

# WELLBEING AT WORK: A WHITE PAPER

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# CONTENTS

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | Wellbeing at work - an overview for employers                                       |
| 2. | Identity in the workplace - what is it, how is it created, and why does it matter?  |
| 3. | Work engagement - how organisations can create and maintain engagement              |
| 4. | Organisational citizenship behaviour - hidden activities that benefit the workplace |
| 5. | Social networks in the workplace - the benefits for employees and employers         |
| 6. | Job crafting - a tool for wellbeing and engagement                                  |



## ABOUT THE WHITE PAPER

This White Paper is aimed at any employer or HR professional with an interest in workplace wellbeing. It provides a rich introduction to the issues, is grounded in published research and not only shows the impact of wellbeing on performance, but also provides tips and ideas to improve workplace wellbeing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## ABOUT HIVE

Hive is a new network designed to help businesses across East Anglia grow and prosper. Visit [www.hivesuffolk.co.uk](http://www.hivesuffolk.co.uk) for more information.

# 1. WELLBEING AT WORK

## AN OVERVIEW FOR EMPLOYERS



People are at the heart of organisations. While delivering the highest quality of products or services is the organisation's goal, it is the resources available to its employees, how much they value their work and that their work is valued, that ultimately deliver success. British Psychological Society, 2017



### WHAT IS WELLBEING AT WORK?

Although wellbeing is being increasingly recognised as a topic of great importance, there is ongoing debate amongst researchers and policy makers as to how to achieve, and how to define, wellbeing.

In 2014, the What Works Wellbeing Centre was launched in the UK, based on work undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The Centre defines wellbeing as having ten key areas: natural environment, personal wellbeing, our relationships, health, what we do, where we live, personal finance, the economy, education and skills and governance – and highlights that work plays a major role in influencing how positive our wellbeing is.

### WHAT IS WELLBEING?

The term 'wellbeing' covers many aspects of the way we feel about our lives, jobs and relationships. Our feelings of wellbeing at work are influenced by day to day experiences with colleagues and management, how purposeful we feel and the work that we do. Employers can have a major influence on an individual sense of wellbeing, which can have a multitude of benefits for the organisation itself. [What works Centre for Wellbeing<sup>2</sup>]

### WHY SHOULD WELLBEING MATTER TO EMPLOYERS?

The Mind website states that wellbeing is a key contributor to an individual's resilience.<sup>3</sup> In the workplace, the ability for employees to value their work, increase their motivation and performance, and decrease their stress and conflict, has enormous value for organisations.

### HOW GOOD ARE WE WITH WELLBEING AT WORK NOW?

The latest official data shows that almost 27 million working days were lost to work-related ill health in 2017/18, with 1.4 million people suffering from a work-related illness. CIPD research shows that the average level of employee absence is 5.9 days per employee per year. Although this figure has been falling over the last decade, it does, however, mask the fact that most people continue to work when unwell, while many employees use holiday or sick leave to work. The UK's ageing workforce also means that employers will increasingly need to ensure they are taking a more strategic approach to supporting the health and wellbeing of their employees. [CIPD website<sup>4</sup>]

**27**  
**MILLION**  
WORKING DAYS LOST  
DUE TO WORK  
RELATED ILL-HEALTH  
2017/18

**5.9**  
**DAYS**  
YEARLY AVERAGE OF  
EMPLOYEE ABSENCE  
DUE TO WORK  
RELATED ILL-HEALTH

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Psychology%20at%20](https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Psychology%20at%20work%20-%20improving%20wellbeing%20and%20productivity%20in%20the%20workplace.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [work%20-%20improving%20wellbeing%20and%20productivity%20in%20the%20workplace.pdf](https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Psychology%20at%20work%20-%20improving%20wellbeing%20and%20productivity%20in%20the%20workplace.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/product/why-invest-in-employee-wellbeing/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/local-minds/resilience/>

