



THRIVE: How to measure workplace wellbeing

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Why workplace wellbeing matters so much in the 21st century

The appetite from employers to understand and support the wellbeing of their people has never been higher and the increasing level of interest shows no sign of abating. In recent years, in the midst of a global pandemic, the focus on employee wellbeing has risen dramatically, and like so many social changes, it seems here to stay.

Comparison between 2019 and 2020 wellbeing related Google search terms (adapted from Bupa, 2020¹)



In addition, searches for 'Working from home stress' actually increased hugely, over 1000x, indicating a newly emerged workplace stressor.



What do we mean by wellbeing in the context of the workplace?

Although few would dispute that improving wellbeing is a good thing, there is no single, universally recognised definition of wellbeing itself.

There is an extensive literature on the subject, from classical philosophy through to modern medical research and popular media, with many differing perspectives. Often, traditional measures of wellbeing are designed for clinical or sub-clinical applications and so focus on wellbeing “deficits”. However, in a workplace setting, it is often more appropriate to focus on *positive psychology*^{2,3}, so our approach seeks to *optimise positive workplace wellbeing*.

Wellbeing in the workplace

Wellbeing can profoundly impact workplace performance, and the nature of the workplace can affect wellbeing too⁴. Occupational factors can be the cause of positive or negative wellbeing. They can also interact with life beyond work, sometimes negatively impacting people’s personal lives and sometimes providing much needed support, mitigating negative personal experiences that may otherwise have a deleterious effect on wellbeing.

A workplace wellbeing strategy is vital for people, and organisations to thrive

Negative wellbeing can have a huge personal and economic impact. The UK’s Health and Safety Executive⁵ estimated 17.9 million working days lost per annum through stress-related absence alone. There is also a well-researched link between wellbeing and a range of employee performance indicators⁶.

Increasingly, employers are recognising that wellbeing is a critical factor in attracting, retaining and engaging colleagues. Organisational values statements and Employer Value Propositions (EVPs) may well reference wellbeing. As the wider societal role of employers comes ever more to the fore, wellbeing will increasingly be evident in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) statements and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies.



Measure the success of your wellbeing strategy with the **THRIVE** model

Our specific measure of positive workplace wellbeing focusses on the occupational setting. The complex interactions of cause and effect between life inside and beyond the workplace are understood in the context of potential drivers of (or barriers to) positive wellbeing.

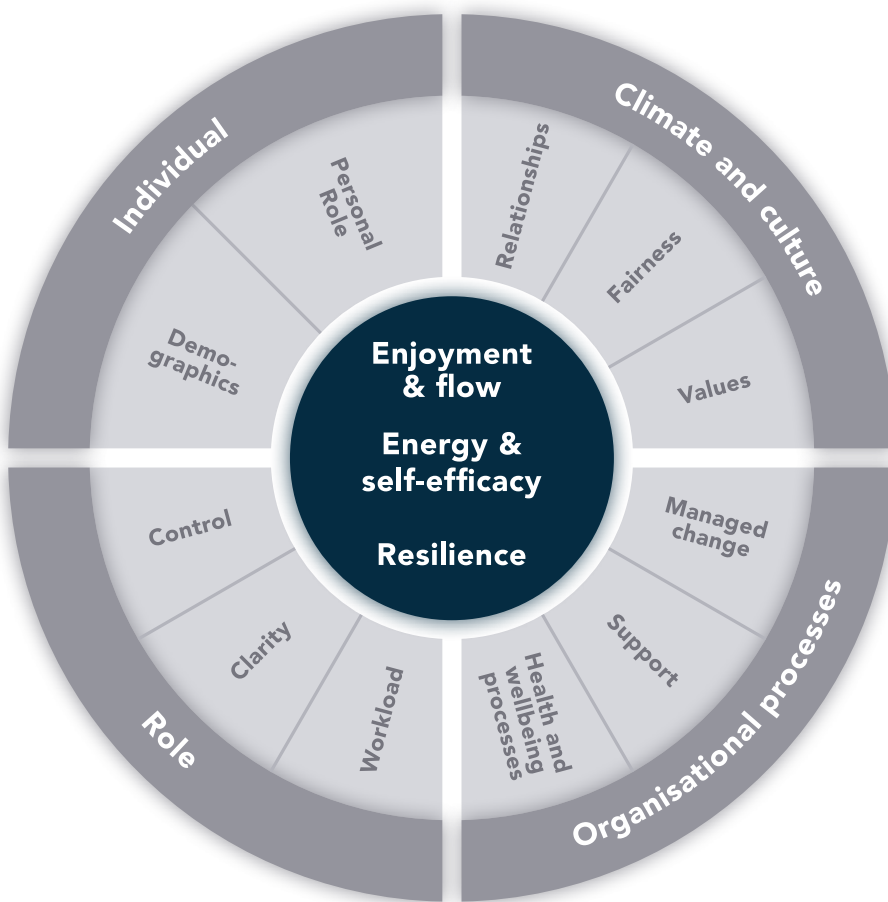
In developing the measure we have drawn on academic and applied research that is most pertinent to the workplace. We have also used our extensive practical experience of employee research to develop a measure that leaders, managers and employees will view as relevant, acceptable, non-intrusive and face-valid.

