



WELLBEING

Wellbeing

Supporting energy, engagement and productivity

Executive Summary

For the first time in decades, **wellbeing issues** have touched millions of people simultaneously. Covid-19 – “the worst global crisis since WWII”¹ – has cost 2.8 million lives. Economic disruption has had a **damaging impact on productivity**, which has come at a **high cost** for organisations.

By April 2020, more than 2.6 billion people around the world had gone into **lockdown**. Millions began **working from home**, often in difficult circumstances. Research² published in September found that **75%** of those polled were concerned about the mental health of co-workers. A second survey,³ across 46 countries, found that the vast **majority of us are still struggling** with wellbeing.

Productivity experts Eric Garton and Michael Mankins suggest⁴ that employees’ **engagement** at work is driven by their time, talent and **energy**. However, over the last year, the shift in working conditions has led to an **increase in fatigue** and burnout, as shown⁵ by researcher Jennifer Moss:

- 89% of respondents said their work life was getting worse.
- 85% said their wellbeing had declined.
- 62% of people struggling to manage their workloads had often experienced burnout.
- 57% of employees felt that the pandemic had a “large effect on” their work.

¹ International Labour Organization: [Covid-19 and the world of work](#), 7 April 2020

² Appreciation at Work: [National Survey Results](#), 21 September 2020

³ Harvard Business Review: [Beyond Burned Out](#), Jennifer Moss, 10 February 2021

⁴ Harvard Business Review: [The pandemic is widening a corporate productivity gap](#), 1 December 2020

⁵ Op. cit. Moss, 10 February 2021

This psychological **fallout won't vanish** overnight. In the coming recovery, as government financial support dries up, **turbulent market forces** will continue. But in supporting their staff, leaders are now better prepared than they were before the pandemic. Covid – the shadow that shaped our recent past – has catapulted business into the future. Over the last 12 months, **progressive views** on wellbeing have been **more widely, and swiftly**, adopted than might otherwise have been the case.

As we move forward into a world of hybrid working, **self-management skills** will be critical. Wellbeing strategies will continue to support self-reliant team members. A culture of **support, empathy and trust** will help staff find the **energy** they need in protecting their business during uncertain times. Collectively, these are the objectives and **values of wellbeing** in the workplace.

In short, the pandemic has shown that the future of a business depends on the wellbeing of its people. These are organisational issues, initiatives on wellbeing are an **investment in the future**.

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[Part 1: The Loss Of Energy](#)

The World Health Organization **defines**⁶ **burnout** as “a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from **chronic workplace stress** that has not been successfully managed.” It characterises burnout as:

- feelings of **energy depletion** or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one’s job, feelings of negativism or cynicism at work
- reduced professional efficacy

What in particular leads to these feelings?

When asked how organisations could provide better support during the pandemic,⁷ people across the US, UK, Australia and Canada asked for **more recognition**, more than anything else. According to Garton and Mankins⁸, a lack of recognition erodes energy, leading to a fall in productivity. Energy is further reduced by what researchers⁹ identify as the **six main causes of burnout**:

1. Unsustainable workload
2. Perceived lack of control
3. Insufficient rewards for effort
4. Lack of a supportive community
5. Lack of fairness
6. Mismatched values and skills

These are organisational issues. The WHO’s definition is expressed in language that acknowledges burnout is **more than just an employee problem**. To misunderstand this is to risk approaching these issues from the

⁶ World Health Organization: [Burn-out an “occupational phenomenon”](#) 28 May 2019

⁷ Achievers Workforce Institute: [Achievers Culture Report](#) 15 September 2020

⁸ Op. cit. [HBR](#) 1 December 2020

⁹ Maslach, Leiter and Jackson: [Making a significant difference with burnout interventions](#) February 2012

wrong direction. Indeed, according to a Gallup survey¹⁰, ineffective managers become the **cause of burnout**, rather than its cure.

Some roles have long been prone to burnout, for example nurses, junior doctors, banking analysts, and staff in technology. However, research¹¹ shows that **long working hours always have an adverse impact on health**. The WHO's definition of burnout was published in 2019, at a time when **stress levels were already high. Then the pandemic hit**. In the UK, 48% of people¹² working remotely reported long and irregular hours during the initial weeks of lockdown, and 60% said they were showing increased symptoms of fatigue.

Despite these challenges, according to Jennifer Moss, **workloads weren't adjusted**, staff were not given more control and flexibility, additional meetings were tolerated – as were unhealthy levels of screen time, and the extent of people's struggles went unrecognised. **Energy quickly eroded**.

Today's level of burnout is the result of an existing problem made exponentially worse by Covid. Things aren't going to get easier any time soon. To help employees renew their energy levels in challenging working conditions, a strategic approach to wellbeing is more appropriate than piecemeal thoughts about self-care.