## HOW GOOD ARE WE WITH WELLBEING AT WORK NOW? (CONT.)

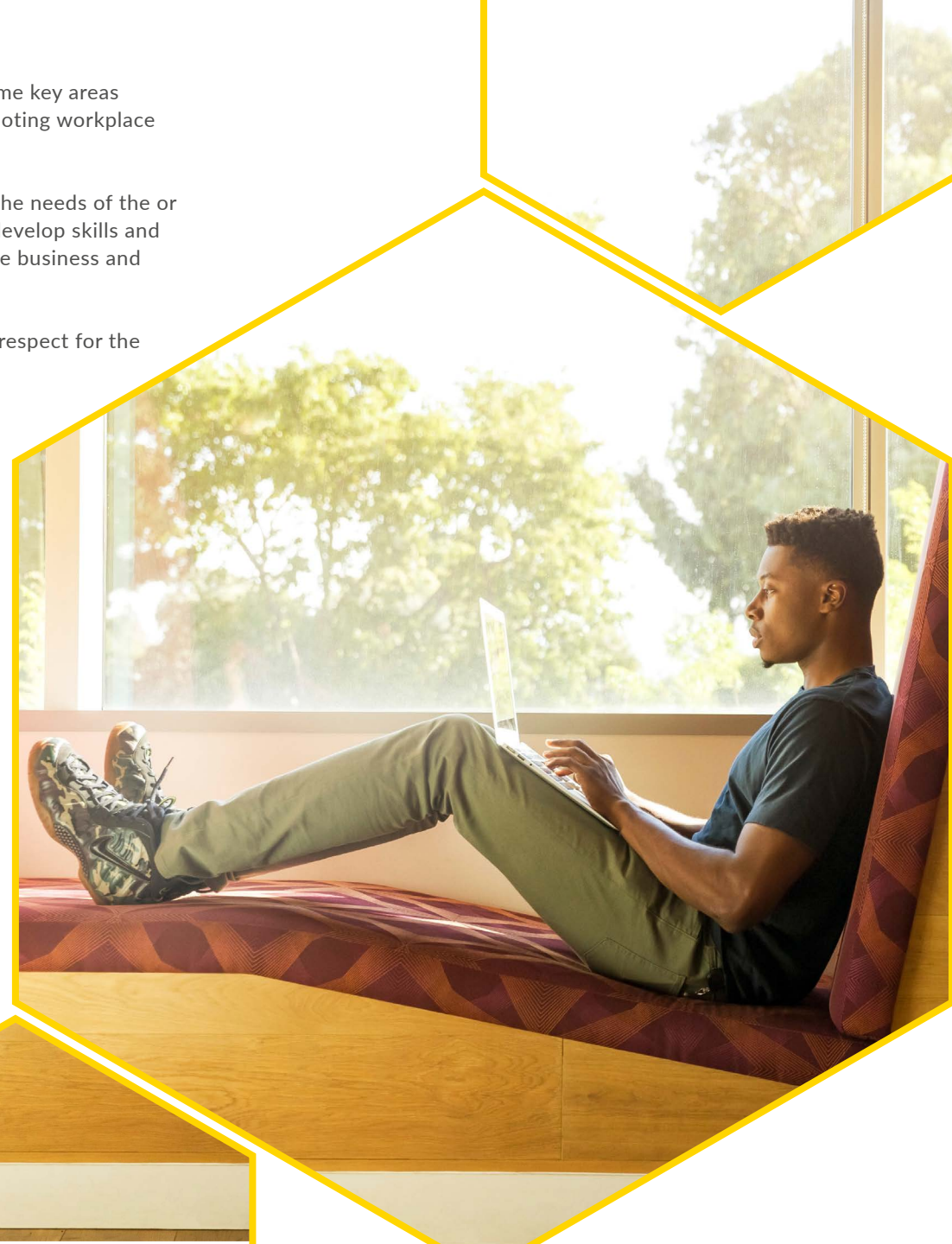
Organisations need their workforce to perform well if they want to succeed as businesses. Traditionally, factors such as sickness absence and performance measurement have been relied upon to indicate whether employees are performing well. However, it is increasingly being recognised that these measurements are limited – for example, presenteeism, and the issue of employees physically coming into work but being unable to perform, has been overlooked and unsupported until relatively recently. Good performance at work has layers – it can be hidden to standard metrics. Researchers are now suggesting that the drive in the UK for efficiency over the past few decades has meant that meaningful performance, stimulated by employee wellbeing, has been and continues to be neglected in workplaces.

