



The Business Case for Wellbeing

August 2018

A report compiled by EEF Venues following a roundtable discussion that took place
Tuesday 21st August 2018



Introduction

On the 21st August 2018, EEF Venues hosted the first of a series of roundtable discussions on the 'Business of Wellbeing'. The aim of the discussions was to put focus on the 'business argument for better wellness within the events industry'.

The event was hosted at Broadway House, and featured a number of senior influencers, industry commentators, and decision makers within both the events industry and the wider business community. The event was also set up as part of the (event) industry's wider campaign to acknowledge wellness within the workplace. The session looked to explore the growing significance around understanding the effects of wellbeing, and its impact on customer service and sustainability, but also identifying how to materialise and measure this within the workplace.

Supported by EEF Venues, as part of their new initiative to prioritise the health and wellbeing of its staff, the discussion shared fundamental insights of which hopes to contribute and lead the wellness charge into a bigger movement.

Attendees:

- Jason Allan Scott - Founder of Calisthetics, a health and wellness coaching program for companies and individuals
- Hannah Luffman - Unicorn Events
- Mark Stormont - Stormont London and London Event Productions
- Holly Shiell - Active International
- Laila Dato - Event Fuel and A Life More Mindful
- David Vaughton - EEF Venues
- Alistair Turner – Industry commentator / Eventwell



Wellbeing in Business

The roundtable discussion began with a discussion around the growing importance of wellness in the business community. This is a subject that is undoubtedly growing within business, particularly in modern businesses, and the need to show care and consideration for people, not just at work, but at home, is becoming an inevitability and a business imperative. Why? The rationale is simple. If employees are at their best, so is the company.

Employees no longer just seek job satisfaction, they want to feel motivated, enriched, valued by their peers, and content in their personal lives too. If people feel their work is meaningful, they are more likely to be committed to the organisation's goals, and more importantly, perform better. *"Contented people are more proactive people,"* commented Mark Stormont, Stormont London and Event Productions.

In fact, recent studies suggest that focusing on helping employees to develop their own wellbeing is not just good for them, but good for the company's overall performance, productivity and profitability. As EEF Venues David Vaughton said *"A happy team equals happy customers, and fundamentally, great customer service generates loyalty, loyalty generates repeat business and repeat business generates business sustainability."*

The smartest organisations today depend on having a healthy workforce, and recognise the need to respond to the values of its employees as a business priority. The discussions quickly turned towards the importance of company culture, and its intrinsic link to wellbeing. For some organisations, this means creating a 'Culture of Wellbeing' through which the work environment becomes a hub for learning and a place for mental and physical wellbeing.

Why is Culture so Important to Wellbeing?

It was discussed that a strong culture is an organisation's greatest sustainable advantage, and in fact, is fast becoming the differentiator between a successful business and an unsuccessful one. Creating an environment where employees feel acknowledged and valued can in turn create a positive workplace, enhance morale and pave the way for high standards at work.

A good combination of character and personality, values and traditions, is not only critical for wellbeing, it reduces stress, increases employee satisfaction and solidifies their commitment to the company. Getting it right can further help to attract and retain talent, drive engagement and ultimately impact business performance.



Definition and breakdown of wellness – Mental Health – Physical health

“Wellbeing”

The term ‘wellbeing’ – defined as ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy’, relates to all aspects of an individual’s life, including their jobs, their relationships with the people around them and their physical and mental wellbeing. With people spending 1/3 of their life at work, the workplace environment plays an important part in an individual’s overall wellness and research shows that employers can have an influence on an individual's sense of wellbeing.

Challenges in Implementing Wellness

The roundtable conversation highlighted concerns for many employers today who experience numerous challenges in improving their performance when supporting employee mental health and wellbeing. This is largely due to the stigma surrounding mental health and the inability to be able to measure wellness. “Culture is intangible, and when something is hard to define, it’s hard to address, improve, or measure,” commented Laila Dato, A Life More Mindful.

If we consider that most of our wellbeing stems from mental health, a topic many still struggle to speak about, it becomes extremely difficult to tackle the problems that may arise from this e.g. absences and lowered performance. Management thinker Peter Drucker was quoted many times during the discussion: ‘What can’t be measured, can’t be managed”, was a particularly fitting comment.

