

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a tan turtleneck sweater, is sitting at a wooden desk. He has his eyes closed and his hands raised in a meditative gesture. In front of him is a laptop, a smartphone, and some papers. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space.

# Wellbeing

Thriving in all aspects of  
working life

# About EY Lane4

The combination of EY and Lane4 focusses on harnessing the power of people.

Powered by technology, EY puts humans at the centre of business transformation. Lane4 takes people beyond performance, giving them the skills and mindset to achieve things they never thought were possible.

We've come together to deliver on our purpose - to build a better working world.

We believe that organisations need to put people at the heart of their decision-making. Not only will this create long-term value for stakeholders inside and outside the business, but it will help ensure success across large-scale business transformations. At EY Lane4, we bring together some of the biggest and influential leaders around the world, drawing on their insight to shape how we support our clients with their people and transformation challenges.

Understanding the psychology of learning and knowledge retention is at the heart of our approach. Our people also bring a wealth of experience from performing at the highest level such as in Olympic sport, the military, the arts and business. This unique combination allows us to walk alongside leaders, acting as trusted advisors to challenge and support them throughout their transformation journeys.

However, at EY Lane4 it isn't just about senior leaders. We believe that everyone deserves access to world-class learning and development. Our global reach, digital learning solutions and innovative service delivery allows for consistent development across multiple levels of the organisation.

This means people can develop behaviours that will not only help them to perform at work, but in all parts of their life. It gives people the confidence and belief to try new things and truly thrive.

All this combined allows us to build a better working world.

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# The wellbeing challenge: Shutting the door on business potential

Businesses can't perform at their best unless their people can operate from a state of wellbeing. Developing wellbeing and resilience in people's mind, body and environment enables them to realise their potential and thrive in all aspects of working life.

Wellbeing means different things to different people. Happiness, healthy eating, exercise or living without mental health issues often spring to mind.

**At EY Lane4, we believe wellbeing means thriving. When people thrive, they operate as the best version of themselves; maximising their own potential as well as that of their business.**

Unfortunately, the reality is that many people aren't able to be their best selves at work. Stress, mental health, physical health and productivity issues have become increasingly common problems. In 2019, EY Lane4's Resilience Tracker found that over a third of employees in the UK reported being more stressed than two years before.<sup>1</sup> Another study found that 12.8 million working days were lost because of work-related stress, depression or anxiety.<sup>2</sup> Physical health is being affected too. For example, more than one in three cases of employee ill health consist of a work-related musculoskeletal disorder.<sup>3</sup>

People aren't being as productive as they could be, either. For example, on average people spend two and a half weeks a year at work when ill.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, research indicates that employees with poor wellbeing also report working to only 64% of their full potential.<sup>5</sup> When employees are stressed, unwell, away from work or unproductive, they can't be their best or give their best.

These figures have only been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. It's no surprise that social distancing, home working and risks to health and livelihoods have had a huge impact on wellbeing. Multiple global studies have shown significant increases in stress, depression, anxiety and insomnia during the crisis.<sup>6,7,8,9</sup> This will have alarming consequences for organisational performance if left unaddressed.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic struck there were already more demands being placed on people's wellbeing. Escalating uncertainty and insecurity about the future means that the challenges which compromise people's wellbeing will keep on coming. Unnerving trends in technology and politics are evidence of this, to name only two. Smartphones are just one example of how technology can leave people feeling stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted.

**In 2019, 12.8 million working days were lost because of work-related stress, depression or anxiety.**

Despite the multiple benefits of instant communication, the immediate gratification people feel when receiving and opening a message can also encourage addictive behaviour such as compulsively checking messages.<sup>10</sup> Research indicates that people who use their smartphones in this way also report lower subjective and psychological wellbeing.<sup>11</sup> Persistent political uncertainty will cause stress and anxiety too. For example, in the UK, the vote on Brexit was followed by a decrease in people's subjective wellbeing regardless of whether they voted to leave or remain.<sup>12</sup> Reasons for this included feelings of anxiety as the country goes through an uncertain transition period and distress about unmet expectations during Brexit negotiations. New and different challenges that threaten wellbeing will keep coming in the future. People need support so that they can thrive no matter what these challenges may be.

