CONNECT

The magazine for the risk professional

Adapting to a Changing World

The future is remote
So what can we learn from remote work prior to the pandemic?

Wellbeing challenges in 2021
Key challenges for a changing world

PLUS   HYBRID WORKPLACES ■ EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ■ WELLBEING VS. TOILET PAPER

WELCOME

Welcome to issue 15 of Cardinus Connect. We've called this one adapting to a changing world, because after 2020 that's what we will have to do. The workplace has changed and it's unlikely to return to how it was pre-COVID.

The Coronavirus pandemic has drastically reshaped how my customers, and millions around the globe, have had to work. In conversations with customers and partners, I've heard many of the health, safety, and wellbeing challenges of the flexible working model. As the landscape changes, many of these issues will come to the fore, and as an industry we will be expected to drive and deliver on this change.

In Jon Abbott's lead article, he argues that as an industry, we know what these challenges are and what the solutions are to overcome them. However, what's going to be difficult is achieving this on scale when prior to the pandemic, flexible workers only made up a slither of our total workforce.

Over the course of Connect, we've got contributors from across our partner network adding to the mosaic of flexible working challenges. For example, Guy Osmond talks about the 'hybrid workplace', and offers some pointers for setting up a hybrid working model. While Mykay Kamara reflects on how this hybrid working model will impact workplace wellbeing and lists 7 key organizational challenges that will need to be addressed.

This change will involve new ways of working, and at its heart that means workers' wellbeing will be adapting to the changes too. Delivering on culture, support, and care when workers might only spend half their time in the office is going to be a huge fight. With that in mind, there's plenty to learn from contributors like HEC's Donna Defalco and Live Greatly's Kristel Bauer.

In 2021 there is a lot to be hopeful about, but it's also an important time to reflect. The industry, as a whole, has worked incredibly hard to ensure the health and safety of workers around the world. You should all be proud of the massive effort that has gone in to seeing us through this crisis.

Thank you once again for taking the time to read Cardinus Connect. Please send your comments, suggestions or issues to **info@cardinus.com** and invite your colleagues to sign up to receive the latest magazine at cardinus.com/us/.

Bill Pace

BILL PACE, Cardinus

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MANAGING STRESS

REMOTE WORK WAS NEVER SO REMOTE, IT'S BEEN WITH US FOR DECADES

As the dust settles on a very challenging year, the promise of a new way of working glistens in the dirt. Upon a closer look, isn't it the same remote working we've always known? **Jon Abbott** relearns the lessons of remote work and suggests all you need to make it work is scale!

We will remember 2020 as a tumultuous year. Everything from the way we work to the way we socialize has been uprooted and reimagined. It stands in sharp contrast to the gradual, slow, piecemeal change that usually accompanies our steady evolution. This sharp shock to the system has engineered new possibilities, opportunities, and, as ever, new challenges.

But, for the workplace, perhaps all of this was bubbling up for some time. We've repeatedly heard of Millennials pushing for new working patterns, resisting meaningless working models, and introducing modern perspectives into the workplace. And, now, Millennials make up 35% of the workforce!

Diversity has been a topic on the top table for some time. Still, the pandemic has amplified existing inequalities for diverse employees and pushed diversity right to the top of the agenda again. Diverse workers tend to have more vulnerable jobs that are subject to furlough or layoffs. Pressure has been building on organizations to confront inequality in their workforces now more than ever.

Technological transition and the tools available for rapid, mass, and nimble video communication

to entire workforces, teams, and individuals have been accessible for some time. How is it that so much of this technology is unavailable, incompatible, or doesn't fulfill our needs as workers or individuals? Why does it still present a challenge to our teams, and why does it not meet our emotional and psychological needs even when video communication allows us to speak and empathize with our teams?

The 4 Big Challenges of Remote Work

Remote work has been thrust upon us by a rapidly changing world. As we look to the future for stability, why aren't we seeing companies planning to return to pre-COVID normality? In many cases, the employees and the management like the flexibility that remote working offers - the chance to see more of the family or to spend less

time stressed out in the commute. There are significant productivity benefits. However, it's also true that there are some notable challenges as well.
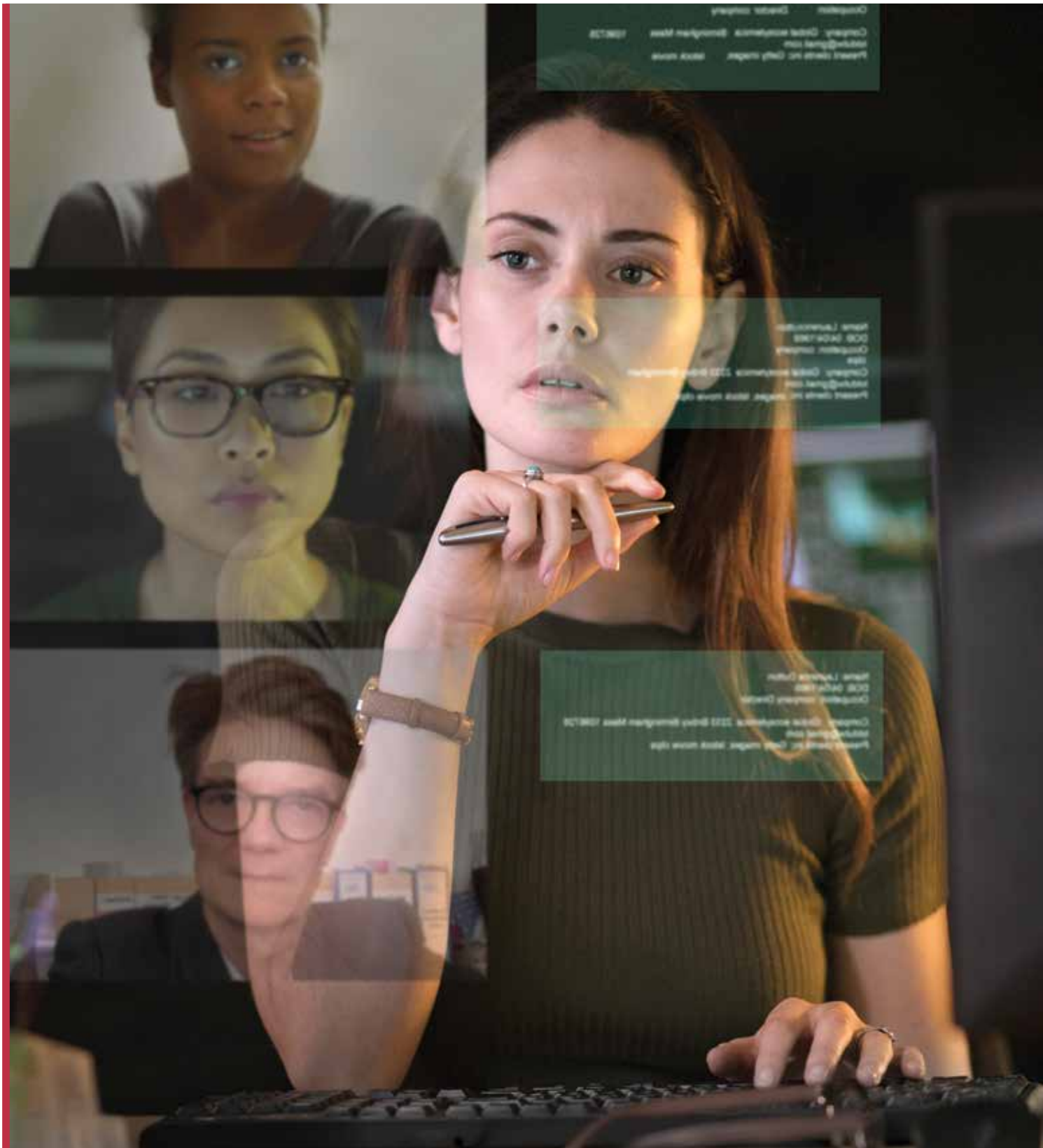
Health

For as long as I have worked in ergonomics, there have been genuine health challenges associated with home working. It requires equipment, training, and planning. In the past, a small number of workers, usually in the employee base's upper tiers, were set up with access to space and a working environment they can call their own.

The pandemic put an end to that. Many workers did not have the space, equipment, or understanding of the ergonomics and health risk factors. Companies across the globe quickly adapted their processes to

> "Remote work has been thrust upon us by a rapidly changing world. As we look to the future for stability, why aren't we seeing companies planning to return to pre-COVID normality?"

meet this need and help employees, if not overcome, at least mitigate many of these risks. It was a huge challenge, and they rose to it.

I should mention that there are mental health risks too. I won't detail the depression, anxiety, or stress produced from the pandemic and home working. It's worth stating that post-pandemic remote working will need to take many of the learnings from this period to ensure a healthy working environment.

Processes for continued homeworking should be put in place. There should be a renewed focus on risk assessment and understanding each employee's risks from their working environment. Suitable training should be issued along with a process for deploying equipment and technology that can reduce risk, but only after an appropriate risk assessment.

Communication Technology

We're all now familiar with the gripes of Zoom fatigue, of scrabbling around for the right communication platforms, and of incompatible software. In a pre-COVID study, 92% said that video collaboration technology "helps improve relationships and fosters better teamwork." After a year of frequent use, I wonder who would say the same now?

Of course, video communication technology is not going away. It is a fantastic tool to bring people together; that's a given. Organizations need to provide a mix of collaboration and communications technology beyond video and instant messenger platforms. It will ensure that these limited applications aren't stretched to a breaking point, which can be frustrating for users. Think about how project planning, message

boards, collaborative whiteboards and mind maps, shared spreadsheets, word processors, and presentation platforms can link with existing communication platforms to reduce the pain and mental strain of trying to do it all with video platforms.

And there's the feeling of loneliness, detachment, and strange anomie that arises from video communication. It's undoubtedly the distance that causes it, through non-verbal cues and behavioral nods, the inability to share a private joke within the crowded faces, the stress of watching yourself perform on camera, and the worries of technical glitches.

To reduce that weariness and fatigue, the organization has to weigh up the positives and negatives of video communications. It's not a panacea but used in

conjunction with email, phone, IM, message threads, and collaborative tools. It can help bridge the gap and keep everyone connected.

Contractual

Outline clearly and consistently the options that workers have and make it a given rather than an exception. Traditionally, the remote working employee has often been senior, experienced, and decided upon a permission-basis.

In 2021, many organizations will likely move towards a flexible working environment, setting the expectation that people will have access to the systems and equipment they need. To ensure your teams know their job expectations, you may need to change your workers' contractual basis.

You will need to consider:
- When should employees head into the office, and when should they stay at home
- The type of work expected from each working environment – i.e. creative, collaborative, project work, email communication, etc.
- How to support workers in each environment in terms of technology and equipment, and what each worker will receive
- Travel and commuting arrangements and expenses

By making it a "given," workers will know the expectations, how and where to ask for help, and remove any ambiguity over the arrangements.

Management and Work Relations

The world has changed, and so too our organizations have changed. The way upper management has dealt with the pandemic has been focused on supporting workers and the way they work and through a culture of care.

There is no way back for most organizations. Command and control management has been swept away by the change and replaced by the supportive, nurturing model commonly associated with remote work.

This change brings with it many managerial challenges. In a post-COVID future, where flexible working is the norm, creating a deep-rooted culture that extends from office to home, giving good employee experiences that support health, enabling rapid communication, and providing what they need to get the job done is a must.

It needs a flip from time-in-the-office performance measurements to outcome-based performance measures, but that requires a

supportive and skilled management team as well. Shifting the focus means everyone can be held accountable for their performance in a flexible environment.

Lastly, it means bringing together three key areas: the working environment, individual resilience, and your teams' personality. Management needs to plan, understand the work environment of home users, provide training or support to build resilience, and assess personality types to be aware of how people work and how people perform.

Relearning what we already know

The big question remains, how do we approach the scale of the challenge and create a truly flexible workforce that empowers our people, enables creativity, and tackles the issues present in 2021 and beyond?

The issue now will be to relearn what we already know and implement those changes. Look to capture data and insight into how our different and disparate teams currently work and map out how they will need to change to a flexible working model.