The three main components of positive workplace wellbeing in THRIVE

The THRIVE measure uses the following three components to demonstrate the characteristic outcomes of an individual experiencing positive workplace wellbeing:

- 1 Enjoyment & flow** - deriving enjoyment from, and positive absorption in work
- 2 Resilience** - capacity to remain buoyant and productive in the face of difficulties.
- 3 Energy & self-efficacy** - personal levels of energy and confidence in making a difference

The THRIVE model



Centre =
Positive wellbeing outcomes

Outer Circle =
Factors that influence wellbeing

Middle Circle =
Sub-factors that influence wellbeing

So how do you affect the characteristics of positive workplace wellbeing?

Whilst assessing whether or not your employees are experiencing positive wellbeing is important, it is vital to understand which factors have an impact on wellbeing (both positively or negatively) so that you can drive improvements.

The factors that have such an impact can be many and varied. To address this challenge, we use a range of relevant factors and describe a methodology to explore these in an efficient and practical way. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identifies six major causes of workplace stress⁷ (and similar factors have been identified as leading to risk of occupational burnout⁸): *Job demands, control, support, relationships, role clarity and change.*



The Job Demands – Resources model⁹ describes a range of personal and workplace demands and resources that, in conjunction, can either bring about negative wellbeing or promote positive wellbeing include work pressure or emotional demands, with positive resources including autonomy, coaching and clarity.

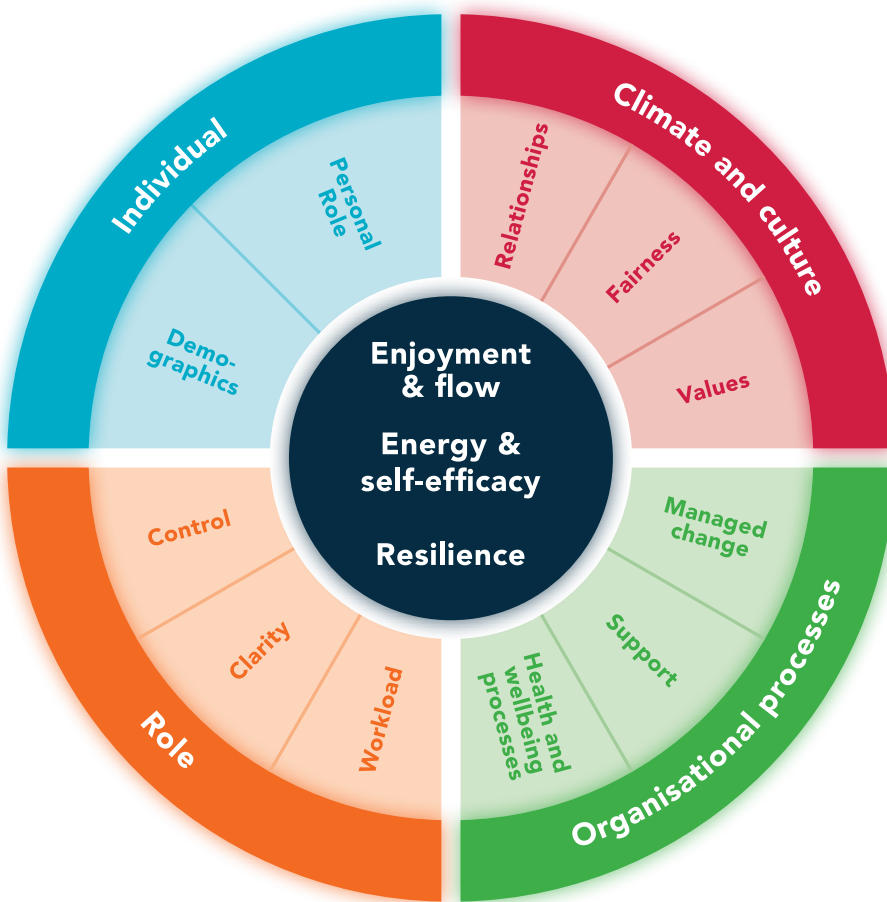
More broadly, in the context of positive psychology, Carol Ryff describes a six-factor model¹⁰ of wellbeing, covering *self-acceptance, growth, purpose, mastery, autonomy and relationship*.