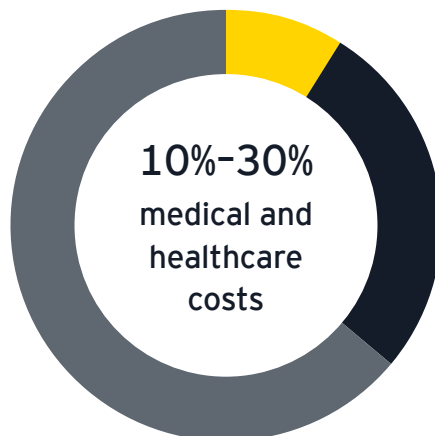


Along with the negative impact on the individual, not paying attention to employee wellbeing comes with a financial impact.

First and foremost, businesses have a duty of care to their employees, but they also risk their future success if their people are unable to operate from a place of wellbeing.

A recent research review calculated the financial cost of work-related stress across 19 different countries from Europe, North America and Oceania. They found that costs ranged from \$221 million to \$187 billion per country. Of those costs, 70%-90% were due to loss in productivity, with the remaining 10%-30% made up by medical and healthcare costs.<sup>13</sup>

Businesses are also losing their best talent. For example, one in ten employees quit their job because of workplace stress,<sup>14</sup> and last year, £3 billion was spent by businesses on replacing employees who left work because of mental health issues in the UK.<sup>15</sup> Businesses who do not respond to the wellbeing needs of their employees put themselves at a competitive disadvantage.



Problems with employee wellbeing are unlikely to be solved any time soon as employees lack support at work. One in three UK employees report that their workplaces don't offer any health or wellbeing support or services.<sup>16</sup> Employees are also lacking support from their managers.

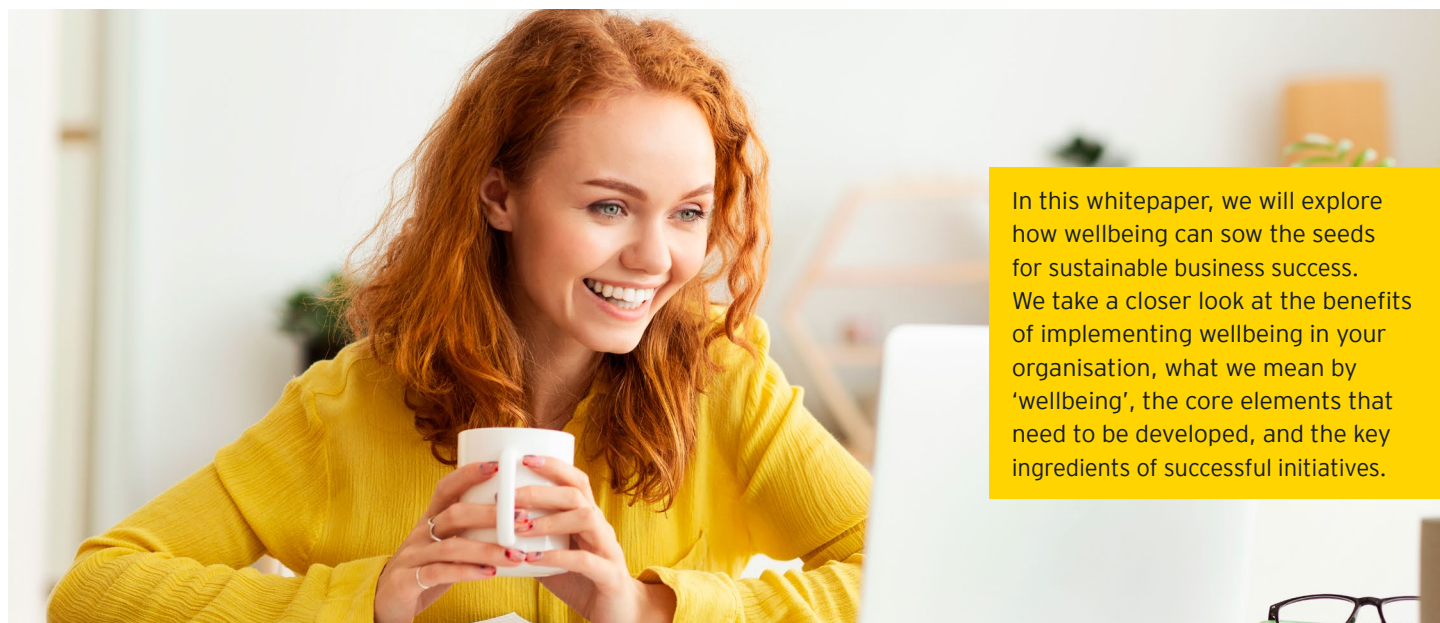
**Cost of work-related stress ranges from \$221 million to \$187 billion per country**



