

# The WellBeing and Performance Agenda

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Stress; psychological presenteeism; peak performance; social engagement; psychological wellbeing.

## What is The WellBeing and Performance Agenda?

The WellBeing and Performance Agenda provides a framework for organisations to achieve peak performance based on the psychological wellbeing and social engagement of the workforce.

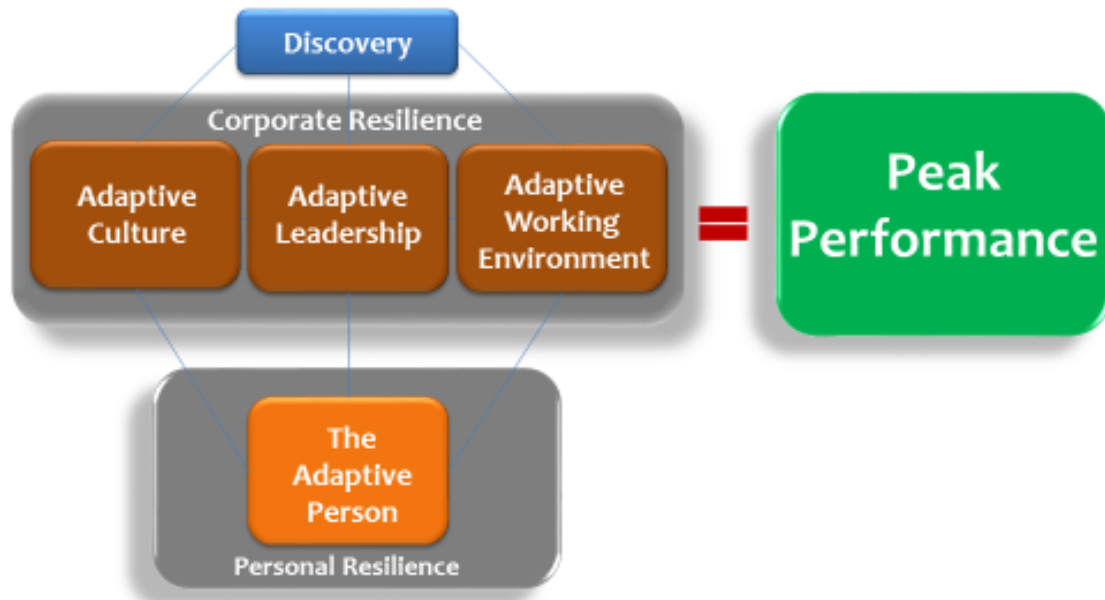
## The Agenda

The Agenda has 5 items.

- 1) The first item on the Agenda is **Discovery**. This item is about finding out what inhibits the psychological wellbeing of the workforce. It is, also, about trying to predict how the workforce will act in the future. The processes involve using surveys and assessments.
- 2) The second item on the Agenda is **Adaptive Culture**. Culture influences everyone's behaviour everywhere. Because of this, all organisations need to have a culture that provokes people to feel psychologically well, as this has a direct bearing on how well the organisation performs. An Adaptive Culture is based on the principle of 'shared responsibility for the future success of the organisation between everyone, including customers and clients'. The processes involved in implementation are mentoring and action learning groups.
- 3) The third item on the Agenda is **Adaptive Leadership**. This is a process of leadership that ensures that an Adaptive Culture exists. Adaptive Leadership involves everyone in 'sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation'. The processes involved in implementation are individual mentoring, action learning groups, and projects.
- 4) The fourth item on the Agenda is **Adaptive Working Environment**. This item is about ensuring the working environment provokes psychological wellbeing, social engagement and facilitates concentration (the essence of performance). The processes involved in implementation are Consultancy and Expert Advice from specialists in IT, Ergonomics, Nutrition and Exercise.
- 5) The fifth item on the Agenda is the **Adaptive and Resilient Person**. Although the previous items on the Agenda are designed to eliminate the events and behaviours for which resilience is needed, nevertheless this is an imperfect world, and everyone needs degrees of personal resilience in order to keep control, form robust attitudes and deal with events and behaviours without impeding personal performance. The processes involved in implementation are personal development programmes.

The model for The WellBeing and Performance Agenda is below.

## The WellBeing and Performance Agenda



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### Background to the Agenda

#### Organisations like to wait until people become ill

The OECD has told us that £70 billion per year is the amount of resource expended on mental illness issues in the UK in 2014. This includes the resources lost to Psychopresenteeism.

Psychopresenteeism costs about twice the combined costs of sickness absence and attrition attributable to psychological distress. It is very costly!

