

WORK
WELL
BEING

*Leading thriving teams in
rapidly changing times*

MARK MCCRINDLE
& ASHLEY FELL



To Ruth, with whom this adventure of life is a great joy and who, along with our children Acacia, Jasper, Zari, Brighton and Corban, brings immeasurable flourishing.

MARK McCRINDLE

To my husband Michael and my mum Marja, my greatest examples of hard work and authentic leadership, and who encourage me to achieve more than I ever thought possible.

ASHLEY FELL

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Along with co-authoring *Work Wellbeing*, Mark is the author of three books on emerging trends and social change: *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the Global Generations*, *Word Up: A Lexicon and Guide to Communication in the 21st Century* and *The Power of Good*. He and his wife Ruth have five children spanning the Generation Z and Generation Alpha age groups.

ASHLEY FELL

Ashley Fell is a social researcher, TEDx speaker and director of communications at internationally recognised company McCrindle Research. As a trends analyst and media commentator, she understands how to effectively communicate and inspire across diverse audiences. In addition to delivering keynote presentations at conferences, Ashley conducts training days for corporate and not-for-profit clients, facilitates panels across an array of industries and supervises workshops for diverse generations, covering generational change to technological disruption and key demographic transformations to social shifts.

Ashley and her husband Michael are based in Sydney, Australia and enjoy reading, travelling and spending time with Ashley's Gen Alpha nieces and nephews.

INTRODUCTION

When you picked up this book, was it the word *wellbeing* that sparked your interest? The use of the word in 21st-century vocabulary and discussion about the subject itself have increased in prevalence, but is it an applicable, useful term or just another buzzword? A Google search on the term tells us that wellbeing is the ‘state of being comfortable, healthy or happy’. Today people place real focus on wellbeing, and it’s not hard to figure out why.

The current century has ushered in some amazing advances in technology, and it’s almost impossible to believe we’ve had smart phones for just a little over a decade. Prior to that mobile phones were indeed just that: phones – whereas today they are so much more: cameras, encyclopaedias, maps, games devices, music players, calculators, alarm clocks, wallets and so many other services we access daily.

The internet is another service that has transformed our work and personal lives. In our presentations we often say that some of the scariest things in the world are not physical threats but, rather, symbols. Instead of fearing snakes, spiders and heights, the bigger fears we hold are of symbols. We dread seeing the low WiFi symbol, indicating we can’t connect to the world around us, and watching the buffering circle while waiting for

something to load. But the scariest of them all would have to be the low battery symbol, when all forms of connectivity cease to exist.

These symbols we identify to our audience as being alarming are meant to be humorous and almost always yield a laugh. However, as with many jokes there is an element of truth behind it, and the fear of not being globally connected is a very real one. Technologies have also brought positive changes to our lives. The invention of the internet brought with it an incredible ability to connect globally with family and friends and engage with any piece of information at the click of a button (or, rather, the touch of a screen). Social media allows us to share every aspect of our lives with those we love, who may live thousands of kilometres away.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the spheres of business and education embraced Zoom and other digital meeting technologies to great effect. Most of us were grateful to have such connectivity in a period of isolation, yet it also became evident that virtual meetings had their limitations. Along with its inordinate benefits, technology has also brought with it some unique challenges, particularly to our wellbeing. It has blurred the lines of private and public; of school and home; of work and rest. It has made it harder for us to switch off, to connect with the physical world around us and to be present.

Even beyond the internet, online communities facilitated through social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat provide us with so much information about the lives of others that we now spend an inordinate amount of time comparing ourselves to everyone else's highlight reels. This is indicated in the popular acronym 'FOMO', or fear of missing out. While the internet and social media can facilitate increasingly connected communities, paradoxically they can also make us feel more isolated and fuel comparisons to others, negatively impacting our health and wellbeing. Interestingly, many a Baby Boomer and Gen Xer have confessed to us that when looking at the frantic activity on social media it is not FOMO (fear of missing out) they feel, but rather JOMO (joy of missing out)!

Currently, around one in four young people aged 15 to 19 meet the criteria for having a probable serious mental illness. Of concern, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of young people meeting this criteria; data shows that it increased by more than 20% in the most recent five-year period.¹ According to global research, mental illness contributes to 45% of the global burden of disease among those aged 10 to 24 years.²

Clearly the increased use of technology in our lives and the impact it has on our mental health and wellbeing, particularly that of younger people, is a significant challenge for our schools, families and communities.