## WHAT CAN WORKPLACES DO TO FOSTER GOOD WELLBEING?

The main issue that organisations face when considering their employee wellbeing is that a one-size-fits-all static approach does not work. Every organisation is different; their employee needs are varied and change, and priorities shift constantly. Recognising this, Mind have set up a workplace wellbeing index that captures and shares current good practice submitted by employers and employees.

The Mind workplace wellbeing index highlights some key areas that employers can consider when looking at promoting workplace wellbeing:

- Ensuring jobs are well designed, to meet the needs of the organisations and give employees room to develop skills and projects that will emerge as relevant to the business and individual.
- Creating a workplace culture that fosters respect for the employees and the business.
- Ensure line managers have training and support to engage in meaningful dialogue with their staff.



## 2. IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE

### WHAT IS IDENTITY AT WORK AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Our sense of who we are as a person is heavily influenced by what we do in our lives – our hobbies, social roles (within a family, friendship groups etc....) - and through what we do for our jobs. For example, people often use what they do at work as a factor in describing who they are. Self and work is a dynamic relationship, and in turn, as far as possible, people will gravitate towards roles that reflect their own values and beliefs. If we like our jobs, then our self-identity is positively impacted by what we do at work. The flip side of this is that if we have a job we do not like, or if our job challenges our values, this can negatively impact our sense of self – and our health.

#### IMPROVING WELLBEING AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE, BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY, 2017

“The relationship between work and health is not straightforward. The benefits of working have been well-documented – twice as many unemployed people (34 per cent) experience psychological health problems compared to employed individuals (16 per cent). However, studies in both the UK and Australia showed that the chances of depression and anxiety were higher among those moving into poor quality jobs that were insecure, had high workloads, low control and poor social support.”

#### IDENTITY AND WELLBEING AT WORK

Studies show that wellbeing and identity at work are linked.<sup>5</sup> Broadly speaking, if we like who we are and what we do at work, then we are more likely to feel good overall and to put energy into activities that will build wellbeing, as well as actively seek to minimise stress and problems. The opposite is also true – if we do not have a positive sense of identity, and for example low self-esteem, we are less likely to devote time and energy to things that boost our wellbeing, and increase our chances of experiencing mental health problems.<sup>6</sup>

#### JOBS, CAREERS AND CALLINGS: PEOPLE'S RELATIONS TO THEIR WORK

“How we think about our work can greatly affect how we experience it – it is the difference for example between a doctor believing they go into work to undertake tick box exercises or to heal people. By assigning meaning to a task or a job therefore someone can positively reframe how they experience their work. For example, employees who view their work as a calling or a career report to be more motivated and more engaged than an employee who sees their work as just a job. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/>”

#### YOUR SELF-ESTEEM CAN AFFECT WHETHER YOU:

- like and value yourself as a person
- are able to make decisions and assert yourself
- recognise your strengths and positives
- feel able to try new or difficult things
- show kindness towards yourself
- move past mistakes without blaming yourself unfairly
- take the time you need for yourself
- believe you matter and are good enough
- believe you deserve happiness

Mind website <sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs12646-010-0011-8>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-esteem/about-self-esteem/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-esteem/about-self-esteem/>



## WHAT IS MY PURPOSE AT WORK AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The ways in which individuals describe why they do what they do at work is an important indicator of how positive their workplace identity and wellbeing is for them.

How we see our purpose at work therefore influences how we experience our work – this in turn influences our resilience overall. Everybody will have parts of their job that they do not like, but if we see our work as meaningful then we are more likely to minimise the negative impacts of the less favourable parts of our roles, and we are more able to deal with problems in the workplace.