Here are a few steps to help get you on your way:
- Get insight from your current working arrangements. Understand the needs of each segment of your working population
- Create flexible working options for different segments of your workforce. This option needs to be appropriate to their work, their needs, and their working environments
- Look for flexible working champions among your leadership who can espouse the values of flexible working

for their segment
- Ensure that you communicate each option clearly, listing the benefits and risks
- Help employees understand and navigate the skills and training required for each flexible working model and the expectations
- Management and flexible working champions will need to train too. They'll need cultural and leadership training to adopt new working models
- If you previously had flexible workers, utilize their knowledge and skills to pair with new flexible workers
- Communicate success stories to help embed change. A useful communication model for this is Kotter's 8-step model for organizational change

The big challenge for you all is to ensure that you can enact change on scale. It will need some clear-thinking, and there will be huge issues to address, but understanding that we have been here before (albeit to a smaller segment of our workforce) will give you peace of mind when making your plans.

■ Jon Abbott is a Director at Cardinus Risk Management Limited, with more than 15 years' experience of ergonomics, safety and occupational health. Over that period, he has worked with a wide variety of organizations in the private and public sector providing a full range of risk management solutions including software, e-learning and consultancy.

WORKPLACE WELLBEING: CHALLENGES IN 2021 AND BEYOND

Ismail Mykay Kamara of Welbot tackles the challenges for organizations surrounding workplace wellbeing in 2021, giving us his top 7 challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought rapid change to millions of workers across every industry worldwide, ushering in a new wave of workplace challenges. Perhaps overlooked is the fact that, in specific sectors, people continued to work, even amid an extraordinary and hurried shift towards distributed workforces.

Equipped with the insights and experience gained from this arduous year, employers should be in a position to address workplace wellbeing in a more nuanced and compassionate manner than could have been imagined just twelve months ago. The first step: identify and understand the challenges your organization and its workforce face. The next step: design, implement, and maintain effective solutions. With that in mind, we have picked out seven key challenges that organizations will face in the year, and likely years, ahead.

1. Mental Health: The Single Biggest Concern

The explosion of remote working initiated by the COVID pandemic has had significant effects on mental health — and these effects will impact every challenge on this list. The erosion of separation between work and home life, increased strain on family relationships, childcare responsibilities, health anxiety, and financial worries have taken

their toll. We aren't out of the woods yet, and these mental health challenges won't just disappear. Last year, mental health conditions accounted for 51% of all working days lost due to ill health, and this number is rising. The pandemic has led to increased stress, anxiety, depression, bereavement, fear, and isolation. In turn, there has been a surge in suicides globally and a growing rate of divorce and relationship break-down.

Employers must respond to this issue and implement practical tools to support their staff's mental health amid new challenging circumstances.

Analyzing our platform data, we saw an increase in negative mood reported by over 27% across all our registered users as the early signs of COVID-19 began to take hold. With the breaking news of a vaccine in late November 2020, we saw an overall positive mood reported by 90% of all users. Data and behavioral insights will remain critical to understanding how your workforce feels daily and help inform your wellbeing initiatives and employee support strategies as we advance.

2. Remote Working

For many organizations, the notion that all staff will be in the office every workday is no longer the case. The demand for innovative, elastic, and safe working conditions that allow colleagues to stay connected is high. What is possible, prudent, and desirable for your staff will depend on factors such as the industry, location, and size of your organization. A remote workforce can provide broad rewards for employees, including increased flexibility, reduced commute time, expense, and stress while increasing productivity and time for family, friends, and hobbies. For organizations, remote working can

open the door to diverse talent, communities, connections, and ideas while reducing carbon emissions. However, realizing these benefits relies on enacting policies and practices that foster communication, engagement, and productivity while safeguarding mental health.

3. Work-Life Demarcation

A separate, though related, issue to remote work is that of work-life balance. It has been an increasingly pressing challenge over the past few years (truly ballooning in the wake of the smartphone revolution and round-the-clock access to work emails, chats, tasks, and calendars). This challenge has only grown over the past year. With so many of us working where we live, it is understandable that the lines between work hours and home hours have blurred: our family watches tv in our workspace, and the laundry machine beeps during our lunch hour. Furthermore, the transition from home to work in the morning and back again in the evening that once required bus, car, cycle, or train is complete with the simple act of opening a laptop. Research shows that many people are working longer hours than usual and taking fewer breaks than they should. The health consequences of continuing

these trends are severe and should motivate employers to deliver considered and evidence-based interventions.

4. Tech Overload

With more and more distributed workforces, an increase in the use of tech at work is inevitable. This increase, however, can be a burden for workers. Keep in mind the effect new workplace technologies have on employee wellbeing. Some workers are more averse to change than others, some are more tech-savvy than others, and some will be wary of the purpose and use of technology. Generally speaking, employees are not eager to add more technologies to their already crammed toolbelt. Aim to maintain a streamlined suite and be mindful of your team's wellbeing. With more and more distributed workforces, an increase in the use of tech at work is inevitable. Attentiveness is needed to mitigate that possibility successfully.

5. Data Privacy

With an increased reliance on digital tools, individual workers' digital footprints grow. An Accenture survey found that more than 90% of employees are willing to let their employers collect and use data on them and their work, but only if they benefit somehow. The technology

you use should support employee engagement, performance, and wellbeing. The benefit an organization derives from technology should not come at the expense of its employees. Be transparent with your employees about what data is collected, how it is used, and the purpose, and make sure there is a direct benefit. Employees are increasingly wary of being monitored by management. Reassure your colleagues that their data is not being used for spying purposes and make it clear that you are committed to protecting their privacy.

6. Rethinking Office-Based Benefits

With a withdrawal from the office comes a need to reconsider employee benefits. On-site benefits such as fitness classes, health assessments, staff chefs, travel cards, and team lunches will likely diminish in importance. Employers have to be creative in finding the next logical iteration of office benefits to reward and incentivize employees. Among

younger employees, recognition of hard work and achievement is essential and increasingly desired. With a generation of talent set to enter the workforce in a landscape of distributed working, employers should be motivated to provide innovative and effective benefits suitable for the new work environment.

7. Employers' Evolving Responsibilities and Obligations

Employers continue to have significant responsibilities concerning the health and safety of their employees. These responsibilities have already changed over the past year and will continue to do so in the immediate future. Employers should do what they can to anticipate evolving demands and requirements rather than reacting once a disaster has struck. Getting ahead of the curve is in the business and the employee's interest, minimizing disruption,

and reinforcing trust and stability. Continually and rapidly developing workplace environments along with an expanding conception of workplace health and wellbeing combine to make this a challenge rich in opportunity.

Conclusion

To a large degree, employee engagement and wellbeing in 2021 lies in uncharted waters. Attitudes towards remote work have shifted, technologies have emerged, and a global pandemic has massively disrupted the overall working life landscape. Any efforts to improve working life should accommodate the facts that colleagues may not be working in the same office — if there is an office — and good employee wellbeing is a prerequisite for good working relationships. A successful workplace wellbeing program will understand these challenges' interwoven nature and respond in a suitably considered, thoughtful, and practical manner.

Ismail Mykay Kamara is founder and CEO at Welbot Limited, the Workplace Wellness company. Mykay has held senior management roles at The Coca-Cola Company, Aviva and Lloyds Banking Group and was MD at BSM Driving School and bluecycle. More recently Mykay led the creation of A&A Investments and Services, the management buy-in of Studio Something and the start-up of Welbot. Mykay is married to Dr. Isa Jalloh and has two kids, Aara and Abdi.

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PREVENTION OF WORK-RELATED PAIN AT HOME

Dr. Romina Ghassemi, Founder of BAX-U, details how to avoid musculoskeletal disorders and injuries in the work-from-home environment.

150 million people are working in the USA today. According to ergonomic statistics, MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders) are responsible for the direct cost of $20 billion a year. Poor posture contributes to more than 60% of MSDs in work-related injuries. Adding insult to injury, the work from home environment increases poor ergonomics and a higher likelihood of RSI (repetitive stress injuries).

At home, employees try to find comfort working long hours in their new work environment. A corporate study conducted by Seattle City Lights documented that posture improvement positively affects physiology, productivity, and cognitive work.

Poor posture can prolong RSIs, which can cause chronic pain. Unfortunately, one out of five people in the US suffer from chronic pain. RSI also has a somato-psycho effect. People with chronic pain are 3X more likely to develop depression and anxiety than those without chronic pain, having at least twice the risk of suicide than those without chronic pain.

Poor posture is a reflection of poor posture habits. Offering home care solutions can help working employees change poor posture and reduce the development of RSI-related symptoms.

When seeking solutions, it is essential to have a systematic approach that impacts both psychosomatic and somato-psychic risks of health. The best results are when these five steps are addressed:

1 Detection of the underlying cause
2 RSI and poor habits
3 Correction of the existing problem
4 Protection against further damages
5 Prevention of underlying cause occurrences

Successful practice of addressing physical damage reduces secondary problems of somato-psycho impact on improving physical health, which directly impacts mental health. Addressing posture has a double benefit in a person's health and wellbeing.

As a clinician, I have been recommending to my patients for years to reduce exposure to MSDs. Most patients could have prevented their condition much earlier and led a healthier, happier life instead of scheduling visits to the doctor. Home care is essential to address RSIs and reduce chronic pain. Preventive measures such as home relief kits alleviate common conditions of MSDs and promote better health.

The good news is that while MSDs are very costly to business, they are preventable. 53% of all workplace injuries can be prevented by merely adjusting how workers use their bodies to interact with their environment, work, and home.

A study by Keith Osborne, award-winning ergonomic and wellness specialist, documented a 21% increase in productivity and a 63% improvement in overall MSD discomforts of 53 employees tested when wearing a wearable posture corrector while at work.
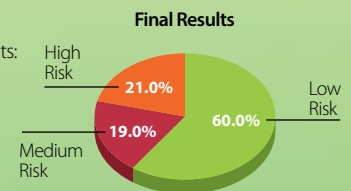
CORPORATE STUDIES

Seattle City Light
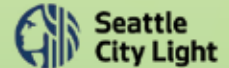
FINAL RESULTS

Exit assessment Results

Risk Categories for the participants:
• High Risk — 11 (20.7%)
• Medium Risk — 10 (18.8%)
• Low Risk — 32 (60.3%)

Final Results

High Risk — 21.0%
Medium Risk — 19.0%
Low Risk — 60.0%

Conclusions to date

Case study with Think Healthy using the BAX-U posture system
• Using the device for 3 months data showed:
  • **63% improvement** in overall discomfort levels
  • **75% improvement** in neck and back discomfort specifically
  • **45% improvement** in employee risk score (853/470)
  • **21% increased** productivity minutes (41/32)
  • **20% reduced** in lost productivity costs per employee ($14,717/11,774)

Case Study End Result:

Improved in neck and back discomfort | Reduced overall discomfort | Improved Risk Score | Improved Productivity | Improved Cost
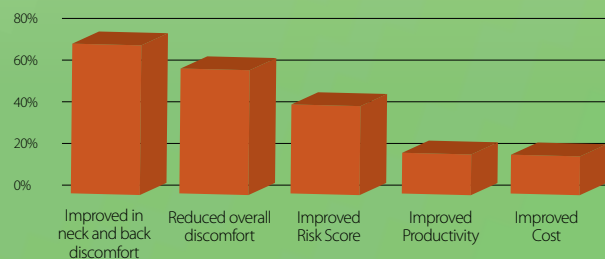
■ **Dr. Romina Ghassemi** is a local practitioner and innovator, creating her Bax-U posture support product to promote better posture for everyday lifestyle challenges.

WHY EQ IS SO IMPORTANT IN MAINTAINING RESILIENCE

Julie Hutchinson, CEO of Core Performance, explains why developing emotional intelligence (EQ) is a critical skill to help managers deal with high-stress situations.

Did you know that there is a direct correlation between one's income and one's level of emotional intelligence? In fact, the relation is so significant that every point increase in EQ equates to around a $1,300 increase in annual income!

We may often think that "smart" people experience less stress because they are better problem solvers and can deal with whatever comes their way. However, research has proven otherwise.

