

Workplace Wellbeing Research Summary Report



Prepared by Learnovate
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Background

Successfully managing employee wellbeing in the workplace has been highlighted by members of the Learnovate community as a major challenge for organisations in today's world of work.

As a research centre guided by the needs of its members and partners, Learnovate initially conducted detailed research on the concept and dynamics of wellbeing which culminated in a report that presented the current state of research into the different theories of wellbeing.

Subsequently, the Learnovate team embarked on a second piece of research that aimed to identify how organisations in the corporate world could improve their wellbeing programmes. More specifically, this involved working with experts in the field of workplace wellbeing with a view to outlining what an innovative and effective tool for corporate wellbeing might look like.

The timeline of the project can be shown as follows (Figure 1):

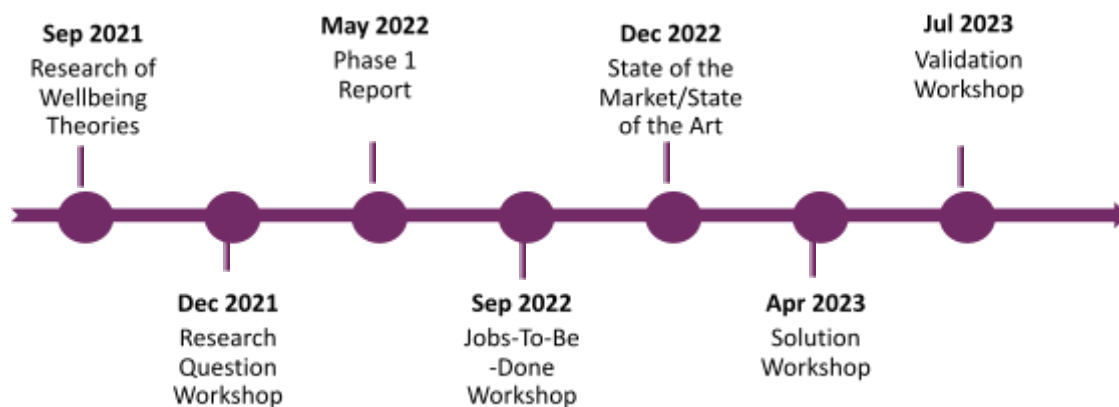


Figure 1: Workplace Wellbeing Project Timeline

Thus, as currently stands, the project has completed a cycle of in-depth research, 'blue-sky' thinking on possible solutions, and a validation of the idea for the potential solution.

Research Question Workshop

To begin this research project, Learnovate invited members who had expressed a particular interest in workplace wellbeing to join a Research Working Group (RWG) that would guide the Learnovate team and pinpoint the key challenges that needed to be examined.

The project started with a Research Question Workshop during which the Learnovate team brought the RWG participants through a structured process aimed at defining a question that would be the focus of the research.