Psychopresenteeism is the term given to people who are at work in body but not in mind.

Their mind has been diverted by events or other people, or because of ill health that prevents the person feeling well.

Waiting for people to become ill also has a direct impact on performance, and ensures that organisations that wait, under perform way below their potential.

It is better for performance for organisations to prevent Psychopresenteeism.

It is better for the individual not to suffer Psychopresenteeism.

## The challenges that organisations face

Stress is the biggest challenge to organisations. Figures vary but close to half the working population experiences degrees of stress at any one time.

If the degree of stress amounts to prolonged pressure, tension, and strain, the individual will be under-performing as the mind will be diverted from being able to concentrate on tasks to be performed. Apart from under-performance, degrees of stress cause accidents, errors, and frequently require people to repeat tasks, and, often, tasks take longer to complete.

Stress is an idiosyncratic extreme response to perceived uncontrollable pressure, tension and strain. Stress is, often, triggered by events and poor behaviour. To prevent stress, it is necessary to prevent the events and poor behaviour from occurring in the first place, and to create the environment where peoples' tolerance of, or resilience to, events and poor behaviours is such as to not interfere with their personal performance.

Individual resilience is robust because the working environment is positive and supportive, not because of any personal attribute that makes the individual impervious to negative cultural and managerial influences. Personal resilience and mental toughness can only go so far, and certainly not far enough to make the organisation perform at anything more than average. The rest is down to culture, leadership and the working environment.

The events and behaviours that may trigger stressful responses in people are many and varied.

All organisations have to adapt and be responsive to external and internal pressures if they are to survive. If they are to prosper they need to be corporately resilient to overcome challenges without denting performance.

The general challenges are well established. They include Political influences; the economy; technological change; demographic change; changes in demand. In addition to these external challenges, internal challenges arise from growth, expansion, takeovers, mergers, downsizing and fragmentation.

To prevent these risks turning into threats, leaders and managers must manage the risks effectively. If they fail, the threats de-stabilise the workforce. The most commonly mismanaged risk is organisational change, which often leads to a de-stable workforce that under-performs. The reason for the under-performance is the uncertainty surrounding most changes because the change process is handled badly. Uncertainty is a stressor.

## Prevention is better than waiting for failure

The costs of waiting for people to become psychologically sick far exceed the costs of helping people to stay psychologically healthy.

The return on helping people to stay psychologically well far exceed the return on getting people better once they are sick.

Preventing people from becoming psychologically unwell will save large amounts of money.

Preventing people from becoming psychologically unwell will turn the organisation into one that is corporately resilient, and achieve peak performance.

Preventing people from becoming psychologically unwell will stop the waiting for failure.

## 5 steps to create a ‘fabulous place to work’

It takes five steps to transform organisations into ‘fabulous places to work’.

### What does a fabulous place to work look like?

A fabulous place to work is a workplace that makes the individual feel socially engaged with their work, their workmates and the organisation. It is a place where individuals feel they are getting everything they need to feel a buzz, a sensation of being successful and happy.

There is no reason why the workplace should not be a fabulous place to work. The workplace is a controlled community, controlled by leaders and managers. Their attitude towards the workforce makes the difference between being a fabulous place to being a place to work or endure working hours until escape time.

Leaders and managers’ attitude needs to change from thinking of the workforce as something to exploit to people who should be nurtured. The difference is between waiting for failure and attaining peak performance.

The image shows what a fabulous place to work looks like.



The aim is to achieve social engagement between the workforce, the work and organisation.

## The 5 steps in outline

### Step 1 –

This step confirms the ‘things that organisations do’. It may seem an obvious step to take, but there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that most organisations fail to do all the things they are supposed to do to succeed.

### Step 2 –

This step is about developing an overall strategy for your organisation to become a wellbeing and performing organisation.

### Step 3 –

This is about encouraging everyone to adopt Psychological Responsibility for themselves and everyone they interact with.

### Step 4 –

This is about encouraging the leaders and managers, together with the workforce, to base the culture of the organisation on ‘sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation.

### Step 5 –

This step is about embedding into the organisation the triggers to provoke the workforce to feel psychologically well so that it achieves peak performance.



## Steps in more detail

### Things that organisations do

They do three things:

- They develop and/or adopt products and/or services.
- They deliver these to a market in the most efficacious manner possible.
- They assemble a workforce that is so psychologically well it delivers the other two things brilliantly.

Unfortunately, most organisations do not achieve any of the things above very successfully.

More unfortunately, they do not do the third thing at all, other than provide services to people after they become ill. This is, of course, too late. The costs have already escalated.