Interestingly, researchers suggest that any job can have meaning for any individual, and only a small amount of work at a basic level is required to achieve this (see section on job crafting).

## HOW CAN I WORK OUT WHAT IS 'MEANINGFUL' TO ME?

Meaning in work is unique to the individual employee. To work out what is meaningful at work, researchers have suggested the following questions are a useful starting point:

- What is important to you at work?
- What do you enjoy doing at work?
- What skills do you feel you have that are of value to your workplace?
- What do you do at work that gives you a sense of achievement or accomplishment?

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

Having a positive sense of who you are at work (your work identity) is a key part of creating wellbeing in the workplace.

Ideas on your purpose at work, and whether you see it as meaningful or not, directly impact your sense of identity, your wellbeing, and your resilience at work.

Identifying what is meaningful to you at work gives you a focus to build your positive identity, and increase your wellbeing.



# 3. WORK ENGAGEMENT

## HOW ORGANISATIONS CAN CREATE AND MAINTAIN ENGAGEMENT

### WHAT IS WORK ENGAGEMENT, WHY DOES IT MATTER, AND HOW IS IT LINKED TO WELLBEING?

Research shows that people who create and maintain positive wellbeing at work are more engaged in their workplace. For organisations wanting to focus on staff wellbeing, thinking about how engaged their staff are will highlight areas that can be celebrated, as well as ones that can be worked on. Research shows that the more engaged staff are, the greater the benefits for the organisation.

### WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

“

The concept of engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption.

”

British Psychological Society, 2017 <sup>8</sup>

### WHY DOES WORK ENGAGEMENT MATTER?

Workplaces are constantly changing. For example, new ways of working, competition, legislation are constantly emerging and shifting, meaning that in order to survive, organisations need to be flexible and adaptable. However it is not enough to just survive – to be sustainable in the long term, organisations also need to thrive. Staff are your greatest resource for keeping up with technology, identifying best practice elsewhere, opening new markets and improving ways of working. In order to do this, employees need to be invested in the work of the organisation. When this does not happen, not only do organisations fail to thrive, but they are actually harmed overall.

### STATE OF THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE, GALLUP, 2017

According to Gallup's recent State of the Global Workplace report, 85% of employees are not engaged or actively disengaged at work. The economic consequences of this global 'norm' are approximately \$7trillion in lost productivity. 18 percent are actively disengaged in their work and workplace, while 67% are 'not engaged'. This latter group makes up the majority of the workforce - they are not work performers, but they are indifferent to your organisation. They give you their time, but not their best effort nor their best ideas. **They likely come to work wanting to make a difference - but nobody has ever asked them to use their strengths to make the organisation better.**

In a nutshell, this global engagement pattern provides evidence that how performance is managed, and specifically how people are being developed, is misfiring.

Most of modern business relies on annual reviews to provide feedback and evaluate performance. And yet the new workforce is looking for things like purpose, opportunities to develop, opening conversations, a coach rather than a boss, and a manager who leverages their strengths rather than obsessing over their weaknesses. They see work and life as interconnected, and they want their job to be a part of their identity.

85%

OF EMPLOYEES ARE  
NOT ENGAGED OR  
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AT WORK

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Psychology%20at%20work%20-%20improving%20wellbeing%20and%20productivity%20in%20the%20workplace.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1348/096317909X402596>

## STATE OF THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE, GALLUP, 2017 (CONT.)

In contrast, when employees experience work engagement, this has enormous benefit to employers, such as with improved job performance, increased satisfaction of clients, and improved financial returns.<sup>11</sup>

Engaged employees are considered to be energetic, hold a positive attitude and demonstrate self-efficacy at work, as well to be a reduced risk for burnout and negative stress.<sup>12</sup> To be engaged, an employee needs to be in a role that works with their motivations and skillsets, be given training, be given meaningful work, be given regular feedback and be in frequent discussions about engagement – this will put them in the position where they are able to answer key questions about their work positively.