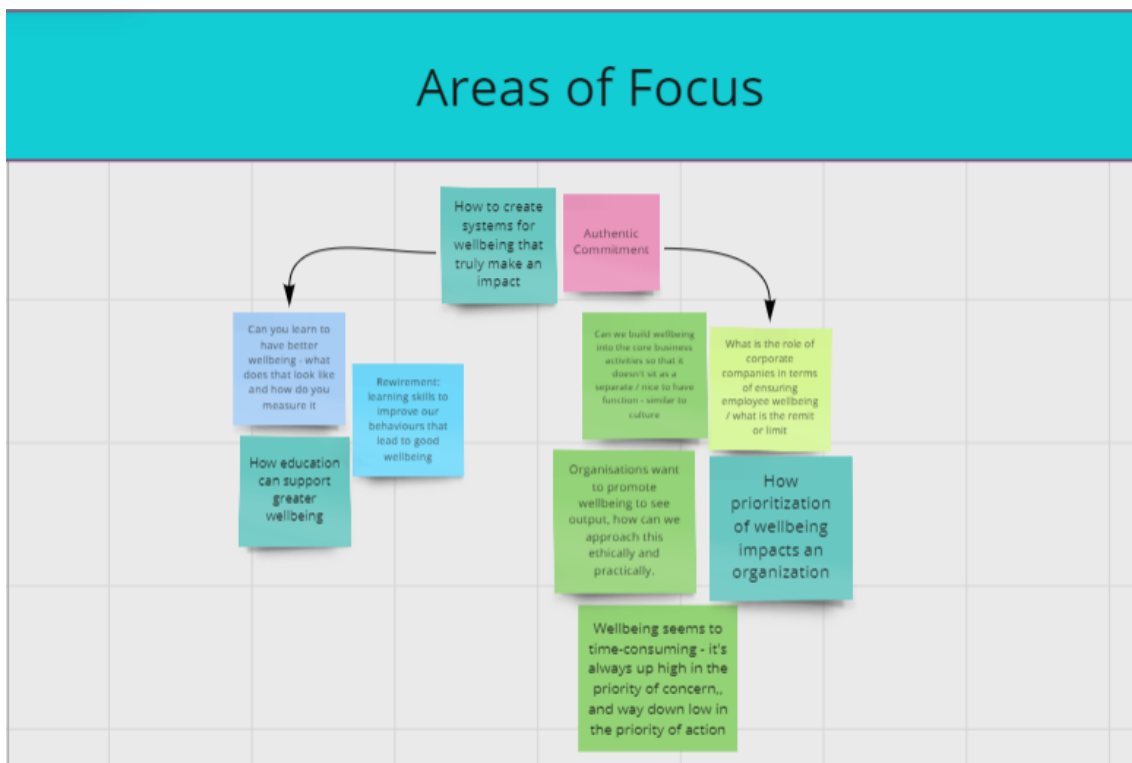


Figure 2: Screenshot of Online Whiteboard from Research Question Workshop

At the end of the Research Question Workshop, it was decided that the research would explore three avenues related to workplace wellbeing.

How can we seek to:

- Improve personal wellbeing through learning and how can the organisation best support the individual in this regard?
- Identify the role of the individual and the organisation in relation to both personal wellbeing as well as a culture of wellbeing and sense of belonging within an organisation?
- Ensure that wellbeing approaches and initiatives are authentic and have real impact on learning effectiveness and related performance improvement for both the individual and the organisation?

Subsequent discussion explored the above topics in the context of what could be called 'The Thriving Organisation', where workplace wellbeing consisted not just of a punctual programme of activities, but was embedded in the very culture of the organisation.

Thriving organisations are those where the individuals of its workforce are able to balance their wellbeing and achieve their personal goals to flourish in life – Employees who are thriving experience personal growth by feeling energised and alive (vitality) and by having a sense of continually acquiring and applying knowledge (learning).

To achieve this, organisations need to develop a holistic wellbeing strategy that considers the three most important elements that lead to increased wellbeing: leadership, the environment and resilience.

Phase 1 Research Report

The report took as its starting point the need to foster a Thriving Organisation and the report used the following definition of thriving: "The joint experience of vitality and learning at work. Vitality relates to the sense that one is energised and feels alive at work; when thriving, people are passionate about what they do" (Kleine et al., 2019).

The report highlighted the research showing that thriving contributes to positive health but also development as a productive employee. Thriving fosters a sense of progress or forward movement in one's self-development.

A key element in building a Thriving Organisation is the role of the leader. Leadership has a unique role in shaping the climate within an organisation – whether that be one of fear and control or support and collaboration.

The report highlighted five key actions from the research that leaders can undertake in an effort to build a Thriving Organisation:

1. Providing decision-making discretion
2. Sharing information
3. Minimising incivility
4. Offering performance feedback
5. Helping staff find their 'niche' in the workplace

While senior management plays an important role in setting the tone for workplace wellbeing and outlining the strategic approach, it is the Team/Line Manager who needs to play a crucial role in embedding the values of wellbeing throughout the organisation. However, traditionally managers are trained for the tasks of organising, scheduling and budgeting but very often lack the 'people management' skills specifically required to foster a culture of wellbeing within their team.

The report highlighted three of these skills that Team Managers require:

1. The capacity to conduct one-to-one conversations with team members on difficult issues.
2. The ability to mediate strained working relations among their team members.
3. The willingness to set a tone for employees that enhances the level of civility in their encounters.

In addition to exploring what organisations need to do to improve workplace wellbeing, the report also looked at how workplace wellbeing can be measured. This covered the following three measurement instruments:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy Workplace Model

This model from the WHO offers a framework for measuring workplace wellbeing that encompasses the physical work environment, the psychosocial work environment, the employee's personal health, and the organisation's community involvement.

