



Developing Your Organisation's
Wellbeing & Performance Strategy

Before we get into the key aspects of what you should consider when setting up your organisation's wellbeing & performance strategy, let's take a look at why this is important.

Why you are important

SMEs contribute to local economies by bringing growth and innovation to the community.

According to the World Trade Organization, small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent over 90 per cent of the business population, 60-70% of employment and 55% of GDP in developed economies. SMEs therefore do not just significantly contribute to the economy – they ARE the economy. They foster local economies, keeping money close to home and supporting neighbourhoods and communities.(1)



What you are doing is important!

But as you know, business is challenging and on our best day there are a multitude of different problems that we need to address. Amongst the key challenges faced by SMEs, managing cash flows is almost always top of the list, followed closely by staff productivity and Investopedia also includes Founder fatigue in their top 3 challenges (2)

1. Managing cash flow remains the number one priority for all SME businesses because “cashflow is still king”. Your business must maintain realistic working capital balances and manage the normal trade cycle with customers.
2. Staff Productivity - Effective staff productivity starts with your organisation culture. How do you get the most out of the resources available in your business? Your team can be your greatest asset or your biggest burden
3. Founder Fatigue - The hours, the work, and the constant pressure to perform wear on even the most passionate individuals. Many business owners—even successful ones—get stuck working much longer hours than their employees. Moreover, they fear their business will stall in their absence, so they avoid taking any time away from work to recharge. Finding a pace that keeps the business humming without grinding down the owner is a challenge that comes early (and often) in the evolution of any SME

Which brings us to the importance of wellbeing and performance in the workplace. Over the last decade a number of research studies have identified the impact that poor health (physical and mental) has upon founder performance and team productivity which affects the organisation as a whole including cash flow.

Why wellbeing is important in the workplace

When we look at it in simple terms, if our business relies on humans (be it the founders, leaders and our team) to run the business, then there is always going to be “the human risk”. The same qualities which make the human experience unique, make us fallible day to day. Our emotions, our beliefs, our bodies, our minds, our experiences, our extended responsibilities... they give us creativity, experience, insight, compassion, purpose, meaning, belonging, amongst so many other qualities... But they can also predispose us to stress, anxiety, overwhelm, insomnia, vices, distraction, relationship issues... highs and lows.

If we looked at just a couple of the common issues many of us struggle with day to day we find two that sit at the top.

One: Sleep

According to a recent careerbuilder survey, sleep deprivation affects the majority of workers. Nearly 3 in 5 workers feel they don't get enough sleep (the number is higher than that for business leaders) 1 in 5 workers have called in sick to catch up on sleep.

Mentally, sleep deprivation reduces the ability to react quickly and think clearly. People who are sleep deprived are more likely to make poor decisions and take uncalculated risks. A lack of sleep also increases irritability and risk for anxiety and depression.

Sleep is absolutely critical in restoring the cognitive functions we (and our team) need to solve problems effectively. Insight, pattern recognition and innovation are all hit hard by sleep deprivation.

Sleepless Employees are almost 80% less productive (3)

Missing out on sleep can decimate successful working relationships. When a manager or business owner is groggy and irritable, they aren't statistically as likely to seek out new perspectives or ask colleagues for their input on strategic choices. That lack of inclusiveness and insight will inevitably foster a counterproductive atmosphere dominated by groupthink and reactionary management.

On the contrary a company leaders who've had a good night's sleep are more than twice as likely to discover a hidden shortcut in finishing a particularly difficult task (4)

Two: Stress & Anxiety

In 2014/15 stress accounted for 35% of all work-related ill health cases and 43% of all working days lost due to ill health (5)

Workplace stress also has adverse effects on workers' mental health, with an increased risk of anxiety, burnout, depression, and substance use disorders. Workers who are stressed at work are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, and poor dietary patterns. (6)

All of which affects our performance. We all know the feeling: you walk into a room on a mission and then stop, confused and a little disjointed, realising you have completely forgotten why you're there. Or perhaps, you're on a computer screen and you jump into another program only to get distracted and forget why you'd gone there in the first place. What's happening is a malfunction of working memory: the ability to grasp incoming information, form it into a cohesive thought, and hold onto it long enough to do what you need to with it. (7)

Moreover, when you're stressed and anxious, your head is full of thoughts, and your brain is somehow biased and paying more attention to negative things." Sustained anxiety can also cause sleep issues, which compounds daily stress and anxiety in a nasty cycle, explains Oliver Robinson of the Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience at University College London.



So what do we do about it?