We must first establish that a stress response begins, not after the perception of the stimulus, but after an individual's appraisal of that stimulus as a threat. Your cognitive abilities do not come into play during that appraisal process, but something else does - your emotions.

It has been found that a high degree of emotional (EQ) rather than cognitive intelligence (IQ) has a much more significant role when choosing the right coping mechanisms, as well as strategies for managing stress and anxiety. That is why developing your EQ is critical, especially if you are in a managerial position.

One out of every three managers cannot effectively deal with high-stress situations, which has a massive impact on the entire team's productivity and overall success.

To better understand the statement above. Let us take a look at two examples.

Meet Steven, the regional sales manager in a large manufacturing company; in the middle of his department's monthly zoom meeting, some tension arises between two of his highest-performing employees. Steven loses his temper, lashes out, and fires one of the employees. However, this has resulted in some negative repercussions, where another employee decided to quit because they were not fond of Steven's reaction. Moreover, a culture of fear within the organization was created and continued to affect the whole team's productivity for months to come.

During the meeting, on a physiological level, depleting emotions such as anxiety, worry, and frustration had overwhelmed the body and drained Steven's energy. More than 1,400 biochemical changes happen in the body when we change an emotion, such as being relaxed to being anxious or stressed. It puts the autonomic nervous system into a "fight or flight" response, which may cause a person to make irrational decisions, just like what Steven did.

He ends up not getting enough sleep that night. The next morning, he indulges in a sugary breakfast and ups his caffeine intake to pull through the day. It feels like a domino effect. One issue leads to another, and they all begin to compound over time.

Now, months later, Steven clenches his jaw while sleeping, has digestion problems, high blood pressure, as well as an array of other health issues.

As you can see, a small situation could cause you to overthink and stress for days, even weeks, driving you to make up for it through behaviors and actions that are not optimal for your long-term health. It, then, sends you into a tailspin of anxiety and worry that affects all facets of your life.

Does that sound familiar?

Now let us take a look at a person with higher emotional intelligence, Mary. This is how she would deal with the same situation that Steven experienced.

The tension arises between her two top employees. However, unlike Steven, she does not lose her temper. She applies self-management techniques, exercises self-control, and takes a deep breath to calm herself down. She now has a clearer mind that helps her become more socially aware of the emotions people display. She can be more empathetic and listen carefully to both sides, as well as understand all perspectives.

She successfully navigated the problem and even gained her colleagues' respect for how effectively she handled the situation. Through this event, she was to grow emotionally and further develop her resilience as a person.

She sleeps well, wakes up energized, and continues to perform at optimal levels.

Do you tend to be more like Steven or Mary?

■ Julie trains top performers to thrive professionally and personally. Her unique approach blends technology, scientific research, resilience and emotional wellbeing techniques, and experience as a successful sales executive to give business clients the skills, mindset, and self-awareness tools to reach and maintain optimal performance while minimizing burnout.

THE SCIENCE OF COVID-19 – WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

Claudia Calder, a PhD in Immunology and H&S consultant at Cardinus Risk Management, explains the science behind COVID-19, what we know if it, and provides some interesting history into the vaccine.

COVID-19, or COronaVIrus Disease 2019, is a respiratory disease caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) Coronavirus 2).

Viruses have been around since life began forming. They have been described as *organisms at the edge of life* because technically viruses are not alive; they exist in a sort of intermediate netherworld, lying in wait until they can hijack a living cell and reproduce using the host cell's metabolites.

There have been ten pandemics in the past 250 years, with 4 of them in the past 20 years.

A pandemic is defined as *"An epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread across a large region, for instance, multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of people."*

Three of the 4 pandemics in the past 20 years have been from the coronavirus family, SARS (or SARS-CoV-1) in 2002/3, MERS (Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome) in 2012, COVID-19 in 2019/20 and the fourth pandemic was the swine flu (influenza virus) in 2009 – all

these viruses have led to diseases or conditions that affect the respiratory system and are really easily spread throughout the human population.

Why Have There Been so Many Pandemics in the Last 20 Years?

As a species, humans are altering the way we interact with pathogens by venturing into rainforests and destroying them through logging, planting, and hunting for bushmeat; concentrating large numbers of people together in large cities; breeding millions of pigs and poultry (birds) and keeping them in close confines; and overusing and misusing antimicrobial (antibiotics). Humans are forcing pathogens (or germs) to adapt and giving them opportunities nature never did. We are helping spread these viruses because we are traveling more than ever.

The most dangerous place to live is where humans, pigs, and birds all live together in high numbers and close confines.

The SARS-CoV-2 did not come from either a pig or bird, it came from a bat via an intermediate animal, believed to be a Chinese pangolin,

The virus (figure 1) is covered in a spike glycoprotein (also known as S protein). The S protein on the virus binds with a receptor called ACE2, which is expressed in humans on blood vessels, lung cells, the gut, and some parts of the brain. If you can imagine a human cell as a house, the ACE2 Receptor is the doorknob, the S protein binds to the Receptor, and the door opens so the virus can get into the cell. Once in the cell, the virus replicates, creating more viruses, eventually (though not in all cases) it kills the cell releasing the virus into the body.

Once the virus is in the body, your response to the infection will depend on your genetics, health status, immune system, and several other factors (gender, age, etc.). There have been many symptoms associated with COVID-19 disease. The most common ones being high fever (your immune system trying to fight the virus), cough (irritation from the virus in your nose and throat), and shortness of breath (lung cells filling with fluid due to cell damage from when the virus has infected the cell). Other symptoms include anosmia (loss of smell) and dysgeusia (loss of taste). These symptoms occur as ACE2 Receptor is expressed on cells closely associated with neurons that interpret tastes and smells in the body.

and 'jumped' into humans in the last week of November 2019, and then spread quickly around the world. By August 1, 2020, SARS-CoV-2 has been reported in 188 countries (of the world's 195 recognized countries).

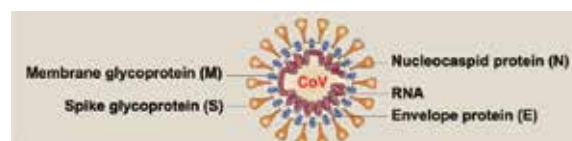## How and Why Does it Spread so Quickly?

There are a few reasons for this. One reason is that the common symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, headaches, sore throat) are similar to flu and colds, so it is difficult to determine (certainly during the early stages of the pandemic) whether somebody just had a common cold or seasonal flu. It wasn't until high numbers of people with shortness of breath resulting in breathing difficulties did medical professionals and those involved in the SARS pandemic in 2002/3 realize that COVID-19 was very similar.

The other reason for its rapid spread is that humans can transmit it from one person to another. Contact can occur from infectious respiratory droplets through coughing and sneezing. Another method is via surfaces (technically known as fomite). For example, where somebody has sneezed on a stainless-steel surface, the virus can survive up to 72 hours (but not reproduce) before being picked up by somebody else who touches their nose, mouth, and eyes and gets infected. More recent evidence has identified airborne transmission via breathing in tight spaces.

How Does the Virus get Into the Body?

To understand how SARS-CoV-2 enters the body, we need to understand what the virus expresses on its surface.

How do the Control Measures Stop the Spread?

As discussed above, the COVID-19 virus spreads via respiratory droplets. To prevent 'spreading the virus,' you need to 'catch' your coughs and sneezes. This method will stop other people from breathing in the virus and prevent the virus from landing on surfaces, which can then be picked up by somebody else.

Physical distancing measures (i.e. standing 2m away from another person) reduces the likelihood of 'catching' the virus. Standing 2m apart minimizes the risk to 6% and 1m apart increases to 13% likelihood. The COVID-19 virus has a weak 'membrane.' Using soap and water can easily break it, which is why you should wash your hands regularly. If soap and water are not available, alcohol sanitizer will 'fix' the virus's membrane, making the virus inactive.

The best way to protect yourself is to be as healthy as possible, avoid large crowds, regularly wash your hands, keep your distance from other people and be mindful of your own physical and mental wellbeing.

Vaccines – What are They and How do They Work?

The term "vaccine" came about from the work of Edward Jenner in 1796. On May 14, he inoculated James Phipps, an 8-year-old boy. Jenner inoculated James with pus from cowpox blisters from a milkmaid, Sarah Nelmes. James developed a fever and some uneasiness but did not get the infection. Although James was challenged with other viral materials, no disease ever followed. James had been vaccinated successfully against smallpox.

Jenner, who referred to cowpox, the disease to which he exposed patients to immunize them from smallpox, as *Variolae vaccinae*, Latin for "smallpox of the cow." The success of this means of inoculation against one of history's greatest killers became known as "vaccination."

Vaccines work by injecting individuals with a substance that resembles the disease-causing germ (such as SARS-CoV-2). The immune system recognizes the germs as a threat, and it mounts a response to destroy them – the immune system's first-line defense (called innate immunity). One of the clever things that the immune system does when challenged with a vaccine is to produce molecules, such as antibodies, which is known as a secondary defense system (or adaptive immunity). This part

of the immune system can recognize any subsequent germ from the vaccination and can mount a response and destroy the germs, resulting in no disease in the vaccinated person.

There are multiple ways to make vaccines, depending on the germ/disease in question. Regarding vaccines against SARS-CoV-2, the most famous vaccine is from Pfizer/BioNTect, first used in the UK on December 9, 2020.

Historically, vaccines are made by making the germ "dead" or "inactive" and injecting this into an individual, and this stimulates the immune system (as described above). The Pfizer/BioNTect vaccine is an mRNA vaccine. It works slightly differently, but the outcome is the same. The vaccine teaches the adaptive immune system how to identify the virus and then destroy it.

Having a Vaccine is Great, but We Must be Vigilant in Keeping the Virus and Disease at Bay

Having a vaccine against COVID-19 is the best news to come out of 2020. However, as Walter Orenstein (former CDC director of the USA Immunization Program and former Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Deputy Director for Immunization Programs) put it in 2019 after a career spanning almost 50 years:

Vaccines don't save lives, vaccination programs save lives (Orenstein, 2019).

It won't be until at least 70% of the population has been vaccinated will the control measures – social distancing, washing hands, and covering your nose/mouth – be reduced.

> ## " Having a vaccine against COVID-19 is the best news to come out of 2020 "

We must continue to be stringent in carrying out these control measures to protect those we love (especially the older population).

The best way to protect yourself (and others) is to be as healthy as you can be by avoiding large crowds, regularly washing your hands, keeping your distance from other people, and being mindful of your own physical and mental wellbeing.

■ Claudia Calder is a health and safety consultant at Cardinus and brings with her a unique set of skills, specializing in medical, biological and laboratory safety. A PhD, she has a rich academic background which she applies to safety, health and environmental consultancy.

APPLYING A USER-CENTRED APPROACH TO DESIGN POST-COVID-19

If you're reviewing office design in 2021 you should start here. **Stephen Bowden** looks at applying a user-centred approach to office design.

Have you been asked the question "what should our office design look like" or attempted to discover what your colleagues need from a new office design post-COVID-19?

From experience working with design teams, a couple of things normally happen when starting a new design process.

1. Someone has an idea for a new design or service. The team assume it is a good idea and move straight to the requirements capture.

The problem with this approach is the team is not checking if the new design or service they are working on is usable to the users they are designing for.

The design team can then be passed a set of requirements for a design or service that is not needed.

2. Someone has an idea for a new design or service. The idea is discussed with a few stakeholders and then tested via an online questionnaire or focus group.

The main issue with moving straight into a questionnaire or focus group is that the new design group ends up validating what they already know.

User research is about discovery and finding out what you **don't know** about the users in question. Surveys and focus groups alone miss the messy reality of *what people do* rather than what they *say they do*.

Background to Contextual Research

A research approach to ensure you are placing the user at the center of your design is called contextual research, a form of qualitative research.

The UK government define contextual research as: *"Visiting people in their everyday*

environment (like their home, work, or school) to observe how they do an activity."

When applying contextual research, the research team explores the design idea by getting a detailed understanding of the user's meaningful activity.

As they research the meaningful activity, other user needs that are more useful and important to meet than the original design idea evolve, which changes the original design idea.