The International Standards Organisation (ISO) 45003:2021

The ISO45003 document provides practical guidelines for organisations to develop a wellbeing at work strategy by considering the following strategy components:

- Understanding the context of the organisation
- Participation of leadership and workers
- Planning
- Building support
- Managing Operations
- Evaluating performance
- Driving continuous improvement

Gallup

Gallup has developed the Gallup Net Thriving measurement tool derived from a two-part questionnaire and that has been tracked in the Gallup World Poll since 2005. It is proposed to be a common metric and common language to benchmark and share best practices across organisations.

Among the key conclusions of the report was, that while organisations devoted time and resources to developing a wellbeing strategy, there was a real need to focus to implement that wellbeing strategy across an organisation.

The report highlighted that learning can play a central role in supporting the implementation of a wellbeing programme by equipping both senior management and line manager with the skills and resources they need to foster and embed a culture of wellbeing.

If there is one takeaway from the report, it is that “even a good seed can’t grow in bad soil”.

State of the Market/State of the Art

In examining the State of the Market (SotM)/State of the Art (SotA), the research demonstrated a significant shift from a narrow focus on fitness and health (wellness) to a more holistic view of wellbeing. Thus, in the corporate workplace, the focus for workplace wellbeing seems to be moving from making employees healthier to helping employees perform better. This can be seen in the move away from punctual workplace wellbeing initiatives to solutions that aim to provide an organisation-wide approach over time.

The solutions in the SotM/SotA report fall into the following three categories:

1. Technologies that provide individual wellbeing solutions
2. Solutions that provide employee wellbeing, experience and/or engagement platforms with measurements and data
3. Potential future solutions and approaches

A summary of the key solutions included in the SotM/SotA report can be found in the separate SotM/SotA Wellbeing Summary Report.

Jobs-To-Be-Done (JTBD) Workshop


Having gained a deep understanding of the corporate wellbeing landscape, Learnovate conducted a Jobs-To-Be-Done (JTBD) workshop with the Research Working Group participants.

Developed by Tony Ulwick, a leader in design thinking, JTBD provides a structured process in which to explore the root of the problem a potential customer is looking to solve.

As part of the Wellbeing Project, the JTBD Workshop explored the motivations and challenges of a senior manager looking to improve the impact of corporate wellbeing within their organisation.

Jamie

Our Customer Persona



Age: 45

Job: Leader in a medium to large organisation, possibly tech, with people management responsibility

Tech: Lots of technology in her day-to-day job
Large systems e.g., HR systems/LMS
Office suite, Slack, content specific technology

Personality: Driven, solutions-focused & ambitious, she is very results-driven
She expects a lot from her team but is empathetic & is a good leader, feeling responsibility for her reports
She may be a little overwhelmed with her responsibilities but is open to the opportunities that tech can provide

Figure 3: JTBD Workshop Screenshot: Customer Persona

A key purpose of the JTBD Workshop was to identify the most important issues to be considered in the course of the follow-up Solution Workshop.



Figure 4: JTBD Workshop Online Whiteboard ScreenShot 2 - Important Concepts

The outputs from the JTBD Workshop were shared with the participants and used as a basis to frame the discussion during the Solution Workshop.

Solution Workshop

The purpose of the Solution Workshop was to engage with a community of practitioners and service providers in the area of workplace wellbeing.

Building on the insights from the Research Report and with an understanding of the existing solutions on the market, the aim was to explore ideas and potential solutions that would meaningfully improve wellbeing for both employers and employees.

A key aspect of the solution was the attempt to address a major challenge for organisations trying to successfully implement workplace wellbeing – that is, that while designing a wellbeing strategy was not without its challenges, the real difficulties arose when the organisation tried to implement the strategy. To put it simply, organisations were able to work out (more or less) what they needed to do, but found it extremely difficult to figure out how to do it.

Any worthwhile solution needed to help organisations close that gap between the strategic plan and the implementation blueprint.

