

Nice Work, If You Can Get It  
The Wellbeing @ Work Project

A Position Paper

2015

## Nice Work

The man who only lives for making money  
Lives a life that isn't necessarily sunny;  
Likewise the man who works for fame --  
There's no guarantee that time won't erase his name  
The fact is  
The only work that really brings enjoyment  
Is the kind that is for girl and boy meant.  
Fall in love -- you won't regret it.  
That's the best work of all -- if you can get it.  
Holding hands at midnight  
'Neath a starry sky...

George Gershwin

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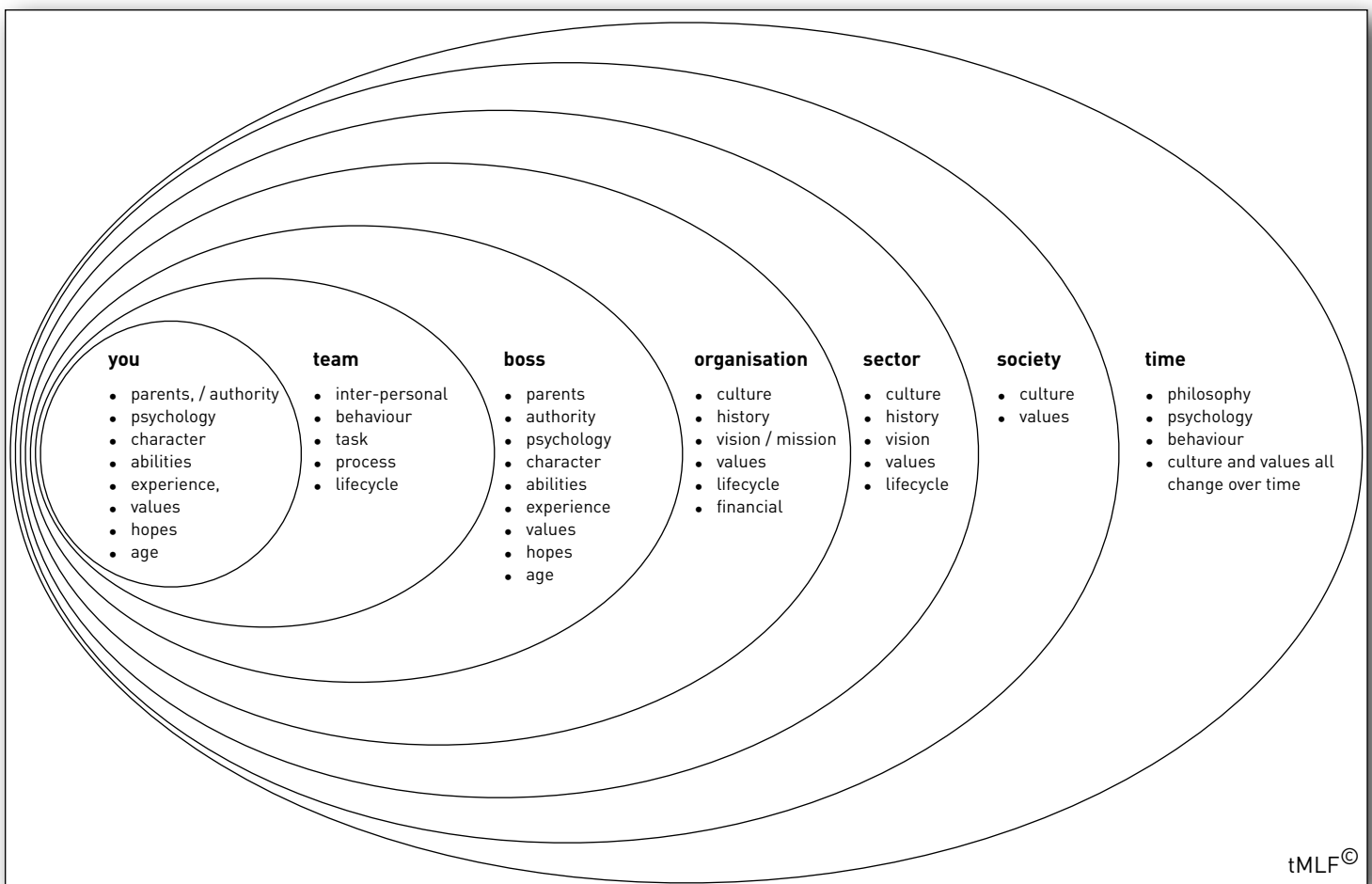
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This project aims to make a modest but important contribution to the current debates about wellbeing at work and will combine research and evaluation to work towards some practical advice and strategies for organisations and employees in developing the wellbeing of all.
- 1.2 This paper briefly explores the current richness and complexity of thinking and approach and proposes a research and practice project involving a number of organisations in identifying both issues and possible answers to the following:
- what contributes to wellbeing at work (W@W) and can we describe what it looks like?
  - what contributes to poor wellbeing?
  - where do organisations stand on the spectrum between individual and organisational responsibility for wellbeing at work?
  - what strategies, interventions and approaches are most successfully currently utilised and which can be developed, to maximise wellbeing in the workplace?
  - what measures have been and could be effectively applied to wellbeing at work?
  - what does the balance between efficiency/profitability and compassionate/mindful employment look like?
- 1.3 The Nice Work project will comprise:
- creation of a steering group, agreement of scope, roles and funding
  - desk research on the background and current practices of member organisations of the group
  - collation of current provision of W@W especially Mental Health
  - self-evaluation by organisations and identification of key issues to be researched
  - questionnaire and interviews with individuals
  - collation and discussion of anonymised comparative research
  - identification of key issues
  - prioritisation of further research
  - desk research of other practical interventions / strategies / solutions to meet the key issues
  - framing of interventions
  - test interventions
  - review of findings
  - (agreement of further research
  - further research)
  - draft report, recommendations, model, interventions
  - agree report
  - seminar/launch