The unfortunate reality (but also the opportunity) is that SME's often have to pick up a lot of things around employee wellbeing because society isn't and historically the medical health care system is reactive, treating symptoms after dysfunction has arisen. For SME's that risk needs to be managed.

At a core level, workplace wellbeing relates to how workers feel about themselves and their work. At its heart, workplace wellbeing aims to ensure workers are safe, healthy, satisfied, engaged and can perform at a high standard. It focuses on preventative action, to reduce the incidence of stress, injury and poor mental and physical health. Beyond this core level we move into high functioning teams.

Employers that invest in workplace wellbeing and performance programs are not only derisking the downside of their businesses, but they can expect to see improvements in productivity, employee job satisfaction and performance. Furthermore, research has shown additional benefits to include staff retention (and attraction of top talent), improved employee engagement, cost control and reduce absenteeism (8)



Health at work economic evidence report 2016 reviewed workplace wellbeing and performance programs and concluded that taking a proactive approach to founder and employee wellbeing through a formal program showed:

1. Reduced sickness absence was evident in 82% of programmes, making a positive contribution economically via reduced overtime payments, temporary recruitment and permanent staff payroll;
2. Reduced staff turnover was evident in 33% of programmes, making a positive contribution economically via reduced recruitment costs;
3. Reduced accidents and injuries was evident in 29% of programmes, making a positive contribution economically via reduced legal costs/claims, reduced insurance premiums and reduced healthcare costs;
4. Increased employee satisfaction was evident in 25% of programmes, making a positive contribution economically via reduced recruitment costs;
5. Reduced resource allocation was recorded in 16% of programmes, making a positive contribution economically through reduced management time;
6. Increased company profile was reported by 15% of programmes, contributing economically via reduced recruitment costs;
7. Increased productivity was reported in 15% of programmes, presenting a positive economic contribution via increased revenues, reduced overtime payments and reduced permanent staff payroll; and
8. Increased health and welfare was evident in 15% of programmes, making a positive economic contribution via reduced healthcare costs.

“Every \$1 spent on workplace health initiatives results in return on investment ranging from \$2:1 to \$34:1” (8)

We hope by now you can see that investing in your wellbeing and that of your team is investing in the success of your business.

But where do you start?

We have put together these 5 key areas that will help guide you in developing your organisations wellbeing and performance strategy.



Make it Part of the Company Culture

Nothing determines business success (or failure) more than workplace culture. This is especially true with employee wellbeing & performance programs, where bad culture can sabotage even the most well-designed employee programs.

Yet, employee wellbeing across the world is at an all-time low. Authorities like Gallup and CDC, suggest that low employee wellbeing is leading to poor physical and mental health that's eroding profits through lower employee engagement, higher turnover, poorer customer service and higher healthcare costs.

Culture is the Foundation

Accordingly, if companies hope to see any positive ROI from improving employee wellbeing, workplace cultures must be the foundation for programs. Culture comes before programs, because cultures are the seedbeds that determine whether employee wellbeing programs die or flourish.

A workplace culture consists of unwritten rules about what it really means to be an employee at the company. These are the real core values, and are often not what employees see on posters or employee handbooks. Simply put, workplace cultures tacitly communicate "How things are done around here."

Simple Steps for Building a Culture of Wellbeing

Workplace cultures must be assessed and re-engineered to ensure they support employee wellbeing. This requires that culture itself must become the primary strategic priority, managed with objectives, platforms, accountabilities and support

1. Assess the current culture

Companies must first understand the existing workplace culture as it relates to employee wellbeing, for better or for worse.

Determine how the current culture supports or discourages optimal employee wellbeing and performance. Conduct surveys, employee interviews and have intentional discussions throughout the organisation to hear, first hand, from employees what they need and want.

Employee wellbeing must become a core value that infuses all organisational procedures, policies and leadership.

2. Involve employees in program design and implementation

Involving employees in the selection and design of the specific wellbeing programs ensures that the right programs are selected and creates a sense of ownership. This reflects and reinforces a supportive culture.

If stress is an issue (and it often is), consider resiliency training. Movement/exercise, diet, sleep, time management (often time management is affected by those previously mentioned), then focus the program in around them.

Initial analysis through employee interviews and surveys helps to link wellbeing and performance strategies to organisational goals.



2

Make it Measurable Against Company Goals (ROI)

Key Considerations:

As mentioned, evidence shows that employers that invest in appropriate workplace initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of their employees have the potential to see a significant return on investment (from \$2:1 to \$34:1). In order to measure the return on investment, employers should track key metrics before and after the program. Key metrics can include:

Company Metrics:

- Employee turnover and associated cost
- Absenteeism including reasons for absence and the direct and indirect costs
- Productivity
- Cost associated with workplace accidents and injury
- Healthcare including health risk and lifestyle issues such as smoking and alcohol
- Disability and workers' compensation costs
- Morale
- Engagement

After the programs you can utilise both the data sets above and those below.