The trend of wellbeing in schools has been steadily increasing over time. According to our future of education report,³ in the last five years almost half of parents (48%) have increased their expectations of their child's school to support wellbeing. More than one in four (27%) have significantly or somewhat increased their expectations.

Generation Y parents are driving this expectation inflation with three in 10 (31%) significantly or somewhat increasing their expectations of schools compared to almost one in four Generation X parents (23%). Almost all parents (97%) believe schools should have a holistic focus and play some role in the management of wellbeing, with almost half (46%) believing schools should provide individualised support for wellbeing but refer on to other experts.

Compounding this challenge for young people's health and wellbeing is the mounting pressure that is put on them. According to parents, three in five (60%) believe the greatest challenge for students today is online bullying through social networks, followed by high pressure to do well in exams and assessments (51%) and the fact that life is more complicated, causing additional stress (49%).⁴

We recently interviewed Stephen Harris, the co-founder and director of learning at LearnLife Barcelona, the first in a worldwide network of learning hubs meant to accelerate change in existing education models through personal purpose-based learning.⁵ Regarding student wellbeing, Stephen said:

There has been a significant backwards slide with mental health issues in the last five or six years. I think it's totally linked to an overemphasis on assessments and examinations by both the media and parents. I'm not condemning parents, because in many cases, they don't know enough about the system to understand what it's doing to the kids. Yet we keep selling the idea that the only pathway is to buckle down and study all these things. I would say in the last five years there has been a pronounced increase in the volume of kids who are suffering from anxiety. And then that also tips over into kids with severe anxiety, or severe depression.

Our schools and communities obviously have work to do when it comes to the mental health and wellbeing of student communities.

Mental health is far more than the absence of clinical conditions such as depression or anxiety. The World Health Organization defines mental health in a holistic context as 'a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'.⁶

Our comparison culture and the inability to switch off, combined with other life pressures and stresses, affect our mental health and wellbeing. Technology and the rise of the knowledge economy (where many more workers make their contributions by using digital tools rather than mechanised ones) mean we are sitting more and exercising less, and that we are working longer per week and later in life. Technology not only affects our mental health, it affects our physical health as well.

Although it is largely undisputed that eating well and getting regular exercise are key to overall health and wellbeing, over time there has been a shift away from viewing 'health' as being purely about the physical. Beyond health, the word 'wellbeing' also refers to more than just being physically and mentally healthy. The holistic approach to wellbeing encompasses a multitude of different spheres of what makes us human.

The World Health Organization defines wellbeing as a ‘state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.⁷ Similarly, the Victorian government defines wellbeing as ‘a complex combination of a person’s physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. In short, wellbeing could be described as how you feel about yourself and your life.’⁸

Advancements in how we define wellbeing, how often we talk about it and the focus we give to it have seen a rise in strategies at a personal, organisational and institutional level as to how we obtain wellbeing – or, at least, improve it. Meditation and mindfulness are now more accepted and practised, devices that help us track our steps are worn on our wrists and we’re continually encouraged to be informed of what we feed our bodies.

All these personal endeavours to be healthy and well holistically are to be commended and we hope they continue to be implemented. But there is another element at play in our lives that massively impacts our wellbeing and our ability to thrive, and that is *work*. Numerous studies indicate we spend roughly a third of our waking hours at work, which has meant that the focus on wellbeing has now extended to the workplace. There are many books, conferences and seminars that are entirely devoted to helping people better understand how to achieve wellbeing in their lives, and the impact the workplace has on this endeavour.

A foundational element of work wellbeing is workplace safety. The good news in most developed nations and in most industries is that rates of physical injury in the workplace continue to decline. Through better training, technology solutions and heightened employer and worker vigilance, worksites have never been safer. Safe Work Australia data shows that in the latest three-year period, serious workplace incidents have declined by 10%.⁹ For many workers, the most dangerous aspect of their job is their daily commute.

At the same time as we have seen safer workplaces physically there has been a growing awareness of the impact of work mentally and emotionally.

Workplace health and safety regimes have robustly turned their attention to mental wellbeing and many organisations have rebranded their workplace health and safety services to *wellbeing* services.

