WHAT IS EMPLOYEE WELLBEING?

YOUR CHECKLIST FOR ENSURING THAT EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IS A PART OF YOUR OFFICE CULTURE
What is employee wellbeing?

Employee wellbeing has grown to become a key issue as companies strive to make sure their employees remain happy and motivated in their work. A happy workforce is a productive workforce.

Workplace wellbeing, though important, can be a bit of an elusive thing to define.

JUNIPER, ET AL (2011)* DESCRIBE IT AS:
“...That part of an employee’s overall wellbeing that they perceive to be determined primarily by work and can be influenced by workplace interventions.”

In the workplace, this can include things affecting physical wellbeing, such as natural daylight and temperature control. Equally important, however, is support for mental wellbeing, through employee assistance programmes or informal areas for taking a break or catching up with colleagues. Supporting both physical and mental employee wellbeing through office design can help create a healthy, productive workforce.

Office design and wellbeing

According to The World Green Building Council report on Health, Wellbeing & Productivity in Offices, there is clear evidence that office design impacts the health, wellbeing and productivity of employees. Workplace transformations present an opportunity to promote your employees’ wellbeing. Small changes to individual wellbeing can have a cumulative effect on productivity and, in turn, your bottom line.

After inspiring workplace transformation for more than 35 years, Morgan Lovell has a unique and informed perspective on what makes a workplace effective and how employee wellbeing can be incorporated into any office design. Whilst traditional office design and build operations tend to be limited to property teams and construction, we believe putting people back in the design equation is critical.

Using this checklist

This checklist is designed to guide you through the process of incorporating wellbeing practices into your office environment. The checklist identifies key areas that should be considered in advance of any office design project. Starting with why you want to focus on wellbeing in the workplace, moving through to how to begin implementing change and how you can evaluate the effects. We have broken the checklist into different sections to include what needs to happen before you embark on integrating wellbeing into the workplace, how to collect qualitative data, design considerations and, most importantly, implementation and evaluation.
BEFORE YOU START

Before beginning any wellbeing initiative, it is crucial that you determine why you are doing so. In order to assist you, we have created the list below. Tick all that are relevant to you and remember to bear them in mind throughout the process.

Why are you starting this wellbeing initiative?

- To increase staff satisfaction
- To increase staff morale
- To improve staff retention
- To increase productivity
- To reduce absenteeism
- To reduce presenteeism
- To foster better relationships between management and staff
- To increase open communication
- To lower costs
- To work towards a more sustainable building and workforce

DEFINE WELLBEING PRIORITIES

From the reasons above, decide what is the most important for your company. Do you want to focus on cost reduction or making your employees more engaged? Inevitably this will affect your research, data collection and subsequently office design. So you need to decide, “What does wellbeing look like in my organisation?”

CHOOSE PROJECT CHAMPION(S)

Next you need to decide who should manage the change project. It should be someone senior, as they need to be able to make decisions, understand your organisation and report directly to the board.

Finding someone who is both senior and passionate about the wellbeing of your employees is critical, as they will drive the necessary changes that need to be implemented.

Change champions should be all of the following, tick wherever you have identified somebody who could potentially become a change champion

- An influencer from finance, HR or FM
- Passionate about wellbeing
- Senior enough to make decisions
- Good communicator
- Good motivator
- Knows the business
- Someone who can manage budgets and projects
YOUR INTERNAL TEAM

The internal team needs to be kept up to date with relevant information throughout the process.

The team’s role is to give feedback on decisions being made and to make sure the project is feasible and will make a positive contribution to your organisation.