## POWERFUL STEPS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FORBES, 2017<sup>13</sup>

- I know what is expected of me and my work quality.
- I have the resources and training to thrive in my role.
- I have the opportunity to do what I do best – every day.
- I frequently receive recognition, praise and constructive criticism.
- I trust my manager and believe they have my best interests in mind.
- My voice is heard and valued.
- I clearly understand the mission and purpose and how I contribute to each.
- I have opportunities to learn and grow both personally and

## THE ROLE OF MANAGERS IN ENGAGEMENT

It has been shown that engaged managers undertake self-development activities that enable increased productivity, better team performance, and openness to innovation.<sup>14</sup>

Organisations can therefore foster workplace engagement through making sure their managers are engaged themselves, and making sure they are engaging with their staff around the questions highlighted previously.

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

Employees Who Are Engaged At Work Find Their Work More Meaningful, Meaning They Are More Likely To Experience Positive Wellbeing In Their Workplaces.

Engaged employees are good for organisations – they perform better and provide a resource that organisations can use to thrive in a changing world.

Identifying what is meaningful to you at work gives you a focus to build your positive identity and increase your wellbeing.

<sup>9</sup> <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1348/096317909X402596>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7453311\\_Linking\\_Organizational\\_Resources\\_and\\_Work\\_Engagement\\_to\\_Employee\\_Performance\\_and\\_Customer\\_Loyalty\\_The\\_Mediation\\_of\\_Service\\_Climate](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7453311_Linking_Organizational_Resources_and_Work_Engagement_to_Employee_Performance_and_Customer_Loyalty_The_Mediation_of_Service_Climate)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/308.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/178.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brentgleeson/2017/10/15/5-powerful-steps-to-improve-employee-engagement/#97afb1341d5>

<sup>14</sup> Hyvönen, Feldt, Salmela-Aro, Kinnunen & Ma"ikangas, 2009





# 4. ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR

## HIDDEN ACTIVITIES THAT BENEFIT THE WORKPLACE

### CAN 'HIDDEN ACTIVITIES' BENEFIT THE WORKPLACE?

Every day at work employees engage in a range of activities, some prescribed by their job description, and others not. Activities not a part of the job description have been the subject of increasing attention from researchers over the past few decades, and have resulted in findings that have been of surprise to employers. One key example of this is around organisational citizenship behaviour.

### WHAT IS ORGANISATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR (OCB)?

Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) describes activities at work that are undertaken by employees, but that are outside the employee's job description, not recognised by formal reward, and that contribute to the overall effectiveness of the organisation. They are sometimes referred to as when employees go 'above and beyond' in the workplace.

### WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF OCB ACTIVITIES?

Examples of OCB activities include hospital cleaning staff talking to patients whom they notice do not get many visitors, colleagues helping each other when they return from sick leave, or when existing staff go 'out of their way' to help new colleagues, creating a greater sense of belonging for them both<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0149206313498903>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199846740/obo-9780199846740-0091.xml>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749597813000381>

<sup>18</sup> <http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.jap.20130303.03.html>

### THE BENEFITS OF OCB

OCB has benefits for both employees and employers. OCB activities can help an employee find meaning at their work, therefore making their workplace a more positive experience for them. OCB behaviours also positively impact social relations at work for example they have been directly linked with employees experiencing enhanced networks at work and employees are more likely to engage in OCB behaviour when they have social support.<sup>17</sup> (see section on social networks for why this is important).

OCB activities have been positively associated with employees experiencing the following:<sup>18</sup>

- Positive feelings towards the workplace.
- Increased job satisfaction.
- An increased sense of control at work.
- Increased motivation at work.
- Reduction in job related stress.

For organisations, the benefits of OCB are huge. The activities can be an enormously helpful additional resource that creates better working environments without the need for direct or substantial investment. For example, to undertake OCB behaviours, employees must have the space to identify, and then engage in these activities.