Employee Metrics:

- Participation
- Engagement
- Health behaviors and risks
- Biometric measures
- Mental health
- Overall wellbeing

Most employers do not currently measure all of these on a regular basis, but without a clear picture of 'before' and 'after', it can be difficult to assess what difference the initiative and investment has delivered. Some metrics can be harder to measure such as productivity but in this case it should be identifiable in terms of an improvement in financial measures such as: increased revenues (per employee), reduced over-time payment, reduce wage bill (i.e. less employees required for the same amount of work) and reduced penalties linked to extended deadlines.

But, it's essential to measure progress, using actionable data you want, when you want it, and how you want it. Many of your team are likely to already own various transformative technology products, it's important to have a centralised dashboard to normalise the data, so that it becomes actionable.





3

Incorporate Workplace Wellness Technologies

In recent years we've seen a proliferation of wearable technologies. Wearables are becoming more and more customary in facilitating employee interactions with their work environment. Devices such as rings and wristbands provide employees and employers with important information about their current environment as well as individual wellbeing and performance feedback.

Organisations are increasingly introducing wearable devices, to improve organisational culture and performance. The performance-related feedback these devices provide helps both employees and managers navigate the work environment more effectively. In addition the promise of a healthier and happier life as a result of a better-managed lifestyle appeals to an increasing number of employers and employees. Wearable technology and associated platforms provide:

1. Data to support individuals
2. Builds community which impacts culture
3. Enables custom solutions for individuals or team challenges across many staff
4. Builds healthy competition through gamification
5. Supports the formation of healthy habits
6. Enables built in rewards

Examples of technologies are listed below.

- Muse
- Oura
- Fitbit
- Applewatch
- Samsung watch
- Garmin
- Apollo

Note: Often it's not always necessary to buy technology as many of your staff already have some form of wearable technologies (watches, wrist bands, rings) and the data can be congregated into a platform to provide actionable data



4

Establishing A Program(s)

When it comes to improving overall wellbeing, employees' goals are unique. It's important to get to know your team, discover their goals, and design an experience to support those goals. In establishing a program it's important to help them change what they want to change, this often drives change across other areas of their life, too.

By creating a personalised experience that meets employees where they are on their wellbeing journey, by integrating and analysing employee data from multiple sources, including surveys, biometrics, interests, platform usage, and more (while adhering to the highest data privacy, security and compliance standards), you are able to ensure that your team gets the level of support they need when they need it.

Activity, nutrition, sleep, stress, focus, cognition, financial health, personal relationships – whatever helps make them happier human beings. It's important to remember by supporting them, you are supporting your business.

As for wearable devices – key tools in building better daily habits – your ideal program will let them bring what they have, or choose from a wide variety that they like best.



Things to consider when setting up your programs

1. What habits do they want to create & why?
Encourage them to start small and build. Small efforts compound over time
2. What wearable technology do they have/need?
3. What level of support do they need?
Daily / Weekly / Monthly
4. Set a timeframe & choose a practical start date
5. Get started



5

Develop Team Challenges

Turnkey and holistic wellbeing challenges are something that you can also consider, however the important thing to be aware of with team challenges is that your organisational culture may not be ready for it.

Whilst some individuals will jump in, others are likely to be disengaged and others somewhere in between. What you want to avoid is launching a program that flatlines and negatively affects your existing culture.

A great place to start is understanding what your individual employee goals are and as you develop individual programs, group those with shared goals into challenges



Examples of popular challenges include:

- 10,000 Steps a day challenge
- Meditation challenges
- Weight Loss challenges
- Sleep challenges
- No coffee challenges
- No alcohol challenges
- Quit smoking challenges
- Phone addiction challenges
- Gratitude challenges

Things to consider when setting up team challenges

1. Consider starting small. Small things consistently rather than random big things helps to build momentum and compounds over time
2. Agree on the rules and encourage healthy competition. Healthy competition can build engagement
3. Consider offering rewards for positive change
4. Lead from the top. For any strategy to work, genuine buy-in must be there from the top. Wellbeing is no different. Encourage all leaders to participate and lead by example.

Next Steps

With these 5 tips, you'll have a lot more insight into how to get started in developing a wellbeing and performance strategy for your organisation.

