managers, employees, occupational health and human resources professionals grapple with this question, and may come up with very different solutions. This can lead to tension.
- Organisational wellbeing initiatives may be reactive and **patchy instead of proactive and comprehensive**. This means they are likely to be less sustainable: they could be derailed by external shocks, such as the current Covid-19 crisis.



## What does success look like in an organisation?

- **Quality jobs**
- **Good management**
- **Supportive social relationships**
- **Health and wellbeing promotion**
- **High productivity**

Many initiatives can improve working conditions.  
**What makes the real difference:**  
how organisations address different concerns, and not just the response itself.

We asked organisations of different sizes and with ongoing wellbeing initiatives, what they have done to effectively implement them.

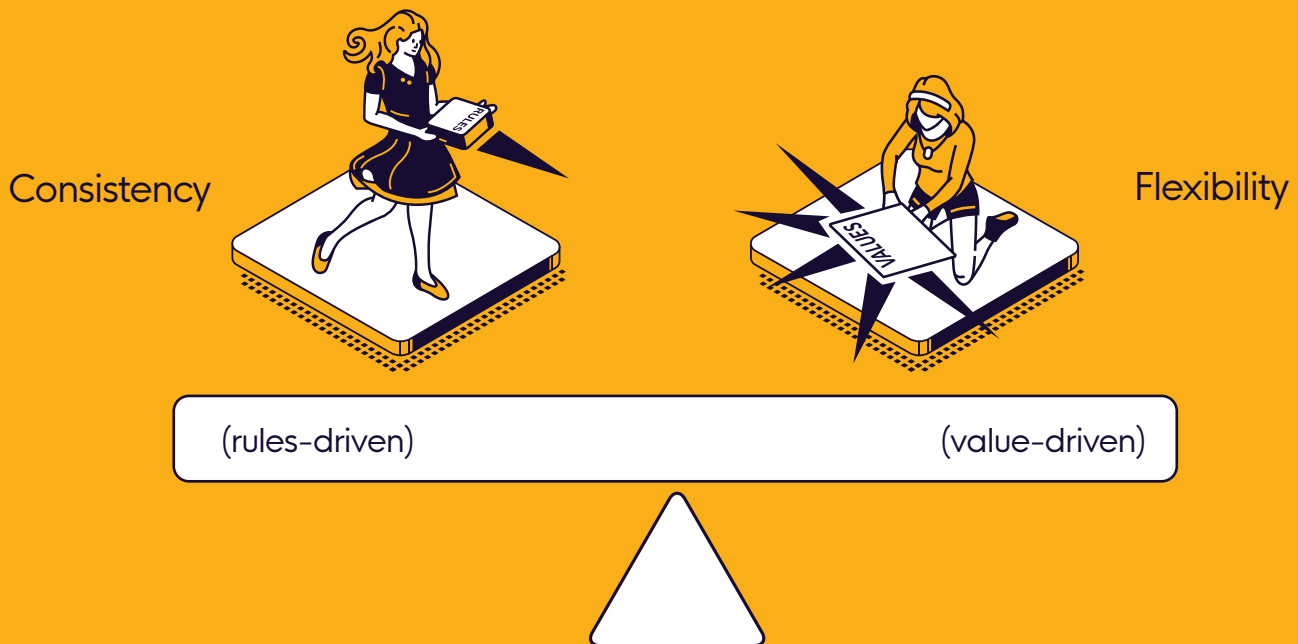
## Who did we ask?



96 informants from 14 different organisations were interviewed in this first wave of research.

# This is what they told us...

## 1. Balancing consistency and flexibility in a dynamic way



Consistency:	Flexibility:
Formally adopt the programme through rules and procedures. These set out the parameters of what wellbeing is, and how to achieve it.	Informally adopt the programme through role-modelling and values, which creates a fluid and shared wellbeing <b>culture</b> .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritises structures</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prioritises agency</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balance tends to lean this way for large organisations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balance tends this way for small organisations</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Advantages:</b> standardisation of wellbeing practices evens out potential inequalities (e.g. between gender, ethnic minorities, parents, disabled workers, and so on)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Advantages:</b> employees feed back and learning is tacit and organic, making the organisation more responsive to changing wellbeing issues and therefore more resilient.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Risks:</b> de-personalisation makes it harder to engage employees, integrate their views and adapt to changing wellbeing issues, therefore learning mechanisms are very important.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Risks:</b> as an organisation grows and diversifies, it becomes harder to create shared understanding, opening the possibility of inequalities, therefore requires open, supportive and inclusive culture.</li></ul>



