



UNDERSTANDING JOB BURNOUT

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THE CHANGING WORKPLACE

Occupational groups

Professions that
traditionally have had a
higher risk for burnout

- Health care
- Human services
- Social activism

Now burnout is a risk in
many other professions

- Tech industries
- Customer service



CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF WORK

- Multiple part-time jobs, rather than full-time career
- Less concern and commitment for employees
- Destructive competition between co-workers
- Divisive tactics that reward “talent” but not everyone
- People getting shut out of opportunities
- Loss of “the common good” as a core value

THE “BURNOUT SHOP” AS BUSINESS MODEL

Short-term “start-up” self-sacrifice is now a long-term model
Forced competition erodes social relationships in workplace

No metrics of the human costs

- long-term stress and health problems
 - physical exhaustion
 - sleep deprivation
 - disruptions of personal life
 - loss of self-worth and meaningful achievements
 - burnout
 - depression, anxiety
 - suicide
-
- The underlying assumption is that employees who burn out are not the best ones, so they are expendable and disposable

THE PROBLEM OF UNHEALTHY JOBS

- Various job conditions are highly stressful and toxic
 - Long working hours and high demands
 - Job insecurity and lack of control
 - Low social support and work-family conflict
 - And more . . .
- These job conditions (stressors) pose a danger to the worker's well-being
 - Increase in annual unnecessary deaths and healthcare costs
 - Lower worker life expectancy and more working years lost
 - Greater risk of burnout and depression
 - And more . . .
- And these job conditions do NOT enhance productivity or the bottom line
- See *“Dying for a Paycheck: How Modern Management Harms Employee Health and Company Performance”* by J. Pfeffer (2018).