EY Lane4's Resilience Tracker found that one in three don't believe their managers give them enough support.<sup>17</sup> And, one in five believe their stress levels have soared because they do not have adequate information and support in their jobs.

Unfortunately, many employees are now coping with this stress with the added challenge of working in isolation.

Good intentions to improve employee wellbeing will only get businesses so far. To get stakeholder buy-in and investment, you need a compelling business case, knowing what genuinely supports employee wellbeing or knowing how to ensure wellbeing initiatives are successful over time.



In this whitepaper, we will explore how wellbeing can sow the seeds for sustainable business success. We take a closer look at the benefits of implementing wellbeing in your organisation, what we mean by 'wellbeing', the core elements that need to be developed, and the key ingredients of successful initiatives.

# Wellbeing: A sound investment

The evidence for investing in wellbeing is conclusive. Improving wellbeing can generate multiple financial, health, performance and cultural benefits.

A multitude of rewards are waiting for businesses who invest in their people's wellbeing.

## Employees who operate from a state of wellbeing improve organisational performance.

Organisations that support their people's wellbeing outperform those that don't. In a research study, the American Psychological Society compared organisations that promoted employee health and wellbeing with the national average. They found that organisations that promoted health and wellbeing had 19% less turnover, their people had 21% higher job satisfaction and were 24% more likely to say they are motivated to do their best.<sup>18</sup> Low turnover, job satisfaction and greater motivation all positively impact employee and organisational performance.<sup>19,20,21</sup> Furthermore, a recent report found that in 82% of health and wellness programmes, sickness significantly declined.<sup>22</sup> As a result, employees were both more productive and absent less. Simply having a positive frame of mind has a positive impact on performance too. For example, research indicates that being in a positive mood can increase productivity by 12%.<sup>23</sup> And, people who are optimistic and believe in their ability are more likely to be highly rated by their manager.<sup>24</sup>



**A research study that investigated the health care costs of medical device company Johnson & Johnson's worksite wellbeing programme found that they saved on average \$565 a year per employee over a six-year period.<sup>28</sup>**

## Investing in employee wellbeing brings financial returns.

Wellbeing should be a strategic priority, yet almost half of senior leaders don't have wellbeing on their agenda at all.<sup>25</sup> This is to their detriment: research shows that employee wellbeing directly impacts organisational profitability.<sup>26</sup> A comprehensive research review that investigated the financial returns of wellbeing and mental health programmes

at work found that on average, there is a four to one return on investment, and in some cases returns as high as nine to one.<sup>27</sup>

In the UK, it is estimated that investing in wellbeing could save businesses up to £1.7 billion from lower absenteeism and £36 billion from the cost of reduced productivity.<sup>16</sup> Investing in wellbeing makes financial sense.

## Wellbeing enhances performance by improving the way people interact.

Business success is dependent upon the multiple, interconnected interactions between people. Wellbeing initiatives that focus on confidence, forgiveness and pursuing personal development have been found to help people interact with others in healthier and more productive ways.<sup>29</sup> The additional benefit of this is that the relationships we build at work also play a significant role in maintaining or bringing people back to their state of wellbeing.<sup>30</sup>

## Employee wellbeing helps to create a positive working culture.

Research indicates that people who operate from a state of wellbeing are often the people who do things that positively promote health and happiness in their workplace.<sup>31</sup> For example, they are often the ones making drinks for others, turning off the lights on their way home or checking in with their colleagues to make sure they're OK. These may seem like small gestures, but they can be powerfully infectious and encourage others to behave in similar ways, further promoting a positive working culture.





