

# OBSERVE

The Odgers Berndtson Global Magazine\_

No. 14  
Issue 02 2018

[odgersberndtson.com](http://odgersberndtson.com)



# WELL WORKING

A special issue on wellbeing at work



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## **INSIDE:**

Resilience  
Happiness  
Diversity  
Mindfulness  
Diabetes crisis  
Neuroscience  
and much more



**I believe**  
that to be successful  
a company must be willing  
to look to the future, to transform,  
to be open-minded, to embrace  
dissenting points of view.

**Steve Shiffman**  
CEO, Calvin Klein, Inc.  
(Global CEO Program)



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**A Way to Learn. A Mark to Make. A World to Change.**

**#1**

Executive  
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FINANCIAL  
TIMES



The roots of wellness are ancient, its corporate history a much more recent one.

Clearly, the ideas and practices of wellness in the workplace have exploded globally, alongside a flurry of digital technology.

But does well

working, as we've called it, merit all the attention it's getting?

We're devoting this edition of *Observe* to answering that question in an in-depth examination that goes beyond the hype and headlines.

We ask whether well working is merely a sticking plaster on badly managed businesses desperate to adapt to relentless change, or an opportunity for a genuine competitive edge in a world where the line between life and work is increasingly blurred.

Our well working debate ranges far and wide. Among other things, it takes in buildings built for happiness, the macro forces of ill health threatening workforces, stress and personal resilience, the hard facts behind the mindfulness craze, the ups and downs of independent working, the best apps to aid well working, and understanding how your brain works.



We hope you'll enjoy the debate and our conclusions, and find some useful advice and tips along the way.

In short, we hope 'well working' works for you.

Mark Houghton

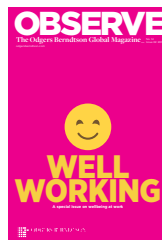
**Managing Partner,**

**Odgers Berndtson Middle East**

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#### **Observe**

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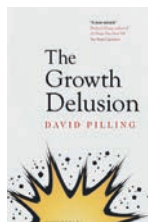
## Stories and statistics that look at global wellbeing and well working



CANADIANS BELIEVE "THEIR EMPLOYER HAS SOME RESPONSIBILITY IN ENSURING THEIR GOOD HEALTH".  
(SOURCE: BUFFETT NATIONAL WELLNESS SURVEY)

### BOOKS

**THE GROWTH DELUSION: WEALTH, POVERTY AND THE WELL-BEING OF NATIONS**  
by David Pilling, published by Bloomsbury, £20/\$26/€21



Writing in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, reviewer Richard N. Cooper rightly pointed out that "growth often becomes a fetish for politicians and policymakers, who have given it priority over many other aspects of national wellbeing. This informative and sometimes humorous book serves as a useful antidote to that myopia." And how timely it is. "When it comes to the economy," Pilling argues, "officials and leaders should pay a little more attention to quality and a little less to quantity." (See our feature on national happiness on p20.)

### HEALTH

#### WORKING OUT FOR WELL WORKING

Swedish fashion and sports retailer Björn Borg (yes, that Björn Borg)

**91%** OF WORKERS AT COMPANIES THAT SUPPORT WELLBEING EFFORTS SAY THEY FEEL MOTIVATED TO DO THEIR BEST. (SOURCE: AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION)



has taken an innovative approach to getting its employees fit. Every Friday they are asked to leave their desks at the company's Stockholm headquarters to have their weekly workout at a nearby gym.

For more than two years the company founded by the Swedish tennis legend has made on-the-job exercise mandatory at the initiative of chief executive Henrik Bunge. "If you don't want to exercise or be a part of the company culture, you have to go," says Bunge. So far no one has felt the need to leave because of the fitness regime.

**80%** OF EMPLOYEES IN PET-FRIENDLY WORKPLACES SAY HAVING PETS NEARBY WHILE THEY WORK MAKES THEM FEEL "HAPPY, RELAXED AND SOCIABLE". (SOURCE: PURINA)

### FITNESS



#### MR MUSCLE

Not some bulging wrestler type, Todd McKinnon is co-founder and CEO of Okta, a publicly traded identity management company based in San Francisco and valued at \$2 billion. Last year he became the world's 14th fittest man in the 45 to 49 age group after competing

against elite athletes from around the world in the annual, four-day CrossFit Games held last summer in Wisconsin, USA. The games are truly arduous. Athletes run, bike, swim, lift weights, do calisthenics, climb ladders, and compete in other shows of strength like handstand push-ups. How many CEOs reading this can match McKinnon's efforts?

**61%**

OF EMPLOYEES AGREE THAT THEY'VE MADE HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE CHOICES BECAUSE OF THEIR COMPANY'S WELLNESS PROGRAMME. (SOURCE: AFLEC)



### ERGONOMICS

#### PLEASE BE SEATED

If you are prepared to spend between \$1,500 and \$2,500 (€1,377 to €2,298; £1,190 to £1,990) you can avail yourself of one of the world's most expensive office chairs. The Xten, a collaboration between iconic Italian design firm Pininfarina and furnishings pioneers Ares Line was developed in 2008 at a cost of \$1.5m and looks as good today as it did at the outset. Made from Technogel, a customised polyurethane material, and Dynatec, a fabric designed for Olympic athletes, it's the ultimate in well working (or well sitting).

[XtenChair.com](http://XtenChair.com)

**78%** OF BUSINESSES SAY EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IS A CRITICAL PART OF THEIR BUSINESS PLANS. (SOURCE: VIRGIN PULSE)

**1 Skagen Hybrid.** A smart alternative to the ubiquitous Fitbit or Apple Watch, Skagen's Signatur Connected hybrid smart watch is a stylish item of wrist wear that tracks basic activities automatically, and synchronises with your iOS or Android smartphone. [skagen.com](http://skagen.com)

**2 7 Cups** is an on-demand emotional health and wellbeing service. Anyone who wants to talk about whatever is on their mind can quickly reach out to a trained, compassionate listener through the 7 Cups global network. It has hundreds of listeners who come from all walks of life and have diverse experiences. [7cups.com](http://7cups.com) or [via the App Store](#)

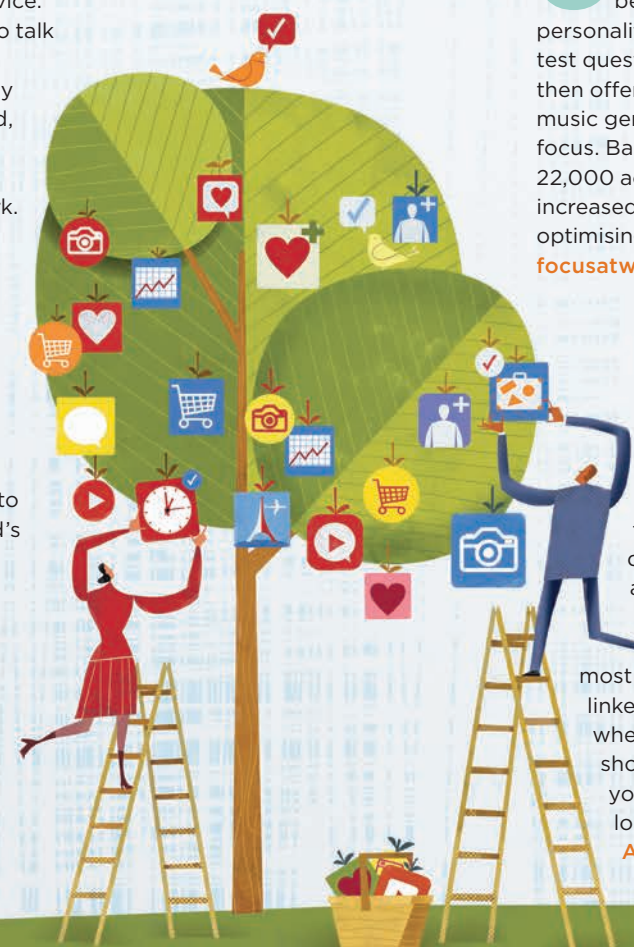
**3 Spire** claims to be "the world's only breath and activity tracker proven to decrease stress and increase productivity". It measures your breathing patterns to determine your state of mind and help achieve calm. [spire.io](http://spire.io) or [via the App Store](#)

**4 Pacifica** says it is the "number one app to help deal with stress, anxiety and depression alongside a supportive community" and is based on cognitive behavioural therapy and mindfulness meditation. [thinkpacifica.com](http://thinkpacifica.com) or [via the App Store](#)

**5 Muse** is a brain sensing headband that helps you get the most out of meditation practice. Put on the headset and complete breathing exercises to the sound of waves (neutral), storms (bad) and tweeting birds (good) each indicating how focused you are. [Available via the App Store](#)

**6 focus@will** is a music service that claims to be able to pinpoint your personality type through two test questions from which it will then offer you the appropriate music genre to improve your focus. Based on its survey of 22,000 active users, focus time increased four-fold, thus optimising productivity. [focusatwill.com](http://focusatwill.com)

**7 Life Analytics** is a handy app that "visualises your daily life" and automatically analyses how you spend your time based on location data. It uses graphs arranged by categories for home, work and leisure. Because most people's actions are linked with locations like where they work, live and shop, Life Analytics analyses your daily life based on that location data. [Available via the App Store](#)



# Just do it!

A range of apps and other tech to help you improve your well working



Is deploying mindfulness in the workplace really beneficial or is it, as some argue, fraught with conflicting evidence?