This means that staff who demonstrate OCB behaviours have had to be motivated, resourceful, adaptable, and have had to identify a space or requirement which needed to be filled.

### OCB, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

OCB behaviours therefore contribute to both work engagement and wellbeing in the workplace, for employees, their colleagues, and the workplace overall, by improving the working environment.

### WHAT SHOULD ORGANISATIONS CONSIDER WITH OCB?

It is probably natural to expect, once organisations find out about OCB behaviours, that they try and capture it in some way. The idea of employees engaging in activities that are hidden, or not a part of the job description, can also be very uncomfortable for managers.

However, research has shown that organisations directly involved in OCB activities can be detrimental and can deter employees from engaging in them.

When learning about OCB activities, managers and organisations should be mindful of the holistic view, and the benefits that these activities bring. It is essential that managers engage in dialogue round these activities, rather than ignoring or absorbing them, as this is the best way to ensure that the mission of the business is kept at the forefront.

“Wouldn't it be great if everyone in your organisation took every opportunity to do good for a colleague and the business, without asking for anything in return? But be warned, as research shows that it can backfire when employees feel forced to be organisational citizens, rather than acting on their goodwill.

Findings suggest that people practitioners need to be careful about making citizenship behaviours an expected organisational culture.”

CIPD Website <sup>19</sup>

#### SUMMARY OF SECTION

Employees are prolific at work, engaging in a range of activities, some of which are outside of their formal job description.

Activities undertaken by employees outside of the formal job description can be of enormous value to employee and employer, boosting workplace engagement and wellbeing.

Employers should be wary of seeking to regulate activities outside of the formal job description, as this can diminish the benefits.



<sup>19</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

# 5. SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE WORKPLACE

## THE BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS

### WHY DO SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE WORKPLACE MATTER?

Humans are social beings, and so it is natural that workplaces are social domains. Interacting with other people is a fundamental feature of every job – and one that can bring both benefits and problems. The positives of networking – the doors it opens and opportunities it brings for employers and employees – has been a dominant feature of workplace research for decades. However, less of a focus, but just as important, are the social networks within the workplace. These workplace networks can provide a key source of support for employees, help to generate work engagement, and contribute to increasing resilience of the workforce.

Indeed, Mind highlight that connecting with other people is one of the five ways to wellbeing at work:

### CONNECT

There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world.

It's clear that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

With this in mind, staff should try to do something different today and make a connection, for example:

- Talk to someone instead of sending an email
- Speak to someone new
- Ask how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you
- Put five minutes aside to find out how someone really is
- Give a colleague a lift to work or share the journey home with them

Mind website<sup>20</sup>

### WHAT ARE SOCIAL NETWORKS WITHIN WORKPLACES?

Social networks describe anyone staff members interact with regularly at work. These could be people within their immediate team, people who work in a similar role in other premises or departments, people they liaise with regularly from different departments, or even people they have met through chance and just get on with. Staff do not have to be friends with people in their workplace social network for this to be effective, and the roles they undertake can range from co-worker, colleague, right through to friend.

The important point about social networks at work is that employees have the autonomy to expand theirs as needs arise. For example, staff members can find people in the workplace who are good at things senior staff may find difficult to explain, or colleagues who have done something before that the staff member is starting for the first time, or people who have shared life experiences who can be used to bounce ideas off, or even people who are in jobs a staff member would consider going for if they knew more about them – the list goes on.

### WHY ARE SOCIAL NETWORKS WITHIN THE WORKPLACE BENEFICIAL?

As well as providing a source of information, social networks also provide important support for employee wellbeing. For example, social isolation, and a lack of a sense of belonging, has been demonstrated to be a significant contributor to poor mental health.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the Mind Workplace Wellbeing report highlighted that colleagues are an important source of support for staff who are experiencing mental health problems.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.mind.org.uk/media/29259579/mental-health-at-work-1\\_tcm18-10567.pdf](https://www.mind.org.uk/media/29259579/mental-health-at-work-1_tcm18-10567.pdf)

## WHAT DO STAFF REPORT POSITIVELY?

Staff generally feel comfortable providing support, promoting wellbeing and interacting with colleagues who are experiencing poor mental health.