### A strategy for wellbeing and performance

This framework comes in two parts.

**Part 1** is to place the workforce at the centre of Corporate Strategy. This is best illustrated by the image that follows.

Most Boards focus attention on the items in the circles surrounding the workforce, and give the workforce an after-thought.

By placing the workforce at the centre of corporate strategy it becomes unambiguous that the workforce should be a forethought, not an afterthought. This is reinforced later by ensuring that the workforce is high on the list of Corporate Values (in the Adaptive Culture element of the Agenda).



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**Part 2** is the strategic framework for wellbeing and performance.

There are five strategies in this framework.

#### **Strategy 1 – Promoting social engagement, and the prevention of stress**

This is the prevention of stress strategy achieved by implementing elements that promote social engagement.

#### **Strategy 2 – Prevent the deterioration of dis-engagement**

This is about providing interventions when members of the workforce start to dis-engage because of events and behaviours having an adverse effect on their psychological wellbeing and performance. Most organisations have services in place to achieve this strategy. However, of course, this is too late to prevent costs escalating.

#### **Strategy 3 – Restoration**

This strategy is about returning people back to their normal level of independent life and beyond, as well as returning people back to work.

#### **Strategy 4 – Palliation**

This strategy addresses those who are off sick for six weeks and longer. They present additional challenges and require specific rehabilitation expertise to elevate their quality of life.

#### **Strategy 5 – Sustaining social engagement**

This strategy is about sustaining the prevention strategy. Unless energy and action is sustained to prevent stress and promote social engagement, future generations of leaders and managers may slip back into old habits. This must be prevented.



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The WellBeing and Performance Agenda is integral to the implementation of Strategies 1 and 5.



## Psychological Responsibility

As part of the change process to achieve psychological wellbeing and performance, this step is crucial.

### Psychological Responsibility

**Think independently.**  
**Be attentive to others.**  
**Act with humanity.**

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involves every manager meeting making enquiries about who has and who hasn't exercised their Psychological Responsibility. It involves Psychological Responsibility being part of the Cultural Values of the organisation.

The slogan that goes with Psychological Responsibility is in the image.

## Sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation

This step is about changing the attitude of everyone in the workplace, especially leaders and managers. The 'big idea' is sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation between everyone in the workplace.

This is the approach to the The WellBeing and Performance Agenda and underpins all the activities involved in implementing the Agenda.

Sharing responsibility plays to the key influences on psychological wellbeing, such as kinship, ownership, involvement, communication, and social engagement.

The idea is based on the understanding that most major decisions are adaptive for which solutions are speculative. Such decisions are not the exclusive preserve of leaders and managers, but require the combined intelligence of the workforce.

Sharing responsibility means that everyone has a stake in the future success of the business or service. It means that everyone is encouraged to make observations and contributions to ensuring that tomorrow will be more successful than today.

Sharing responsibility is the antidote to whistleblowing, a pernicious experience for those involved, and a reflection of poor management.

The workforce is encouraged to think about the organisation above thinking about what leaders and managers require of them. The workforce judges the requirements of leaders and managers

in the context of what is in the interests of future success of the organisation. Leaders and managers are required to encourage the workforce to be open and to critique how to make the organisation more successful.

### The WellBeing and Performance Agenda

The WellBeing and Performance Agenda is a systemic approach to transforming organisations to achieve peak performance by enhancing the psychological wellbeing of the workforce.

Psychological wellbeing is how a person feels.

It has less to do with physical health; more to do with feelings. Feeling well is contingent on being in mental control of oneself, being able to form social and professional relationships, being able to focus and concentrate on tasks, feeling, as well as being, successful, and feeling happiness.

Feeling happy at work comes from the same factors as above, combined with doing things that feed personal psychological wellbeing, such as being challenged, learning new skills, being involved, gaining recognition, adding to self esteem, and other factors.

The process is to encourage the workforce to adopt behaviours which, combined with organisational triggers, produce commitment, trust, social engagement, kinship, motivation and concentration.

Performance depends on concentration. People can have all the skills, knowledge and experience, but if they cannot concentrate, they cannot perform.

The whole process of transformation is shown in the image.

Input behaviours of attentiveness, reliability, intellectual flexibility, conflict resolution and encouragement (Psychological Responsibility) are embedded into the organisation using The WellBeing and Performance Agenda to produce the output behaviours of commitment, trust, social engagement, motivation and concentration.



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## The Agenda

The WellBeing and Performance Agenda, as explained earlier, has five elements.

Setting aside Discovery, the remaining elements of the Agenda, together with the topics within each element, are shown in the image.