# The mindfulness debate

If, as some major global organisations argue, mindfulness has had a profound and positive effect on their employees – from boardroom to shop floor – then why isn't every business using it?

The answer is more complex than you might think. Much of the debate focuses on the existing – and often very robust – evidence that has been conducted over recent years into whether or not mindfulness really *works*. And much of that evidence is, well, inconclusive.

## Believe the hype?

Writing in the October 2017 edition of the renowned journal *Scientific American*, Brett Statka

argued: "Many psychologists, neuroscientists and meditation experts are afraid that hype [about mindfulness] is outpacing the science. In an article in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15 prominent psychologists and cognitive scientists caution that despite its popularity and supposed benefits, scientific data on mindfulness is woefully lacking. Many of the studies on mindfulness and meditation, the authors wrote, are poorly designed – compromised by inconsistent definitions of what mindfulness actually is, and

often void of a control group to rule out the placebo effect."

So far as its provenance goes, most scientists, practitioners and users do agree that mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist thought and theory; that it was later taken up in the 1970s by Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts; and that Kabat-Zinn, a cognitive scientist who founded the university's Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, was advocating its astounding efficacy in dealing with a number of problems.

It was Kabat-Zinn who came up with "mindfulness-based stress reduction" as a way to deal with conditions that were seen as otherwise difficult to treat. "By the early 2000s," adds Statka, "the concept of mindfulness had ballooned in popularity."

And as the world gets tougher, more stressful, more connected and more manic, anything that helps calm us down must be good, right?

## Trials and tribulations

Nevertheless, the critics still persisted. *American Psychologist* reported that only around nine per cent of research into mindfulness-based interventions had been tested in clinical trials that included a control group. The journal went on to say that multiple large placebo-controlled meta-analyses concluded that mindfulness practices have often produced unimpressive results. A 2014 review of 47 meditation trials, collectively including more than 3,500 participants, found no evidence for benefits related to enhancing attention, curtailing substance abuse, aiding sleep or controlling weight.

Counter those findings with the seemingly inexorable rise of mindfulness use in the workplace and it seems that some organisations are carrying on regardless, whatever the formal science concludes.

Mindfulness meditation is being deployed as part of employee development in a number of high-profile Fortune 500 companies, including such behemoths as Google, Apple and Nike. This is good news for those involved in the US\$1.1bn mindfulness and meditation industry, which in turn makes up 7.4 per cent of the overall \$15.1bn alternative care market in the US.

Just last year, *Wired* reported on the experiences of "Google

employee number 1072, software engineer Chade-Meng Tan". Back in 2007, Tan launched 'Search Inside Yourself', a seven-week mindfulness meditation course for Google employees. "At first, his colleagues were reluctant," said the *Wired* report. "They questioned what, if anything, a mystical, new-age, candlelit, deep-chanting practice could do for them. But it wasn't long before Tan's colleagues learned that a mindfulness practice that helps you to be truly present with yourself and others had the power to change the way they worked and lived. Soon, Googlers who went through Tan's class were raving about its benefits. They felt calmer, clear-headed and more focused."

## The ultimate tool

Similar beneficial experiences have been recorded by numerous aficionados from organisations both big and small. For example, Nike's 'Headspace' app is, according to Andy Puddicombe, Headspace co-founder, "the ultimate tool for any athlete at any level. It [mindfulness] can help strengthen motivation, increase focus, improve resilience, enhance form, optimise recovery and, perhaps most important of all, get us out of our head and into the body for an enjoyable and fulfilling training session."

Not all the respected scientific journals are in the 'inconclusive' camp. According to a 2011 study published in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, just four days of mindfulness meditation halved pain perception in participants compared to those who did not practise it. It presents compelling evidence for meditation's ability to improve the quality of life for those suffering from pain.

Perhaps the fact that even some governments have adopted mindfulness within their health

systems proves it's more than just a fad. According to a paper published in 2017 by the UK Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group, "a culture of mindfulness in the workplace could certainly be a step in the right direction to improve employee wellbeing. The potential benefits of practising mindfulness at work exercises could include improved resilience, fewer absences due to sickness, the cultivation of positive workplace relationships and better collaboration between colleagues ... mindfulness is a technique that's even recommended by the UK's National Health Service to improve mental wellbeing."

Jacqueline Foley, Chief Marketing Officer at Odgers Berndtson Canada, agrees: "Today's leaders are facing unprecedented change," she says. "They are often stressed and distracted, making it difficult to focus and be in the moment with others. I think mindfulness enables you to be more compassionate, because you are taking the time to listen to and check in with people. Then in turn people feel more heard, and they feel more respected."

The general conclusion is that yes, mindfulness can be a useful leadership tool (even if the scientists are still debating) – for people who are first trained by a properly qualified practitioner and then do it as a daily practice. "You make the time and fit it into your schedule," Foley concludes. "For me, honestly, it's been transformational. I am calmer and more thoughtful which I believe makes me a better colleague and team leader. It's a practice anyone can take on and benefit from, and I think that is why it has really taken off. I'm just sorry it took me so long to finally do it." ■

## Well working conversations on social media abound, as research by Shareablee demonstrates

When Virgin CEO Sir Richard Branson posted from his own social media account to promote his company's Extended Shared Parental Leave policy in 2015, it became the most shared post on Facebook on the topic. Branson's use of social media to promote his sprawling organisation's well working practices is just one high-profile example of the way in which social media is being used to great effect to discuss this increasingly important topic. It also enabled Virgin to spread the well working word to global followers and employees quickly, effectively and with high engagement (e.g. likes, shares, reactions and comments).

Apart from Branson's very specific post, what does social media as a whole have to say about wellbeing and well working? Quite a lot, according to data compiled by social media analytics firm Shareablee.

### Social analytics

Shareablee analysed more than 900 organisations who posted on the topic between January 1, 2015 and March 31, 2018.

The sample included brands, publishers (publishing houses and news organisations such as *The New York Times*, *Forbes* and the *Harvard Business Review*) and public institutions such as Public Health England (which posted about sleep deprivation and work performance), the Cleveland Clinic and the World Health Organisation (which posted tips to promote ways to combat mental health issues at work).

Prominent organisations such as Deutsche Bank, GSK and SAP use their social media pages to talk about their own initiatives to promote well working and the resources they

have available for their employees. Deutsche Bank's posts spoke about relieving negative stigma around mental health and the services it provides to combat the issue. Meanwhile, SAP (via its 'Life at SAP' page) hosted TEDx speaker and workplace happiness expert Holly Landau at an internal event.

The private sector leads the wellbeing in the workplace conversation, with 71 per cent of total engagement on the subject. Shareablee analysed the top-performing posts on the subject and found that the most engaging posts featured an organisation's senior management taking an active role in promoting wellbeing – and specifically happiness – in the workplace. CEOs, take note.

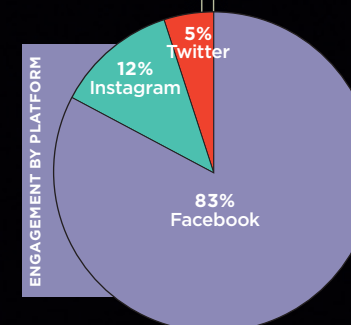
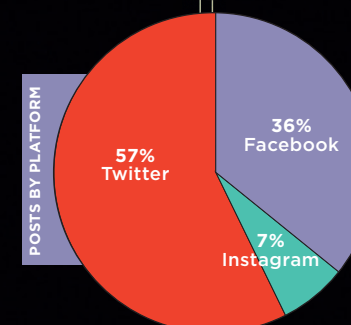
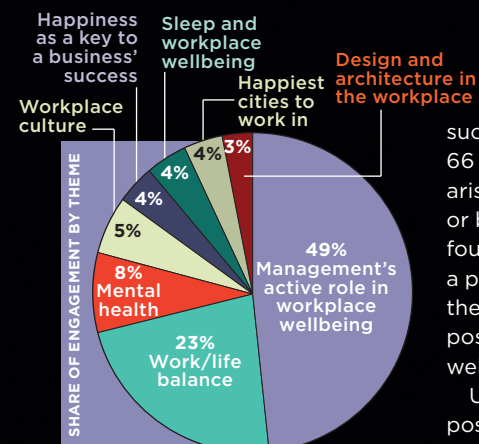
Marriott Careers' Facebook page, featuring its 'Wunderlust' podcast series and including interviews with its Chief Human Resources Officer David Rodriguez, had the most engagement of the 2,250 posts

analysed in the Shareablee study. In particular, two posts on workplace wellbeing made up seven per cent of total engagement and achieved 40 times more engagement than Marriott Careers' average post engagement.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, US-based organisations lead the conversation with a 59 per cent share of total engagement. The UK followed with 17 per cent of total engagement, then Swiss-based businesses with 13 per cent and Australian pages ranking at 10 per cent.