Four key points to explain contextual research:

1. It can be used before surveys and focus groups to examine what people do rather than what they say. Information gathered during data collection can be used to design focus groups and questionnaires.

   Questionnaires will provide you larger sample sizes, but the results are of little use if you have asked incorrect questions.

   Focus groups tend to focus on opinions rather than critical details as they are harder to articulate in a focus group. Participants do not have the advantage of the context of their work environment to aid the discussion.

2. If the research team design questions for focus groups and surveys before completing contextual research, they miss out on vital bits of information to the design's success.

   Within contextual research, you do not know what questions to ask until you start observing the users completing their daily tasks. A fundamental point to

remember here is that *'you don't know what you don't know!'* Asking a question leads to another question in a way that you cannot predict ahead of time.

3. Useful to understand a user's real-time interactions, their "context of use," and their shifting needs for a day.

4. Useful for understanding the "messy reality."

Contextual Research Process

The UK Government provides an excellence guide to contextual research here.

Below is a short summary of a similar research process you may consider:

1. Set the research focus

Ben Holliday provides some great questions you should ask yourself to give focus to the research

- **Why are we doing this work?** What is out motivation for building the new design?

- **Who are our users?** Who will be using the new design?

- **What outcome will users get from the new design?** What problem will it solve for people?

- **What results are we seeking?** What problem will it solve for our organization?

- **What are our key metrics?** What do we need to measure against these outcomes?

Albert Einstein famously said *"If I had one hour to save the world, I would spend 55 minutes defining the problem and 5 minutes finding the solution."*

You need to ensure from the start of your research that you are not solving the wrong problem. The more time you focus on truly understanding the problem, the more chance you have for success.

2. Decide who to visit

A big mistake is looking to find the 'average' user; the average user does not exist. Instead of thinking about the 'average user' theoretical sampling should be considered.

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Your job as a user researcher is to discover what you do not know. The discovery process goes hand in hand with theoretical sampling, whereby you select individuals and groups according to the expected level of new insights.

3. Carry out the visits

You may have assumptions from the original design team meetings. This is the time to test those assumptions. Test those assumptions with the users during the interview process.

The purpose of the visit is to observe and interview the user in their environment.

Alongside testing your assumptions, you are looking to:
- Observe for long enough to ensure you make a fair assessment about what is going on
- Find out the following during the interview:
✓ The goals users are trying to achieve
✓ How users currently do it
✓ The parts they love or hate
✓ The difficulties they experience along the way
✓ The workarounds they use
- Record the interview - You will need the recording to analyze the data
- Take pictures of anything that surprised you

4. Analyze the data

Analyzing qualitative data is hard work.

User interviews produce vast quantities of data. You are looking for themes of an overall story in the data.

A common technique used to analyze the data is what's called an Affinity Diagram.

Here's the process to complete an Affinity diagram:
- **Understand your data.** Listen to the interviews and look at any insights you gained during your observations.
- **Transfer observations for each user onto sticky notes.** Focus on significant findings, key stories, behaviors, good design, bad design, workarounds, needs, goals, or anything else that surprised you.
- **Start your Affinity Diagram.** Cluster similar findings from different users into similar groups.
- **Look for insights.** Look into your clusters for key insights.

5. Share the results

Designers require insights into the day in the life of the users they are designing for.

Insights are the key word. Provide lots of clear and concise insights instead of a long report that few people read.

In Summary
- One key thought to keep in mind during the research - If you haven't discovered you were wrong about some things, you probably haven't completed the research correctly.
- The context of use is key! Surveys and focus groups may miss the context.
- An alternative method to surveys and focus groups is to examine what people do rather than what they say they do. You can achieve this via contextual research
- Remember, you don't know what you don't know!
- Consider surveys and focus groups once you have a detailed understanding of the user and their meaningful activity.

■ Stephen Bowden BSc (Hons) C.ErgHF MIEHF EurErg, is a chartered member of the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors (CIEHF) and registered with Centre for Registration of European Ergonomists (CREE). Experienced in ergonomics and human factors ensuring and integrated approach between humans, machines and work systems within industrial, office, manufacturing, defense and aerospace.

FROM THE INSIDE OUT:
FLIPPING THE SCRIPT ON MODERN ERGONOMICS

Find out how **Donna DeFalco** and **Jessica Faller** of the Health Enhancement Company, create a comprehensive ergonomics programs by focusing on current state and habits to become our own support system.

"My home office setup was good for a while, but now I feel sore and wiped out by lunch."

"I adjusted my screen height and lighting, but my low-grade headaches are not going away."

"I thought this chair was going to solve my posture issues, but I keep catching myself slouching anyway."

Just like there's an app for everything nowadays, for virtually every ergonomic concern, there's a tool. Desks, chairs, cushions, mats, keyboard trays, stands, surface arc mice, the list goes on, ad infinitum. Many of these products are excellent and have never been more in demand.

So why aren't they working?

Before we dash off an irate email to the manufacturer or upgrade our equipment yet again to the newest products on the market, let's take a breath and consider: **the best tools on the planet can't do anything if we're not in the right condition to use them.** A Cervelo R5 racing bike is useless to someone with a torn meniscus. Translated into ergonomic terms, if our mental and physical wellbeing needs are not met, our streamlined sit-stand mount system isn't going to help much.

Effective ergonomy is comprehensive ergonomy. To achieve this, we must work from the inside out.

2020 has been nothing short of extraordinary for us all. To say it's taking its toll is an understatement. We have been running on empty in the face of enormous uncertainty for nearly a year, constantly trying to reconfigure and keep on, some of us in crowded chaos, others in total isolation. The world has shifted, and so have our priorities. Right now, the first and most crucial area to address is mental fitness. Our mental state holds tremendous power over our physical health, functional, and cognitive abilities. It affects our work, our relationships, how we interact in the world, our sense of self, and our perception of reality. Fostering mental resilience requires daily awareness and targeted action. The rapper Ice Cube summed it up perfectly nearly 30 years ago: "Check yourself before you wreck yourself." That's what we must do now: check ourselves. Rather than rely only on external tools to support us, we need to focus on our current state and develop habits to become our own support system.

Sound heavy? It's not! Just ask a child- they're naturals at this. For example, I can tell you that movement throughout the day is an effective defense against mental distress, anxiety, hormonal sluggishness, physical discomfort. Kids will instinctively get up and play when they need to. They will walk away and take a time-out during a stressful moment. They reach for things that make them feel happy. Without being guided, they always seek balance.

It is something society has bred out of us, and to thrive, we must build it back in.

Make playful, meaningful movement a priority every day. Stepping away when you're feeling stressed about a looming deadline or exhausted from a round of Zoom meetings to be with yourself and moving - stretching, walking, dancing, whatever brings you pleasure - will have immediate effects on your body and your mindset. Look at it, not as exercise or a break, but as an instant recharge, a joyful necessity. It's then, revived physically and emotionally, that you can put all those ergonomic tools to work for you, as the final component of your strong support system.

■ Donna DeFalco is President of The Health Enhancement Company, a consultant and wellness program developer with over 30 years experience.

■ Jessica Faller is the Content Writer and Editor for the Health Enhancement Company (HEC).

THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

How do you move towards the hybrid workplace? **Guy Osmond** dissects the issue and provides some key pointers to get us started.

2020 brought us disruption on a scale beyond living memory. With the promise of widespread vaccination, UK businesses can finally start to formulate a plan for the future of their workforce and the corporate workplace.

A crucial question at the top of every corporate board's agenda is 'how much space do we need?' They should also be asking, 'How shall we use our space?' The first question cannot be answered without a plan for the second. For many employers, the appropriate timescale for any transition will be dependent on lease cycles; but, for all, there are vital questions to be asked immediately.

Inevitably, creating a future homeworking plan will be essential in identifying what corporate space is needed. The scale and apparent ease of homeworking adoption have accelerated a process that might have taken many employers years, rather than months, to embed without the COVID impetus.

However, there are pros and cons to review carefully, especially now that the honeymoon period of enforced homeworking has passed.

Here are my thoughts about some of the issues to address and some pointers on getting started.

Communication

The key to any change management process is excellent communication. Those businesses that have navigated successfully through this year's challenges will have done so with their personnel's help and support. Support and goodwill are only maintained through consistent, reliable, transparent communication. They will become even more critical in navigating the post-lockdown changes.

Culture

Do your managers trust their people, and do their people know they are trusted? Central to a successful transition is support for your middle managers who may feel the most threatened by these changes. Typically, they support their teams in new and challenging circumstances while under pressure from their superiors to maintain standards and productivity.

Managing a geographically dispersed team requires different skills and greater trust than when everyone is in the same location. Without trust, nothing works efficiently. If keystroke monitoring or activity tracking software was on your shopping list, then it is time to stop what you are doing and look carefully at your business culture and, probably, your whole recruitment process. It is time to start the cultural transition from management to leadership.

Vocabulary

This point may sound trivial, but you need to be communicating without ambiguity. Are you planning a 'Hybrid Workplace' or a 'Homeworking Program'? These may be terms you see in blogs and magazine articles. They may even be good titles to make you read such articles! But are they relevant to what you plan to do? If your

> " Managing a geographically dispersed team requires different skills and greater trust than when everyone is in the same location. Without trust, nothing works efficiently. "

non-office workers are distributed between homes, coffee shops, local hubs, satellite offices, and new 'third spaces' not invented yet, do you need a better catch-all term than 'homeworking'? Bear in mind that the distributed workforce concept is not new, and many employers have been operating 'agile' or 'smarter' working programs for a decade or more.

Premises

However, much of the corporate real estate you (eventually) decide to retain, the most important issue will be to create an attractive, welcoming, inclusive environment that your people want to visit. The expectation is that many will prefer to continue to work at home for at least part of the week, and those who have now been homeworking for several months will have established a new work-life balance. While some will be desperate to get back to a corporate environment, others will need to be enticed.

Think about what type of work will be done on your premises. Now, most recognize that concentrated, focused work is often done better at home while collaborative, creative work often needs a physical meeting place. What sort of spaces and furniture will you provide? It is becoming evident that rows of legacy desks will not fit the bill (and not just because of social distancing constraints). Look to the hospitality industry for ideas about creating suitable zones and opportunities for collaboration and serendipitous encounters.

Accommodation Utilization

Whether or not you decide that you need less corporate space will be essential to maximize its use. You may well find that three desks per ten employees are sufficient, but you will need to provide an array

of other setups to accommodate their various behaviors. An activity-based working approach will help to match needs and resources. Many employers identify personas to classify not only technical needs but space requirements too. Think about providing wi-fi in outside areas as well as all shared spaces.

Train your leaders to manage the timing of meetings and critical collective activities to ensure you don't find you have only Tuesday-Thursday occupancy. Make no assumptions and think afresh in terms of the new requirements rather than adapting old opinions.

Wellbeing

Over the last several months, there has been a welcome recognition of mental health issues for those working remotely or alone. Rightly, there has been a much more open discussion about stress, anxiety, and depression and ways to address them. Your organization will need a robust and comprehensive wellbeing program to accommodate both mental and physical health needs.

We have already seen that the mental health issues grew again in the second lockdown, not least because of colder, wetter weather and less daylight. We know that mental and physical health are intrinsically connected, and we have also seen an increase in physical health issues and musculoskeletal problems in particular.

In a rush to make the corporate space more dynamic and inviting, do not forget the personnel who have been working for months using unsuitable furniture at inappropriate heights and with insufficient support. They may be out of sight, but they should not be out of mind.

■ Guy Osmond has been a vociferous advocate of good workplace ergonomics for nearly 30 years. He has been an early champion of, amongst other things, laptop stands, quality seating, sit-stand desks, agile working and work from home programs. He writes, blogs and speaks regularly about workplace wellbeing issues and trends.

MANAGING STRESS FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH IN 2021

Kristel Bauer, wellness expert and podcaster, gives us some top tips to manage stress, from morning routines to breathing techniques.

We have all faced new stressors that have made having effective stress management techniques essential for optimal health and wellbeing. Whether it has been juggling working from home, managing e-learning, or dealing with quarantines and social distancing, we all have been in uncharted territory!