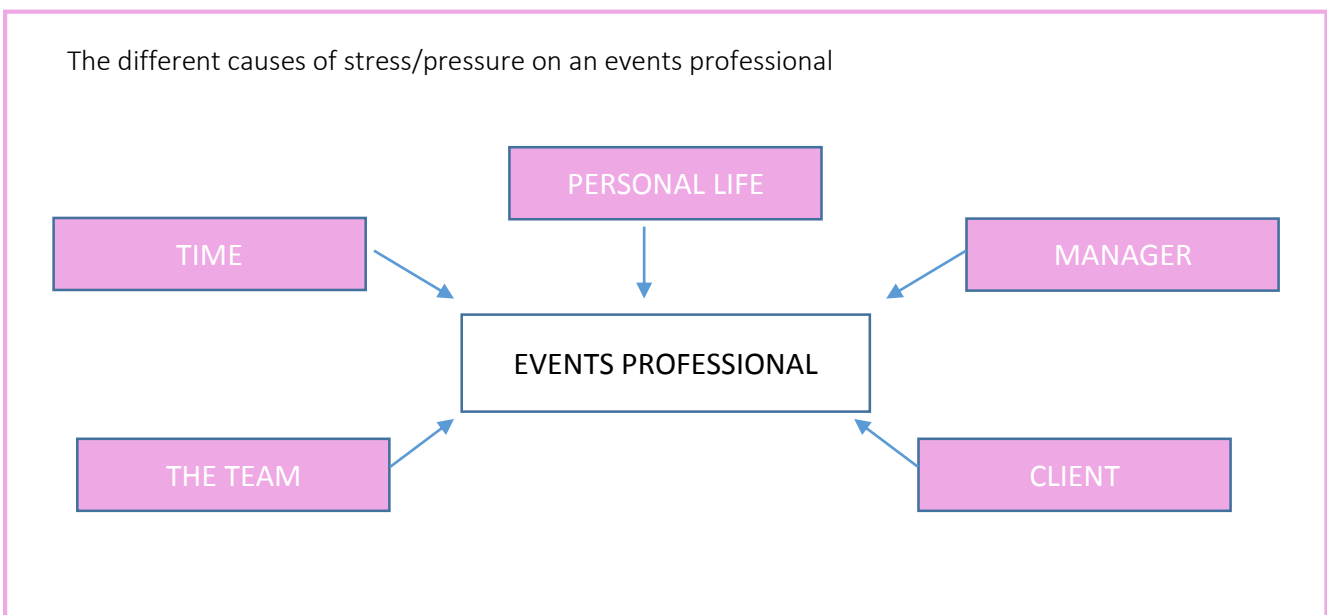
So how do we measure staff wellness and how do we monitor its bearing on the business? Event entrepreneur, conference organiser and Business and Wellness expert, Jason Allan Scott created a coaching platform (Calisthetics) with the idea of using the science and data of nutrition, psychology and emotional wellbeing as an effective form of measurement.

One of the key areas of the discussion was the friction over corporate wellness programs and their ability to demonstrate tangible ROI? A lot of companies aren’t investing in wellness due to the expense and complication it creates, which some argue, produces slow results.

There was also some debate that the size of the company can influence the ability to do this well. Larger organisations are often seen as having the resources to monitor wellness and fund attractive benefits such as health care, coaching, lifestyle programmes and appealing work spaces. Equally, small organisations, whilst they may not be able to fund such facilities or programmes, are more likely to have an emotionally and psychologically healthier environment, where wellbeing can flourish due to the relationships and closeness formed with their managers and peers.

Further to being able to identify a workplace culture, another prevailing concern raised throughout the discussion was how to maintain a sustainable culture as the business grows?

Event Management Stress Model (Image)



Leadership Drives Culture

In any discussion around business impact, the subject of leadership ‘buy-in’ is an important factor, and again, this was discussed at length during the forum. Culture is a learned behaviour, and leadership plays a pivotal role in the achievement of its success. Part of a manager’s role is not only to encourage an environment where people can flourish, both personally and professionally, but to instil a workplace morale where its staff feel safe and valued. If done correctly, the business will, and should take care of itself.



Transformational leaders understand that a culture is made up of the values you live by daily, and managers must lead by example when modelling behaviour. But first, they need to understand what their staff want and need, and how they will ensure this culture encourages individuals to work and interact in a way that is consistent with the management's mission and vision for the company.

People are often inspired to do their best if they feel their work is important and therefore should be treated with the same level of professionalism, openness and positivity from entry level management to top level. Hannah Luffman, director of Unicorn Events, attributes Unicorn's rapid business growth to a strong work culture, stating *"... a lot of the choices we make as a business comes from the team as a whole, whether that's ways to maintain good morale or creating a better environment, as well as business development decisions. It instils leadership and increases their motivation."*

Whilst the responsibility of trying to ensure your staff are content both in their personal lives and at work can seem formidable, the results can be worthwhile – lower staff turnover, easier recruitment processes, increased productivity and better business results. It was suggested that for smaller organisations, where management have a direct control and personal influence on the culture, it is easier to secure a better workplace environment. But what happens when the company grows and the ability to give everyone the same touch points becomes impractical? Laila Dato added, that *"... if not structured correctly, this could leave values and beliefs open to interpretation which could in turn alter the culture of the business and affect performance"*.

Culture Drives Leadership – How do we create a sustainable culture.

It was tabled, that when a business grows, wellness has to be owned by the culture of the business and not its leader. This means the values and beliefs instilled by management needs to be able to run themselves long after the management has been distributed. This is a vital part of 'The Business of Wellness' and the need for companies to instil lasting strategies that sew wellness deep into the DNA of the business, and that are not vulnerable to change in management of leadership.