## 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Wellbeing is the zeitgeist. As a nation we have joined others in measuring our happiness and wellbeing <sup>(1)</sup>. A putative organisation What Works Wellbeing is beginning to look for empirical evidence about what contributes to Wellbeing <sup>(2)</sup>. Many organisations are considering what wellbeing means for their employees, clients and what role and responsibilities they have in developing it. Fifteen years ago psychology made a major move towards addressing 'positive' emotions to counter a hundred years of understanding of 'negative emotions' in the shape of Seligman's Subjective Wellbeing <sup>(3)</sup> Increasing demands on employees in order to maximise efficiency, and profitability, has had impacts on workloads, span of control, capacity, stress and absenteeism in the workplace <sup>(4)</sup>. (See Bibliography)
- 2.2 The whole field of wellbeing at work is much richer than has really been explored until now and combines many aspects and disciplines: economics, psychology (personal and organisational), neuroscience, politics, psychodynamics, job design, intra-personal relations, job design, organisational design, culture, health, terms and conditions, history and many others.
- 2.3 The individual's wellbeing at work can be influenced by any or all of the following (tMLF model):



#### 2.4 Some definitions:

The various definitions of Wellbeing show the complexity and richness of the concept and a lack of agreement about its scope.

*As NEF points out 'Achieving well-being has been the concern of philosophers since Aristotle, and is, in many respects the essence of human existence. In recent years, well-being has moved from the realm of philosophy to that of science. There has been a growing body of research into what contributes to the quality of people's experiences of their lives. This has enabled a new understanding of the factors that both influence and constitute well-being'*

*Wellbeing is the 'wholehearted and successful pursuit of intrinsically worthwhile relationships and activities. The source is finding meaning in your life'*

Raz, J. The Role of WellBeing. Philosophical perspectives. 18 Ethics 2004

*'the dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources or 'mental capital''*

NEF 2014

*Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community*

WHO 2014

*'Indeed, there is still a lack of consensus over fundamental questions such as:*

- *what mental well-being is*
- *how it relates to public mental health and illness*
- *what value is placed on it across society.'*

Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2013

Wellbeing is now included in Care and Support [5],

It 'is a broad concept, and it is described as relating to the following areas in particular:

- *personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect);*
- *physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing;*
- *protection from abuse and neglect;*
- *control by the individual over day-to- day life (including over care and support provided and the way it is provided);*
- *participation in work, education, training or recreation;*
- *social and economic wellbeing;*
- *domestic, family and personal relationships;*
- *suitability of living accommodation;*
- *the individual's contribution to societ'y.*

There has been for the last 15 years a huge body of well researched thinking and practice in the field of Positive Psychology and a growing interest from philosophers, academics and employers alike in Happiness, what it means, the neuroscience behind it and what does and does not impact significantly our individual happiness, often referred to in the literature as Subjective Well-being (SwB).

Subjective well-being (SwB) *refers to how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgments.*

Seligman famously came up with a now contested formula, to test what contributes to our SwB. There has been huge amounts of research around this for individuals and societally (the latter now measured by the ONS) but still relatively little material in the field of W@W. One oft-quoted outcome of this work was the discovery that in spite of our considerable material gains in the west over the last 50 years, it has had little impact on our SwB.