Being an Integrative Medicine Fellow and practicing in Integrative Psychiatry, I have learned the importance of supporting ourselves with daily self-care practices.

There truly is no better time than now to start moving in the direction of optimal health and wellbeing!

Here are some tips to manage stress and help you feel your best:

- Start your morning with a healthy routine and aim to take time for yourself first thing. I meditate in the morning, read some inspiring words, journal, and then exercise. It sets me up for feeling my best all day. I think this is key to a successful, fulfilling day.

- Start practicing mindfulness. Anchor yourself into the present moment by focusing on your breath and utilizing your five senses. Regular mindfulness practices can lead to positive changes in the brain!

- Optimize your breathing. A lot of people hold their breath and breathe shallowly with stress. Focus on relaxing your muscles and breathing deeply from your belly to de-stress.

- Start to meditate, even if it's for 5 minutes a day. Sit in a quiet space and focus on your breath.

- Exercise! It is a huge stress reliever, and it supports optimal mental health. Make sure to talk to your GP about any health conditions and specific exercise recommendations for you. I like to exercise outside, and being out in nature also supports optimal mental health.

- Practice gratitude. I start my day and end my day by expressing gratitude. This is a powerful practice that can shift your perspective from lack to abundance.

- Pay attention to your surroundings and environment. If possible, have windows where you work. Try to bring the outdoors in with plants, photographs of nature, and uplifting colors.

- Surround yourself with uplifting people and friends that inspire and support you. Find new ways to connect in the current times.

- Nutrition is vital for optimal mental health. Gut health impacts mental health. Limiting inflammatory foods and increasing plant-based foods is a great place to start.

- Pay attention to your inner dialogue and your self-talk. Journaling, mindfulness, and counseling are some examples of how you can work to break free of limiting beliefs and develop self-love.

- Make healthy sleep a priority.

■ Kristel Bauer is an accomplished and inspiring female entrepreneur who founded her company, Live Greatly, to support companies, organizations, and individuals in attaining optimal wellbeing and success. Her extensive experience in healthcare, as both a physician assistant and Integrative medicine fellow, equips her with a unique perspective and skillset to bridge the gap between traditional and holistic modalities to optimize wellbeing.
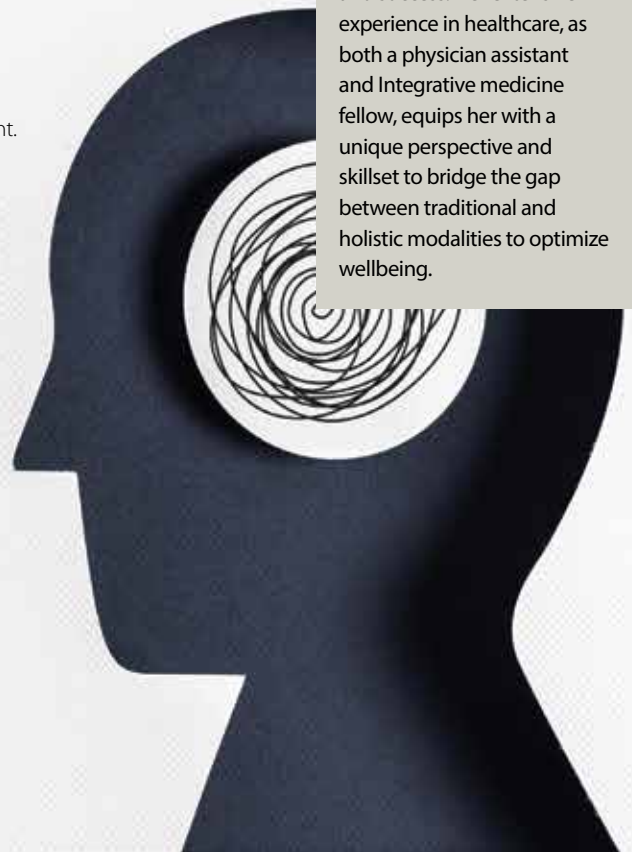
HAVE YOU INVESTED IN TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE WORKPLACE AND STILL NOT SEEN THE BENEFIT?

Mark Heaysman of Longitude6 gives the potential key to unlock benefits gained from the use of technology. If your company's belief system revolves around the theory that tech will provide the complete solution, this article is for you.

Over the past five years or so, the hard sell has been the probability of a 30% reduction in workplace musculoskeletal claims providers of technologies and services have used to attract new business. Where this number originated from is untraceable, much like the data to support it; yet, it seems to be the benchmark claim for many products and services related to technology promoted to prevent and reduce these kinds of injuries globally.

If this were true, the projection over five years at 30% reduction would have reduced claims to just under 25%. Have any of these users experienced such prolonged savings? While individual experiences vary, statistics from the governing bodies are not supporting this drop.

For example, Workcover Western Australia reported that from 2017-2018, 62% of musculoskeletal injury claims were for injuries caused by body stress, acquired while performing repetitive tasks. While the number of instances was less by 15% (Safework Australia) from 2000-2014, each claim's cost has risen significantly.

Further Details of Rising Costs

Between 2000–2001 and 2013–14, the median time lost for a serious claim rose by 33% from 4.2 working weeks to 5.6. Over the same period, the median compensation paid for a serious claim rose by 94%, from $5,200 to $10,100. After considering wage inflation over the period, the adjusted median compensation paid increased by only 23%.

This is not great news as far as reducing overall costs of claims is concerned for the companies experiencing higher insurance premiums, workers having to take time off for recovery, and additional labor costs for replacement contingencies. Of course, insurance companies have to turn a profit, hence the rise in claim values to offset the number of claims falling.

What are the Questions that Businesses Must Now Ask?

1. Will the cost of reducing injury claims be financially reflected if I introduce technology or service?
2. Why, after adopting technologies and services, do these numbers still exist?

The short answer is 'no' and 'because one technology or service on its own may not deliver the result you wish', and here's why.

As long as the focus remains driven by numbers and siloed approaches to workplace initiatives, the human element, where most of the expense lies, is not factored into that stated claim of a "30% reduction from using our product or technology".

Considering the rise in recovery times from musculoskeletal injuries is at 33%, it negates the magic 30% reduction in total costs resulting from claims. That is only the direct cost of replacing the injured worker (not including options such as engaging consultants, changing providers of rehabilitation or onsite services, changing insurance policies and brokers, buying the latest technology and management system, introducing pre-employment processes, and fitness for work trainers).

With that in Mind, What Questions Should You Ask?

1. How do we make a change?
2. What can we do differently to achieve a sustainable reduction with injuries to our most valuable asset, our people?

We invest in resources and capital on compliance, buildings, and workplace equipment and maintenance to be more productive and save costs, weighing up all the options and measurables to ensure optimal return on investment.

So, why not when we invest in initiatives around injury reduction?

The only difference is we need to consider that the commodity in question is the most variable factor imaginable, a person, a human being. Aging, different lifestyles, decision-making processes, and life stories are crucial stressors in the evaluation process yet are sometimes ignored even if they are known.

With workplaces becoming more fast-paced, demanding, and structured in their processes, the system is trying to fit this variable into a fixed environment – people into tasks.

We need to create a workplace that accounts for this fact. Our people within their work environment are complex issues, all relying on environment, decisions, training, knowledge, self-management, and discipline to create that safe workplace dream.

If we approach each element of our injury and cost reduction model with the lens of each informing the other, we could achieve our goal of a sustainable reduction in injury and cost.

Doing the same with the services and activities we provide, deciding the roles our people undertake, and most importantly, the information that informs those decisions and initiatives completes the process.
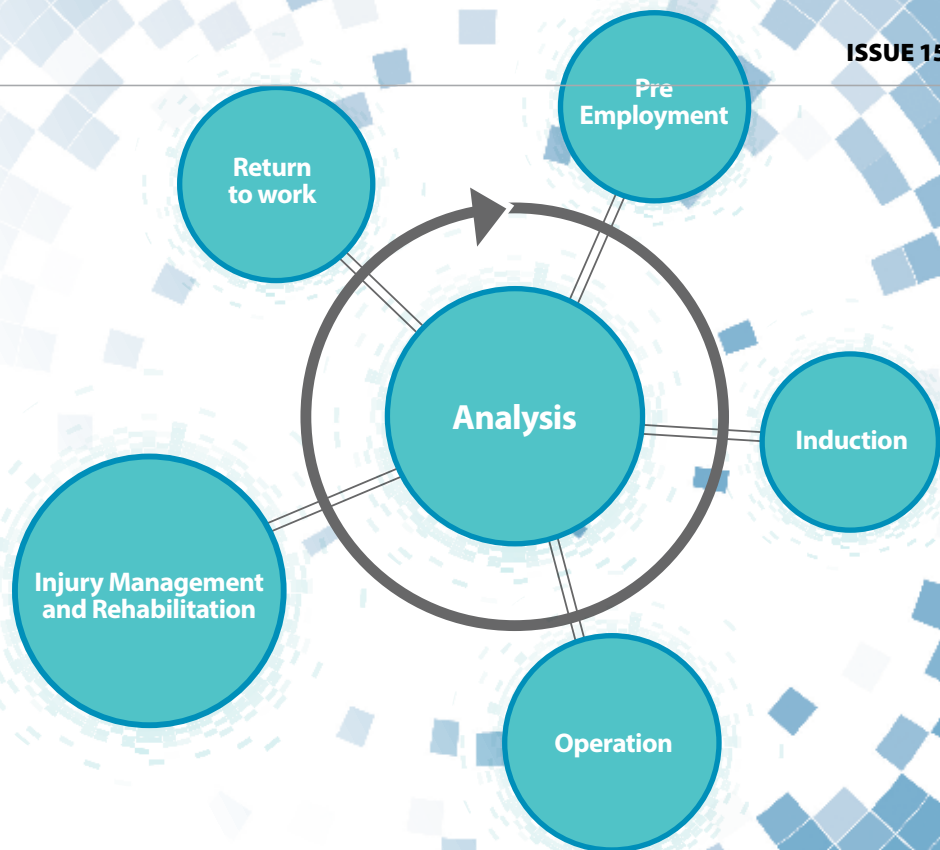
This idea is not new; in fact, our world is reliant on this very concept – An ecosystem, each element informing and benefiting the next part.

In the workplace, this can and is most efficiently done using technologies, learnings, and technical and professional skills to create a symbiotic and effective ecosystem approach.

Before an employee is hired, the learnings and knowledge gained in that process must be carried through that person's work-life cycle. Using the right data can deliver such a result.

We call it the Delta Method of analysis to develop the Longitude6 Ecosystem approach. It can be called our ecosystem; it should be called your ecosystem.

What could be achieved when using technologies to inform our ecosystem? Maybe, that mystical 30% or why not 100%? That should be the objective, and it can be achieved.

Pre Employment

Return to work

Analysis

Induction

Injury Management and Rehabilitation

Operation

■ Mark Heaysman is the CEO of Longitude6. He has a background in workplace safety from managing a large multi-national logistics business, management systems design and implementation to selling a clinical technology into the workplace. In recent times the team at Longitude6 have been building this Ecosystem approach for companies in the UK, USA and Australia.

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ADAPTING TO THE NEW NORMAL:
REMOTE WORKING CHALLENGES-EMPLOYEE BENEFIT SOLUTIONS

How is your workforce adapting to remote working? **John Cox**, Alliant Vice President, shares some essential tools to ensure your employees are ready to perform at their optimal levels.

As Charles Darwin once said, *"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is most adaptable to change."*

Last year, many companies had to put that quote to action when the COVID-19 outbreak hit. It was no longer safe to be in the office, and it seemed like implementing "remote working" was the only option that would allow for the continuity of many businesses.

Zoom, Google Docs, Dropbox, and Slack replaced face-to-face meetings, physical documents, filing systems, and day-to-day chatter with colleagues. Some companies had similar systems already in place, and hence, the transition was not as drastic. But, for others, it was a whole other way of doing things that they had never previously explored. To them, it was a monumental shift, and of course, like many shifts, it was almost impossible to avoid the myriad of problems and obstacles that could come along with them.

But What Problems Did Employees Face?

I mean, remote working does sound great, right? More time with the family, less time spent in traffic, and, of course, no distracting conversations in the office.