### Action and reaction

Where companies are posting on 'workplace', wellbeing had an impact as well. While Twitter saw the most posts on the topic, Facebook posts had the most engagement with 82 per cent of total engagement occurring on that platform. Photos and link posts had the most



### ABOUT SHAREABLEE

Launched in 2013, Shareablee empowers brands by providing data that can help them define and drive success on social media by arming them with metrics and predictive analytics that inform powerful best practices. It is the leading authority on audience intelligence, competitive benchmarking and actionable insights across the social web, measuring more than 500,000 global properties across all major social platforms every day. It helps marketers quantify the value of their audiences by providing insights and data-driven assessments about how consumers are engaging with their brands and competitors on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, Tumblr and YouTube.

success, with more than 66 per cent of total 'Actions' arising from posts with either or both. Shareablee analysis found that posts that included a photo or included a link had the most engagement, with most posts linking to a company's website for a full article.

Ultimately, work-life balance posts sparked the most conversation or were the most-commented posts, with 22 per cent of all post comments. Physical activity such as doing more exercise also trended high on social media. The Luxottica Group (a leader in the design, manufacture and distribution of luxury eyewear) took to Facebook touting its investment in promoting physical activity for its employees and offering healthy meal options in its cafeteria, while Deloitte used Instagram in 2016 to showcase its new Toronto offices with dedicated spaces for mental and physical health.

Global furniture designers Steelcase and Knoll also used social media to talk about the important role furniture ergonomics and office design play in an employee's satisfaction and overall happiness in the workplace. The designers had the most success on Instagram using stylised images that feature well on the platform.

This is just a snapshot of the dynamic social media activity being undertaken by companies promoting their well working credentials. With more than 73 billion engagements on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in 2017 in the USA alone, why would companies not want to take to social media to extol the virtues of their well working activities and better connect with their employees? ■

shareablee.com

# A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

# THE RULE BREAKERS

Globally, corporate wellbeing is a \$40bn industry. From unlimited vacations and sabbaticals, through growing organic vegetables and astronomical personal budgets for the workplace, *Observe* highlights 11 companies offering a unique approach to well working

## ASANA

Well working is at the forefront at this San Francisco-based software company established by Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz and software engineer Justin Rosenstein, both of whom were involved with improving employee productivity at the social media giant.

Alongside wellbeing 'must haves' like daily yoga, gym memberships, mentoring programmes focused on learning and health, executive coaching and unlimited holiday, Asana even gives each new starter a \$10,000 budget to create his or her own unique workspace. Motorised desks that allow an employee to sit or stand are the most popular choice.

## ZAPPOS

At Zappos, decentralised organisation reigns. Their model removes the typical corporate command-and-control structure, instead replacing it with one in which everyone becomes a leader in their own role.

Despite trading in sports footwear, Zappos foregoes the more clichéd gym classes and fitness regimes when it comes to well working. Rather, the company champions 'Wellness Adventures' in which employees take part in regular group activities off-site, 'Recess Tuesdays' in which playground toys are distributed, and 'Energy Pods' available for employees to take naps in.

## GOOGLE

Arguably an obvious choice, but as a pioneer of innovative employee well working initiatives Google is worthy of inclusion. Its 'Optimise Your Life' programme focuses on improving "self-actualisation and self-fulfilment" through three pillars: emotional health, physical health and financial health.

In practice, this includes, among other things, life coaching, deep sleep sessions, brain training, flexible hours and vacations, support groups and 'recharge pods'.

Google's Campus hosts physicians, chiropractors, healthcare professionals, fitness centres and classrooms for extra-curricular activities,

as well as the PiLab – or People & Innovative Lab – which researches and develops new techniques for employees' wellbeing.

## AIRBNB

Airbnb's 'workplace as an experience' vision is built on creating memorable workplace experiences and a true sense of belonging for every employee.

A 'belong anywhere' environment encourages staff to create their own workspaces, while each employee has his or her own webpage on a dedicated intranet, from which they communicate and interact socially with others in the business. Employees are also encouraged to volunteer with

local communities for four hours per month.

It is, says Mark Levy Airbnb's former Global Head of Employee Experience, about "creating memorable workplace experiences that span all aspects of how we relate to employees, including how we recruit them, develop them ... the type of volunteer experiences we offer them, and the food we share together". <sup>[1]</sup>

## MICROSOFT

From an annual wellbeing week for all staff to the 'Microsoft Living Wellness Health Center', Microsoft views employee health as essential for well working.

The Microsoft CARES

employee assistance programme offers education on matters such as stopping smoking, weight and overall fitness, gym and exercise classes and spousal healthcare. Workers are also offered healthy eating initiatives, as well as on-site grocery and personal care services, a host of extensive mentor programmes and learning opportunities.

## RODALE INC.

The international publisher, known for its *Women's Health* and *Men's Health* titles, somewhat unsurprisingly practises what it preaches.

Employees are provided with on-site fitness facilities and →

classes, but the emphasis is very much on the outdoors. A dedicated outdoor running/walking trail encourages time out in its headquarters' surrounding woodland, and a garden area lets employees relax by growing their own vegetables and organic produce.

Focused on mental, emotional and professional development, Rodale also provides wellness days, meditation facilities, private nursing rooms and seminars.

### BP CANADA

Wearable tech from Fitbit is at the heart of BP Canada's wellbeing initiative. The company's 'Elements for Life' programme uses the technology to gather a detailed overview of employee wellbeing to ensure a healthy work-life balance.

Four key factors drive 'Elements for Life': physical, emotional, financial and social health. The innovative points-based system encourages employees to take part in activities from which they earn points and are then rewarded via online tools that monitor professional and personal progress.

### SAS

A regular on various lists of 'best companies to work for', SAS has nurtured a positive work-life balance since its inception. The company, which has been named as a best place to work for millennials, working and single parents, offers a wellness initiative from its Recreation and Fitness Center.

This includes a multitude of exercise and fitness classes, health-conscious eateries, on-site childcare, educational courses and an on-site healthcare programme including

free doctor's appointments and a six-month 'Your Way to Wellness' programme.

It works, too – the company reportedly has a staff turnover rate of less than four per cent. According to Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer Jenn Mann: "It's critical for us to provide a workplace that incentivises great talent. This allows them to be motivated, creative and innovative."<sup>[2]</sup>

### UNILEVER

The global consumer goods brand delivers employee wellbeing and health via dedicated wellness areas. Its 'Wellbeing Zone' features four sub-zones focused on individual health aspects.

The 'Movement Zone' includes yoga, stretching exercises and massage, while the 'Connection Bridge' encourages employees to take a break and communicate with each other. A 'Refreshment Centre' offers healthy meals free of charge, and a dedicated 'Silent Zone' promotes meditation and rest during the working day.

### DELOITTE

The global consultancy uses a leader-driven, holistic 'Wellness Strategy' that focuses not only on its employees' professional wellbeing but also their personal health.

Leaders must recognise and reinforce a healthy, balanced and safe working environment across three key tiers: mind, body and purpose. It is, says Deloitte, only through carefully balancing these three elements that employees can realise their full potential in the workplace.

Workers are offered gym and

fitness classes, ergonomic environment options, massage and therapy sessions, extensive wellness programmes and more.

### NETFLIX

Granted, the idea of motivating your employees to work by telling them they don't have to can seem odd. But it's through being unencumbered by policies and rules that Netflix encourages its employees' wellbeing, fulfilment at work and creative spirit.

The company's holiday policy, now being more widely adopted elsewhere, is that there is no policy. Employees are free to take as much, or indeed as little, holiday as they wish and whenever they wish. The only stipulations to this 'formal' plan are that work must be covered and managers must know where employees are. ■

1. <https://bit.ly/2Grxssk>

2. <https://bit.ly/2GtQ7np>

“Responsible people thrive on freedom”

To survive and thrive in the senior leadership arena, you need resilience to enable you to combat the myriad challenges faced every day. KEIRON PIM reports

**C**ompeting to work the longest hours, struggling on through illness, toughing it out when chronic stress takes its toll – for many executives, life in the boardroom has more often than not been a case of survival of the fittest. But what is changing is our understanding of how to keep physically and mentally fit for life at the top.

The question of how leaders can withstand extreme pressure came to the fore last year when, in the UK, Lloyds Banking Group's CEO António Horta-Osório revealed that anxiety and insomnia "almost broke [him]" while he led the company's turnaround from being partly Government-owned into a private bank again. Within months of starting the job in 2011, he said, he had a spell in a clinic to avert a breakdown.