Amid these trends, a growing number of organisations are seeing the value of implementing and encouraging healthy initiatives for their employees. There has been a significant trend in workplaces towards standing desks, natural light and fruit bowls. Our own organisation tries to prioritise the physical and mental health of our team. We encourage walks at lunch time, we have a communal fruit bowl and we (try to) have regular stretch breaks away from our desks. Organisations have realised that having healthy employees' equals having a healthy organisation. They should be recognised and rewarded for this, and we hope these practices and priorities continue to abound.

But as we have pointed out, wellbeing is more than positive physical and mental health. In its holistic definition wellbeing is about our ability as humans to thrive and flourish, and we believe that work plays a crucial role in this. We believe that as humans we are designed to work, that work is good for us, that purposeful work has a positive impact and connects us with others. It is core to our wellbeing and our ability to thrive. Like the growth rings of a tree, our lives can occasionally experience seasons of extraordinary flourishing. We have found three catalysts for such growth: significant adversity, extreme dissatisfaction, or exposure to an exceptional leader.

The concepts we explore in this book are founded on decades of social research and are the culmination of detailed surveys, focus groups and literature reviews into the areas of wellbeing, human thriving and flourishing. We hope it will inform you about the changing nature and context of work, the importance of it in our lives and the opportunity work presents individuals, leaders and organisations to facilitate flourishing workers. In turn, we believe that flourishing workers will contribute to flourishing communities and a flourishing society.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS WORK WELLBEING?

When you think about work, how often do you think about it being tied to our human purpose, as a key to flourishing and thriving or as part of the reason for life? This might have been the perspective you held when you first started out in your career, but the longer you've worked the more responsibility you've taken on and perhaps along with this you've taken on more stress. Amid meeting deadlines, leading teams or not getting adequate rest, work has become a burden.

THE ROLE OF WORK IN OUR LIVES

As social researchers we often hold hypotheses about certain topics, then we test them through different research methodologies. One hypothesis we held when writing this book was that people view work as getting in the way of life rather than as being a key part of their life. It's the sentiment of living for the weekend; that work is a hurdle we must get over to get to the good bits; that work is a means to an end. This sentiment is expressed in many ways: in memes that say 'When you haven't even gone to sleep yet

and you can't wait to come home from work tomorrow', to bumper stickers on cars that say 'I owe, I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go'.

To test our hypothesis, we surveyed workers by asking them how they felt about their work. Over half of the workers (53%) said they enjoyed work most days. Almost a quarter (23%) said they didn't mind it, and 7% said they hated work. Less than one in five workers (17%) said they loved their work. Clearly work is not universally despised yet less than one in five workers (17%) said they loved their work. These results supported our hypothesis that far too many are not thriving at work. While even those who really enjoy their work might not absolutely love it every single day, it is true that if you love what you do for work you are more likely to be happier and more satisfied and engaged.

In our survey of 1,001 workers across a variety of age groups and industries, we asked the question: *'When you wake up on a Monday morning, which of the following best describes how you most commonly feel about the week ahead?'* An indefatigable 12% said 'I'm excited and can't wait to get started'; however, more than twice as many (29%) said 'I don't feel great but work is an unavoidable part of life' and a further 6% said 'It's a terrible feeling knowing the working week lies ahead.'

In a follow-up question we asked: *'Overall, when you reflect on your work life how do you feel it is going?'* A very resilient 9% said 'It is excellent' and another 32% said 'It is very good', but 18% rated it as just 'Fair' and 6% said 'It is poor'. These 6% of workers who feel terrible every Monday morning knowing a work week lies ahead and who rate this key part of their life as 'poor' equate to almost a million workers across Australia and New Zealand, and around 10 million in the United States.

It is important that humans at the very least enjoy, if not love, what they do for work. Work is what we spend the bulk of our life doing, and it contributes to our sense of meaning, purpose and identity in life. It's one avenue that people use to find and build social connections. It's key to our growth as an individual, our development as a person and our contribution to society. We are made to contribute, and work is often the way we grow as leaders and have influence.

While it is true we are defined by more than what we do for work, it is nonetheless an integral part of our identity. When you meet someone at a social gathering one of the first questions often asked is ‘What do you do?’ or ‘Where do you work?’ Because work takes up so much of our time it is logical that people might ask this to find out more about who we are. It is an important aspect of our lives and can often be and hopefully is an indicator of our passions, interests and strengths.

The large majority of people will spend a third of their discretionary hours at work, so it’s important that whatever we do it’s something we enjoy and find purpose in. Steve Jobs, the chairman, chief executive officer and co-founder of Apple Inc., communicated it well when he said: ‘Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don’t settle.’