JOB-PERSON FIT IN SIX STRATEGIC AREAS

- Workload
- Control
- Reward
- Community
- Fairness
- Values

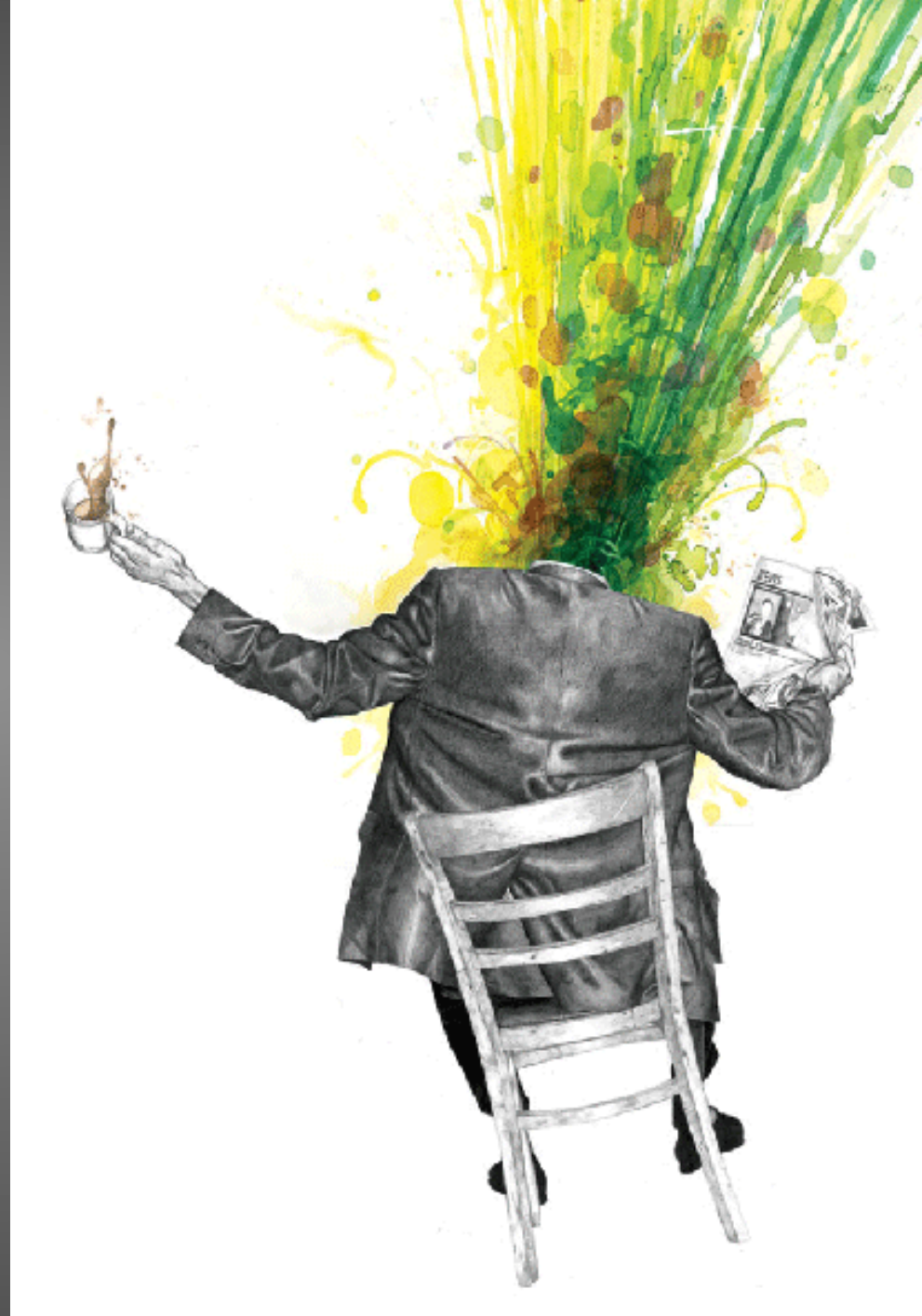


[Areas of Worklife Survey, AWS]

JOB-PERSON MISMATCH

- Demand Overload
- Lack of Control
- Insufficient Reward
- Breakdown of Community
- Absence of Fairness
- Value Conflicts

More Mismatches = More Burnout



BURNOUT AS A STRESS PHENOMENON

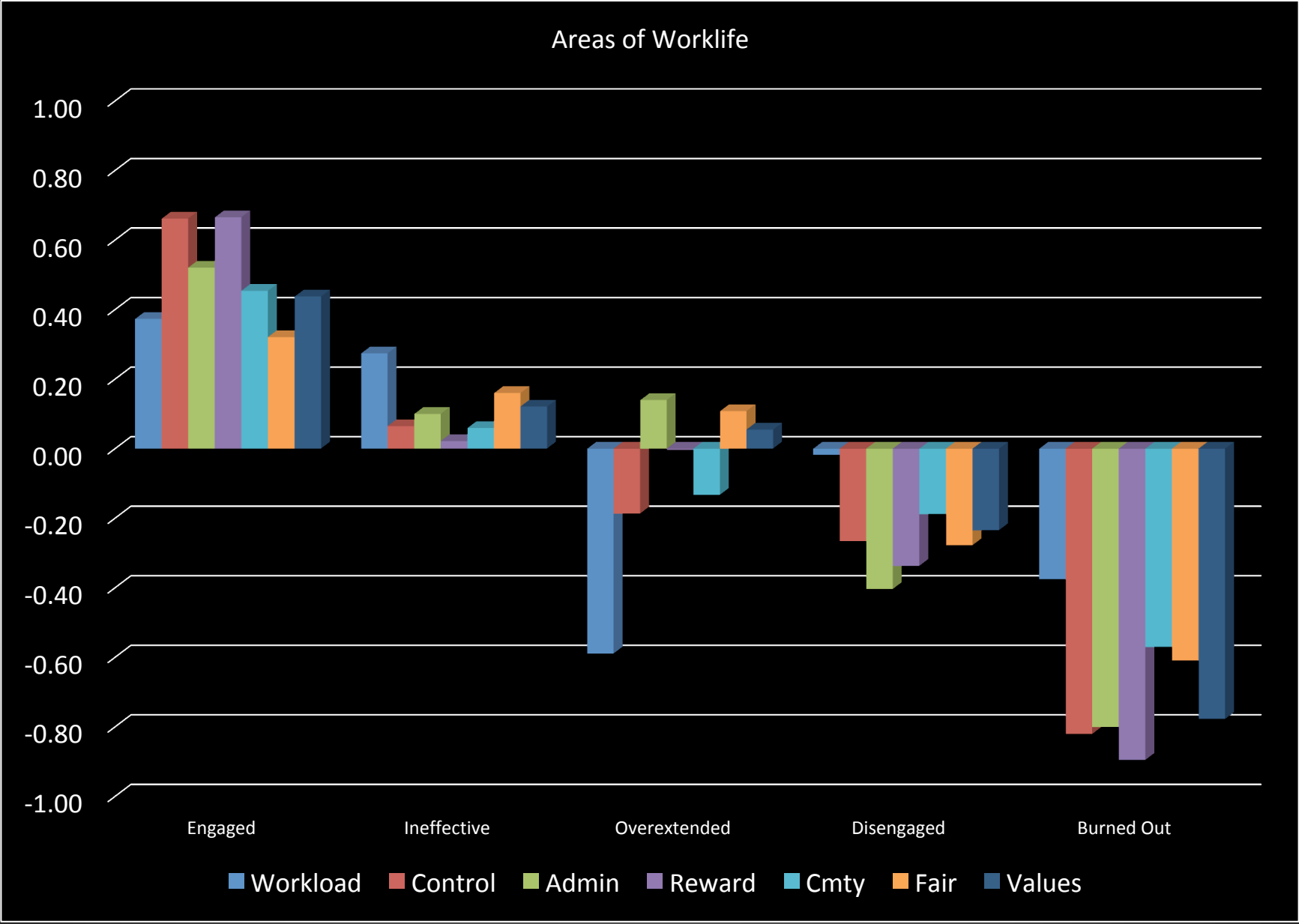
- Prolonged response to chronic situational stressors on the job
- Three dimensions
 - Exhaustion
 - Individual stress (“can’t take it anymore”)
 - Cynicism
 - Negative response to job (“socially toxic workplace”)
 - Professional Inefficacy
 - Negative self-evaluation (“erosion of my soul” “no future”)