The internal team should include representatives from the following and should meet at regular intervals to ensure the programme stays on schedule and on budget

- **MD/CEO:** Your MD has final say over any changes so it’s important to make sure they’re on board
- **Operations director:** The operations director can manage any issues that may affect day-to-day running
- **Executive board:** Your board needs to understand the changes happening in the workplace and how they will positively affect wellbeing
- **HR:** HR is important in safeguarding the wellbeing of all employees and is crucial in linking policies and procedures to changes in the workplace
- **Marketing:** Marketing representatives are key in managing internal comms and creating any promotional materials to promote new approaches
- **Finance:** Those in charge of the budgets should be involved from day one.
- **IT:** Changes in the physical workplace need to be supported by the technology infrastructure
- **Facilities Management:** Property teams need to assess the impact of any changes to the built office environment
- **PAs:** PAs and administration staff probably know more about what’s going on in your business than anybody else. Don’t leave this valuable resource untapped
- **Unions:** Often it’s a legal requirement to include a union representative on any big organisational change

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

An effective internal communications strategy is vital to the success of any wellbeing initiative. All staff need to be informed why the change is happening and how it will affect them.

**Decide how changes will be communicated to staff**

Change management starts as soon the change is decided upon. Staff will hear about the changes quickly. Managing expectations and gaining buy-in is crucial for a successful change and open communication

- Weekly emails? Newsletters? Posters? Staff meetings?

DATA COLLECTION

It is essential to collect a mixture of raw and emotional data through interviews with staff. It can also be useful to spend some time analysing how staff use and interact with the office space.

The results of this research will paint a rich and detailed picture of not only how the current workplace is used, but also why your employees prefer some spaces over others.
Engage a workplace consultant
Workplace consultants bring with them a wealth of knowledge, collect all of the necessary data and interpret the data collected into a clear office design brief.

Engage your staff
There are numerous ways that data can be collected, from surveys to observation-based techniques, so it makes sense to decide in advance what data is important to receive and also how it is collected.

Workplace evaluation survey
Sending out a staff survey can illustrate how your workforce really feel about the current space and also determine how they see themselves working in the future

- These wellbeing indicators can include both comfort factors, such as temperature and air quality, and cultural factors, such as out-of-hours email policies and access to management
  - A 60% response rate is a good response rate on which to base informed changes

Time Utilisation Study (TUS)
A TUS study is where a surveyor walks around your office space every hour for two weeks noting if spaces are occupied, vacant or temporarily unoccupied. This builds a picture of what spaces are being underutilised

- Understanding how people actually use the space you currently have is essential, as our perceptions of where we spend our time can be flawed
- Understanding the anatomy of your workspace can pinpoint a need for concentration and informal meeting areas or a need to create alternative traffic routes to minimise noise

Interviews

- Choose 8-10 key individuals from the workforce. Ideally, candidates should be team managers who can gather the concerns of their teams and should not necessarily be in favour of the changes

This process can gather rich data such as cultural factors, work/life balance, rates of presenteeism (i.e. staying at desk for appearance, not working productively) as well as differences between departments.

METRICS
Reviewing the data collected can help highlight where there might be issues to resolve through office design. Gathering ‘before’ data is important for future analysis and benchmarking to determine whether a positive change has occurred.

The list below includes different workplace metrics that should be included in any research findings that will impact office design:

Absenteism
Long and short-term absence statistics can indicate whether there are problems in certain departments with stress or other complaints that may be worth investigating, such as back problems

Output measures
Although not always measured, team performance can be a good indicator of the health of relationships, a strong indicator of wellbeing.
### Individual annual reviews
It can be good to review whether staff members are assessed on outputs or time spent at desk, and whether this differs by department.

### Engagement survey results
Engagement results can indicate how satisfied your employees are and how engaged they are in their work and with the business.

### Staff turnover and reasons for leaving
It is important to understand why people leave your organisation, and whether the reasons are wellbeing-related.

### FM complaints
Analysing complaints from all staff about issues such as temperature and noise are useful in understanding what can be improved.

### Health insurance claims
Has there been a rise in claims? Is it abnormally high? What types of claims are most frequent?

### Flexible working uptake
If there is a flexible working policy in place, it can be useful to know how and when requests are placed. Are there more requests from one part of the organisation? Is low uptake due to cultural factors? Interview data can also help answer some of these questions.

### HR complaints raised
Relationships between managers and direct reports as well as between peers are all important and need to be included in any analysis.