When we feel that our work is purposeful and is having an impact, it often correlates to greater enjoyment in the work. Whatever it is you do for work, no matter how menial or high-flying, we hope you find that it has purpose. During the COVID-19 crisis, despite social isolation policies schools were kept open so that essential workers with children could carry on their jobs. It became clear that essential workers were not just those on the front lines of the pandemic such as health-care workers, but also supermarket workers, transport and supply chain workers and many more. In fact, amid this challenge, the Australian prime minister Scott Morrison championed the importance of all work when he said: ‘Everyone who has a job in this economy is an essential worker. Every single job that is being done in our economy is essential.’ As Martin Luther King Jr put it, ‘If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, “Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.”’

Work plays too big a role in our lives for us to view it as merely a means to an end, as something we have to get through in order to live our best lives. When work is our vocation, when we feel strongly that we are suitable for a particular career or occupation, that's when we will have a greater chance of thriving. This is even more the case with the emerging generations: many young people don't seek a job as much as they seek an opportunity.

WORK IS GOOD FOR US

'Working hard for something we don't care about is called stress; working hard for something we love is called passion.' – Simon Sinek

Can you remember a time when you felt like you were thriving; that you were in the right place at the right time doing the right thing; when you felt alignment to a purpose that increased your sense of meaning or fulfilment? Have you ever been in a place where you described yourself as flourishing?

We believe that work, that businesses, that corporations exist not simply to make money, but to better society in general. And that starts with bettering their teams and increasing their sense of wellbeing. Work is good for us, and organisations and the leaders in them have a unique opportunity to reprioritise the health and wellbeing of their staff.

Ashley: The topic of my keynote presentation at a recent conference concerned the future of work. I spoke about some of the future trends impacting what humans will be doing for work, addressing trends such as automation, robotics and other technological advancements, as well as the demographics that would impact the types of jobs and sectors that will require more workers. The MC at the event was Geniere Aplin, the group executive at workers' compensation firm EML. In her introduction, Geniere spoke about the idea that work is good for us. As I listened to her I found myself agreeing with everything she said. I thanked her at the conclusion of

the event for her perspective on work, mentioning that it was similar to my own.

In ensuing conversations we discussed what the term ‘good work’ means. Geneire said that the closest she could come to defining good work is:

‘having a role or purpose – whether that is voluntary or otherwise – that inspires you to keep going back to that job. It can change over time for people, but it’s about being in an environment that supports you delivering positive outcomes. Whether that be making or constructing something and being able to see it at the end of the day. It might be a purpose for people. It’s also about having the right tools, the support of whoever you are working for, or the support of your community or the team to deliver that outcome. This makes it good work. I think about it with my daughter and volunteering in the school canteen. It’s not something I would normally do but the system of work they had in there and the delegation meant you knew what you were accountable for, what you needed to deliver and when you needed to deliver it by. That support of an organisation in helping define how people do their work and what a good outcome looks like, I think, is critical.’

As futurists we are sometimes asked the questions: ‘Do you think we will still be working in, say ten, twenty or thirty years’ time?’ and ‘If robots and artificial intelligence in this fourth industrial revolution can do tasks faster than human beings can, will there be a universal basic income for all people?’ Our answer is that, first, while robotics and automation will take over some jobs, new jobs will be created. Second, it is our belief and the basis of many other studies that human beings possess certain skills such as empathy, creativity and context-dependant critical thinking skills that are difficult to translate into a language a computer can understand. Third, and most importantly, work is about

more than just earning money: it provides the opportunity for us to make a contribution by using our talents and skills, for social interaction and to find fulfilment in our role. This is why we believe work is something human beings will always do.

While work is designed to be good for us it's evident that some workplaces might not be geared towards allowing their teams to thrive, and that in fact some work environments are toxic or negatively impact people's lives. It would be difficult to acknowledge the positive elements of work when the work environment is not conducive to workers' wellbeing.

Ashley: One of my friends has worked hard all of her life, providing for her family and ensuring her children had opportunities that hadn't been afforded her when she was growing up. She was a hard worker, and aside from her children's younger years she worked her whole life – even during seasons when her husband was out of work and for many years being the main breadwinner. After her children had finished school, moved out of home and got married, she began to transition out of the workforce.