RESEARCH MEASURE OF BURNOUT (MBI)

- **Assessment of the three dimensions**
 - Exhaustion
 - Cynicism
 - Inefficacy
- **Frequency rating (0-6), with each point identified**
 - Never (0), A few times a year or less (1), Once a month or less (2), A few times a month (3), Once a week (4), A few times a week (5), Every day (6)
- **Three scores looked at separately (not combined into single overall score)**
 - Can yield different patterns, or profiles
 - This approach is counter to the effort to simplify the MBI to one dimension or a cut-off score

FIVE MBI PROFILES OF WORK EXPERIENCE

- **BURNOUT**
 - Three high negative scores
- **DISENGAGED**
 - One high negative score -- Cynicism
- **OVEREXTENDED**
 - One high negative score -- Exhaustion
- **INEFFECTIVE**
 - One high negative score -- Inefficacy
- **ENGAGEMENT**
 - No negative scores (all three are positive)



BURNOUT IS LIKE THE CANARY IN THE COAL MINE

- IT IS A WARNING SIGN OF A TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT
- THE RESPONSE SHOULD FOCUS ON MAKING THE ENVIRONMENT LESS TOXIC
- [and not just trying to make the canary more resilient]



FITTING PEOPLE TO THE JOB

- **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**
 - Development of skills
 - Practical experience
- **COPING WITH STRESSORS**
 - Resilience, strength
 - Time away from work
- **THESE INDIVIDUAL SOLUTIONS DO NOT MAKE THE JOB LESS TOXIC**

FITTING THE JOB TO PEOPLE

- Goal is to modify the work conditions that create negative outcomes for human beings
- Use the model of **ERGONOMICS** – which focuses on the relationship between workers and their **physical** environment
 - Better designs for seating, computer workstations, pilot cockpits, etc.
- Apply design model to the **social and psychological** environment

WHAT CREATES PERSON-JOB “FIT?”