# Wellbeing: What does it mean?

Operating from a state of wellbeing puts people in a position to maximise their potential.

Take a moment and imagine what it is like when you are the best version of yourself at work. What do you notice? What are you thinking? What are you feeling? What are you doing? Whatever you imagine, in that moment, you'll know what it is like for you to be in a state of wellbeing. It's an optimal place to be because from here we can live a fuller, satisfying and more productive life.

At EY Lane4, wellbeing means thriving. Thriving amounts to much more than just living without stress or mental health challenges. When people thrive, they operate as the best version of themselves. This enables individuals, teams and organisations to maximise their potential at work.

**According to academics, thriving occurs in two arenas.**



In one arena, people can thrive in the pursuit of personal growth and fulfilment.<sup>32, 33, 34</sup> For example, developing a new skill or engaging in an activity that is personally meaningful. People who thrive in this arena pour everything into their personal development or activities that matter to them.



In the second arena, people can thrive in the presence of adversity; when the pressure is on or when times are tough. For example, delivering an important pitch you've been preparing for many months or working to a tight deadline with depleted resources. People able to thrive in this arena perform when the heat is on and emerge from the flames a stronger and more knowledgeable person.<sup>35</sup>

**Our approach to wellbeing and resilience brings these two arenas together.**

Our aim is to help people maximise their potential by enabling them to thrive in all aspects of their personal and working lives.

# Mind, body and environment: Supporting people to thrive in all aspects of their working life

People can learn strategies for their mind, body and environment which help them to maintain a state of wellbeing and brings them back to this state when they are unable to deal with the challenges and interferences of working life.

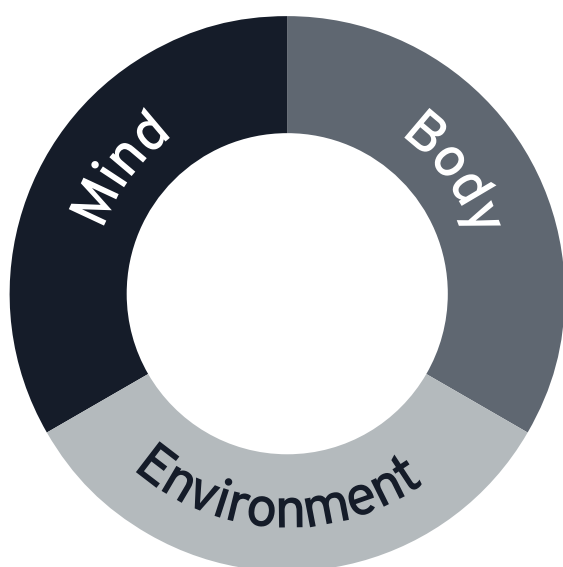
At EY Lane4, we believe in a holistic and integrated approach to wellbeing that focuses on building resilience in people's mind, body and environment; giving them the tools to make the best use of their mental, physical and social functioning.



## Mind

Attaining a state of wellbeing in people's mind involves extending their psychological flexibility.<sup>36</sup> In other words, their ability to hold thoughts and feelings lightly and act in ways that truly matter to them. Psychological flexibility can be developed by improving people's ability to: accept their emotions, stay present and live their values.

- ▶ **Accepting my emotions:** When we allow emotions to flow through us without struggle, no matter how unpleasant they may feel, we are more able to invest time and energy into doing meaningful life-enhancing activities. Research indicates that people who accept their emotions are more likely to be open to accepting setbacks at work and are better at dealing with stress and interacting with people.<sup>38,39</sup>
- ▶ **Staying present:** When people are aware of what is happening in the present moment, without judgment, they report being happier than when their mind wanders to unpleasant or even neutral thoughts.<sup>40</sup> Staying present can also boost memory and cognitive performance by improving people's ability to attend to tasks without distraction.<sup>41</sup>
- ▶ **Living my values:** Values are personal, chosen qualities and principles that guide people towards purposeful action. People who act out their values create a greater sense of meaning, connection and self.<sup>42,43</sup> Studies also show that pursuing personal values predicts resilience and positive improvements in wellbeing over time.<sup>44,45</sup>





## Body

Developing wellbeing through people's body requires them to take the time to be physically active, refuel with the appropriate quality of food and drink, and restore energy both physically and mentally.