[Part 2: Wellbeing Solutions](#)

Productivity experts Eric Garton and Michael Mankins found that the better an organisation does in engaging and inspiring its employees, the better its performance. They suggest¹³ that an inspired employee – one who has a profound personal connection to their work — is 55% more productive than an engaged employee, and more than twice as productive as a satisfied worker.

Many companies found ways to keep people engaged throughout the pandemic. Regular pulse-check surveys at Adobe, for example, revealed that employees were growing tired in balancing the new realities of work and home. In response, Adobe gave all employees an extra day off each month, as part of a package of wellbeing policies.

Hewlett-Packard Enterprise was already two years into an internal campaign focused on wellbeing when the pandemic hit. HPE had already introduced meetingless Fridays, and reinforced the importance of frontline managers regularly checking in with employees – a strategy that detected concerns, escalated them and managed them with professional help.

Many strategies for wellbeing were cited in a survey¹⁴ of more than 1,500 people from 46 countries:

- A manageable workload (most-cited need in the survey)
- An empathetic manager (second-most-cited need in the survey)
- A sense of purpose
- Being able to discuss mental health at work
- Access to mental health support
- Hybrid solutions that allow co-workers to connect and collaborate in person
- Prepare *before* the next crisis

¹⁰ Gallup: [Employee burnout: the biggest myth](#) 13 March 2020

¹¹ Wong, Chan, Ngan: [The effect of long working hours and overtime on occupational health](#) June 2019

¹² Institute for Employment Studies: [Working at home wellbeing survey](#) 7 April 2020

¹³ Op. cit. [HBR](#) 1 December 2020

¹⁴ Op.cit. [Moss](#) 10 February 2021

Paying attention to personal values such as these pays dividends in the long-run.

According to a survey¹⁵ of 1,140 people in the US, UK, Australia and Canada, respondents whose personal values were very well aligned with their company's values were five times more likely to report being engaged than those who were not aligned. The same study found that 59% of those whose values are not at all aligned report being disengaged.

These then are the benefits of protecting employees' energy levels. Wellbeing policies support a better use of time, leading to stronger levels of engagement and higher productivity.

At a personal level, our energy comes from four main wellsprings¹⁶: body, mind, emotions, and spirit. In each of these, energy can be expanded and regularly renewed by establishing specific behaviours – with the aim of adopting them as unconscious, healthy and empowering habits.

Part 3: How Working Voices Can Support You

At Working Voices, we have closely followed expert opinion in shaping a suite of courses designed to address wellbeing issues at an organisational level. These courses will help people at all levels of every organisation to navigate the new way of things with a greater sense of control. Ultimately, our objective is to help clients support their staff – and thereby protect motivation and productivity.

Drawing on extensive research and real-world examples, our interactive courses feature easily- applicable techniques and strategies that participants will be able to put into practice straight away.

Working Voices can deliver these courses as stand alone virtual workshops of 90 to 120 minutes with small or large groups. They can form part of a curriculum and be tailored to your exact requirements.

Wellbeing Curriculum 2021

We are offering 13 modules. Each can be taken as a **stand alone virtual workshop** of 90 to 120 minutes. Or they can be **taken together**, serving as a journey into the full meaning of wellbeing.

Our 13 modules fall into **four groups** – illustrating the four pillars of our curriculum, (each pillar can also be taken as a single, stand alone virtual workshop of 90 to 120 minutes). Our modules are:

Physical wellbeing – the quantity of our energy

1. The Power of Sleep (recognising quality and quantity of sleep as the route to health and wellbeing)
2. Nutrition & Hydration (understanding how nutrition and hydration support performance)
3. Movement & Breath (exploring body and mind links, eg the re-energising nature of movement)

Emotional wellbeing – the quality of our energy

¹⁵ Op. cit. [Achievers Culture Report](#) 15 September 2020

¹⁶ Forbes: [From time to energy management](#) 24 October 2018

- 4. EQ & Emotions Vocabulary (knowing how to recognise, label, express and regulate our emotions)
- 5. Dealing with Anxiety (developing strategies to understand, cope and deal with anxiety)
- 6. Confidence & Self-esteem (harnessing the power of confidence and esteem)
- 7. Self-compassion (overcoming perfectionism and judgment towards ourselves and others)

Mental wellbeing - the focus of our energy

- 8. Success habits (developing successful habits, because we are what we repeatedly do)
- 9. Bounded optimism (using the power of optimism to tackle uncertain times and deliver results)
- 10. Performance behaviours (visualisation, mental preparation and mindset as tools to excel).

Social wellbeing - the warmth of our energy

- 11. Coping with isolation (developing strategies that enable us to thrive whilst working at home)
- 12. Social connection (engage with others for performance, emotional and mental health)
- 13. Purpose & gratitude (finding passion and purpose by knowing and working within our values)

We also offer a masterclass in wellbeing, a single, stand alone session embracing key elements of all four pillars.

The return on investment in these skills can be measured in the performance of leaders and team members – people who feel energised and know themselves to be trusted, supported and ready to fight another day.