"I thought I was Superman," he told *The Times*. "I felt I could do everything. Before this, I had thought that the less sleep and the more work, the better. It showed me I was not Superman."

Now Horta-Osório plans to put 200 of his executives through a programme he and

his psychiatrist devised, which will include mindfulness, psychological testing and nutrition analysis. This comes within a growing corporate awareness that trying to be Superman is not the best option either for an individual or their business, and that leaders need a more effective toolkit to handle their challenges. In a word, they need resilience.

#### Publicising problems

Horta-Osório is not alone. Although other high-profile leaders publicly acknowledging their mental health problems are few and far between, there have been some notable cases. The Australian billionaire James Packer, director of casino operator Crown Resorts and son of the late media mogul Kerry Packer, stood down from his role in March of this year for personal reasons believed to be depression and anxiety, which he is known to have experienced during the past two decades.

In 2017 Ton Büchner quit as CEO of Dutch manufacturer AkzoNobel, which owns Dulux, because of health reasons relating to stress.

"Resilience is the ability to manage a sprint as well as a marathon," says Elizabeth Stewart, Odgers Berndtson's Head of Executive Assessment and Development in London. For Jacqueline Carter, Partner and Director, North America of the Potential Project, a global leader in providing mindfulness-based organisational effectiveness programmes, "a simple definition is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties", and it's "a mental quality that can be trained through practising mindfulness".

#### Duty of care

For Rob Stephenson, whose social enterprise Inside Out aims to change corporate culture by encouraging executives to discuss their mental wellbeing, "resilience is all about the ability to respond to adversity or difficult situations, and there's a strong element of flexibility ... I think it's misconstrued that resilience means strength or toughness."

A City of London tax and finance expert, Stephenson co-founded Inside Out in response to his experience of coping with bipolar disorder in a corporate environment.

"I think corporates are realising they have a duty of care to help →



# A CULTURE OF RESILIENCE



individuals manage their mental wellbeing, regardless of where the issue may have arisen,” he says. “Businesses are starting to understand it’s not just workplace stress they need to be supporting employees on.”

Another aspect of corporate life that is ripe for change is the culture of ‘presenteeism’, when employees turn up for work despite being unwell, whether physically or mentally. A Deloitte report from October 2017 titled *Mental Health and Employers: the Case for Investment* cites this as the greatest cost to the UK economy – costing an estimated £17bn-£26bn compared with absence costs of around £8bn – so tackling it would be a win-win situation for the business and the individual. The report also notes that businesses that intervene to address employees’ mental health, whether through individual therapy sessions or group workshops to build resilience, see an average return on investment of 4.2 to 1.

“That’s really where businesses can make a difference,” Stephenson says. “It’s one of the rare cases where the moral case of it being the right thing to do, and the business case of it being good for productivity and the workforce, are aligned.”

#### Keep in condition

Going hand in hand with this is the individual executive’s obligation to develop resilience by keeping in optimum condition for work. So how should they do this? Above all else Stephenson recommends prioritising a good night’s sleep, which boosts our ability to make decisions and cope with stress. Too little sleep negatively affects this. Be disciplined about your bedtime and avoid screens and social media late at night, he advises, to help your body naturally wind down.

In Australia, Andrew May of KPMG’s Performance Clinic is leading the charge to build a

culture of resilience within business. He identifies two further factors: physical and psychological fitness.

“The first piece of resilience is moving your body,” says May. “Get 10,000 steps today. This is not for fitness, it’s for mitochondria – little powerhouse energy cells. That wakes the body up and gets the system working properly.” On top of that, ensure you do at least three to four hours’ physical activity a week to increase VO2 max, your body’s maximum rate of oxygen consumption, “which also increases our ability to switch between stress and recovery. Movement gives you energy, and physical activity helps us regulate emotion.”

Good nutrition is also essential: ensure your sugar consumption is moderate, eat regular meals including protein, “which has dopamine to fuel the body”, and plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, he says.

Secondly there’s psychological fitness. Instead of being rigid and beholden to a ‘fixed mindset’, try to develop flexibility in your thinking. “With thinking skills, 50 per cent is genetic, 40 per cent is trainable and 10 per cent is lifestyle,” May believes. Training thinking skills to become more flexible helps leaders adapt to changing circumstances and thus become more resilient in trying times.

#### Business buy-in

His KPMG Australia colleague Dr Jane Gunn, a Partner in the Management Consulting division in Canberra, notes that businesses there are addressing the issue – “from mining companies through to our public sector organisations, businesses are starting to see the value in ensuring that their leaders and their workforces are

resilient,” she says. She suggests doing so by building a ‘growth mindset’ whereby executives “practise approaching each situation from the perspective that it’s not going to be about their performance, but about how they can learn – that having all the answers is both not possible and not helpful in generating new ideas.

“Equally important to building resilience is building what we call ‘capacity’ to lead,” Gunn continues, “giving yourself recovery time so you can recharge and focus your energy. The science shows that being in a constant state of stress reduces our ability to engage in creative or lateral thinking, and make effective decisions. Being low on energy can also lead to poor self-regulation and increased reactivity.

“We all know the feeling of being worn out and the ‘short fuse’ that creates for us. Our ability to be resilient, and to bounce back when something inevitably doesn’t work out as we planned, depends on having the reserves that help us to be reflective and learn from a failure, rather than reacting and blaming ourselves or others.”

Meanwhile the Potential Project’s Jacqueline Carter says there’s still much to be done at a corporate level. “In our experience, too many organisations are not addressing the root causes of a lack of resilience: busy, overworked, overloaded minds. Although there are many great programmes to enhance resilience, too many of them provide information and guidance on what to do, but fall short on the ‘how?’, which in our view requires training the mind to change how we process the difficulties we experience.”

She adds that the World

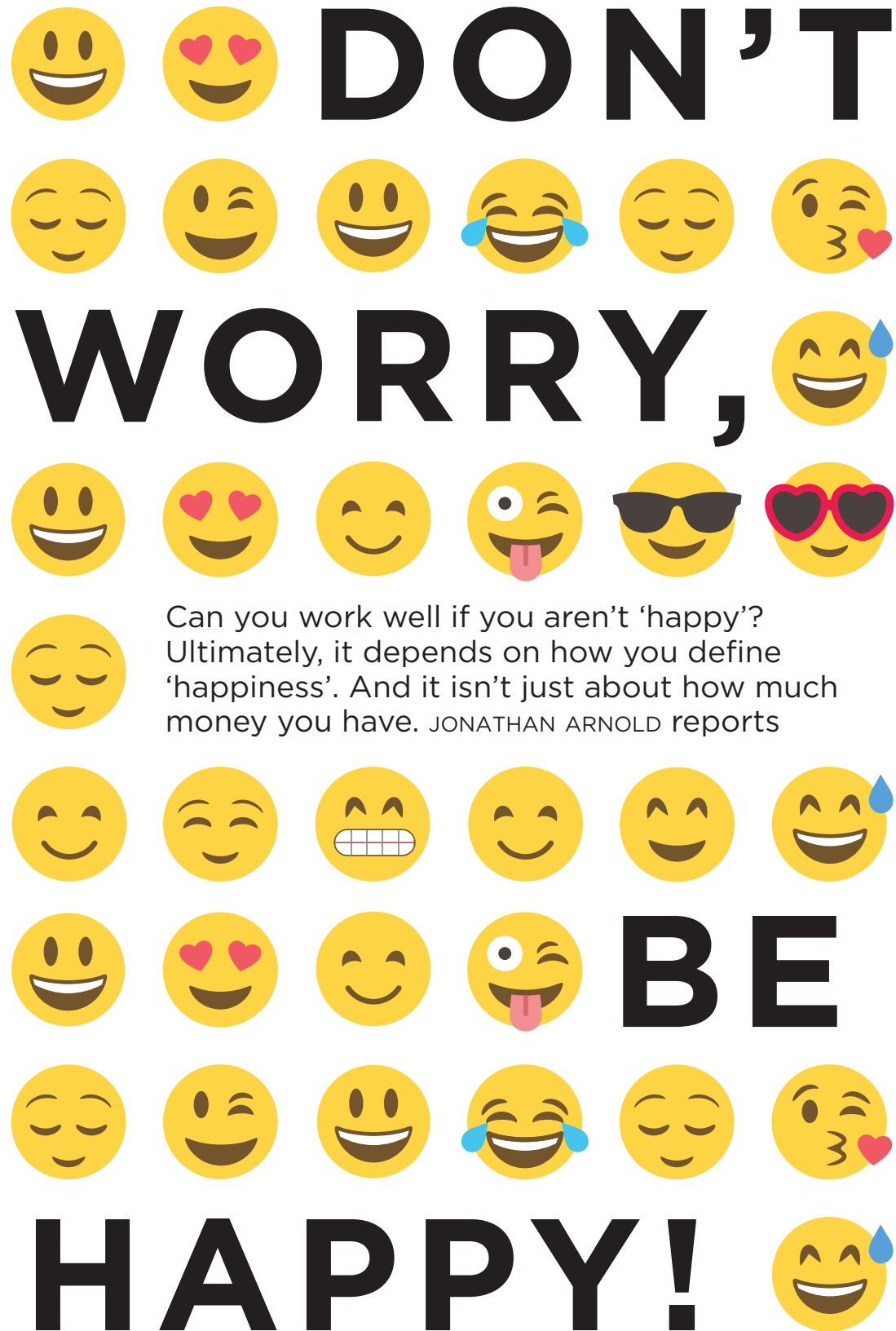
Health Organisation has named stress the “health epidemic of the 21st century”, and it is estimated to cost American businesses up to \$300bn a year. Her London-based colleague Louise Chester adds: “We are seeing tangible evidence from our work with a large number of leading companies who are taking this issue very seriously and placing both focus and significant budget in this area.