But apparently, it does not work for everyone.

The lack of social interactions and not having a standardized workplace setting has caused productivity and overall morale to dwindle. Moreover, the lack of boundaries between personal life and work-life has had a significant toll on many people.

Fast forward to now, and suddenly working on your couch all day does not sound as enticing. It quickly became apparent that some

adjustments had to be implemented for remote working to be an effective long-term strategy.

Corporations can do several things to help alleviate some of the issues usually associated with remote working.

We Have Compiled Our Favorite Categories Below:

1. **Co-working space**
Some people rely on the workplace to put them in the "zone" because sometimes their home environment is not adequate for working, or there are many distractions to keep them from performing at optimal levels. That is why providing employees with reimbursement for a coworking space could go a long way to improve productivity.

2. **Company trips**
Remote working could lead to isolation and can make employees feel a bit "distanced." This distance could be quite problematic, especially when onboarding new employees who have had no previous bonding experiences with their coworkers. That is why organizing some trips, or even small outings will help create a sense of belonging that will increase your employees' loyalty to the firm and improve their mental wellbeing.

3. **Home-delivery subscription services**
As a result of the pandemic-induced changes in our lifestyles, we have seen several startups rise in the space of home-delivery subscription services. So, why not subscribe to a dog toy startup that would send a new toy every month to all your remote workers who own pets? Maybe home care services? Or a food delivery subscription or even a coffee-of-the-month subscription?

Do not underestimate how small gestures like these can affect your employees' morale and overall retention rate.

4. **Wellbeing tools and services**
In general, the biggest concerns associated with remote working are the number of physical and mental health issues that could arise. Instead of physically going to work, walking around all day, and interacting with people, you can now do everything from just your bedroom; this could have dire health repercussions over time. That is why it is of critical importance that employers consider increasing the money they spend on health and wellbeing programs for their employees. Companies should start by looking at their employee healthcare data because many might already be struggling with

chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, obesity, metabolic syndrome, and musculoskeletal issues. The new unhealthy habits of remote working may further exacerbate matters, leading to higher health claim costs and lower productivity.

That is why the following are must-haves for your corporate employee benefits plan:
• Resilience and mindset training
• Direct primary care
• Digital therapeutics to treat chronic diseases and musculoskeletal issues
• Nutrition programs + coaching
• Incentives to get their preventive diagnostics completed
Ultimately, remote working was already on the rise. However, the pandemic outbreak has expedited its adoption across all industries.

That is why employers should "adapt" as needed using the tools above to ensure that their employees are ready to perform at optimal levels in this "new norm."

■ John Cox has been consulting employee benefits for 27 years, and has worked with many 500 companies, as well as small businesses. John researches the way employers use technology and tools to help employees change the behaviours that cause them to be sick and underperform at work. John is a passionate believer in proactive healthcare.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND THE CHANGING FACE OF THE WORKPLACE

The workplace is changing, but how do you ensure that you meet the health needs of employees. **Jonathan Daniel** of FitBack provides his recommendations.

The onset of the global pandemic in March 2020 dictated a significant change in the way companies work around the world. Overnight they saw a shift from office-based employment to millions of employees working from home.

The Global Home Worker

As employees flooded out of their offices at the start of lockdown, employers' responses to how best to manage this varied considerably. In some circumstances, employees grabbed any equipment they could get their hands on, leaving some offices barren.

Conversely, some businesses maintained that no equipment was to be taken away from the offices and equipped employees in alternative ways with varying urgency.

Some organizations made personal allowances available for employees to purchase their equipment, which had mixed results. Occasionally, employees selected chairs and desks based on their newly found workplace color schemes rather than the fittest for purpose.

A global surge in online procurement of office equipment made it increasingly difficult to source anything from laptops to keyboards and mice to facilitate

the setup of the home office and the continuity of business activities. As a result, there was often a lengthy delay in employees receiving the right equipment, and we started to see the physical impact of this.

Despite the initial considerations for basic IT equipment, the considerations of working environments and physical health was perhaps an afterthought. During the early days of the

first lockdown, when we first started supporting those new to homeworking through video consultations, we were welcomed into all sorts of working environments. From kitchen worktops to couches and laptop balancing acts on bedside cabinets and pillows in bed. Unsurprisingly, it wasn't long before people complained of aches and pains due to poor working postures and a change to their regular routines.

The Home Worker Returns to the Office

As we enter 2021, the anticipated temporary move from the office to homeworking shows no signs of abating any time soon, and potentially the landscape of office working may have changed forever. Is this a favorable situation? A possible opportunity for both employer and employee? Or, should we be more restrained and look beyond the noticeable financial gains of reducing office space, introducing hot-desking, and promoting long-term home working?

From the employee's perspective, there are positives and negatives to home working. Homes have essentially become our offices for many. It is effortless for employees to slip into working extended hours or lose the daily commute that offers opportunities for physical activities - whether it is cycling to work, walking to the train station, or purely postural changes of getting in and out of the car. Perhaps, on the flip side, more time may now exist for exercise and new routines that could have positive impacts on individuals` lives. The loss of workplace gyms or office-based health and wellbeing initiatives could be one of the drawbacks of this new way of working. It is not possible to give a definitive answer as to the benefits or lack thereof.

Employer Obligations

For the employer, where do their responsibilities lie with maintaining physical and environmental wellbeing, and what are their obligations?

Most recently, the HSE has stated that employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for home workers as for any other workers. How will this be achieved on mass?

Guidance is provided to encourage discussion and a risk assessment framework for working from home, whether permanent or temporary. As an employer, you should consider:

- How will you keep in touch with them?
- What work activity will they be doing (and for how long)?
- Can it be done safely?
- Whether you need to put control measures in place to protect them

If contact is low, workers may feel disconnected, isolated, or abandoned. It can affect stress levels and mental health alongside possible physical problems.

Many employers are now talking about a blended approach to office work in the near future, including a mix of home, office, and even a third space such as local satellite offices or hubs. In this scenario, all environments must be conducive to support the physical health of the employee. This support is likely to include advising employees on optimal working postures, recommendations for exercise, and even the safe transportation of laptops and other equipment between the home and office. Dedicated workstations, including boards with pinned photos of family and pets, may well be a thing of the past as some offices may become a more flexible space.

Consequently, executive teams contemplating a blended workplace future, with a mixture of home working and office-based activities, will need to consider employees' physical wellbeing as part of their legal obligation. In my opinion, this will not be a once size fits all approach.

The Effects on Our Physical Health

We certainly aren't designed to sit for long periods, and we are in danger of becoming chair shaped if we do. Our bodies are designed to move, so regularly changing

position is essential to prevent aches and pains from setting in. Micro breaks throughout the day are recommended when sitting for long periods, and changing positions every 45 mins or so is advisable.

It's imperative that employees take, and are encouraged to take, regular breaks from their workstations wherever they are working. The latest research shows that even if you exercise outside of work, when you remain sedentary without changing positions for long periods, you increase the risk of chronic health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers, so it's certainly something to stand up for!

In our experience, many individual's exercise routines have changed since the pandemic. Some employees are now exercising more than they used to due to having more available time working from home. We have ironically had to advise some individuals to reduce exercise levels due to picking up injuries from overindulgence. We have also seen many who are exercising

less frequently due to the loss of their daily commute - for example, individuals who would typically cycle or run to work.

Employers must be aware of the health and wellbeing of their employees. When employees work from home, there is a potential for them to become "out of sight, out of mind." It's imperative to consider this.

Presenteeism due to musculoskeletal issues while working from home may be a real problem that the employer is unaware of. For example, employees are more likely to take time off work with a musculoskeletal issue if their commute to work aggravated their condition.

Although sickness absence rates may be low, it doesn't necessarily mean that employees aren't suffering and need support. When employees cannot be seen, these times are where regular communication is essential.

What Can Employers Do to Promote Musculoskeletal Health Among Employees Working from Home?

- Virtual physiotherapy consultations for employees suffering from musculoskeletal issues
- Ensure employees have access to the right DSE and know the process for requesting equipment or a DSE assessment if this is available
- Provide advice on working safely at home
- Encourage employees to move regularly throughout the day through regular communication or apps/software that provide prompts and reminders
- Provide health assessments to assess employees'

musculoskeletal health, mental health, and overall wellbeing so they can provide interventions based on their findings
- Provide employees with advice around musculoskeletal health and injury prevention through webinars, online exercise classes, health and wellbeing challenges, and interdepartmental physical challenges
- Encourage employees to replace previous commute time with exercise time
- Provide online exercise classes that cater to a full range of fitness levels from basic Pilates to high-intensity interval training classes, so there is something for everyone

I would suggest that the changing climate offers opportunities for the future. Any financial savings realized by businesses through a reduction in the traditional office space should be invested in their employees to ensure they are working in the most appropriate environment with the right equipment to optimize their physical health.

■ Jonathan founded FitBack Physiotherapy in 2007. Having previously worked in the NHS, private practice and professional sport, he found his skills highly transferrable into the world of occupational health. FitBack has successfully grown through its exceptional outcomes for businesses they work with. Jonathan now manages a team of highly experienced physiotherapists and support staff who are helping businesses across the UK and globally.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY: MAKING TOTAL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT YOUR NORTH STAR

What's your North Star? SHE Software's **Simon Cooke** looks up to the night sky to find a way to improve the performance of health and safety programs.

For centuries, sailors and other travelers in the northern hemisphere have used the North Star as a guide because it marks the way due north. In recent years, Silicon Valley companies commandeered the idea of the North Star as a guide and created the North Star Metric.

The original idea was to define the one metric that best captured the core value that a product delivers to customers.

Over time, the North Star Metric has morphed into an aspirational metric that guides a company, department, project, or team, such as "20,000 new students in three years" for the admissions department of an online university or "25% reduction in production waste" for a factory.

So, what would be a good North Star for a health and safety team? Let's look at why we think it should be total employee engagement and what can guide you there.

Company Culture Drives Engagement

Every aspect of your operations is influenced by culture - from your processes to policies to how motivated your employees are. Having a robust and unified culture plays a significant role in achieving business goals and improving overall performance.

A Columbia University study shows that the likelihood of job turnover at a business with a positive company culture is 14% compared to 48% for a company with a weak or negative company culture.

Numerous studies have shown that a unified, strong company culture increases and improves employee engagement. According to a recent Forbes article, highly engaged teams in a positive company culture increase a company's profitability by 21%. Companies with cultures that enrich and improve employee engagement reduce absenteeism by up to 41% and attrition up to 59%.

By contrast, Gallup estimates that disengaged employees cost organizations £230 billion in lost productivity each year. By contrast, the Forbes article also says that engagement and wellness are closely intertwined. Healthy employees are happier and show higher rates of job satisfaction. Engaged employees show up to work with a positive attitude and are less vulnerable to stress, which

is a cause of poor health. Engaged employees also have a positive effect on safety.

Engagement Drives Safety

In 2016, Gallup studied more than 1.8 million global employees and their workplaces to determine how engagement impacted safety. It found that employees and workplaces with high levels of engagement saw fewer workplace accidents than those with lower engagement.

For example, organizations rated in the top 25% for engagement had 70% fewer incidents than those in the bottom 25%.

A joint research project between HR firm Aon Hewitt and Queen's University of Canada, which took place over 10 years and surveyed 110,000 employees, also established a link between high employee engagement and safety. Absentee rates were 20% lower, and turnover was also 26% lower in businesses with strong employee engagement in health and safety.

When a workforce takes ownership of safety, productivity improves. With the threat of incidents reduced, productivity increases, and employees become even more engaged. They are committed to helping the business succeed —safely.

For this reason, total employee engagement should be your health and safety North Star!

## Total Employee Engagement in Health and Safety: How to Get There

Engaged employees are more likely to buy into the importance of safety if it improves their productivity and drives increased profitability. They want your business to succeed and do not want to

see anybody get hurt. You can get that buy-in and encourage engagement by:

- **Making it easy to participate:** If taking part in health and safety is difficult, people won't do it. Remove manual, antiquated, and paper-based processes.
- **Responding to feedback:** Close the feedback loop when an employee submits information, and other employees are empowered to communicate more.
- **Delivering visibility to all:** When you share safety performance reporting with everyone, they can see the difference they are making.
- **Scheduling inspections:** Regular inspections go a long way toward making employees feel safe and facilitating engagement.

