

FOCUSING ON WELLNESS AT WORK

A company offering at wellness at work would ideally offer a one-stop-shop approach to services. This could be achieved with a loose confederation of individuals co-operating under the banner of one business (e.g. psychotherapist, psychologist, counsellor, yoga/massage instructor etc). Some interesting current topics regarding wellness in the workplace are summarised below:

- Wellness at work: Stress management, mindfulness and relaxation
- Coping with Depression
- Tackling addiction (work, coffee, alcohol, drugs)
- Harnessing individual motivation and ambition
- Being your authentic self at work
- Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead
- Psychological safety: the psychology of high-performance teams

Wellness at work: Stress management, mindfulness and relaxation

Wellness entails looking after an individual's mind and body. The modern workplace can be a challenging environment and employees risk the possibility of stress which can lead to burn-out or lead a valuable employee looking to leave the firm. An employer has a duty of care towards their employees which is incorporated in statute. Many firms now have designed Wellness At Work programs in order to identify individuals at risk and offer them strategies and tools for dealing with day-to-day stress. Such tools can include relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises and mindfulness techniques which allow the individual to avoid focus on tasks in hand and avoid the resulting panic which often incorporates a heavy workflow. On site massages can also be offered as a treat to workers, allowing them 15-30 minutes of respite during a busy day.

Coping With Depression

Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest. Everyone feels blue from time to time but depression is a serious disease and a major depressive episode which may last many months can not only impact on the way an individual thinks but how he behaves and his relationships with others. In the very worst case, depression can lead to self-harm or even suicide and often people who suffer will self-isolate sometimes because they are ashamed to admit to other about their state of mind. Individual counselling and cognitive behaviour therapy are tools which have been proven to work in battling depression and can restore a sense of hope and purpose and thus reinvigorate a valued employee and turn them back into a happy, productive team member.

Tackling Addiction

Many of us are addicts without realising. Addiction is a disease of the mind which leads an individual to behave obsessively and in a way in which they ultimately become powerless over their behaviour. Workaholics may appear to be productive individuals in the workplace but by not achieving a healthy work-life balance, the individual is at high risk of physical and psychological burnout. Workaholics damage the relationships they have with family and friends outside work by not recognising that these relationships are equally important in achieving success at work. Likewise, stress can lead individuals to use alcohol and drugs outside work in order to 'cool off'; alcohol and substances are subconsciously regarded as tools which can 'soothe' the individual after a particularly stressful day but ultimately long-term use will be extremely damaging. Furthermore, many individuals may be in denial about their own addiction. Coffee or caffeinated beverages are a common tool in practically every workplace to deal with fatigue, however, caffeine itself is a powerful drug and drinking too much coffee can interrupt healthy sleep patterns which in turn disrupts an individuals' circadian rhythms. As with alcohol and drugs, the pattern of behaviour can lead to a vicious cycle of more using which can easily spiral out of control.

Individual Ambition & Motivation

The modern workplaces values a 'self-starter' who can motivate themselves at work and who harbours a certain level of personal ambition for his or herself. Motivation, however, can easily be disrupted by stress, bad people management, workplace bullying/harassment or negative behaviours outside work. Feelings of powerlessness ensue and this has a highly damaging effect on productivity. Short individual counselling sessions in which employees are encouraged to 'share' on a one-to-one basis in an environment of confidentiality. Such sharing allows an employee to gain a better perspective on their work and personal life, offload anything which has been troubling them psychologically and re-harness their individual ambitions. Counselling also allows an individual to abandon resentments and disappointments which they may be carrying around in their mind and which are hampering their ability to achieve peak performance.

Being your authentic self at work

Many employees – especially young people starting out – often feel they have to wear a mask at work. This is particularly true of corporate environments where there can be a strong emphasis on a particular corporate identity. Often when recruiting, companies will look for a right 'fit' and will ask themselves 'Is this *our* sort of person?' It is hardly surprising, therefore, that many employees feel they have to hide elements of their true identity. A good case example of this is how in the last few years a focus on LGBT issues has allowed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees to be open about their sexuality at work. This kind of honesty not only decreases the level of stress put on the individual at work but makes them feel valued for who they truly are rather than who they are pretending to be. Also, diversity in the workplace can be a valuable asset to any business: having people who can offer an alternative perspective on things because of their particular personal circumstances avoids a 'groupthink' mentality and can allow business to see angles which were they were previously blind to. It is also a major benefit when recruiting if a business can honestly say that as an organisation we will accept you for who you truly are.

Lean In: Work, and the Will to Lead

Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook, opened a debate with her 'Lean In' philosophy detailed in her book published in 2013. Women often face particular issues at work in trying to climb the corporate ladder. There are still only 7 women in charge of FTSE 100 companies and the upper echelons of the corporate management sphere remain dominated by middle-aged white men. Some women feel they have to mirror certain male characteristics (e.g. aggression) in order to be accepted by their male peers but Sandberg also points out that females more frequently than males suffer from impostor syndrome, believing they are not really up to the task. Encouraging women to discuss these issues in an atmosphere of honesty and openness are key to levelling the playing field and encouraging an active women's network in organisations with mentoring schemes is something which has been proven to bring enormous benefits. Once again, diversity in the workplace brings with it diversity of opinion and fresh insights when solving difficult problems.

Psychological Safety: The Psychology of High-Performance Teams

Google has undertaken a significant amount of research into why certain teams with the same calibre of people outperform other teams. The conclusion that was drawn was to do with what has been determined 'psychological safety.' This concept really boils down to 'Am I allowed to take risks at work and I am allowed to fail if taking that risk doesn't work out?' The opposite of psychological safety is an organisation which operate a culture of blame appropriation. In this kind of atmosphere, individuals will recoil from offering potential solutions to problems because they are worried that if their idea does not succeed then they will pay a penalty of shame. As a consequence such companies lack the drive to innovate which is essential to many companies today because individuals simply don't think the risk is worth taking. A company which encourages psychological safety not only allows individual to take risks but harnesses greater individual potential by recognising that what really motivates people is mastery of a particular chosen skill and the autonomy to create environment in which they operate. Studies show these two factors are actually far stronger performance incentives than traditional financial incentives.

Promoting The Proposition

Once the business proposition is clearly defined then the business can be promoted through established social media channels (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc). You should feel willing to give away free content in order to build a following and then encourage those followers to sign up through a website to a mailing list and target them with regular updates including links to both free and premium content. You need to decide whether revenue will be generated through a membership website type scheme with a monthly payment charged or whether the business will depend on corporate consultancy work generated through online promotion or possibly some kind of mix of the two. Offline promotion and networking is also highly encouraged through things like meetups (see meetup.com) and other events where you can promote your services either on a one-to-one basis or by offering to give presentations or talks on a particular topic.

Interesting videos:

Shawn Achor: The happy secret to better work

https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work

How Motivation is Driven by Purpose - and not Monetary Incentives

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgKKPQiRRag>

The Puzzle of Motivation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrkrvAUbU9Y>

Lean in: A Discussion on Leadership with Sheryl Sandberg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTZPvLi3Hdc>

Everything you think you know about addiction is wrong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY9DcIMGxMs>

Inside the mind of a master procrastinator – Tim Urban

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arj7oStGLkU>

Building a psychologically safe workplace: Amy Edmondson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhoLuui9gX8>