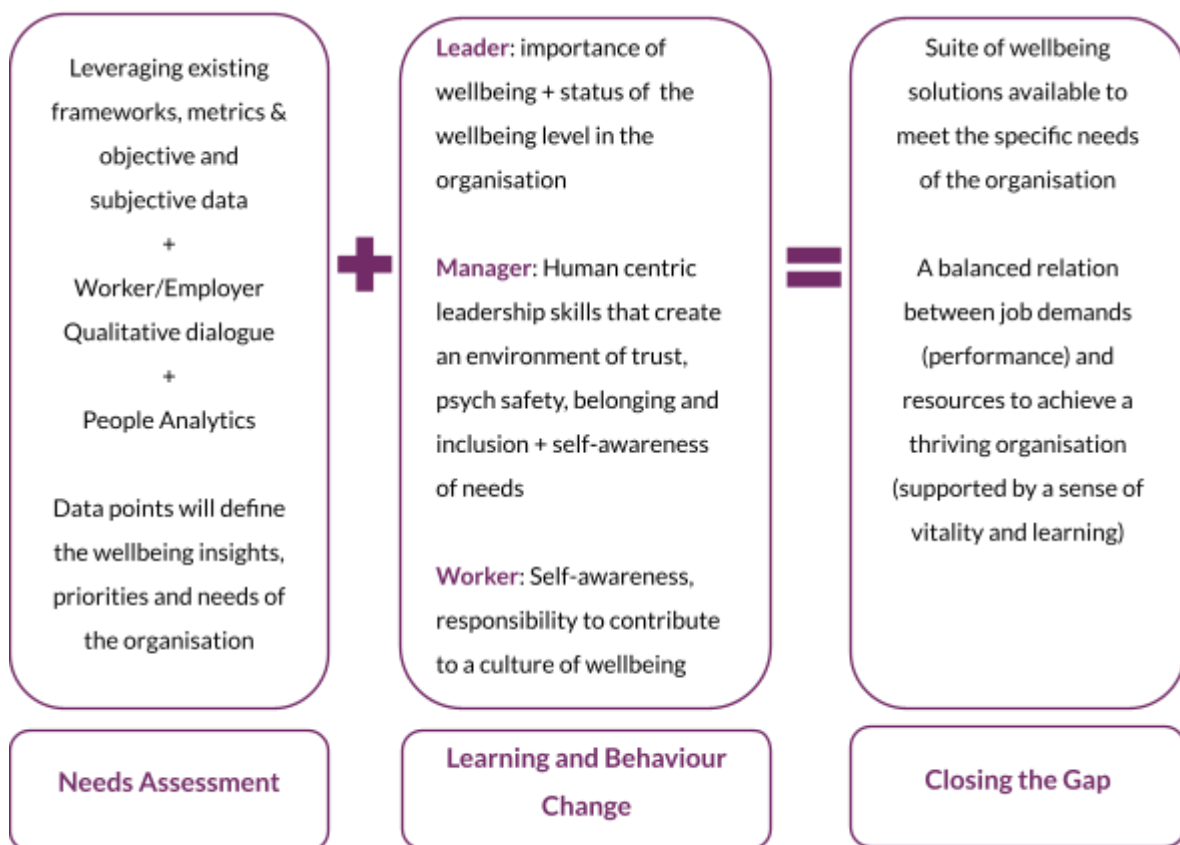


Figure 5 : Blueprint for closing the gap between wellbeing strategy and implementation

One important difficulty was that too many solutions for workplace wellbeing adopted a ‘one size fits all’ approach which failed to take account of the specific nature of each organisation – such as: What is the current state of workplace wellbeing in the

organisation? What are the specific challenges the organisation is facing? What are appropriate measures of workplace wellbeing for the organisation? Therefore, any proposed solution needed to, at a minimum, do the following:

- Clearly assess the current state of wellbeing within the organisation
- Identify key areas that needed attention
- Provide resources that address these areas in a way that is tailored to the organisation
- Measure key metrics of workplace wellbeing in the organisation over time

The outcome of the Solution Workshop offered four potential next steps:

1. Mapping ways of bridging the gap between theory and practice
2. Bringing researchers, service providers and Learnovate members together to build a prototype implementation model
3. Identify and collaborate with a Learnovate partner willing to run a pilot with the prototype implementation model
4. Report on findings and build a scalable implementation model for employee, manager, and leadership learning that supports a culture of wellbeing

Future Directions

To move the project forward to the next phase (prototype development) would require two participants: a subject matter expert (in the area of corporate wellbeing) and a corporate partner (willing to assist in the development of the prototype and participate in the pilot).