

## Introducing workplace wellbeing to organisations: The “Me, We, Us” model.

The benefits of employee wellbeing are numerous. For example, happier employees are healthier (Waddell & Burton, 2006), have less sick days (Bertera, 1990), earn more (Koo & Suh, 2013) and get promoted sooner (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008), are more effective (George & Bettenhausen, 1990) and productive (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009), display better organisational citizenship behaviours (Organ, 1988), inspire customer loyalty (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002), increase the wellbeing of other employees (Christakis & Fowler, 2009), stay in their jobs longer (Judge, 1993), and can even increase the organisations stock market value (Edmans, 2012). So why then with wellbeing such a good for organisations do organisational consultants find it challenging to introduce wellbeing initiatives to organisations?

Although there are various reasons, one element that can aid in abating this challenge is a model that, through its simplicity and language, can easily provide organisations with a rationale and justification for multiple levels of assessment and intervention in order to maximize performance and wellbeing across an organisation. This is important because workplace wellbeing programmes *largely* target employees with little consideration of levels of intervention across organisational systems.

When focusing on organisational wellbeing, wellbeing assessments and workplace wellbeing programmes can happen at three distinct levels regardless of organisation structure or size – at the employee level (Me), at group level (We), and at the organisational level (Us) – as depicted in Figure 1.

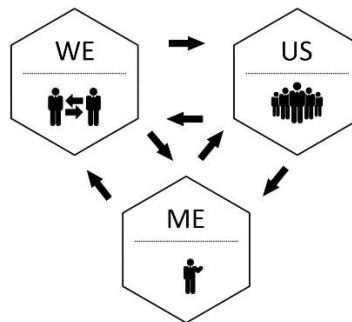


Figure 1. Me, We, and Us levels of possible wellbeing intervention.

Employee level wellbeing initiatives include strategies and tasks that employees can do by themselves, such as learning about and utilising their strengths mindfully (Niemic, 2013), or undertaking a mindfulness program (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Such ‘Me’ initiatives do not require the involvement of others within the organisation, however the organisation may provide support or resources to the employee (e.g., subscription to a mindfulness programme).

Group level wellbeing initiatives include strategies and tasks that involve an employee working on their wellbeing with either their manager, their direct team, or other employees who they are in frequent contact with in the work setting. These ‘We’ activities either have influence on a small group or are undertaken in a group format, and cannot be undertaken by employees themselves as they require the cooperation and input from others - such as the employee’s manager or team

members. Examples of 'We' initiatives include strategies and tasks such as job crafting (Wrzesniewski, 2014) or building high quality connections (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

'Us' level organisational wellbeing initiatives include strategies and tasks that have an impact over the whole of the organisation; they necessarily impact all employees. Examples of 'Us' initiatives include strategies and tasks such as creating organisational wellbeing policy (HAPIA, 2009), directing resources towards one-off or smaller scale wellbeing initiatives (i.e., funding 'Me' or 'We' activities), or whole of organisation wellbeing assessments or workplace wellbeing programmes such as Appreciative Inquiry summits (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

On the whole, at all levels of Me, We and Us, high wellbeing from a positive psychology perspective is about employees and organisations shifting their perspective from predominately focusing on what is wrong, to building on what is going right and working – to capitalising on the good and building and seeding the enabling conditions for high wellbeing (Jarden & Jarden, 2015; Lewis, 2011). Workplace wellbeing programmes across these three levels are about helping employees to use their strengths, enhance their relationships, and find more meaning and engagement at work so that both employees and the organisation as a whole can achieve their, and its, true potential<sup>1</sup>.

The main purpose for introducing this model is to elicit feedback and invite debate on this initial pragmatic model. This model has grown out of insight from the large dataset from Work on Wellbeing Ltd (WoW: [www.workonwellbeing.com](http://www.workonwellbeing.com)), and from organisational consultants using WoW in organisations. Consultants trialing this model overwhelmingly report positive receptivity from all levels of an organisation (i.e., from the CEO and HR manager, to managers, to employees). It is anticipated that the main utility will be to provide organisations with the rationale and reminder that multiple levels of assessment and intervention are needed to maximize performance and wellbeing across an organisation. Although the vast majority of research to date has been on the benefits at the Me level, there is still research at the We and Us levels which should not be discounted. Feedback on this model is cordially invited to [aaron.jarden@workonwellbeing.com](mailto:aaron.jarden@workonwellbeing.com)

Implications for practice:

1. The language used to initiate organisational wellbeing endeavours is important – both for the initial understanding and acceptance from the organisation, and from the employees within the organisation.
2. The 'Me, We, Us' model provides a simple framework and language that seems, *prima facie* at least, to be useful for organisational wellbeing consultants.
3. More debate and research is needed to substantiate the utility of the 'Me, We, Us' model – i.e., do organisations and employees find it useful, and how. In addition, investigation of the particular strengths and benefits of interventions at the various levels and their timing, and if the pathways (e.g., from Me to We, or We to Me) flow bi-directionally.

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<sup>1</sup> I am not suggesting an exclusive focus on happiness and wellbeing (which can be bad - see Caza & Camerson, 2008), just a more inclusive approach to both what is going right and what is going wrong.

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