Reflecting on the many years she had worked, she was proud of her contributions. A few months after she had completely transitioned out of the workforce, something heart-wrenching happened: she found out her husband had been having an affair, and he left her. As you can imagine, my friend was absolutely devastated. Not only did she have to confront a life without the person she had been with for 40 years, she had to confront the realities that lay ahead of her; in particular, the financial reality that her retirement was no longer secure and that she would have to go to work again.

A resilient woman, she went job hunting, and it wasn't long before she re-entered the workforce. She told me recently how finding this new role has helped her in ways she didn't expect

during one of the darkest periods of her life. Not only had it given her a renewed sense of financial independence, it has also given her purpose and meaning and provided a new community of people. Some of her work colleagues are now her friends. She often tells me that this job, this new work, has helped her through some of the toughest seasons of her life.

DECOUPLING WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

Have you ever thought about what the notion of ‘work’ means to you: Is it simply a physical place you get paid to go to each day? Is it your passion? Do you dread it? Is it a case of ‘I just need to get through this work week so I can get to the weekend’? Is it a means to an end?

In our worker survey we asked the hypothetical question: *‘If you won the lottery or received a massive inheritance of several million dollars so that all of your financial needs were taken care of, which of the following best covers what you would do with your current employment situation?’* Exactly half of workers (50%) said they would quit their job. Of those that would, 23% said they would quit the job they are in and never work again. The remaining 27% said they would quit their current job and find other work. The other 50% would stay in their current role. Of those, a third (33%) would stay in their current role but would cut down the days, and 17% said they would stay in their current role unchanged.

Another question asked how workers feel about their work, with 17% saying they loved it. It is likely this group are the same ones who would stay in their current role unchanged. If work is good for us, if it provides benefits beyond financial reward and contributes to our sense of purpose and meaning, accomplishment and relationships and sense of community, then why is it that for half of all workers work has become a burden?

Part of the reason for this is that the role of work in our lives has changed. Today, ‘work’ has become synonymous with ‘employment’. The definition of employment is ‘the state of having paid work’, whereas the definition of work is ‘activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve

a purpose or result'. These definitions are vastly different, yet we tend to jumble them together. We've made work about success, status, power and money, when the true essence of work is about contributing and making an impact.

People can 'work' without having an employment contract and without being paid, as do millions of people around the world. There are 2.9 million Australian volunteers and over three million stay-at-home parents. Our research shows that grandparents are increasingly taking an active carer role with their grandchildren and helping out with their activities. The foundation of our communities are sporting clubs, membership associations, churches and other local organisations, all of which are sustained by the work of volunteers. These volunteers are working but are not being remunerated for it. They are not 'employed' but they are making a difference, fulfilling a purpose and helping communities and individuals. They are 'working'. We even see this being played out in our youngest generations: have you ever seen a child play with their toys?

Mark: As adults, we can dismiss the activities of children simply as play, yet when I watch my youngest son Corban spend hours building little worlds with blocks, I can see it is more akin to work than play. He expends much effort on his envisioned purpose, but it is a creative, fun and engaging pursuit (much like work should be) and he is working towards a result. This is not just meaningless play, and I see this clearly from his response when one of his siblings knocks his world over!

The concentration and effort children display when pursuing their selected outcome, whether it's playing a game, making a craft or setting up cars, blocks or dolls, is remarkable. Why? Because they care about achieving an outcome, the finished product, and in their mind they are working towards it. Yes, they are playing, but it's not just playing: they are also working. As

Alan Watts put it: ‘This is the real secret of life – to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. And instead of calling it work, realize it is play.’

The concept of work starts young, without us being aware of it; it doesn’t just start when teenagers turn 14 and nine months and begin paid employment at McDonald’s. We work at things our whole life, from building a Lego bridge to studying for an exam or training for a sporting match. All of this is work, and often we don’t do it alone as it’s frequently in the company of others.

Many people would consider themselves to be employed by a ‘company’, the dictionary definition for which is ‘an entity that engages in business’. However, the origins of the word suggest a deeper meaning as it comes from the Latin *companiono*, or ‘companion’. The *com* in companion means ‘with’, while *panis* is the Latin word for ‘bread’ or ‘food’. In that root you can identify the basis on which the notion of companionship originally hinged: a companion was one with whom you ate a meal.¹ Thus in the word ‘company’, literally ‘together breaking bread’, we have a link between people working and sharing together for a common output.