Each element focuses on ‘sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation’

### **The Adaptive Culture**

The culture influences everything. The elements that form an Adaptive Culture are shown in the image. They include the rules of how the organisation should run. Each rule is an enabling rule, enabling shared responsibility.

### **Adaptive leadership**

Adaptive Leadership is a process of sharing responsibility, and encourages everyone to focus on the future success of the organisation. The process encourages raising and dealing with Elephants in the Room, encourages independent thinking; and encourages organisational learning.

### **Adaptive working environment**

This focuses on five elements – physical health, the working environment, Information technology and technology, ergonomics and management practices.

Each is orientated towards sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation.

### **The Adaptive and Resilient Person**

Personal resilience is about retaining mental control in difficult circumstances so that robust attitudes can be formed to overcome the situation. Attitude is a choice, so being resilient is a choice, a choice influenced by the culture and leadership of the organisation. The same difficult event in a positive adaptive culture will produce a different degree of personal resilience compared to a toxic culture.

People at work need to be resilient because events and difficult behaviours occur, even in the best working environment.

However, the Agenda is designed to eliminate the adverse events and behaviours, recognising that there will be some that occur for external reasons as well as lapses in concentration in individuals.


## **Conclusion**

A major challenge for organisations is the prevention of stress. Stress impedes performance.

The WellBeing and Performance Agenda draws together the psychological influences that provoke psychological wellbeing. Psychological wellbeing arises from working in a fabulous place to work, which is based on attaining social engagement between the workforce, their work and the organisation.

The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda is a systemic approach to transformation, and is designed to help leaders, managers and organisation development specialists to go through the steps to transformation.

## Implementation

The  [Organisation Health Development Programme](#) mentors organisations, leaders, managers and organisation development specialists in the implementation of The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda.

For more details, please email [barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk](mailto:barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk)

## About MAS

We are:

- Specialists in Organisation and Leadership Development
- Specialists in Corporate and Personal Resilience

## Our Programmes

We provide workshops and masterclasses on:

- The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda
- Personal Resilience
- Corporate Resilience
- Adaptive Leadership
- Organisational Health

## Mentoring Scheme

Our mentoring scheme exists to mentor leaders, managers, Organisation Development specialists and others in the implementation of The WellBeing and Performance Agenda.

## Our Guides

More information about the various aspects of The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda can be found in our 4 practical guides which are available on our website –

<http://www.mas.org.uk/publications.html> .

[Derek Mowbray's Guide to WellBeing and Performance](#)

[Derek Mowbray's Guide to Corporate Resilience](#)

[Derek Mowbray's Guide to Adaptive Leadership](#)

[Derek Mowbray's Guide to Personal Resilience.](#)

For more information about our programmes and services, please email [barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk](mailto:barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk) or call +44 (0)1242 241882.

# Professor Derek Mowbray



**Professor Derek Mowbray**  
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Derek Mowbray is a Chartered Psychologist and Chartered Scientist, with a doctorate in the psychology of leadership.

Derek Mowbray specialises in the primary prevention of psychological distress at work, with a focus on promoting wellbeing and performance. He provides consultancy and facilitation in four areas:

- Building and sustaining healthy organisations
- Promoting and adopting adaptive leadership and management principles
- Boosting personal and corporate resilience
- Resolving lifestyle@work issues – impediments to wellbeing and performance

Derek focuses on organisation culture, the behaviour of leaders and managers in relation to their employees, personal and corporate resilience and on issues of lifestyle@work that impede performance. By helping managers to develop the behaviours that encourage commitment and trust, staff engagement and levels of personal performance are strengthened and improved; staff retention increased; absence and presenteeism levels will be reduced along with their huge associated costs.

In 2011 his management standards for A Healthy Organisation were published and are now widely used across all sectors. In early 2012 his Manager's Code for Health and Social Care was launched by Dame Carol Black on behalf of the Institute of Healthcare Management. Derek Mowbray is now working on the next in his series of Guides - Managing your own stress at work, due for publication in 2014.

Derek Mowbray's clients are from all sectors and are of all shapes and sizes. His work is being adopted throughout the UK and Ireland and overseas.

Derek is a regular contributor to HSE, CIPD, HSJ, and LinkedIn communities, and has made national presentations at conferences for the International Stress Management Association, NHS Employers, the HSJ World Class Workforce, the Health and Wellbeing at Work, The Royal College of General Practitioners, The British Psychological Society and the CIPD.

Derek is a visiting Professor at Northumbria University and the University of Gloucestershire.