“In London, for instance, we facilitate an ongoing peer-to-peer forum for leaders from 30 or so of our global clients to explore why resilience is a vital business imperative and a leadership responsibility, and to confidentially share challenges and solutions.

“We are also currently working one-to-one with a number of CEOs and C-suite teams who acknowledge that the resilience of their organisation’s people is a vital contributor to the sustainable financial wellbeing of the organisations they lead. They realise that resilience starts with the leaders themselves, with their own behaviour and the culture they create.” ■

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- Inside Out: [inside-out.org](https://inside-out.org)
- The Potential Project is a global leader in providing customised, organisational effectiveness programmes based on mindfulness. Its mission is to enhance individual and company performance, resilience and creativity. It has brought mindfulness training to 100,000 individuals in more than 500 companies across the world. [potentialproject.com](https://potentialproject.com)



Can you work well if you aren't 'happy'? Ultimately, it depends on how you define 'happiness'. And it isn't just about how much money you have. JONATHAN ARNOLD reports

**W**hen we talk about happiness, I don't refer to pleasures or momentary feelings. It's the authentic, long-term happiness." So said Ohoud bint Al Roumi, the Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing in the United Arab Emirates, who took up the newly created role in 2016.

Minister for Happiness? Yup. It really exists. Add in that this is happening in the Middle East and the role is performed by a woman, and it is clear that happiness is increasingly becoming a key measure of social progress. For many nations, happiness is the overarching goal of public policy.

#### More than a feeling

Some countries, like the tiny kingdom of Bhutan, have long advocated treating happiness as much more than just an unconnected personal sensation. It coined the phrase 'gross national happiness' as far back as 1972 when the 4th King of Bhutan, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, declared: "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product."

In 2011, The UN General Assembly passed Resolution 65/309 'Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development', which states that happiness is "a fundamental human goal and universal aspiration; that GDP by its nature does not reflect that goal; that unsustainable patterns of production and consumption impede sustainable development; and that a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach is needed to promote sustainability, eradicate poverty, and enhance wellbeing and happiness". The UN urged member nations to follow the example of Bhutan and measure happiness and wellbeing.

Two years ago the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) committed itself "to redefine the growth narrative to put people's wellbeing at the centre of governments' efforts", while Helen

**“**The UN urged members to measure happiness and wellbeing**”**

Clarke, the head of the UN Development Program, spoke against what she called the "tyranny of GDP", arguing that what matters is the quality of growth.

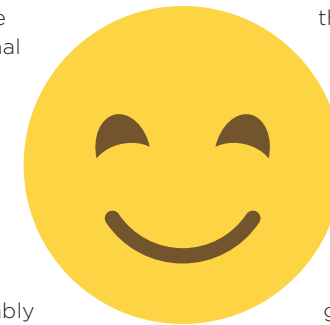
#### The happiness journey

Ms Roumi's role in the UAE continues this global trend. Her aim is nothing less than to create 'The Happiness Journey' by focusing on five main themes: mind wellbeing, physical wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, gastronomy and arts. By deploying interactive, multi-sensory and motivational sessions, cognitive experiences and workshops, Roumi hopes to give participants the "opportunity to understand the nature of these relationships and their direct impact on their own happiness and wellbeing".

Interestingly, Ms Roumi's quest for happiness targets all segments of society, providing information and experiences in a simple and practical manner that contributes to the government's goal of establishing happiness and positivity as a lifestyle and cultural trait in the UAE.

This move towards developing national happiness is just one part of a growing global quest to understand exactly what happiness means in our fragmented, dangerous, always-on lives and the crucial role it plays.

But what is happiness? Is it about a transitory state of mind – today I feel happy? Is it something that only applies to wealthy Western societies who have the time and luxury to think about their →



happiness status rather than simply worrying about getting enough to eat? Is it about how much money you have? Or is it something so complex and so bound up with our physical and mental wellbeing that it's too big a question to ever answer?

### The origins of happiness

In a new book called *The Origins of Happiness* [2018] the authors – all academics – seek to answer some of the 'big' questions about happiness. Drawing on a uniquely comprehensive range of evidence from longitudinal data on more than 100,000 individuals in Britain, the US, Australia and Germany, the book considers the key factors that affect human wellbeing.

Contrary to received wisdom, the authors declare, income inequality accounts for only two per cent or less of the variance in happiness across the population; the critical factors affecting a person's happiness are their relationships and their mental and physical health. More people are in misery due to mental illness than to poverty, unemployment or physical illness. Examining how childhood influences happiness in adulthood, the authors show that academic performance is a less important predictor than emotional health and behaviour, which is shaped tremendously by schools, individual teachers and parents. For policymakers, the authors propose new forms of cost-effectiveness analysis that place wellbeing at centre stage.



Income inequality accounts for only two per cent of the variance in happiness



Meanwhile, the latest edition of the annual *World Happiness Report* (produced by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network for the United Nations) ranks 156 countries across six factors including GDP, life expectancy, social support, generosity, freedom and corruption. In its chapter on 'Happiness at Work'

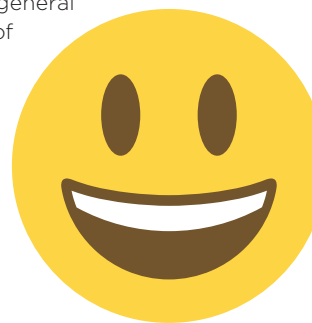
the report states: "Work-life balance emerges as a particularly strong predictor of people's happiness. Further factors include job variety and the need to learn new things, as well the level of individual autonomy enjoyed by the employee. Moreover, job security and social capital (as measured through the support one receives from fellow workers) are also positively correlated with happiness, while jobs that involve risks to health and safety are generally associated with lower levels of subjective wellbeing."

### Which are the happiest nations?

Unsurprisingly, Scandinavian countries rank highest, with Finland top of the list, and Norway second followed by Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Australia. Well outside of the top 10, the US ranked 18th, while the UK was one place behind in 19th position.

The world's least happy country is Burundi, followed by Central African Republic, South Sudan and Tanzania. Poverty, civil wars and general instability afflict many of these poorer countries so it's hardly surprising that they rank so low.

But it isn't only developing world countries that struggle. The UK doesn't have a Minister for Happiness. Instead it recently appointed a Minister for Loneliness. What with Brexit and the country's many problems since the 2008 financial crash, it seems that country still has a lot of work to do. ■




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# TURN OFF, SWITCH ON

Digital overload is causing burnout, stress, lack of productivity and more. So is it time to put down the tech and take back control?

**W**e are more plugged in than ever. Whether emails or messenger apps, digital workflow programmes and organisational tools, video calls or virtual meetings, the inescapable fact is that our workdays are consumed by an unceasing connection to digital devices.

It doesn't stop there, either. While there's little doubt that digital technology has changed the working environment immeasurably, that same technology has, by virtue of its handheld nature, created a culture where many of us feel it necessary to work around the clock. For some of us, that compulsion has become an addiction.

#### Battling burnout

The overuse of digital devices has in recent years been cited

as being detrimental to employee wellbeing – it causes burnout, sleeplessness, lack of productivity and other, more serious, health issues. Evidence also suggests that as the volume of technology in the workplace has increased, our productivity has taken a downward turn.

“For those who feel that they can't switch off from technology, there is a risk they never get proper recovery time, which is bad for long-term wellbeing and mental health,” says Emma Donaldson-Feilder, an occupational psychologist and director at Affinity Health at Work, which specialises in improving organisational performance through enhancing workplace health, wellbeing, engagement and leadership.

The global situation is fragmented to say the least, with some countries more

willing to recognise the issues and others less so. In 2016, the French government initiated a new employment law to guarantee employees the ‘right to disconnect’. In force since January 1, 2017, the right to disconnect can be described as “the employee's right to disconnect from any digital device or tool used for professional purposes such as smartphones, email or the internet during his or her free time and vacation.” The right to disconnect, in principle, benefits all employees, regardless of their professional category and related responsibilities.

More recently, French telecoms giant Orange declared: “Respect for private life and the right to switch off are considered to be fundamental rights at Orange. It is a matter of protecting employees from intrusive

practices (such as email, SMS, or instant messaging services) at any time of the day or night, over the weekend, during days off or during training courses originating from managers, but also from their colleagues or themselves.”