A company of people today often comprises much diversity: in gender, generation, cultural background, opinion, perspective and life experience, to name a few. Yet despite these differences a company of people work towards a unified goal and purpose. When unity is created among diversity, when we celebrate alignment to a clear goal or vision, we open the door not only to success and achievement but also to wellbeing.

Over time, the changing concept of work has left economists, investors and big corporates with the perspective that profit and the resulting shareholder return is the *raison d’être*. However, from its origins capitalism has always focused on the customer and the common good. A key feature of capitalism is that it is a multiplier of money: shareholders grow their investments, customers receive good value on their exchange, the company pays earnings to staff members and in addition the capital value of the business increases. Yet the beauty of a virtuous business is not only that it creates monetary value but that it creates a flourishing cycle of wellbeing.

Australian economist Ian Harper is the dean of Melbourne Business School and co-dean of the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Business and Economics. He is known for his work in public policy, and in May 2016 was appointed to the board of the Reserve Bank of Australia and became a senior adviser to Deloitte Access Economics, having previously been a partner with the firm. When interviewing him about the role of work in our lives, Ian said he believes that:

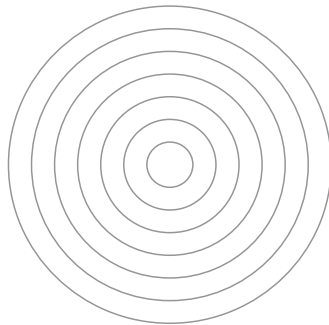
Work is about human fulfilment and purpose. We were made to work as it expresses our humanness. But there is a distinction between work and drudgery. I don't think people were made to be drudges. And when people think about work in a sort of simplistic context, within an economist's frame, it's often thought about as exactly that: work as disutility or drudgery. But even economists know that that's not true. We work because it fulfils our purpose and is part of what gives us a sense of meaning.

Now, if I start to think about work in that characteristic way, then what I say about wages becomes more complex. Work is becoming far more varied in the tasks people are asked to perform and the autonomy that people have. It includes what your colleagues are doing, who your colleagues are, when you are on the job, when you're not and where you work. And what this makes for is increasingly stimulating, encouraging, creative work. So when people think about an opportunity to work, they increasingly think through the different dimensions like whether they will have to move, if they'll have to do shiftwork every fourth week – a whole raft of different things. And the employer, therefore, has pressure applied to start thinking about these things.

At the end of the day, any business that wants productive and creative talent knows it comes bundled up with all sorts of emotions and other commitments, and [as the employer]

I need to find a way to induce you [my staff] to give me your best or as much of your creative talent as you're prepared to, to engage with my wider purpose. And I need you to do that willingly. Because if this is against your will you're not going to do it, you're going to withhold, there'll be no discretionary effort, and you'll go through the motions. I won't get what I'm really looking for, which is that creative spark, that excitement, until I create the environment. And all of that is far richer than suggesting that work is just about drudgery. On the other hand, money does have an impact, but it's not always the first thing people consider. So it comes down to the fact that the models need to be richer to get a fuller understanding of why people work and what draws them in. So I think a lot of that boils down to the fact that economists clearly are aware that there are many more dimensions to the work/leisure decision than the traditional simple models would imply.

One of the key reasons that people work is to earn a living, but as Ian points out it is not the only reason. When work is good for us, when both employers and employees view it as more than just a job or place of employment, it creates an environment for people's wellbeing to be prioritised and valued.





'Many young
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a job as much
as they seek an
opportunity.'

