

Is My Workplace Affecting My Wellbeing?

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Which came first – The chicken or the egg?

Does a work force with a collective sense of Wellbeing create a good workplace culture or is it the other way around?

Workplaces change and evolve quickly as they respond to market conditions and growth (or decline). As these workplaces change the “culture” changes too. Before we look at how workplace culture affects Wellbeing, let’s just have a quick look at what workplace culture might be. We use the term “might be” because there is no hard and fast formula that defines workplace culture to the exclusion of everything else – it’s not a precise science.

Dive into and read any MBA business text on the subject and it will tell you that culture is a combination of Vision, Mission (Statement) the apparent expressed Values, Attitudes, Behaviours, Commercial Orientations, Customer Focus, Beliefs and so the list goes on. And on.



A prevailing culture can experience seismic shifts that are usually caused by several factors.

1. A successful hostile takeover of a business (often by a Venture Capitalist or similar)
2. The arrival of a new CEO with new ideas and perspectives
3. A merger
4. Hugely disrupted market conditions

There is much debate as to who exactly drives the culture of a business, and how that dimension of management is implemented. More on this and culture shifts in a moment.

What is certain, however, is that the prevailing culture impacts on the Wellbeing and wider welfare of the employee community. The impact is not always positive – frequently quite the reverse.

How do you know if the culture is negative, or even toxic?

This is actually quite easy to spot – but not so easy to fix, as we shall see.

A malign workplace culture will be hallmarked by:

1. High staff turnover
2. High rates of absenteeism
3. An evident blame culture and a prevailing CYA mentality where individuals or Departments adopt fractious “bunker” behaviour
4. A high failure rate with new hires (people leaving before the induction period has been completed)
5. The necessity to pay premium pay increases to avoid loss and help retention
6. Poor productivity sitting alongside perverse incentive and bonus programmes
7. Obstructionism – the slow take up of new process and reluctance to explore new opportunities and low propensity to collaborate and, most importantly,
8. a prevalence of cynicism at the water cooler encounters and at the front door smokers’ huddle.

You might add a bit of bullying into this as insecurities surface.

This list is by no means exhaustive, nor is it exclusive to this article – but you get the picture.

It’s easy though to see how these features will impact on wider staff welfare and Wellbeing.

The only direction of travel where a negative culture exists is down – a downward spiral that can only be destructive and frequently very costly.

So, we can see, in just a few sentences, that this is a massive subject with huge consequences for workplaces that screw it all up.



OK, let's start with who is responsible for all this?

Well, that's going to be the CEO.

The key big issues for the CEO can be boiled down to just two questions:

1. How do I stop my workplace from failing?

And

1. How do I make my workplace more sustainably successful?

That's the fundamentals of the CEO role nailed down.

What's next?

The Leadership Team.

Between them, and the CEO, they need to design and build – and agree – a strategy for the business that engages and encompasses their employees and resources.

Put simply – they need to define what success looks like and how to achieve it.

Now comes a tough bit – implementation.

The CEO and the Leadership Team are going to need to facilitate a workplace culture that will enable the successful delivery of the business plan. Without it they will fail.

Implementing the Business Plan is tough, but it's not the toughest part.

Step forward the HR Lead for a conversation with the CEO.

"Hello HR Lead. Tell me, what is the state of this workplace's culture?"

Whatever the, now embattled, HR Lead says, the CEO will surely respond by asking "How do you know? What evidence do you have?"

Some HR Leads do not have issues with workplace culture but these people are unicorn level rare.

If you are going to impact workplace culture in any way you absolutely need to know where you are today. What is the prevailing sentiment in the workplace? What are the issues being experienced by the employee community and what effects are these having?

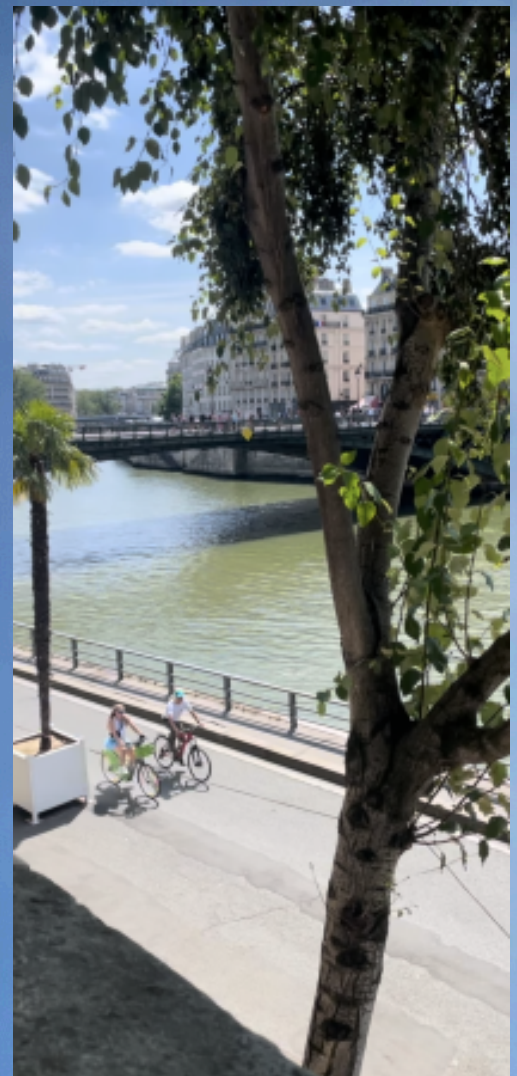
Further, what do we need to address first?

Conventional staff surveys are invariably not trusted by those expected to complete them, especially those who are experiencing factors that make them insecure, and the fear of being identified.

Once we know where we're at regarding prevailing culture, sentiment and morale we can start to develop a set of Values and wrap that around a Mission, a workplace Vision and entwine that with a set of desired behaviours.

But we're back at finding out where we are.

A technology-based solution can enable the accurate measurement of sentiment.



NoWorriesApp.com has such a tool; it's actually a self-help App that enables the accurate assessment of a workplace's culture by asking completely confidential questions of employee communities about 10 aspects of their life. A key aspect will be Work Life, another will be Relationships Life and also Financial Life.



The App enables the individual user to navigate work/life challenges whilst privately recognising, managing and easing worry. And building their resilience too.

The anonymised – and it **IS** 100% anonymous – collective data is available to an HR Lead as both quantitative data and qualitative data via a Digital Dashboard.

Lights are shone on culture-based issues and priorities emerge.

Precision interventions can then be devised and implemented with confidence. This is evidence-based policy making and implementation in action.

Clever though it is, and effective it is for sure, it still does not resolve whether the chicken or the egg came first.

But, at least, we do now know how to address the culture quandary.



Learn more at www.NoWorriesApp.com

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