#### Return to sender

Germany is one country at the forefront of the digital ‘switch-off’, or at least digital reduction. For example, IBM Germany blocks employees’ emails between 8pm and 6am. At the end of 2017 Uwe Hück, head of German car maker Porsche's works council and deputy chairman of Porsche's supervisory board, said the firm's employees should be protected from work-related emails in their free time, and any correspondence between 7pm and 6am should be “returned to sender”.

“  
IBM Germany  
blocks employees’  
emails between  
8pm and 6am  
”

Hück added: “To read and reply to emails from the boss during the evenings is unpaid working time that increases stress – that's just not acceptable.”

Other high-profile companies such as Volkswagen, BMW and Daimler in Germany, and Areva and Axa in France, have also taken matters into their own hands and introduced steps

to limit out-of-hours messaging to reduce burnout among workers. Indeed, Daimler is something of a pioneer in this regard – as far back as 2014 it introduced a mail-blocking policy for staff that go on holiday. Yet other companies, and other countries, are more reluctant to join the digital switch-off culture.

#### States of emergency

In the US employers expect, or even require, employees to respond to their mobile phones or laptops day and night. And with an employer-friendly environment in the US right now, it seems highly unlikely any active central government legislation to reduce digital dependency will occur soon.

Locally, however, the situation is changing. In March 2018, New York's City Council declared that it is considering →

a law that would make it illegal for employers to require workers be on call to answer emails after clocking out for the day. As one commentator put it: "Getting the measure enacted in the notoriously workaholic environment of New York, a massive global financial and media hub that prides itself on being 'the city that never sleeps', could prove to be far more difficult. The measure will no doubt face fierce opposition from the city's business community, should it even get that far to be approved."

Ultimately, finding the balance between a perceived need to be connected 24/7 and the repercussions of a failure to do so is the current status quo.

#### Requirement for rest

But there are other, more significant, side effects of avoiding or ignoring digital 'downtime', says Donaldson-Feilder: "The body and mind never get a chance to return to a resting state. It means that these individuals are 'always on', which can be damaging for mental and physical functioning."

Preventing digital overload has become a key part of employee wellbeing programmes, with the concept of 'digital detoxing' taking hold in many boardrooms and organisations. Virgin Management, which supports the Branson family and the growth of the Virgin brand by developing and nurturing valuable Virgin businesses, shuts down all emails for two hours each week, with no access granted. Instead,

“  
Good leadership  
requires the leader  
to be fully present  
in their interactions  
”

#### TOP TIPS FOR DIGITAL HEALTH

Donaldson-Feilder believes there are essential actions that leaders must take to ensure that both they and their employees avoid becoming subservient to the digital world:

1. Be conscious of how you use digital media and technology – reflect on how to benefit from the advantages and avoid the disadvantages.
2. Think about how your use of technology impacts on those you lead: communicate clear expectations and beware of what you are role-modelling. For example, avoid sending messages out of working hours as this will give people the idea that they also need to be responding out of hours.
3. Put away all technology when you enter a meeting or have a conversation with someone. Instead, be 'fully present'.
4. Turn off push notifications and 'red dot' badges on everything to have control over when you check messages, rather than having the compulsion to look at them because you have a notification.
5. Create device-free time in your week so you can totally recover.

employees are encouraged to communicate with colleagues, step away from their desk and simply take a break.

"Some countries and organisations are trying to manage the issues through laws, policies and mandates," adds Donaldson-Feilder. "However, it may actually be more beneficial to support employees through awareness-raising and helping them take greater control of technology rather than reducing control still further through universal mandates."

#### Leading by example

Companies can no longer ignore the issue at the expense of their employees' wellbeing, and the onus is on leaders to take control. "For leaders and senior executives," says Donaldson-Feilder, "the demands and expectations are potentially greater, so it is even more important to find ways to switch off – both for their own wellbeing and in order to be effective leaders."

"Good leadership requires the leader to be fully present in their interactions with others in order to create relationships that inspire and support people, so it is particularly important that they put their technology to one side not only to take a break for themselves, but also to really meet others."

"To avoid digital overload, it's essential to be conscious of the impact of that technology to your business. By creating awareness in the boardroom and among your employees, it's possible to benefit from the advantages while avoiding the disadvantages." ■

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# THE INVISIBLE

*Dementia and diabetes  
are two of the world's most  
pressing health and workplace  
issues. NATASHA D'SOUZA looks at  
what is being done to combat them →*

# EPIDEMICS



How can organisations prepare themselves for an environment where their employees are likely to become less healthy than they have ever been before? More importantly, what kind of well working approaches bear immediate attention and implementation in order to mitigate the impact of this looming health crisis on the bottom line? The two most significant – and global – non-communicable diseases, dementia and diabetes, are at the heart (or brain) of this looming global health crisis, as the data that follows amply and urgently demonstrates. Diabetes and dementia will unquestionably have a profound impact on the workforces of the future. Of that there is no doubt. The question is: what should boardrooms know about it and do about it?

#### The silver citizen

The mainstream media may continue to profess the might of the millennial generation, yet our world is in fact skewing towards the so-called ‘silver citizen’ segment. The United Nations projects that by the year 2100 the world’s population will be 11.2 billion, of which 3.2 billion will be at least 60 years old. America alone is expected to double its 65-and-older population from 48 million to a staggering 88 million by 2050. Thanks to advancements in food production, medicine and the

science of anti-ageing, we are living longer today – and working longer – than at any other time in history. According to a 2017 study led by the Imperial College School of Public Health in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), average life expectancy continues to rise with South Korea poised to have the highest life expectancy (90 years) in the world by 2030.

Rising human longevity may serve as a testament to the marvels of modern science. Yet the socio-cultural and epidemiological shifts that this phenomenon presents may prove problematic for the future of the modern workforce. According to a 2016 study by the Global Wellness Institute, 18 per cent of the workforce will be over 55 by 2030, with more and more of these individuals choosing to delay retirement and remain gainfully employed, either out of financial necessity or to pursue healthy aging by remaining mentally active and challenged.

It is this segment of the population that is most susceptible to what the WHO



ALL PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK

calls “the invisible epidemic” of non-communicable diseases (NCD), a complex cluster of diseases ranging from dementia to cancer to diabetes. NCDs today account for about 70 per cent of deaths worldwide and nearly half of the actual and effective life years due to morbidity and disability.

#### Dementia

Every three seconds, someone, somewhere in the world, develops dementia. Given such a chilling statistic, it comes as no surprise that Dr Matthew Norton, Director of Policy and Strategy at Alzheimer’s Research UK, believes that: “Dementia is arguably our greatest medical challenge.”

The numbers give cause for pause. World Alzheimer’s Report released in 2015 indicated that 46 million people suffer from dementia, a number likely to increase to 131.5 million by 2050. Dementia alone also has a huge economic impact. Today, the total estimated worldwide cost of dementia is US \$818bn, outpacing the market values of companies such as Apple (US\$742bn), Google (US\$368bn) and Exxon (US\$357bn).

Dementia is caused by different degenerative brain diseases, with Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s being the most common. Alzheimer’s disease (AD) is the leading cause of dementia and one of the main sources of morbidity and mortality in the aging population. While a host of factors – genes, nutrition, lifestyle – can predispose an individual to develop dementia, age proves the biggest risk factor; the longer people live, the more they face the risk of developing it. Medical breakthroughs allow for improved and earlier diagnosis, and with better treatment and care now available, more people are living longer with Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.

#### Diabetes

Diabetes represents a major global health threat despite a common perception that the condition is “not a disease”. In 2017, an estimated 451 million people (aged 18-99 years) live with diabetes worldwide, compared to 108 million in 1940, and this figure is expected to rise to 693 million by 2045. Half of all those people today live with undiagnosed diabetes.

Besides direct and indirect costs borne by patients, health systems and employers are paying the price for the rampant growth of this disease. The global cost of diabetes is set to almost double to \$2.5tr by 2030 according to research by King’s College London. In the United States alone, the American Diabetes Association quantified the economic burden of diagnosed diabetes – including increased health resource use and lost productivity – at \$327bn in 2017. In the UK, diabetes costs the National Health Service (NHS) £14bn a year to treat, or £1m every hour.



While many public figures are open about their diabetic condition, from British Prime Minister Theresa May to American talk show legend Larry King, workplace discrimination towards people with diabetes remains rampant. A survey from Diabetes UK suggests that one in six people with diabetes in the UK have faced issues with their employer, from getting flak for multiple hospital visits to not having a comfortable, private area at work to test their blood sugar or administer insulin injections. The word ‘diabetes’ can lead employers to develop concerns about reliability and productivity, thereby influencing their willingness to hire, retain or promote an individual living with diabetes. Consequently, diabetes sufferers tend to withhold disclosure to their employers and colleagues and alter their behaviours (forgetting to test their blood glucose, missing meals) in order to avoid negative reactions or discrimination, at the risk of not just impaired performance but also jeopardising their health and safety on the job. Also, co-workers who lack information about diabetes can feel uncertain about how to treat their colleagues with diabetes who are testing their blood glucose, administering insulin and treating hypoglycaemia throughout the workday.