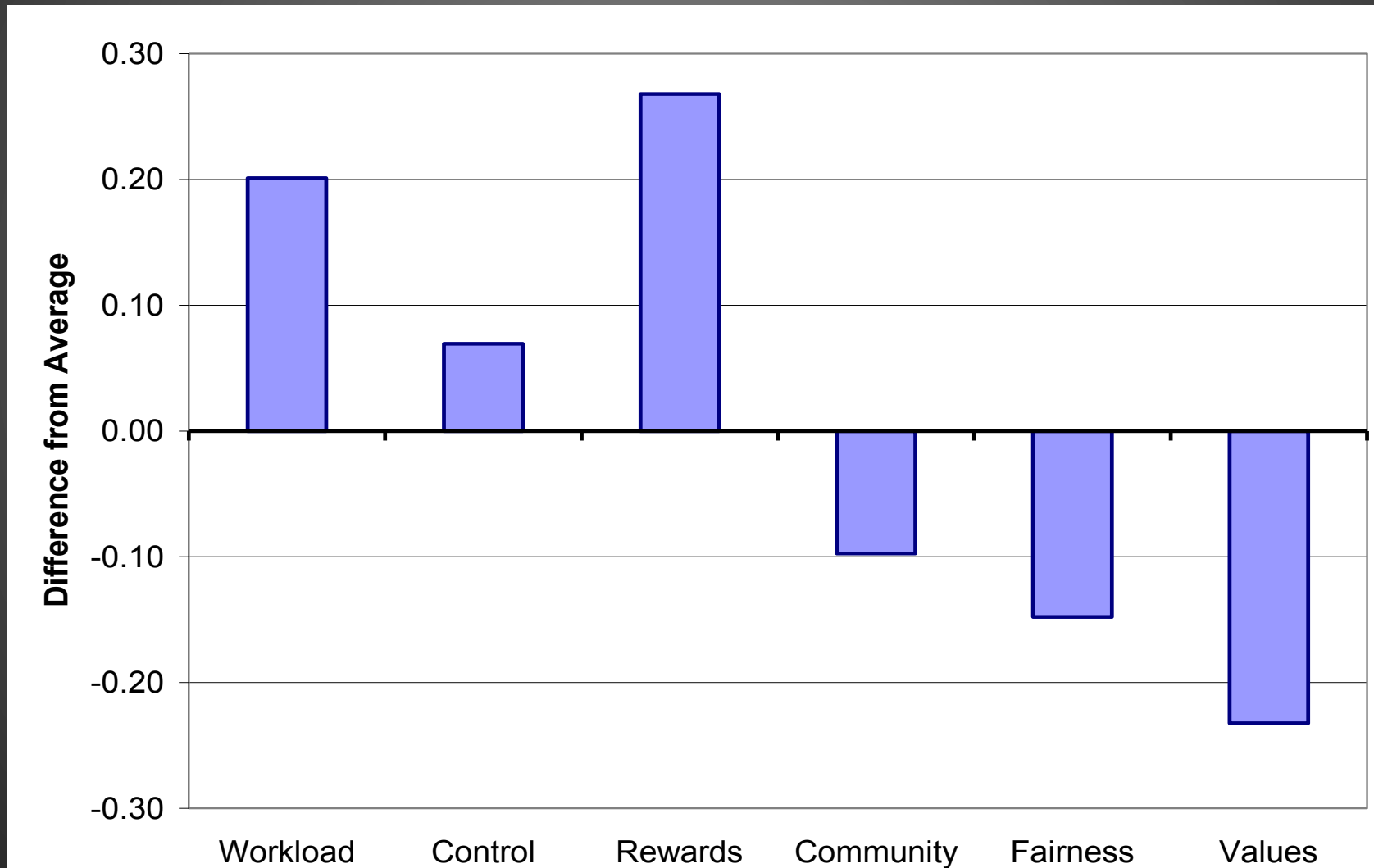
- Satisfaction of core psychological needs promotes worker motivation and psychological well-being
- Seven core needs
 - Autonomy
 - Belongingness
 - Competence
 - Positive emotions
 - Psychological safety
 - Fairness
 - Meaning