This is a prevailing difficulty amongst employers as businesses expands, where direct influence of employee values from management becomes less and less. Whilst management alone, drives company values, they too need support, and by investing in provisional networks such as mid-level management to help facilitate company culture, the organisation becomes more resilient, more proactive and a better place to be.



A motivating work culture can make a leader out of everyone, and inspire people to view their responsibilities more clearly, which in turn can help with the enforcement of imparting company behaviours and values. In order to achieve culture sustainability and a mentally healthy workplace, organisations need to consider developing a comprehensive strategy to help people stay well at work, tackle the root causes of work-related mental health problems and offers equal consistency across the board in terms of access, support and advice.

It is also important to promote health as a core value and this can, and should, be looked at from both a pragmatic and emotional point of view. *“You have to be open to looking at your culture. Do you have the systems in place for understanding why there are certain patterns in the business? Are you offering appropriate perks for the people who work for you? Are you nurturing the growth and development of your staff? Are your staff satisfied in work and how much autonomy do they have to use their own initiative and influence decisions,”* commented Holly Shiell, Active International.

Laila Datoos added, *“We need to take a holistic approach to business wellbeing, and look at wellbeing as being more than just about physical or mental health, but that it may encompass wider issues that could have an effect on one or both of those. It’s important to give employees the tools to make them happier in themselves, be that; regular catch ups with managers, encouraging peer support, availability of support and advice and the provision of flexible working hours”.*

Businesses who Have Cracked it

Whilst there is still groundwork to be made in the relationship between wellbeing and profitability, businesses who are creating a true sustainable culture through investing in business wellbeing are achieving company goals faster and reaping higher gains from increased employee performance. Jason Allan Scott identified a few examples of businesses he believes are embracing the move towards the business of wellness.

They included:

- Johnson and Johnson, with staff of up to 129,000, prioritise sustaining a culture of health. They teach that development is a journey, not a race and give the staff permission to care for themselves. Using services to support their structures, they build relationships with staff by understanding the intrinsic reasons for staff to be healthy



- Netflix introduced the 'Netflix Culture Deck' with the goal of promoting a culture that balances 'freedom with responsibility'. The idea was to treat employees like adults. Give them the freedom of flexible working and unlimited holidays, so long as they did the work and they did it well.
Netflix eliminated the idea that your job was just your job, but rather encourages everyone to help everyone. The phenomenon not only contributed to Netflix's ongoing success, but has inspired other businesses to do the same
- Next Jump, a small ecommerce company, saw a dramatic increase in growth due to its implementation of a wellness program that chased progress and not performance. The program included touch points around the building, opportunities for rest, recharge and exercise and, performance coaching

Measuring Wellness in Business

The contributors to the roundtable discussion were keen to share tangible learnings from the meeting. The forum concluded with each highlighting optimal ways of measuring Business Wellbeing. These tips are intended to form a general compendium of evaluation ideas to be discussed, added to and agreed over time, they included:

1. **Surveys** – Conducting regular surveys to track employee satisfaction is a good way of understanding your staff's contentment at work. Are they happy at work? Do they feel there is good morale? This is also a great method for improving the business, allowing your staff to feel valued and contribute to the businesses' growth
2. **Trust Index/Great Place to Work Programme** – The programme (published in the Telegraph and Guardian), provides an opportunity to be recognised as a great place to work, and is evaluated using the employee trust index.
It is also a great way to assess the levels of trust and engagement within your organisation and benchmark them against others in the market
3. **Achievement of business objectives** – Is business seeing a ROI as a result of increased employee satisfaction? Is the business achieving its goals more efficiently and is it seeing financial gain? Is this being assessed on the balance sheet as well as at personal development level



4. **Time to hire** – Measuring the application process is another effective way of identifying whether the company has a good culture. Is the staff turnover high? How many applications does it receive and where do they come from? Are recruits indicating their reasons for wanting to work with the company as due to its culture?
5. **Absences/Sick days** – Measuring the company sick days is a good way to monitor a business culture and the effectiveness of a wellness programme. Have they increased or decreased, if so, why?
6. **Coaching and Mentoring** – Giving time for employees to actively engage with management on a 1 to 1 basis and share how they are feeling can enable companies to identify whether individual performances are improving. The development of the staff member both professionally and personally can be directly attributed to these schemes
7. **Tests measuring psychological, physical and emotional wellbeing** – This can be a good way to determine the wellbeing of individuals as well as understanding what motivates or negatively affects their performance
8. **Turnover** – Monitoring staff turnover can help highlight whether staff feel happy or content in their jobs
9. **Engagement at social events** – Relationships are a key factor in wellbeing at work - it's about more than just "getting-along" with a co-worker. Paying attention to employee engagement during social events can indicate whether they feel happy and included or isolated from the team / business
10. **Pool Culture** – Allowing business decisions to come from the team can help employees feel valued and motivated. It can also enable management to identify employee wellbeing. Do your employees want to contribute ideas? Are they excited about improving the business and business culture?

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EEF Venues would like to thank all those who participated in the discussion and would like to invite the readers of this report to put forward their comments and opinions.

If you are interested in joining us for any future events, please contact us via the information provided below.



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