#### A trillion-dollar crisis

Given the scale and speed with which NCDs are impacting individuals’ personal and professional lives, on a macro level there is a compelling and imminent need for a cross-sector, collaborative approach on both a national and international scale. →

#### THE GLOBAL SPREAD OF DIABETES: PREVALENCE (2017) AND PROJECTION (2045)

Source: International Diabetes Federation Diabetes Atlas 2017  
www.diabetesatlas.org

Ranked in order of projected percentage increase in prevalence by 2045

Region	2017 (in millions)	2045 (in millions)	Change (+/- %)
Africa	16	41	+156
Middle East and North Africa	39	82	+110
South and Southeast Asia	82	151	+84
South and Central America	26	42	+62
North America & Caribbean	46	62	+35
Europe	58	67	+16
Western Pacific	159	183	+15

## LIKELY EFFECT OF EARLY ONSET DEMENTIA COUNTRY BY COUNTRY ON WORKFORCES

Alzheimer's Disease International: World Alzheimer's Report 2015  
<https://bit.ly/2leXUY1>

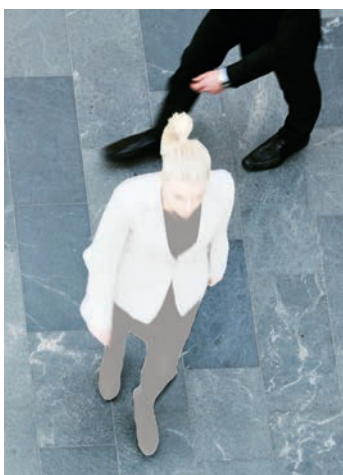
Region	Number of people with dementia in 2015 (millions)	Number of people with dementia in 2050 (millions)	Proportionate increase (%)
North America	4.78	11.74	145
Latin America	4.29	17.06	298
South Asia	5.13	16.65	225
Asia Pacific (high-income countries)	3.64	7.81	115
Europe	10.46	18.66	78
Middle East and Africa	4.03	15.76	291

With 10 million new cases of dementia diagnosed every year, Professor Andrea Pfeifer, CEO of Swiss biopharmaceutical company AC Immune believes there isn't enough being done fast enough to turn the tide on what is today "a trillion-dollar human crisis in the making". Dr Pfeifer, a trained toxicologist in oncology and the former Head of Nestlé's Global Research, avers: "I believe that the WHO and governments have to establish Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative diseases as a national priority. They have to apply the lessons learnt from other life threatening diseases like cancer, HIV and cardiovascular diseases, using global disease registries and biomarker-based clinical trials. And, furthermore, we need more funding to initiate a bigger and better clinical trial infrastructure."

Dr Norton agrees that investment in dementia research is crucial in order to turn the tide. "Dementia is considered the UK's leading cause of death, with no treatments yet capable

of stopping or slowing the underlying diseases. In recent years we have seen government support for dementia research increase, but funding for research into the condition still lags behind other serious health conditions. That's why Alzheimer's Research UK is asking the government to increase the annual budget for dementia research to a minimum of £132m by 2022."

Public health policy, while vital, cannot mitigate the swift rise of NCDs alone, believes Dr



Norton. Instead, "a multi-sector collaboration by the government, the NHS and the pharmaceutical industry, delivered immediately, is essential to significantly overcome these challenges. The Dementia Access Taskforce instituted by Alzheimer's Research UK is one such example," he cites.

Pfeifer, a member of the Global CEO Initiative on Alzheimer's Disease (CEOi), believes it is influential partnerships like these that can address the colossal impact Alzheimer's is poised to have on multiple generations within the workforce. The CEOi's core focus areas include accelerating clinical trial process, increasing investment, and driving innovation in Big Data, among others. Early successes include leading the payer-regulator forum known as the 'Lausanne Dialogue'; establishing the US Big Data Initiative to tap into a unique data set to develop insights into disease prediction and progression; and the development of the Dementia Discovery Fund, launched by the UK government as part of the G7 effort.

### Starting small

It is resoundingly clear that businesses can no longer afford to sit back and expect the government, the public health system and policymakers to lead the front in the battle against NCDs.

While multi-stakeholder collaboration has important ripple effects on a macro level, individual efforts within individual businesses can cumulatively play a major role on the ground. "With working individuals spending most of their waking hours on the job,



employers are in a unique position to be a good influence on health and general wellbeing," says Williams, by shifting perceptions both for those diagnosed with an NCD and those working alongside these individuals.

The notion of modern-day work moving beyond the staid indoor office environment may not change any time soon, yet there are high-impact, value-driven ways in which major corporations can preserve or maximise an employee's ability to perform by counteracting the toll that modern-day work takes on an individual's health status. Besides corporate wellness programmes, more employers are opening dedicated health centres to cater exclusively to their employees. Tech giant Apple announced earlier this year the launch of its dedicated clinics to deliver the "world's best healthcare experience" to its employees.

Corporate wellness is clearly evolving past mere aesthetic significance. Leon Ayo, CEO of Odgers Berndtson, Sub-Saharan Africa, asserts that corporate wellness programmes are integral as both a pre-emptive way to maintain health

and a method of yielding multiple business-boosting benefits – from team building to increased morale to productivity. "The active involvement of a company's C-suite executives, with the CEO leading from the front, is crucial for employee uptake and the ultimate success of such programmes," contends Ayo. In his view, if a company's executives are themselves the embodiment of wellness, employees are inspired to act on their own fitness levels.

When manager and subordinate are literally "sweating it out" side by side, "there's no better way to break down silos and brainstorm outside the boardroom", believes Ayo. "In our experience, South African executives generally fare better than their counterparts in other parts of the world. We have an outdoor culture in South Africa, and sports such as mountain biking are now overtaking golf as the traditional corporate sport."

### Maintaining a productive role

For those living with a non-communicable disease, keeping a productive role in their daily (working) lives is crucial to

overall wellbeing. "Public and private employers should invest to retain people diagnosed with AD and keep them engaged, maybe under supervision, and tap into their knowledge. This will help also to defer the onset of symptoms and unburden their families," adds Dr Pfeifer.

Dr Norton concurs: "It is of paramount importance that businesses become aware of the impact dementia can have



on their employees. For many people with early-onset dementia, difficulties carrying out tasks at work may be the trigger for seeking a diagnosis. It's important for employers to be aware of the challenges dementia poses, and to consider whether a role could be adjusted to allow people with the condition to continue working longer." He applauded the example of UK grocery retailer Sainsbury's helping one of its employees to remain at work for as long as possible following a diagnosis of early-onset Alzheimer's disease. Case studies like these, he says, show employers how they can lead not just with intention but by action. ■



Corporate wellness is clearly evolving past aesthetic significance





Has a greater emphasis on gender overshadowed the still-woeful lack of multicultural boards? *Observe* investigates

In 2015, a McKinsey report on 366 public companies found that those “in the top quartile for ethnic and racial diversity in management were 35 per cent more likely to have financial returns above their industry mean”.

It’s a compelling statistic, and one that throws important light on the pressing issue of ensuring that a true multicultural mix in management and the boardroom yields significant benefits, not just to the bottom line but to better and more enlightened well working.

#### Embracing the difference

The McKinsey report specifically found that “racial and ethnic diversity has a stronger impact

on financial performance than gender diversity, perhaps because earlier efforts to increase women’s representation in the top levels of business have already yielded positive results”.

HBR.org echoed those sentiments adding: “In recent years a body of research has revealed another, more nuanced benefit of workplace diversity: non-homogenous teams are simply smarter. Working with people who are different from you may challenge your brain to overcome its stale ways of thinking and sharpen its performance.”

Stuart Morton, Partner and Head of Practice, Legal & Professional Services at Odgers Berndtson London, who also heads up the company’s Diversity Council, agrees: “A senior management team that looks and

feels more like its people will build empathy – and always have a happier, more productive workforce who will go the extra mile. Millennials in particular look for positive indications of empathy and a real belief in core values. So a diverse multicultural, multi-ethnic board is not just best practice – it’s best for the business and best for employee engagement.”

#### The diversity imperative

Indra Nooyi, the Indian CEO and Chairman of PepsiCo, and one of the most high-profile female ethnic minority business leaders, has gone on record as saying that increasing the diversity of her team is a “business imperative”. Currently 27 per cent of senior executives at PepsiCo are women, and 36 per cent are people of colour.

*Fortune* summed up the status with this damning indictment: “Racial diversity continues to be at best a challenge – and at worst a flat-out fiction – particularly in the executive ranks.”