### In your organisation...

- What do rules and procedures look like?
- What do values and culture look like?
- Are all elements of the business consistent in their wellbeing approach?
- What flexibility exists to adapt to changing wellbeing priorities?
- What is the appropriate balance in your organisation?

## 2. Providing combined **resources** for wellbeing



**Individual** resources  
Skills for employees to proactively manage their own wellbeing using holistic frameworks (e.g. training in job crafting, mindfulness, resilience).



**Relational** resources  
People networks for general support (e.g. line manager, lunch group, mental health first-aiders) or for people with specific wellbeing challenges (e.g. single parents groups).



**Tangible** resources  
Wellbeing services and information (e.g. Employee Assistance Programmes, professional support, awareness campaigns)

### Based on

subjective aspects of wellbeing and that appropriate actions can be different for each employee (e.g. taking breaks, managing demands, etc.)

the social environment of work and therefore can pick up and address wellbeing issues arising from day to day experience

'nudge' approaches to ensure wellbeing provision is known by employees

### Requires

individual learning and changes in behaviour.

full engagement and upskilling of nominated actors (e.g. managers being trained as mental health first-aiders).

individual employee engagement and central steering with some local tailoring.



### In your organisation...

What **individual** resources can you provide?

Are you aware of how individuals experience wellbeing issues that need addressing?

What **relational** resources can you provide?

How are those responsible for delivering relational resources supported in their roles?

What **tangible** resources can you provide?

How can you ensure these resources are used and are impactful?

### 3. Engaged actors to help make sure resources are used



#### Catalysts

Instigate wellbeing changes across the organisation by driving a wellbeing agenda.

- Tend to sit at a senior level (e.g. senior managers)
- Influence others through **leadership**, power dynamics or role modelling.
- Able to **reconcile the organisation's productivity and wellbeing goals** due to their understanding of the whole organisation and its context/the wider environment.
- Fulfil a **symbolic role**, often prompted by personal experience or views of wellbeing challenges.



#### Practitioners

Inform decisions about wellbeing programmes by using their expertise in the subject.

- Tend to sit in functional roles (e.g. OH and HR professionals)
- Influence through expert knowledge or **technical know-how**.
- Able to **reinforce reconciled goals of wellbeing and productivity** by monitoring and putting in place the right wellbeing and (in a few cases) productivity indicators.
- Fulfil an **educational and practical role**, setting data collection methods, deciding what wellbeing services to purchase, identifying tangible resources as part of the programme, etc.



#### Agents

Actively support the adopted wellbeing programme day to day.

- Tend to be deployed at all levels and across sites to reach as much of the organisation as possible (e.g. frontline workers as wellbeing champions).
- Can influence through **enthusiasm**, giving groups a voice (e.g. connecting with employee-led interest groups).
- Able to **mediate** between catalysts and practitioners, e.g. by directing colleagues to wellbeing related information, disseminating wellbeing across proximal work areas.
- Fulfil a **practical role** to colleagues but also play a **symbolic role** by making wellbeing more visible.



#### In your organisation...

Who are your **catalysts**?

Are there any influencers who might counter or undermine the purpose of the catalysts?

Who would be your **practitioners**?

Are there gaps in their knowledge or areas of provision?

Who would be your **agents**?

How will you or the wider workforce identify these people?

Are there clear roles and supports for each group?

# How do these three actions help an organisation's adaptation to external shocks?

- Organisations investing in people and wellbeing are likely to be already undertaking these actions, even if not as part of a 'wellbeing programme'.
- Yet, it is necessary to bring these elements together and develop a strategic understanding of how sustainable wellbeing is achieved and its relationship to productivity.
- Communicating this understanding transparently to employees gives them a sense of the balance between wellbeing and productivity and demonstrates an organization's authenticity in supporting wellbeing.



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