- The majority of line managers (71%) and non-line managers (67%) reported that they would feel comfortable supporting a colleague experiencing poor mental health at work.
- Most (69%) of line managers also report feeling that they have a good understanding of how to promote mental wellbeing to their staff.
- 81% of non-line managers would feel comfortable interacting with a colleague who was experiencing poor mental health.

Mind website<sup>22</sup>

## WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO TO HELP EMPLOYEES DEVELOP THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS?

Organisations can assist employees in finding people who can help and support them in the workplace, as well as help share their information with others who need help and support, as follows:

- Maintain a staff directory so it is easy to find information on who works for your organisation.
- Highlight examples of good practice, such as employees coming together for projects or charity, and share these via newsletters and websites.
- Support staff to set up peer networks (for example, the NHS has done this through support groups<sup>23</sup>, and the Civil Service through networks<sup>24</sup>).
- Set up a mental health champions network.

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

Even when we go to work, we are still people, and we have a need to belong and be a social being in the workplace.

Employees are an important source of information and support for your staff.

Employees can expand their social networks at work to meet their needs (see section on job crafting).

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.mind.org.uk/media/29259579/mental-health-at-work-1\\_tcm18-10567.pdf](https://www.mind.org.uk/media/29259579/mental-health-at-work-1_tcm18-10567.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.mind.org.uk/media/25781370/workplace-wellbeing-index-insights-report-2017-18.pdf?ctald=/workplace/workplace-wellbeing-index/slices/index-201617-insights-report/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.nhsemployers.org/-/media/Employers/Publications/appendixexampletermsofreference.doc>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-set-up-an-employee-network>





# 6. JOB CRAFTING

## A TOOL FOR WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT

### AN OVERVIEW OF JOB CRAFTING

In 2001 a paper was published that outlined activities that any employees at any level could undertake, to give them new and positive identities and meaning in any jobs. These activities were labelled 'job crafting'.

### WHAT IS JOB CRAFTING?

Job crafting, in the broadest terms, is an activity undertaken pro-actively by an individual in three distinct areas; changes to the tasks they undertake at work, changes to the way they think about the tasks they undertake at work and changes to the people they socialise with at work. The result of activity in any one or combination of these areas results in the individual being a job crafter, creating new meaning for their work and generating a new identity for them in their workplace. Job crafting and the resultant changes in meaning and work identity are often closely aligned with the individual's own values and, enabling them to reframe their work in a way which promotes values fulfilment and builds career capital. Recent work on job crafting has also advocated the additional view that as well as to build meaning, employees engage with job crafting as a means to deal with workplace problems.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF JOB CRAFTING FOR EMPLOYERS?

Job crafting as a tool for fostering work engagement has enormous potential. In job crafting theory, any employee at any level has the autonomy to job craft, and so in theory any employee can derive meaning and value from their work. The benefit of an employee who job crafts for organisations is that they have a productive workforce, motivated to take control of their own working lives, able to build job resources that require no financial investment and adaptable in the face of sector changes. Managers can assist employees by verbally exploring what is meaningful to the employee, opportunities for development, opportunities for networking, providing feedback and generally ensuring that the employee perceives opportunities to job craft.

### JOB CRAFTING TASKS AT WORK

Job crafting sets out that an employee can actively alter the tasks they deal with on a day to day basis. Critically, this is considered to be a low-level activity, different to job-redesign, not requiring additional resource or explicit recognition from the workplace.