What else can you do to engage employees and leadership in safety as part of your North Star? Consider health and safety management software that eliminates barriers to participating in health and safety. It should be accessible on mobile so your employees can complete audits, inspections, and assessments as part of their daily activities, 24/7, online or offline. No more searching the office for the correct form and a pencil.

Health and safety management software can help close the feedback loop by assigning corrective and preventative actions with visibility to track progress to resolution. Stakeholders identify trends, track leading indicators and predict where preventative interventions will be most effective—so that everyone in your organization can benefit from your health and safety programs.
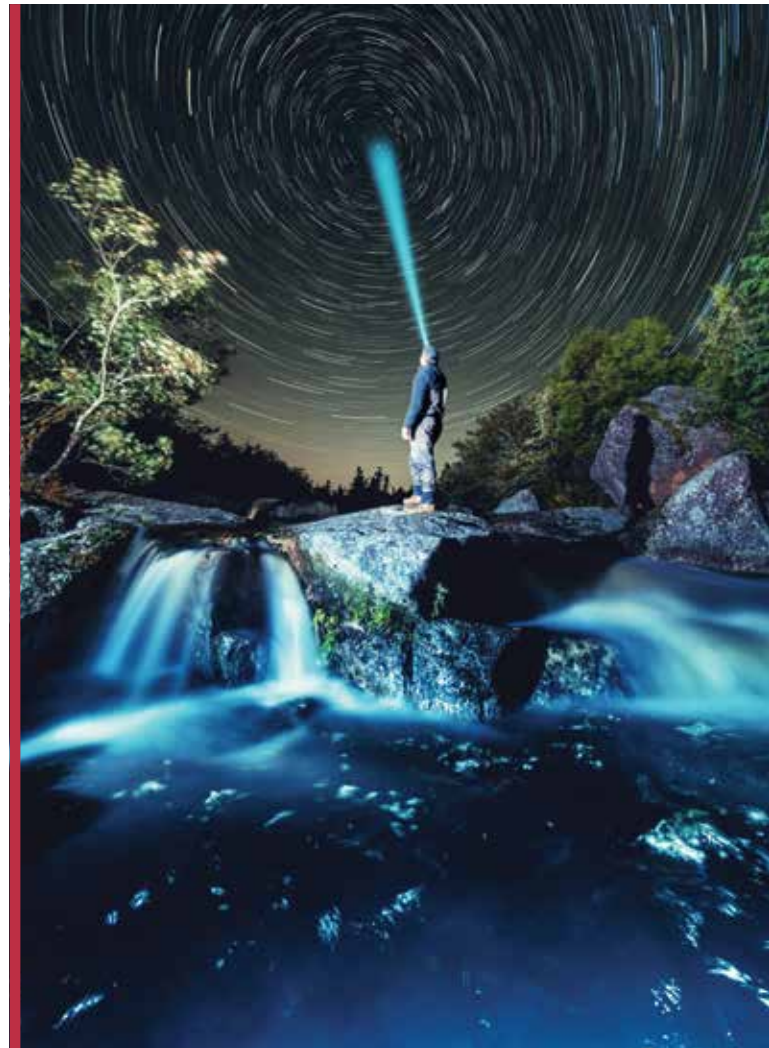
■ Simon Cooke leads SHE Software's Global Alliances program with partners in the UK, Netherlands, North America and Australia. With over 20 years' experience in the HSE industry, Simon is passionate about working collaboratively with partners, helping with the application of technology to help solve customers' Health and Safety challenges.

YOUR TEAM'S WELLBEING VS TOILET PAPER

Should we focus on our wellbeing or buying toilet paper? **Harry Bliss** of Champion Health gives us the lowdown on addressing workplace wellbeing, one sheet at a time.

Health and wellbeing is everyone's business, quite literally.

If there's anything that 2020 has taught us, it's that our most important asset is truly our people.

However, what if I told you that the vast majority of organizations in 2019 spent more on toilet paper that proactively keeping their employees well? Although it's alarming, this has been the reality for too long. In this article, we'll explore the business case for investing in your team's wellbeing, as it's no longer a 'nice to have'; it's a 'need to have.'

Firstly, every single area of your health and wellbeing influences your daily performance levels. It is the same for every single member of your team too. Surely this is enough to make the business case?

If my mood is low, I'm less creative. If I'm tired, I'm more likely to make mistakes. If my back is causing me agony, I cannot concentrate. But, let's move away from the anecdotal and quite simply painstakingly obvious comments. Let's use data to establish a business case. Hard data that cannot be disputed throughout all levels of the business.

The Gold Standard in Workplace Wellbeing

Early in 2020, Deloitte published their second report on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace entitled 'Refreshing the Case for Investment.' They pulled together all of the gold-standard research papers on workplace mental health initiatives into one easy-to-understand report. Once again, this had a damning conclusion: workplace health initiatives, on average, return the investment by x5. When the initiatives are proactive, the returns are as great as x11. Let me explain.

The report broke down the average cost of poor mental health to every sector. The average cost is £1,652 and £1,716 per employee per year, respectively, for the private and public sectors. Let's put that into context. For an organization within the private sector, with 1,000 staff members, the average cost of poor mental health is £1.65 million annually. It sounds ridiculous. This cost could be more or less in your organization, but you'd be guessing without running analytics yourselves. However, even if it is half of that, that is still £800k per year. Let's break down where these costs are.

The Costs of Wellbeing

Firstly, there's absenteeism. We're all aware of it, and we often use this as the prime measure of wellbeing. However, absence isn't the primary issue. Absence data is a lag indicator and is regularly misreported. There's then staff turnover. Oxford Economics stated that the average cost of staff turnover for an employee earning over £25,000 per year is higher than £30,000. With staff turnover closely linked to employee wellbeing, there is a high cost to organizations. However, the highest cost is presenteeism.

Presenteeism is working while we're ill. It sounds strange; but, when we break it down, it makes total sense. How many times have we felt vacant on Zoom calls or felt tired at 2 pm? These are examples of presenteeism.

Champion Health's data discovered that >40% of the workforce are working through illness; this has a monumental impact on business performance. To prevent your best salesperson from burning out, reduce the risk of data breaches due to tiredness. To stop your admin assistant's back from keeping them off work for 6-months, we need to invest in our team's wellbeing.

Unsurprisingly, workplace health initiatives provide a significant return on investment for the organization if invested wisely. The average return on investment for workplace mental health initiatives had risen in 2017 from 4x to 5x in 2020. Let that sink in. For every $10,000 invested in mental health initiatives, on average, this will return $50,000. Now, for smaller organizations, it may be more applicable to invest $1,000 and for larger to be > $100,000, but the same principle still applies. On average, you're likely to not only get your money back; you're likely to get it back multiple times over.

The Key to Maximizing Return

There are some key rules to maximizing your return:

Rule no.1: You need data on what areas require investment. Is it anxiety? Is it back pain? Is it tiredness? Let the data decide, not our gut instinct.

Rule no.2: Use this data to develop a proactive health and wellbeing strategy.

Rule no.3: Ensure your strategy focuses on prevention and intervention at the heart of it.

Without using those three rules, you run the danger of reacting to issues when it's too late or, even worse, misallocating resources to areas that don't require attention and missing the areas that do.

The Deloitte data backs this up further. Initiatives that used data through an online health assessment at the start of their wellbeing program had an ROI between 7-11x.
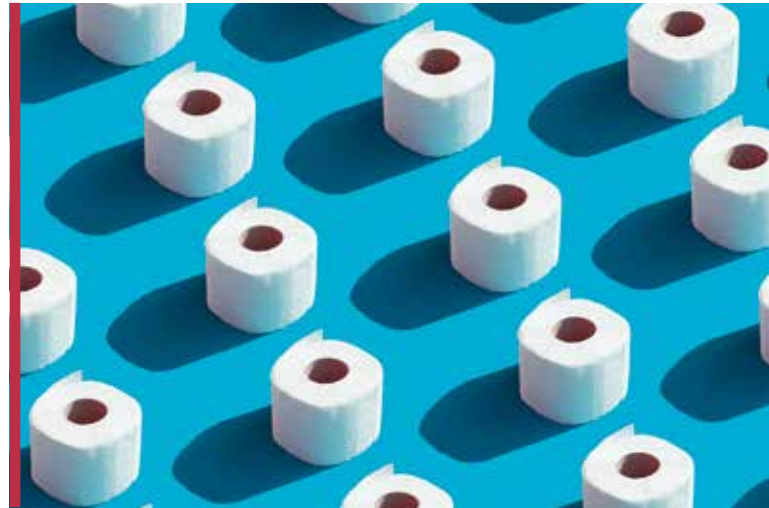
A case in point is Unilever's wellbeing program, which was researched by McDaid et al.

(2012). The department had 500 members of staff. The cost of the intervention was £80 per employee, therefore £40,000 over the year. They did a health assessment to gather the initial data. Off the back of this data, they built a proactive strategy that included seminars and interventions tailored to the issues presented. This data returned a whopping £347,000 in just one year. The breakdown was a return of £110,527 for absenteeism and £277,195 for presenteeism.

Now, there has been one issue with what I've discussed with you today. It's predominantly focused on mental wellbeing. I don't want to make any bones about it: mental wellbeing is a vital area to focus on in your strategy. However, the return on investment is likely to be even greater when it is multifaceted and focuses on all areas of wellbeing, ranging from financial wellbeing to mental health. Back pain, poor sleep, colds, and flu are also huge areas that require focus and attention.

In Summary:

- Employee wellbeing is an integral part of the performance of the business. It is not a 'benefit' or a 'perk.'
- The costs of poor employee wellbeing are now well documented for every industry.
- When presenting the business case to the board, use the Deloitte statistics to underpin the rationale.
- The return on investment has never been so well documented – the average ROI currently stands at x5.
- To maximize your return on investment, use data, act upon that data to develop a proactive strategy that focuses on prevention and early intervention of all areas of wellbeing.

References and Further Reading:

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McDaid et al., 2012: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215626/dh_126386.pdf

■ Harry is the Co-Founder of Champion Health; digital workplace health specialists that focus on all areas of wellbeing. Champion's aim is to turn awareness into action, through a single online platform that has everything your team needs to proactively look after their wellbeing. Having lost a friend to suicide due to workplace pressures, Harry and his team at Champion Health are on a mission to support organizations, support their team.

DOES TRACKING HEALTH AND SAFETY MATURITY IMPROVE CULTURE, PERFORMANCE, AND ENGAGEMENT AND REDUCE WORKPLACE INJURY RATES?

Andy Hutt of Safe365 shows how tracking health and safety maturity can improve performance across the business.

As the saying goes, "A fence at the top of the cliff is better than an ambulance at the bottom."

In the context of work health, safety and wellbeing, quantitative evidence is increasing to underpin the relationship between improved health and safety and reduced rates of injuries to workers. It has always been a challenge to track health and safety maturity even when using "all-singing, all-dancing" operational management systems that cost £10s, if not £100s of thousands a year. Using the Safe365 Safety Index™ (an indicator of business health and safety maturity), across 4,500 customer data points, we demonstrated the correlation of how one affects the other. In this example, we touch on two specific industries - construction and energy. Furthermore, is there a tangible return on investment, and where should one focus their efforts?