### HR PROCESSES AND POLICIES
A review of all current HR reporting processes and policies can be helpful. If the flexible working policy is clear, but uptake is low, does this mean it needs to be more effectively communicated to staff?

Do managers need to be assessed on their implementation of agile working? A new space needs a supportive company culture, with this being reflected in company policies. Employees need the flexibility to choose their working environment and not be judged on hours at their desk.

An audit of all of the policies and processes listed below is an important task with the objective of ensuring they are all aligned and consistent with wellbeing initiatives and objectives.

### Health and safety
Reporting workplace accidents and injuries. Is there a clear procedure in place for this?

### Policies and procedures – work/life balance
- Holiday allowance
  - Do staff take all their holiday? Is there a requirement to take holiday? What restrictions are in place?

### Remote working
Is your policy clear? Is the application procedure clear? Are managers trained on how to implement remote working?

### EMPLOYEE WELLBEING STAT:
Employees experiencing conflict between their work and home are three times more likely to consider quitting their jobs (Thompson et al., 1999)
Employee Benefits

- Private medical insurance/cash plan
  - Are these offered? Do people claim?
- Absence management (short- and long-term)
  - Short-term: Is self-certification in place?
  - Are ‘return to work’ interviews carried out?
  - Do managers check wellbeing after a certain number of days?
- Long-term Employee support: Do you offer a phased return or reduced hours?

Employee assistance programme
Do employees have access to impartial advice? Is the number easily available?

Employee support

Succession/progression planning
Knowing the way through the business and opportunities available are important for a sense of purpose within the business.

Training
Good access to information about opportunities and training programmes being held or that employees have access to can be important and affect overall satisfaction levels.

OFFICE DESIGN

Office design decisions should be based on a combination of:

- Research data collected by a workplace consultant
- Feedback from your internal team
- Business strategy (including any plans for growth)

Assessing the appropriateness of your current space should be considered in this context and when ready, the business should begin to look for an office design company that understands these specific requirements.

Engage a designer who supports and understands your wellbeing needs.
Ideally, the designer should understand the wellbeing objectives that emerge from the finalised data report and they should have experience in designing sustainable workplaces

- If a workplace consultant has worked on the collection and interpretation of research data, they should be remain involved and assist the design team.

BUILD WELLBEING CULTURE INTO THE DESIGN

Using the data collected, you will need to consider carefully which of the factors listed below need to be addressed and to what extent. Tick those that you think need to be considered:

Working conditions

- Lighting/daylight
- Bright spaces and the most daylight possible for workstations.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee wellbeing</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Temperature</strong></td>
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<td>Ideally, individuals should be able to control their ambient temperature.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Technology</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Technology should facilitate the ways of working identified in the data collection. Having the correct technology to perform daily duties, such as a mobile phone for externally mobile individuals, can improve productivity and reduce stress.</td>
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<th><strong>Furniture</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Specialist furniture should be available for those who need it, while all furniture should be fit for purpose and support physical wellbeing. This may well include ergonomic chairs and wrist supports.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Environmental sustainability</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Movement-triggered lights</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recycling bins</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use of stairs over lifts</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Use effective office design to promote use of the stairs over lifts, such as posters or fitness programmes</td>
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<th><strong>Physical wellbeing</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Movement around office space Use design to encourage individuals to move around the office</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In-house gym Consider an in-house gym, where individuals can de-stress during the day</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cycle to work scheme If appropriate, offer subsidies for cycling to work to promote physical exercise and provide space to store bicycles and to change</td>
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<tr>
<td>• In-house café A café could be subsidised but could also offer healthy options for lunch and breakfast</td>
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<th><strong>Mental wellbeing</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Contemplation zones Areas where employees can take time out to think without distraction or for some quiet time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaboration zones Specific areas for both formal and informal collaboration can aid productivity and communication amongst staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Concentration zones Areas where individuals cannot be disturbed are useful for concentrated work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Outside zones Opportunities to get outside are important on long working days and when the weather is warm</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Plants and artwork As well as creating a pleasant atmosphere, art and plants can provide an opportunity to consult with staff members on their preferences and get them involved in the change process</td>
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<th><strong>Look and feel</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Culture Reflect your core brand values in the design</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Community Create a sense of community and history in the design with an employee picture wall, for example, or build some corporate history into the design.</td>
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Location