- ▶ **Getting active:** Being active is beneficial for both physical and psychological health.<sup>46</sup> For example, physical activity decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease by strengthening the heart muscle and reducing blood pressure.<sup>47</sup> It can also help people to effectively respond to stress by turning down the production of stress hormones and neurochemicals that can damage health.<sup>48</sup>
- ▶ **Fuelling up:** People who have healthy diets are less likely to suffer from mental health issues and develop illnesses such as cancer, cardiovascular or neurodegenerative diseases.<sup>50</sup> Some studies have even shown that increased fruit and vegetable consumption can increase happiness and satisfaction with life<sup>51</sup>, even as soon as the following day.<sup>52, 53, 54</sup>
- ▶ **Restoring energy:** Good, quality rest and sleep helps provide people with the energy and vigour needed to embrace the challenges of daily life.<sup>55, 56</sup> Without it or with too little, people risk damaging their physical and psychological wellbeing.<sup>57, 58</sup> For example, when people are deprived of sleep, they are more likely to react quickly to negative events.<sup>59</sup>

## Environment

Building resilience in people's working environment enables them to operate from a state of wellbeing. This involves people being clear on what is expected of them, finding relationships that support them to be their best selves and engaging in tasks that are aligned with their personal purpose.

- ▶ **Gaining clarity:** Research shows that people who are clear on what they are doing and what is expected of them at work are healthier, more engaged and more satisfied with their job.<sup>60</sup>
- ▶ **Connecting for support:** Connection is part of what makes us human. Supportive relationships prop us up when times are tough and encourage us to take chances to grow and develop as a person.<sup>61</sup> In fact, connection is so important that meaningful relationships have been found to be a stronger predictor of mortality than smoking or physical activity.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, researchers have suggested that disconnection is the most harmful thing you could do to a human.<sup>63</sup>
- ▶ **Following my purpose:** The challenge of 'following my purpose' requires people to find their path in life and get to the very essence of who they are. This supports wellbeing by cultivating and maintaining meaning in people's lives. Meaning is thought to be an inherent human need.<sup>64</sup> People who find meaning in what they do are generally happier, value themselves more and are able to maximise their potential.<sup>65, 66, 67</sup> Meaning also has a magnetic effect on others, with research indicating that people prefer interacting with those who have meaning in their life.<sup>68</sup>

IP communications company Bandwidth promote physical activity in their organisation by offering people a 90-minute lunchbreak when they exercise.<sup>49</sup> Leaders don't just talk the talk. Unless there is an emergency, CEO David Morken won't be in meetings between 11:30-13:00. Bandwidth also make physical activity accessible for employees by putting on shuttle buses to and from the gym every day and provide onsite exercise classes, a personal trainer and a nutritionist at no extra cost to employees.



# The key ingredients of successful initiatives

The most successful wellbeing initiatives are aligned with the mission of their organisation, understand people's needs and measure impact.

The potential rewards from wellbeing initiatives aren't guaranteed through investment alone. Around one in four organisations do not see any benefits from their wellbeing initiative.<sup>69</sup> Often businesses rush ahead and start implementing the changes they want to see.<sup>70</sup> But, to help initiatives make the biggest impact, it is critical to lay the foundations that will help them succeed in the long-term.<sup>71</sup>

To make wellbeing initiatives more successful, businesses must ensure they are aligned with the mission of their organisation, understand people's needs, and measure impact.

**60% of formal wellbeing strategies don't support their wider organisational strategy.**



## Three ingredients to think about

- 1. Align with the mission**

To get initial lift off, it is vital that senior leaders see the value of any wellbeing initiative. They are more likely to be supportive when they understand why the wellbeing initiative is important and how it will contribute to the organisation's vision and mission.<sup>71</sup> Despite this, 60% of formal wellbeing strategies don't support their wider organisational strategy.<sup>69</sup> Wellbeing initiatives are less effective when they operate as a separate entity<sup>71</sup> and the greatest returns on investment are made when people are aware of how wellbeing mutually benefits them and their organisation.<sup>27</sup>

When a wellbeing initiative supports an organisation's mission, it is used as a route to achieve improved performance and a competitive advantage.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately businesses can't be as successful as possible without wellbeing.