Clearly there is both commonality and divergence between these approaches. We have combined relevant aspects from among elements these diverse views, developing a broad-based set of factors.

Crucially, we have focused on those workplace characteristics that are subject to management influence – i.e., they are *actionable*.

In addition to these experiential factors, understanding wellbeing, and creating conditions in which it is optimised, require an understanding of people’s personal circumstances, to enable contextualised understanding and action. We therefore include demographics in the set of information to be captured.

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Centre =
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The factors that influence positive workplace wellbeing are outlined below. Your wellbeing survey will include questions for each factor and sub factor.

1 Climate and culture

- Relationships
- Fairness
- Values

3 Role

- Control
- Clarity
- Workload

2 Organisational processes

- Managing change
- Support
- Health and wellbeing processes

4 Individual

- Personal role in wellbeing
- Personal demographics



Notes on the **THRIVE** model

State, not trait

Naturally, wellbeing is not necessarily stable over the longer term, like personality traits. Rather, it can vary over time, as a result of a changing context. But it is not as transient as 'mood'. We therefore ask about how people have been feeling over the past few weeks.

Mental and Physical wellbeing

Our focus here is on mental wellbeing. However, the link between physical and mental wellbeing is proven, clear and strong. There appears to be a mutual relationship, with mental and physical wellbeing as co-dependent upon each other¹¹.

The approach we have taken here is to focus on mental wellbeing outcomes, recognising the role physical wellbeing plays in this.



How we use **THRIVE** to measure positive workplace wellbeing

Tailored wellbeing survey questionnaires

Organisations are highly diverse with varied purposes, strategies, settings, activities and contexts. As such, the factors that can influence wellbeing will vary. Our experienced organisational psychologists work with key internal stakeholders to understand the salient organisational context and objectives. No two contexts are identical and we draw upon our expertise and extensive database of employee experience and wellbeing questions to tailor develop questionnaires depending on the situation. For example, the relationship to process / behavioural safety measures will be relevant in some cases, whereas the nature of client relationships will be key in others.

Effective wellbeing survey project management

Planning and effective implementation are essential. Our team of insight professionals ensure expert planning, seamless delivery and absolute confidence. Employees are reassured that sensitive data are handled professionally by us as a trusted third party, promoting candid responses by insulating clients from access to individual responses.

Positive workplace wellbeing in the context of an employee listening strategy

Of course, employee wellbeing is not an isolated phenomenon, but is interlinked with employee experience, engagement and organisation culture. It will be important that approaches to measure, understand and improve wellbeing are strategically 'joined-up' to ensure appropriate understanding and action. Our guide to listening strategies outlines a comprehensive approach here: <https://peopleinsight.co.uk/resources/what-is-an-employee-listening-strategy/>

Making action happen as a result of your wellbeing survey

Applied employee research is not an abstract activity. The insights generated are not an end in themselves, but should drive improvement. Whilst getting the right measures in place is important, it is vital to ensure that appropriate actions follow. Equally important is the need for appropriate stakeholder engagement, management capability and internal communications to bring everyone through change.

At People Insight, we provide expert support in interpretation and communication of findings, typically preparing and delivering a narrative, insightful and action-oriented presentation to leadership. Our dynamic results dashboard ensures everyone has access to, and can act on the results, whilst our support to develop a clear communication and improvement strategy means our clients feel confident that they'll achieve improvements as a result.

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To find out more about People Insight's research to help you assess wellbeing in your organisation contact our friendly team at:

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