An employee can engage in job crafting activities around the tasks of their job, for example, by:

- Selecting tasks (for example tasks that promote skills development or reflect personal values)
- Taking on additional/fewer tasks (for example to increase challenging job demands and reduce hindering job demands)
- Changing the way the task is accomplished (for example implementing new processes or innovative ways to complete the task)
- Changing the scope of the task (for example taking increased ownership of a task to ensure a high quality)

## JOB CRAFTING JOB PURPOSE

Employees can undertake cognitive crafting at work by engaging with the following activities:

- Rethinking their work to give it meaning and purpose (for example, if a part of a job is stigmatised e.g. bureaucratic or administrative tasks that are of little interest to the employee, rethinking them as necessary steps essential to overall success can be helpful, especially when dealing with conflicting priorities or feelings that basic needs at work are not being listened to.
- Take a holistic view of their work (understanding their work as part of the bigger organisational picture).<sup>25</sup>
- Undertaking organisational citizenship behaviour activities.
- Space Management (employees report rethinking their physical location at work, for example seeing themselves as part of a team, relocating to sit with a team they identify strongly with, placing meaningful items to assist with motivation such as family photos into their workspace, builds positive meaning at work. It is also worth noting that space management can also be a negative strategy – withdrawal, isolation and creation of artificial work divisions can all result from negative space management strategies.

## JOB CRAFTING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Employees can undertake social crafting at work by engaging with the following activities:

- Expanding relational boundaries for example engaging with new colleagues in different departments who can provide valuable input to projects. It is important to note that this has an inverse effect – contracting relational boundaries, where employees only interact with a very small and always the same group, which has been shown to have a negative impact on work engagement and motivation<sup>26</sup>. This is also cited as a strategy for dealing with multiple identities in the workplace e.g. manager and engineer, so employees would link with both other managers and other engineers to help them develop in their own role.
- Avoiding colleagues perceived as obstacles to success (note this can be problematic if the colleague is in direct contact e.g. as a line manager).
- Building and maintaining workplace relationships with colleagues perceived as enablers to success.

## SUMMARY OF SECTION

By focusing on what you do, the way you think about your work, or the people that you interact with, you can be a job crafter and create new meaning and identity at work.

Job crafting is a tool that can help build work engagement and wellbeing – without requiring any substantial investment or resource.

Job crafting puts the employee in the driving seat of their role and makes wellbeing and engagement something they can positively pursue.



<sup>25</sup> <https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/JMP-09-2014-0269?journalCode=jmp>

<sup>26</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0018726718779121>

# CONCLUSION

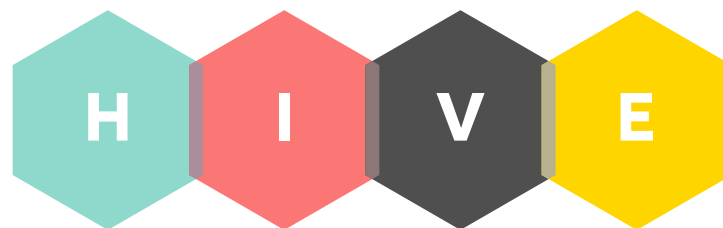
This paper has aimed to bring together some of the key concepts at the forefront of current work on wellbeing in the workplace.

In general, the focus is increasingly a positive one - that employees want to be productive, engaged and successful - and approaches such as job crafting seek to help individuals realise this in the workplace. It is not that problems arise which is the issue, as they are a natural part of life, but there are helpful and unhelpful ways of approaching them.

In summary, people have the potential to be a great resource to organisations. Your staff are flexible, adaptable, constantly learning, and they bring a multitude of skills and knowledge to the workplace. The culture of your workplace is a significant influence as to what extent this potential can be unlocked. Is it a culture that focuses on successes or problems? Does it reward long term success or focus on short term blips? Does it invade every area of your staff's working life, or does it give them space to perform, improve and develop? Does it seek to reveal problems or does it respect and maintain boundaries of trust?

The strength of your workforce is therefore in its people - and this is the point, they are people - with aspirations, motivations, beliefs, opportunities and barriers. People are not machines, and a focus on outputs and performance is limited in that it only ever sees a tiny fraction of the success of your workforce. Treating your staff like humans will bring out the best in them, no matter what they are experiencing in life. Giving your staff the tools, space and support to thrive at work will not only increase their wellbeing, but it will massively improve your business performance also - in every way.





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