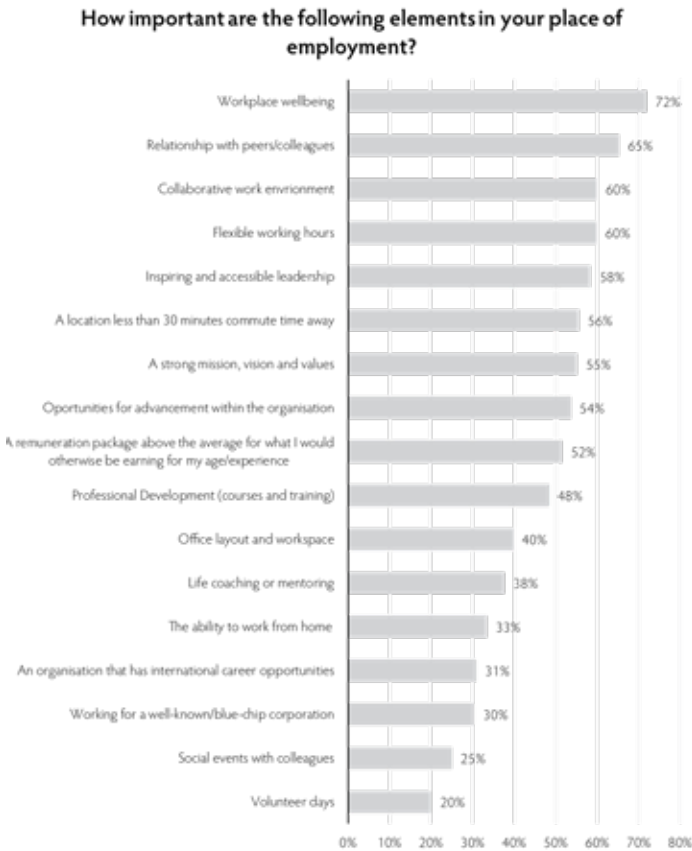
— McCRINDLE



WELLBEING AT WORK

Achieving wellbeing in both personal and work spheres has been a goal for human existence, even as far back as Aristotle’s day. He said: ‘Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.’

In a McCrindle survey of 1,160 working Australians, we asked the question: ‘How important are the following elements in your workplace?’ We had respondents evaluate 17 different elements specific to the workplace in terms of importance. Workplace wellbeing ranked as the most important element, with 72% of respondents rating this as extremely or very important to them. This ranked above other workplace elements such as relationship with peers/colleagues (65%), a collaborative work environment (60%), flexible working hours (60%) and inspiring, accessible leadership (58%).



Have you ever thought about how you define wellbeing? Do you incorporate physical and mental health along with human flourishing and thriving?

According to a study of employed Australians conducted by McCrindle and Reventure,² the majority of workers (42%) defined wellbeing as ‘when I have found balance across my physical, mental, social and spiritual life’. A third (33%) of respondents said wellbeing was ‘when I feel physically and mentally fit and well’, 13% said it’s ‘when I have found inner peace’ and 12% said it’s ‘when my desires for house/income/success are met’.

Esteemed psychologist, educator and author Martin Seligman is well known for his theories of positive psychology and wellbeing. In his book *Flourish*, Seligman delves into the difference between authentic happiness and wellbeing: ‘I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness, that the gold standard of measuring happiness was life satisfaction, and that the goal of positive psychology was to increase life satisfaction. I now think that the topic of positive psychology is wellbeing, that the gold standard for measuring wellbeing is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing.’³

He goes on to say that ‘wellbeing is just like “weather” and “freedom” in its structure: no single measure defines it exhaustively, but several things contribute to it: these are the elements of wellbeing, and each of the elements is a measurable thing.’ The five elements Seligman notes as contributing to wellbeing are positive emotion, engagement, meaning and purpose, positive relationships and accomplishment.⁴

When thinking about this idea of flourishing Seligman cites Felicia Huppert and Timothy So of the University of Cambridge, who defined flourishing as ‘having all the core features (positive emotions, engagement, interest, meaning and purpose) as well as three of the additional features (self-esteem, optimism, resilience, vitality, self-determination and positive relationships)’.⁵ When it comes to personal wellbeing, this refers to factors that individuals can control such as sleep, sense of satisfaction, sense of meaning and purpose, feelings or emotions and how one feels their life

is going. Holistically it incorporates the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It's personal.

Another recent report states that flourishing and thriving at work are about helping employees to:

- ❖ strengthen their personal resources
- ❖ flourish and take pride in their role within the organisational system
- ❖ function to the best of their abilities, both as individuals and in collaboration with their colleagues
- ❖ have a positive overall experience of work.⁶

Taking all of this into consideration, *work* wellbeing is bigger than *workplace* wellbeing; it is bigger than fruit bowls, standing desks and other practices that help people to feel less stressed and more valued. These initiatives are important, but an approach to work wellbeing needs to be more than these tangible features. It needs to be a mindset, a set of values and practices shared by leaders and teams. It needs to be more integrated and holistic, not just tokenistic.

Work wellbeing exists where people are championed above profits, where the culture is aspirational and inspirational not just transactional, where leaders are focused on creating a community of customers, clients and teams and where there is a compelling passion for societal good rather than personal gain.