2.5 The science of 'subjective well-being' suggests that as well as experiencing good feelings, people need:

- a sense of individual vitality
- to undertake activities which are meaningful, engaging, and which make them feel competent and autonomous
- a stock of inner resources to help them cope when things go wrong and be resilient to changes beyond their immediate control.
- It is also crucial that people feel a sense of relatedness to other people, so that in addition to the personal, internally focused elements, people's social experiences – the degree to which they have supportive relationships and a sense of connection with others – form a vital aspect of well-being.

2.6 Seligman shows that SwB **is** related to:

- optimism
- extraversion
- social connections and close friendships
- being married (long-term partner)
- having engaging work
- religion / spirituality
- leisure
- good sleep and exercise
- social class (through lifestyle difference and better coping methods)
- subjective wellbeing (what you **think** about your health)

what is **not** related to:

- age, in fact older people are sometimes happier than younger people
- physical attractiveness
- money (once the basic needs are met, the difference between the very rich and the Ok is negligible - what does contribute is the comparator)
- gender (women are more often depressed but also more joyful)

- education level
- having children
- moving to a sunnier climate
- crime prevention
- housing
- objective health - what the doctors say

#### interesting facts

- in three months the effects of being promoted or fired lose their impact on the happiness level
- winning the lottery often leaves people less happy and most people return to the level of happiness they had before within 3 months
- real income has risen dramatically over the last 30 years but levels of SwB have stayed the same
- recent changes in an individual's level of pay predict job satisfaction but average levels of pay do not
- desiring wealth leaves one unhappy
- all objective life circumstances account for not more than 10% of variance of well-being

#### 2.7 Factors under voluntary control refer to intentional practices which account for about 40% of SwB

- focus beyond self
- practice gratitude, stop occasionally to 'count your blessings'
- treat yourself to a special day and savour the experience
- consciously chose your activities rather than going along with others
- look for new ways to do something usual to avoid being bored
- give priority to close relationships. It's the quality not the quantity that counts
- join a 'movement' movement. A sound mind resides in a sound body
- stop and think. Maybe there is meaning in life after all. Be Mindful
- don't compare yourself with 'stars'

#### 2.8 Wellbeing at Work

2.8.1 Various writers have researched and attempted to codify what contributes to W@W.

2.8.2 Peter Warr in his *Work, Unemployment and Mental Health* (1987) first identified the 'Needed Nine' external sources of happiness and unhappiness. they are:

- 1 Personal Influence
- 2 Using your abilities
- 3 Demands and Goals
- 4 Variety
- 5 Clear requirements and Outlook
- 6 Social Contacts
- 7 Money
- 8 Adequate physical setting
- 9 A valued role

These are explored in some detail in Warr P, Clapperton G, *The Joy of Work? Jobs, Happiness, and You*, Routledge 2010

2.8.3 Adrian Furnham in his *The Psychology of Behaviour at Work: The Individual in the Organisation*, Psychology Press 2005 looks at a wide range of contributory factors.

2.8.4 A more recent example is the New Economics Foundation (NEF) 5 Ways to Wellbeing <sup>(6)</sup>

- Connect
- Be Active
- Take Notice
- Keep learning
- Give

The CMO for England recently called into question the validity of some of the research behind these but they are more rigorous in their approach than many more anecdotal versions and have proved helpful to many.

2.8.5 The Marmot Review, Fair Society, Healthy Lives, which looked at inequalities in health highlighted the importance of work and listed 10 core components of good work that protect and promote good health. These can be summarised as:

- freedom from precariousness
- having some control over work
- having appropriately high demands
- fair earnings and job security
- opportunities for training, learning and promotion
- preventing social isolation, discrimination and violence
- sharing information and decision-making
- reconciling work and other demands
- reintegrating sick and disabled people into full employment meeting basic psychological needs.

2.8.6 The individual's wellbeing at work can be influenced by any or all of the following (tMLF model):

- pay/parity, T&Cs, especially if inconsistent and the salary multiple is well researched (the huge increase in this multiple over the last 20 years (<https://www.haygroup.com/downloads/uk/Getting-the-balance-right.pdf>))
- agency/control over work (See Warr above)
- relationships (tMLF Critical Relationship tool) (managing authority and power)
- personality adaptations in the workplace (Cavaiola A, Lavender N 2000, James 2013, Lubit 2004, Kets de Vries)
- service to customers/clients and to staff -
- terms and conditions (induction through to retirement)
- the changing nature of employment

### 3 NICE WORK PROJECT AIMS & OBJECTIVES

#### 3.1 Aim

The Nice Work project aims to maximise wellbeing in the workplace. Using Lord Layard's phrase to 'increase happiness and reduce misery' at work. (Thrive. Clarke/Layard 2014).