SIX PATHS TO A HEALTHY WORKPLACE

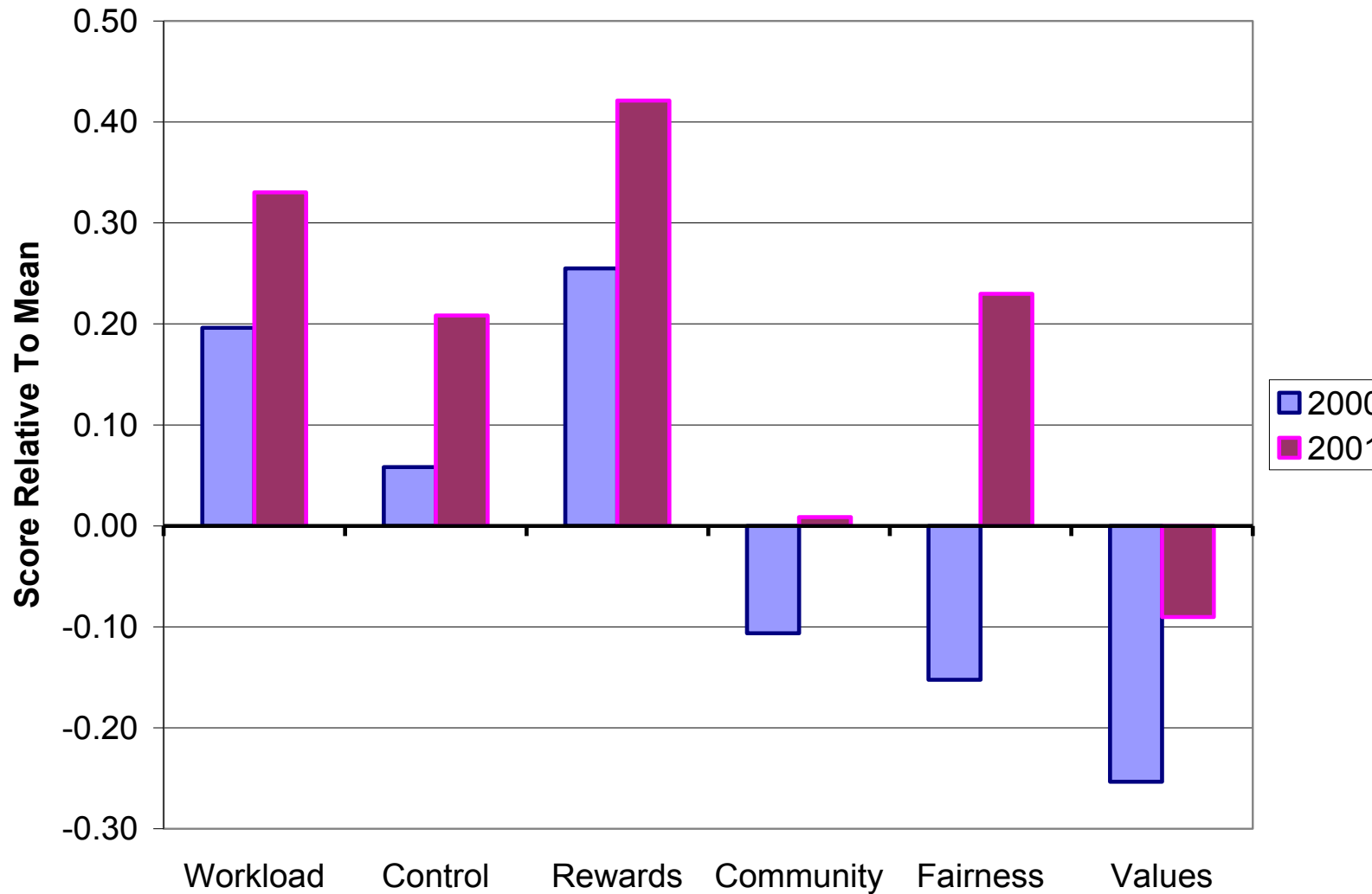
- Sustainable Workload
- Choice and Control
- Recognition and Reward
- Supportive Work Community
- Fairness, Respect and Social Justice
- Clear Values and Meaningful Work



A SUCCESS STORY: In the beginning . . .



FIXING FAIRNESS: One year later . . .



SIX STRATEGIC PATHS

- There are *many* possibilities, within *all* six areas, to improve the “good fit” between people and their job.
 - These changes can be small, inexpensive, and customizable.
 - They can be done with teams, groups, or units (rather than just with individuals)
- This healthy job environment takes care of both the workers and the workplace, so that the former will thrive and the latter will succeed.

A Final Note

- The burnout shop is not a viable, or desirable, future for our workplaces or our society.
- Experts from a variety of areas (architecture, psychology, IT, sociology, economics, medicine, public health, etc.) must partner to design, and help create, the healthy workplaces of the future.
 - **Healthy Workplaces, an interdisciplinary center at UC-Berkeley, is undertaking that challenge**

HERE'S THE HELP I AM LOOKING FOR

- What are other good examples of success stories, or best practices, within each of the six areas?
- How can we establish better partnerships between research and practice?
 - To try out possible solutions
 - To gather evidence that these really work