

Workplace wellbeing continues to elude corporate Australia – leadership disparity the concern

By David Buttifant Director & co-founder Keen Edge

The concept of workplace wellbeing is not new and although many Australian corporates see the potential for positive business / commercial outcomes – they're not really improving the daily lives of employees.

Wellbeing programs have grown exponentially in recent years with more and more organisations investing in health paradigms to increase productivity, engagement, and talent retention to get a return on their investment.

But wellbeing is not merely the absence of illness or disease. It maintains a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social health.

Leaders are the biggest influence on the behaviour and mindset of their teams. But most organisations have little visibility into whether their leaders are developing their people, or merely reacting to the needs of the day – and therein is the problem.

The relationship between effective leadership and wellbeing is closely linked. When we see disparity between leadership and wellbeing, stress flourishes.

Hence the need to focus on your staff's stress levels.

So, why is it that mental health conditions cost Australian workplaces around \$10.9 billion each year?

\$4.7 billion in absenteeism.

\$6.1 billion in presenteeism (being at work longer than necessary because of perceived job insecurity).

\$146 million in compensation claims.

One in five Australian employees experience mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

At a human level, we don't want to see the people around us suffer. At a business level, mental health issues impact our day-to-day operations and performance.

Challenges and setbacks in the workplace (and life) are inevitable. Stress, conflict, talent attrition, policies, performance and technological change are constant.

As individuals, we have basic human needs to deal with these challenges. We crave social support, physical safety, health, and a feeling that we can cope with whatever is thrown at us.

More than ever, employees are asking for help from their employers to meet these needs.

11 questions business leaders need to ask themselves

1. Are you cultivating a high-performance culture?
2. Are you encouraging learning through reflection?
3. Are you exploring better ways of doing things?
4. Are you making team members accountable?

5. Are activities consultative and interactive, or didactic and one-sided?
6. Are you challenging people's way of thinking?
7. Are you driving your team's performance with positive conversations?
8. Are you creating a learning journey and empowering team members?
9. Are you fostering collaboration and innovation?
10. Are you empathic, compassionate and kind?
11. Are you 'walking the talk'?

Understanding the causes of stress in the workplace will highlight interventions to mitigate stress and enhance wellbeing to positively drive performance.

6 reasons we stress at work

1. Demands - workload, work patterns and work environment
2. Support - inadequate support colleagues
3. Relationships - conflict, bullying, and harassment
4. Role - lack of clarity and conflicting roles
5. Control - having too little say about their work
6. Change – poorly managed organisational change

Keep in mind these common stressors. Continually act to address them and build the resilience of your staff.

Because resilience helps cultivate a healthy, productive environment. It helps retain workers with the right values and behaviours. It protects their mental and physical health. And it helps them deliver quality work consistently.

The benefits of fostering resilience

Of all the things we experience in our lives, nothing defines our character more than the way we respond to setbacks and adversity.

Resilience helps with:

- Higher performance and quality of life - Leadership at every level
- Positive workplace culture
- Employee engagement
- Worker retention
- Enhanced job satisfaction
- Greater self-awareness and understanding of others
- Better decision-making

Building and maintaining our leadership and wellness tools helps your team to be highly engaged and productive. It will lead to successful outcomes and a positive culture.

To maximise your potential and that of your team, you need to be immersed in an environment that cultivates the habits of high performance.

It's bigger than what happens at work.

A holistic leadership model fosters diversity, inclusion, workplace quality, business ethics, community and environmental sustainability.

So, ask yourself: How well are you looking after your staff? And who is looking after you?

Issued by Keen Edge www.keenedge.com.au

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