### Ask your leaders:

- ▶ Why is improving people's wellbeing important for our organisation?
- ▶ How will improved wellbeing contribute to our vision and mission?





## 2. Understand people's needs

Organisations reap the most benefits when time is taken to understand what their people need and want from a wellbeing initiative.<sup>71</sup> People are more likely to be engaged if they know their personal needs have been heard and then subsequently see their ideas implemented in the initiative. They are also more likely to be engaged when initiatives appeal to their basic human needs.<sup>70</sup> According to psychologists these may include **competence**: a need to be good at what we do, **autonomy**: a need to feel free to make our own choices and follow our own goals, and **relatedness**: a need to connect with others.<sup>32</sup> People will be more motivated when these needs are met because they will be able to engage in activities that are fundamentally rewarding for them.

### Ask your leaders:

- ▶ How would you like to benefit from our wellbeing initiative?
- ▶ How will our initiative help people feel a sense of achievement?
- ▶ How will our initiative support people to pursue their own goals?
- ▶ How will our initiative help people to develop closer relationships?

## 3. Measure the impact

Measuring the impact of wellbeing initiatives is critical for making sure they improve over time. Only one in five organisations currently assess how effective their wellbeing initiatives are.<sup>68</sup> It is important to work with key stakeholders before anything is implemented to decide what a positive impact would mean. For example, if the aim of an initiative is to help people make healthier choices, what specifically would qualify as a healthy choice? How would this be quantified? How would it be tracked? Tracking progress on these measures over time is really important because organisations that continually measure impact and make adjustments off the back of it are much more likely to report positive outcomes.<sup>68</sup>

### Ask your leaders:

- ▶ How will we know our initiative is making a positive impact?
- ▶ What are our indicators of success?
- ▶ How would we measure those indicators?



# Case study

## Lincoln Industries: The best wellbeing initiatives flow from the heart of their organisation.

Lincoln Industries is the largest metal finishing company in North America. Its health and wellbeing programme aims to improve people's wellness so they are high-performing 'at home, in their community and at work'.<sup>73</sup>

Wellbeing integrates with pretty much everything it does as a business. First of all, it recognises that the health and wellbeing of its people enables them to better fulfil their mission. It firmly believes that a happier and healthier workforce 'creates a better end product.' For Lincoln Industries: "supporting our people's health and wellness interests is a sound investment in our company, as the most important asset of the company is the people."<sup>73</sup>

Lincoln Industries has created programmes that encourage and provide opportunities for its people to make choices that support their wellbeing. Some of the support it offers includes an emotional wellness employee assistance programme, onsite health and fitness facilities and onsite clinics that focus on preventative care and lifestyle choices. It also offers employees paid volunteer time to give back to their local community. This has resulted in Lincoln Industries employees working on projects that have transformed the local area. In 2018, its people gave over 2,000 hours of their time to support organisations that provide services such as education, employment training and food banks for the local community.<sup>73</sup>



When it comes to health and wellness, Lincoln Industries has set the benchmark for companies in the US. CEO and Chairman Marc LeBaron has reported that its major medical costs are approximately 30 percent less than other companies in the same industry<sup>74</sup> and an independent awarding body calculated a five to one return on its investment.<sup>75</sup> The company's work hasn't gone unnoticed, winning multiple national awards for its work on health and wellbeing. It has also been named one of the 25 Best Medium Companies to Work for in America for several years in a row.

## Conclusion

Employee wellbeing needs more attention now than ever before, especially given the impact the global pandemic has had on intensifying this already pressing issue.

As we've discussed in this paper, learning effective strategies to improve wellbeing will have huge benefits for business performance. Unfortunately, the reality is, many people aren't able to be their best or give their best at work. Issues with stress, mental health, physical health and productivity have become the new norm. But it doesn't have to be this way. People can learn strategies for their mind, body and environment that help them to thrive in all aspects of working life.

Organisations who help their people develop these strategies and lay the foundations for their initiatives to be successful over time will open the door to multiple financial, performance and cultural benefits. Maximising their people's potential and that of their business must be a key priority in the immediate future.

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