1. Make it Part of the Company Culture
2. Make it Measurable Against Company Goals (ROI)
3. Incorporate Workplace Wellness Technologies
4. Establish A Program(s)
5. Develop Team Challenges

Supporting employee wellbeing and performance for your people who are critical to business success. When you improve your employees' physical and mental health for improved outcomes, more resilient teams, and strong cultures.

Establishing the right solution—one that fits your goals, culture, and budget is key to getting started.

We're available to answer questions and tailor a program that's right for your business and your team. Talk to an engagement expert at iAMconnected today. Register here to organise a complimentary, no obligation wellbeing and performance strategy consultation today.

BOOK A DEMO

About iAMconnected

iAMconnected, supports SME business leaders and their teams establish a culture of energy, focus, and drive necessary to fully engage at work and in their personal life. Deep connections with the Transformative Technologies movement (which supports entrepreneurs and innovators to build wellness technologies) enables us access to leading edge technologies, scientists, thought leaders, experts and coaches. Through our award-winning online platform, iAMconnected fosters healthy daily habits and sustainable behavior change that help your team thrive at work and across all aspects of life. Unlike large corporate employee health and engagement solutions, iAMconnected offers customisable solutions specifically for SME's to ensure that no one gets left behind as we evolve along the wellbeing spectrum into wellbeing > peak performance > realising greater potential

Learn more at [iAMconnected.com](https://www.iamconnected.com).

Find us on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/iamconnected-com/>



References



World Trade Report 2016 - Levelling the trading field for SMEs

The 2016 World Trade Report examines the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in international trade, how the international trade landscape is changing for SMEs, and what the multilateral trading system does and can do to encourage more widespread and inclusive SME participation in global markets.

https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/wtr16_e.htm



5 Biggest Challenges Facing Your Small Business

Starting a business is a significant achievement for many entrepreneurs, but maintaining one is the larger challenge. There are many common challenges every business faces, whether they are large or small. These include hiring the right people, building a brand, developing a customer base, and so on.

<https://www.investopedia.com/articles/pf/12/small-business-challenges.asp>



Do Small Business Owners Need More Sleep Than Corporate Executives?

According to researchers at CareerBuilder, 58 percent of workers say they don't get enough sleep at night. Move up the ladder, and sleep deprivation worms its way into company culture. Over 40 percent of business owners and C-level executives reckon they're shunning sleep at least four nights per week.

<https://smallbiztrends.com/2016/03/small-business-owners-sleep-less.html>



Sleep Deprivation Affects Majority of Workers, According to New CareerBuilder Survey

For many people, daylight savings time is less about "spring forward" and more about falling behind... their sleep schedule. And many of us can't afford to lose out on any more sleep. According to a new survey from CareerBuilder, over half of workers (58 percent) feel they don't get enough sleep, and 61 percent say lack of sleep has a negative impact on their work.

<https://press.careerbuilder.com/2016-03-10-Sleep-Deprivation-Affects-Majority-of-Workers-According-to-New-CareerBuilder-Survey>



Workplace Stress: A Silent Killer of Employee Health and Productivity

Stress levels vary between professions and population groups. Some workers are at a higher risk of stress than others. Studies reveal that younger workers, women, and those in lower-skilled jobs are at most risk of experiencing work-related stress and its attendant complications.

<https://www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com/article/workplace-stress-silent-killer-employee-health-productivity#:~:text=Workplace%20stress%20also%20has%20adverse,abuse%2C%20and%20poor%20dietary%20patterns.>



How anxiety affects your focus

We all know the feeling: you walk into a room with a mission and then stop, confused and a little disjointed, realising you have completely forgotten why you're there.

In 2011, researchers at the University of Notre Dame sought to figure out why – they determined it was the act of walking through the doorway that caused the instant amnesia.

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200611-how-anxiety-affects-your-focus>



Health at Work: Economic Evidence Report 2016

Over the last decade a number of research studies have identified the impact that ill health has had upon the economy. We present compelling evidence of the cost to employers of sickness absence, presenteeism and staff turnover and how these costs could be reduced through the introduction of up-front investment in workplace health initiatives.

https://www.bhf.org.uk/-/media/files/health-at-work/health_at_work_economic_evidence_report_2016.pdf

Sleep Health Foundation

2016 Sleep Health Survey

Report to the Sleep Health Foundation of Australian Adults Executive Summary by Robert Adams, Sarah Appleton, Anne Taylor, Doug McEvoy, and Nick Antic, The University of Adelaide and The Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health

<http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/pdfs/surveys/SleepHealthFoundation-Survey.pdf>