#### 3.2 Objectives

The Nice Work project will:

- research current thinking and practice on developing wellbeing at work
- evaluate these
- identify the greatest contributory factors to W@W (both +ve and -ve) using the model, (cultural, economic, emotional, organisational, personal and inter-personal, psychological, psychodynamic, sectoral, social, systemic, and personal)
- identify best and most effective practice
- explore the balance between the needs of the employee and employer in creating W@W
- research, identify and create positive strategies and interventions to develop W@W
- work in partnership with a range of employers and organisations in the field
- develop ongoing research, support, tools, guides and strategies for those developing W@W
- raise the profile of best practice in creating W@W and to disseminate it

Nice Work will bring together a whole range of research and practice in order that the project/ partners/hosts could, in time, be an authoritative leading voice on Wellbeing at Work. Whilst there are myriad influencing factors the focus will be on good mental health at work, including prevention and sustainability as well as existing research practice and service on mental illness and work.

The context will be a desire to normalise language and practice around wellbeing - we are all on spectrums and have patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour, scripted during our developing Attachment.

The outcomes will be really practical, open, authentic and useful rather than simply a body of academic research, but rather something that can provide new and important thinking and practice for the contributions the workplace can make to wellbeing and 'flourishing.'<sup>(7,8)</sup>

Having researched the factors (like a new version of Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene factors) we will produce user-friendly materials (like the Mental Health Foundation's on Mindfulness) and trial projects (influencing or creating some measures/ ideas/ a marque?)

#### 4 OUTLINE PROGRAMME & SCOPE

	When	What	Who	Content
1	March 2015	Creation of Steering Group	Hosted by CRi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Discussion of paper and approach</li> <li>• Agreement of scope, roles and funding (identification of other organisations to involve)</li> <li>• introductory exploration of the field for member organisations</li> </ul>
2	May 2015	Research	CRi researcher / DF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 1</li> <li>• general comparison of organisations in Steering Group and identification of others</li> <li>• collation of current provision of W@W (including Mental Health, e.g EAP) in member orgs</li> <li>• self-evaluation of provision and issues by organisations</li> <li>• Part 2a</li> <li>• desk research of other current practice / interventions / solutions</li> <li>• research of other organisations to include MHF, Mind, Sane, Rethink, BPS, CiPD, Unions, IoD, Universities (Sheffield)</li> </ul>
3	May 2015	Steering Group	Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collation and discussion of anonymised comparative research from member organisations</li> <li>• identification of key issues</li> <li>• prioritisation of further research</li> </ul>
4	June-Sep 2015	Research	CRi researcher / DF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part 2b</li> <li>• desk research of other current practice / interventions / solutions to meet the key issues</li> <li>• desk research and interviews to identify current measures of W@W</li> <li>• in-depth individual questionnaire and interviews (based on identified key factors)</li> <li>• framing of interventions / strategies / tools</li> </ul>

	When	What	Who	Content
5	Sep 2015	Steering Group	Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review of findings and research</li> <li>• comparison of measures</li> <li>• agreement of intervention trials</li> </ul>
6	Sep - Dec 2015	Interventions	CRi researcher / DF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interventions / strategies</li> <li>• testing measures</li> <li>• further research</li> <li>• draft report, recommendations, model, interventions</li> </ul>
7	Jan 2106	Steering Group	Steering Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agree report</li> <li>• agree tools / interventions / code of good practice</li> </ul>
8	Feb 2016	Launch	All	

## 5 PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS - Some Starting Points

Proposed Member Organisations of the Steering Group

Alternatives Future Group, ABRSM, BBC, British Council, British Red Cross, C3Health, CiH, CRI, LEON, Mental Health Foundation, SYHA, What Works Wellbeing

Possible individuals and organisations:

Prof Frank Bond	Goldsmiths
British Psychological Society	
Centre for Mental Health	
Charity Awards (top 10)	
CIPD	
Professor David Clarke	Oxford University
Prof C Cooper	Lancaster University
Emma Donaldson-Feilder	Affinity Health at Work
Adrian Furnham	UCL
Lord Layard	
Mental Health Foundation	
Mind	
New Economics Foundation / Happiness Works	
Rethink	
Karen Wendy Royle	Ways to Work
Dr Ashley Weinberg	Salford University
Sane	
Dr Christine Sprigg	Sheffield University
Shaw Trust	
Sunday Times Top 100	
Time to Change	
Unions - TUC	
Carole Watling	Wellbeing Officer, Dentons

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- 4 Bunting, M Willing Slaves, How the Overwork Culture is Ruling Our Lives, Harper Collins, 2004
- 5 Department of Health Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Care Act 2014, June 2014
- 6 NEF <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/five-ways-to-well-being>
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