- **Commute** If changing location, consider where most of your workforce live, and whether this may burden some
  - It is also worth considering what type of public transport is available to employees
  - It is also worth analysing the number of parking spaces available if some staff drive to work

**Amenities**

**Childcare** Providing childcare in-house / nearby may relieve stress sometimes experienced by working parents.

**PUT CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN PLACE**

Any change is difficult and it’s important to keep your staff informed. They will have many questions and need a space to address concerns.

Workplace transformations are often accompanied by changes in working practices. Having someone to go to with concerns is vital, and knowing that wellbeing is being incorporated in to the design will help the process.

Remember, gathering and listening to feedback is the most important part of any change process. The checklist below provides practical tips on how to manage change during the implementation of any wellbeing programme, including during an office design and fit out:

**Engage change management experts**

Whether just for advice or to run your change management programme, this is important and can save a lot of grief.

**Choose staff change champions**

Champions should be at the heart of the organisation as they are likely to have strong connections both within their team and across the business.

- Champions need to be able to influence both formally and informally and communicate well.
- These individuals will attend the workshops and disseminate information to all staff

**Establish change management strategy and programme**

- **Introductory workshop**
  - This will include timeline details, an overview of the data collected and how this translates to design and new ways of working.
  - The emphasis on wellbeing should be acknowledged.

- **Furniture, tech and protocols workshop**
  - This is about introducing the concrete elements of what to expect in terms of furniture and technology.
  - Individuals should also get a chance to develop rules or protocols about how to use the space, such as not disturbing people in a contemplation zone.

**Refresher courses**

Once the build is underway, more workshops may be needed to air concerns and remind everyone the protocols developed.

**New staff inductions**

All new starters inductions should include information on workplace wellbeing and the change that has been undertaken.
Aftermath

It important not to assume that all employees will love the new design.

Change is hard even for the most accepting of individuals, and adjusting to the new environment and ways of working will take time. Continuous training is important to remind staff why wellbeing programmes and new office designs have been implemented. The checklist below is designed to provide clear guidelines on what should be accomplished post implementation and also how success or otherwise should be evaluated:

CONTINUOUS TRAINING

Refresher workshops on protocols

These workshops are an opportunity to gather feedback on what is and isn’t working in the new space and to remind people of the protocols developed during the first phase of change management. Continuous assessment of how people are functioning and feeling in the space is important.

Continuous messaging

This is a way for staff to remind each other of the protocols. For example, if a hot-desk environment is in place and someone is consistently sitting at the same desk, someone can quietly drop a ‘no camping’ cone on their desk. Other ideas include informative icons in shared spaces and do not disturb signs.

Create new metrics for employee assessment

On the basis of the changes you want to witness in the culture, assess individuals on new metrics. For example, this could be output assessment instead of time at desk, or assessing managers on their ability to implement agile working within their team.

Post-occupancy questionnaire

Around six to eight months after completion, send a workplace evaluation survey. This is to identify improvements made and any potential areas for alterations in workspace design and wellbeing. This way, it is possible to evaluate the difference workplace transformation has made and any potential savings seen.

Metric assessment

After six months in the new workplace, access the metrics identified at the beginning of the project. This is arguably the most important step and an indication whether the new office environment has successfully supported your definition of wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

The key to any successful workplace transformation is communication with your staff, with key stakeholders and senior leadership. If you communicate successfully, by the end of your workspace transformation you should have a workplace that reflects what wellbeing means to your organisation. However, this is not the end of the process.

Wellbeing is not a one-time intervention. Continuous updating of the metrics measured as well as reinforcing workplace protocols is important to keep your workforce happy and productive. Your wellbeing definition may change as the organisation matures. However, a flexible and future-proof office with a data-driven design will continue to support employee wellbeing.