Looking at the Data

When two large higher risk industries - construction and energy - are compared, the data shows significant variation in worker injury rates between the sectors in terms of fatalities, lost time injuries, incidents, and reported unsafe work conditions.
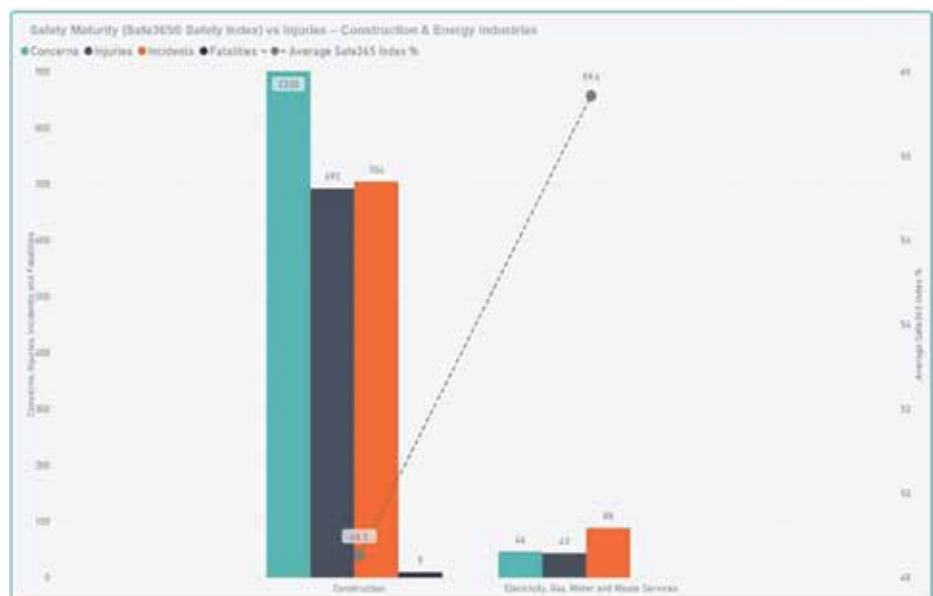
Safe365® measured the health and safety maturity of businesses operating in the same industry verticals using 84 elements across leadership, risk management, engagement, training, culture, and systems related to legislation and ISO45001 best practice. To show a differential in maturity, the Safe365® Safety Index™ was expressed across the same two industries.

The Results

The construction industry reported a significantly higher degree of injuries than the energy industry, which generated comparatively fewer injuries for the same period. Construction scored an industry average Safe365 Safety Index™ of 48.5%, demonstrating a significantly lower health and safety maturity level. The electricity, gas, water, and waste services industry, by comparison, had a considerably higher maturity level with an industry average Safe365 Safety Index™ of 59.4% and a correspondingly and significantly lower injury profile. Both industries have large workforces with significant operational exposure to health, safety, and wellbeing risk. The 11% difference may not sound much, but the reduction in safety concerns, incidents, injuries, and fatalities is significant in reality.

Safety Maturity (Safe365® Safety Index) vs Injuries – Construction & Energy Industries

The Learning

While further longitudinal research is required, there is increasing evidence to support the proposition of systematically measuring, improving, and monitoring a business' health and safety maturity is likely to support an outcome of reduced injury to workers in the workplace.

Whether in construction, energy, or any other industry, implementing the disciplines of measuring maturity, improving capability and culture, monitoring continuous improvement, and having constant visibility of progress and accountability can be a simple exercise that would likely:

1. Reduce the probability of injury to workers
2. Support officer due diligence and effective governance
3. Ensure the business remains efficient in using resources to improve in critical areas
4. Ensure the business can benchmark itself against other companies, both industry peers and beyond

5. Increase the attractiveness of both the commercial and employment brand of the business

A local authority measured their maturity over two years; the main objective was to convince the board that measuring and improving maturity – building the fence at the top of the cliff – had dramatic and positive implications of reducing injury rates and proving a return on investment.

They calculated that for every 1% increase in maturity, they could save £5.07 per employee due to better safety culture and increased overall performance. Extrapolating this out across the 9,000 FTE business, then we start to see a measurable ROI that becomes compelling. The average maturity increase across all industry sectors is 6%.

Of course, there are lots of other hard savings to be made, such as reduced claims, lower insurance fees, notwithstanding other more comprehensive benefits such as increased worker productivity, improved culture, among others.

Further drilling into the maturity data shows some of the strengths and weaknesses of an organization's overall health, safety, and wellbeing ecosystem.

A study in June 2020 showed that across the 84 leading indicator elements of the maturity model, having a health and safety system and policies in place was the top performer. No real surprises there, as it is the law! However, what was not so good, and the bottom performer, was the lack of business directors not being inducted into the company's health and safety regime.

As we all know, good culture comes from the top! On a positive note, these leading indicators are what a business needs to improve and, maybe, look for that 1% improvement in health and safety maturity. If you can measure it, you've got a baseline from which to improve.

So, maybe building the fence at the top of the cliff is not such a bad idea. The ambulance at the bottom will not be so busy, surely!

■ Following a military career in the 80s, Andy has been in the software/high-tech industry for over 30 years, predominantly working with start-up organizations or companies looking to significantly grow. For the past 6 years, Andy has been working within the health & safety sector and is currently heading up UK and European operations for Safe365.

REMOTE WORKING CONSIDERATIONS

Peter Kinselley and **Pamela Gellatly** give us a rundown of the core considerations for introducing remote work into the workplace.

When developing or introducing remote working, organizations should consider formalizing their remote working programs by ensuring that the following issues are developed:

- Remote working forms part of the employee contract of employment
- The workplace is defined so there is no ambiguity of where work takes place
- Work equipment for home working is provided as part of the contract but is subject to a risk assessment
- Remote working forms part of the occupational health and safety program and as a minimum is:

o Risk assessed – for both the physical and psychological home working environment and workstation together with an assessment of any individual risks

o Staff are provided with training on these risk and remote working

o Managers are training to support remote workers and to understand the risks

o A workplace occupational health and safety program is developed to support remote working covering psychological and physical risks with additional support for those who have disabilities (including neurodiverse conditions)

Reflecting the Practicalities of Remote Work

As a business Cardinus Risk Management advise a range of clients on their responsibilities to keep staff safe when using display screen equipment (this includes laptops, PCs, tablets and other forms of input devices).

While global health and safety legislation places a duty of care on the employer, the first steps to remote working are to ensure that remote workers have a suitable contract that

reflects the practicalities of working remotely and puts protections for the business.

Examples of this include considerations of what equipment is provided, who owns it, where can the items be used, are alternative locations such as a café a suitable work space, will the items be insured by the business or the individual?

The contract should be clear about the worker's primary place of work, which may well be their home address.

It's crucial to make sure that remote workers understand that they have a personal obligation to carry out their duties for a certain number of hours per working day, and for taking proper rest breaks, given that the employer will be unable to physically monitor and enforce working time on a day-to-day basis.

Another issue to think carefully about is the equipment including furniture, IT equipment, and other items that a worker may be provided with, or required to use, in order to carry out their role remotely.

If the business provides equipment, consideration needs to be given to who will be responsible for insuring it in case of damage, or if it is lost or stolen from the worker's home or place where they are remote working. There is a requirement to have arrangements in place for the maintenance of any business property and for its recovery if a worker leaves the business.

Whatever the decision on the provision and protection of property, it should be clearly documented in the worker's contract.

Employer's Duty of Care

Having established a key principle that remote working can be a part of an employee's contract the employer needs to understand the legal obligation they have to their employee.

For example, in the UK the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations and the Health and Safety (Display Screen Regulations) an employer is required to:
- Assess the risks of ill health to employees (physical and psychological)
- Inform them of the risks and providing instruction

- Train on controlling the risks.

Further duties are applied if the member of staff meets the requirements of the Equality Act and requires workplace adaptations to support them and their condition. Similar responsibilities will occur in other regions across the globe.

You should consider the impact of less formal (remote) working arrangements which can result in concerns that there might be a loss of occupational safety and health (OSH) protection for individuals.

The same can be said in respect of psychological risks. There is currently increased reporting from remote workers who are suffering from stress, anxiety and depression and emotions such as loneliness, irritation, worry, and guilt.

There may well be other considerations in the environmental reporting, such as how you capture your remote working emissions. You should look at schemes like ESOS or SECR.

Peter Kinselley has over 20 years experience of successfully implementing health and safety management systems within large corporate organizations.

Pamela Gellatly is the founder of Healthcare RM. For 17 years they have provided an integrated approach to Employee Health Risk Management.

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info@ergonomics.co.uk
ergonomics.co.uk
0345 345 0898

Osmond Ergonomics has supported the health, wellbeing and workplace productivity of employees for almost 30 years. Originally, this was through ergonomics assessments, specialist seating and accessories but now our scope includes a full spectrum of training, education, furniture, seating, accessories and support services to meet the challenges of homeworking and the rapidly evolving demands of the corporate office. Our monthly newsletters and regular webinars are free resources to keep you informed about trends and solutions for today's workplace in all its many forms.

Alliant

John Cox
john.cox@alliant.com
alliant.com
512-825-1289

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Kristel Bauer
kristel@livegreatly.co
www.livegreatly.co

Live Greatly aims to help people awaken to their ultimate potential, harness their mental state, and live the life they have always wanted.

Kristel Bauer believes in the power of the mind, and she provides her clients tools to push past the boundaries of fear to live fully from a place of love and joy.

Kristel shares her knowledge through her top 100 self-improvement podcast, Live Greatly where she inspires others to attain success without sacrificing their well-being.

Longitude6

Ryan Brittain
ryanb@longitude6.com
www.longitude6.com
+44 779 341 1401

Longitude6 was founded on the belief that while there's good tech in the marketplace, there is a need to support companies in how to use this information to deliver sustainable and measurable change, not just talk about it.

Longitude6 has grown quickly to support the reduction of workplace MSK injuries, claims and the associated costs to people and organizations.

By harnessing advanced tech that provides data and analysis about people and the jobs they do, Longitude6 provides unparalleled insight into what has previously been mostly assumed or even guessed.

Longitude6 operates in the USA, UK, New Zealand and Australia.

Core Performance

Julie Hutchinson
Julieh@coreperformance.us
www.coreperformance.us
512-656-4822

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(+44) 1423 608080

FitBack are a leading provider of Specialist Occupational Health Physiotherapy and Health & Wellbeing Initiatives to businesses both across the UK and globally.

Established in 2007, they have years of experience working with many different industries from SMEs to FTSE 100 companies. FitBack provide on and offsite support for businesses. Since the start of the COVID 19 pandemic, they have seen a huge increase in homeworker support through their video assessments for both ergonomics and musculoskeletal issues.

SHE Software

www.shesoftware.com
+1 (866) 339 1728

SHE Software are experts in the application of technology to solve customer's health and safety challenges. Assure, our comprehensive, adaptable and intuitive health and safety solution was developed to help customers ensure compliance, streamline processes and increase employee engagement. Our mobile first technology makes safety part of the day job, getting everyone involved and contributing to the digitization of the workplace.

Champion Health

Harry Bliss
harry.bliss@championhealth.co.uk
championhealth.co.uk
+44 (0) 7804 794509

Champion Health are digital workplace health specialists, that focus on all areas of wellbeing. Whether it's mental wellbeing, women's health, back pain or sleep (to name a few), Champion's platform is personalized for every employee to empower them to look after their wellbeing. Alongside this, Champion assist organizations in building evidence-based wellbeing strategies off the back of robust data and high engagement. The message is simple, we need to invest in our best asset; our people.

Safe365

Andy Hutt
andy.hutt@safe365global.com
www.safe365global.com
+44 (0) 7900 955490

Safe365 has developed and applied, innovative 'out of the box' technology that enables a data driven, lead indicator approach to improving senior leadership awareness. It enables step changes to occur in organizational health, safety and risk capability/ maturity delivering stronger business performance, including improved productivity, efficiency, significant injury reduction and improved financial outcomes.

Thought its unique health, safety risk and maturity assessment it enables a business to rapidly understand its level of capability and to focus on improvements that will make the biggest impact on reducing overall risk. It also provides powerful data insights to aid more informed decision making.

Welbot

Sarah Taylor
sarah@welbot.io
www.welbot.io

Welbot is an innovative, evidence based workplace wellness platform designed to improve employee health and wellbeing in the office or when working from home.

Our enterprise software features daily physical and mental health exercises including hydration, nutrition and screen breaks, which are all delivered through desktop notifications that pop up at intervals on your computer screen during the working day.

Our "enterprise ready" platform integrates with existing wellbeing programs and features custom signposting to health and wellbeing resources and employee benefits.

Welbot is tailored to SMEs and enterprise organizations, and includes insight gathering and reporting, internationalization, customization and white-labelling features.