#### Change is coming

The UK recognises the issue and is trying to do something about it. Last year Britain’s biggest companies were given four years to appoint one board director from an ethnic-minority background as part of a package of measures outlined in a government-backed review into the lack of diversity at the top of corporate Britain.

In Australia, according to Odgers Berndtson’s Julie Steiner, Head of the Board and CEO Practices and Chair of the Global Education Practices based in Sydney, board diversity has primarily focused on gender diversity. Steiner cites a number of recent pieces of research that bear this out, such as an article by Sally Freeman, Partner at KPMG, which explores the issue of board diversity. Says Steiner: “I agree completely with Sally Freeman when she declares that having a board consist of more than one ‘type’ of person will bring greater benefits to an organisation and a move away from typical ‘group think’.”

#### Still a long way to go

Similar stories can be told about the situation in the US: according to a 2016 *Fortune* study, there have been only 15 black chief executives in the history of the Fortune 500. A truly woeful statistic that must be changed – and changed soon.

One of them, Arnold Donald, CEO of Carnival Corporation, the world’s largest leisure travel company, was named the top-ranked global executive in last year’s ‘EMpower 100 Ethnic Minority Leaders’ list. Donald received the award for his “strong leadership and commitment to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace and for serving as an inspiring role model”.

Donald is clear about the benefits of a multicultural board: “We are also very proud of the diversity of our workforce and believe that the power of diversity of thinking drives innovation, which is fuelled by leveraging the knowledge and creativity of our rich backgrounds, experiences and perspectives to achieve common goals.”

The pioneering work being done by Donald and the 99 other individuals on the EMpower list is heartening, and it will be interesting to see how it has evolved when the 2018 list is published.

The last word on this greatly under-discussed topic should come from HBR.org, which rightly pointed out that “although ... plenty of studies demonstrate the effectiveness of diverse teams working together there’s still a long way to go before we can say that the majority of boards have a broad multicultural mix.” ■

## From vision to execution: the importance of emotional capital

It's no secret that leaders are supposed to have vision. But too many business leaders focus the majority of their time and energy on creating their grand idea, only to drop the ball when it counts. Interestingly, the primary cause for failure isn't lack of technical capability, poor project management or any other procedural breakdown. The reason most big ideas fail in execution is due to simple human emotion.

For most leaders, discussing emotions in the workplace is still considered a taboo topic. After all, this is business, where logic and reasoned arguments prevail. If an idea is strong and a strategy solid, there's no reason feelings should stand in the way.

The problem? Business is made up of humans, and humans are emotional creatures. Leaders can't afford to ignore the emotional dynamics inherent in the execution of a grand vision. In fact, those who are sensitive to these undercurrents and respond effectively to them can actually leverage emotions to propel execution forward. According to Quy Huy, Associate Professor of Strategy at INSEAD, executives who do this increase the odds of successful strategy execution between 20 to 30 per cent.

### Tips on managing collective emotion

Instead of perpetuating the business 'norm' of suppressing emotions, give people ample opportunity for constructive expression of their feelings. In the words of Parin Mehta, Airbnb Director for Asia-Pacific and INSEAD MBA alum,

leaders should "ask, listen, and follow up". Show them that you're doing so and that you value their input. Observe emotions that aren't clearly articulated in words – those that are demonstrated through actions, body language and facial expressions. Mehta also stresses the importance of helping team members feel that they can be open and vulnerable in front of colleagues.



INSEAD GEMBA Alumna Nadiya Lubnina, Head of Marketing at HoReCa.digital, adds: "I'm always trying to watch out for the mood in the team. Even when just entering the office in the morning, I check in with my team how they are feeling, how the evening was and so on. This builds an atmosphere of trust, and people need to trust you in order to grow."

For leaders who are attempting to navigate the collective emotions of employees, such 'emotional capital' skills are essential. The stigma attached to feelings in the workplace must be overcome. Otherwise, your organisation's big ideas may remain nothing more than just that – ideas.

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# A state of independence

ADAM GATES, Principal of Odgers Connect, on the ways in which independent consultants can maintain effective well working practices

The world of work is rapidly changing, and nowhere more so than at the professional end of the so-called 'gig economy'. Highly skilled and experienced professionals are leaving the confines of the corporate world and going it alone. As liberating and entrepreneurial as this may seem, it does throw up a number of challenges that often go unnoticed.

## No safety net

Devoid of the usual trappings of being part of, say, a large multinational corporation, how do experienced independents manage their wellbeing when the safety net is taken away?

Independent professionals who are self-employed value the autonomy they have, unshackled from corporate stresses. They have the freedom to innovate, express their own views, have influence beyond their own role and compete with other companies and people. All of these factors lead to an increased sense of wellbeing and purpose.

However, this is not to say there aren't challenges with working on the outside of corporate life. As an independent you are walking away from the security, guaranteed income and often generous benefits packages that come with corporate full-time employment. It can be daunting and at times stressful: the fear of the unknown.

As a full-time employee in a mainstream consulting firm, you have guaranteed income, probable upside in the form of an annual bonus, benefits that usually include private medical insurance, gym membership, pension, paid sick leave, paid annual leave, life insurance, maternity/paternity leave... the list goes on. As an independent all of these

benefits are removed: it's up to you to earn enough to replicate them for yourself. And that is not easy. It can often lead to stress and a reduced feeling of wellbeing.

## The death of the pyramid?

And yet, the supply and demand of independent professionals is steadily increasing. *Harvard Business Review* estimates there

are 150 million workers in North America and Western Europe who have left the corporate world to set up on their own. Furthermore, a recent report by think tank IPPR found that almost a third of people working in the professions in the UK are now self-employed. In professional services, management consulting is

seeing the highest rise, driven by clients demanding more flexible and cost-effective solutions, challenging the traditional pyramid structure of mainstream consulting firms.

This professional gig economy is thriving, and the reasons are broad. As consultants reach senior levels in consulting firms, the role shifts

significantly: away from delivering projects, and into client and business development, which is not always attractive despite the financial incentives of a partner. Often intrinsic motivations outweigh the extrinsic ones. In addition, to progress through to partner, the ladder is becoming increasingly precarious. So people are leaving, →

## THE INDEPENDENT DREAM

Inga Umblija has devised a strategy that helps to manage the uncertainty of independent work and keep well working:

- Plan ahead: with careful planning, the independent dream is accessible. Plan your work time and free time and think about what you would like to do with your life. If you would like to take a sabbatical, you can, of course, as long as the rest of your life is planned around that outcome.
- Take your holidays: it is tempting to focus on just the day rate and opt out of time off and holidays, citing the 'cost' of not working. But rest, downtime and connection with family resets the mind and maximises productivity. Independents can burn out when they do not rest and recover from intense periods of work.
- Hold yourself accountable: you or your small consultancy firm are your brand. Your networks are the source of opportunities, and your own growth and development is your responsibility. Maintain and nurture them.



disillusioned with corporate life. They want to improve their work-life balance and take control of their career. A survey by IPSE, the Association of Independent Professionals and the Self-Employed, mirrored this in their research last year, reporting the top three reasons to go independent were better work-life balance, control of work and maximising earnings.

### Supporting the self

Finding positive wellbeing in your independent working life – encompassing everything from health and happiness, stress-free working conditions, freedom of expression, a strategy of self-discipline, planning and positivity – is essential. Without these elements, life as an independent can rapidly become isolating and stressful, with potential negative mental and physical health implications.

Baruch Harris is a US based independent consultant to the life sciences sector, and former McKinsey consultant. He reports that being based in Boston, at the heart of the biotechnology hub, has increased both his job satisfaction and his wellbeing. "I tend to travel less because of proximity to my clients. More importantly, I am hired for my specific expertise and tend to be much more focused on value-added activities. The distractions and pressures of internal politics, while not completely absent, are less impactful and much easier to manage or extricate myself from if the dynamics are dysfunctional and the overall cost/benefit of working with a company is not there." Harris adds that stress from financial instability has lowered as a result of having built a portfolio of clients "alongside my own

network whom I regularly enjoy interacting with".

In the UK, Tracey Barr, an independent consultant to the National Health Service (the world's largest public healthcare system and one of the biggest employers globally) and formerly with L.E.K., the global strategy consultancy firm, has experienced this "potential isolation of working alone". To help, Barr joined a network for female entrepreneurs: "It's a community of like-minded women, and we each draw on each other for business advice and support. We have monthly business breakfasts, lunches and workshops where we meet. It creates a sense of belonging, an alternative structure to a corporate."

### Networking works

Alumni networks are an increasingly important way for independent professionals to

maintain contact with peers, share learnings on best practice and combat "industrial isolation". Without a corporate office, it is essential to find places to work to avoid feeling rootless, be that clients' offices, shared workspaces or a well-set-up home office.

"Working as an independent consultant means you have to take full responsibility for your own health and wellbeing, and this is a very positive thing," says Andrew Simmonds, an independent consultant, executive coach and former Managing Partner at Accenture. He adds: "You generally have more control over your own time and more freedom to organise your lifestyle in the way that's best for you. Because I control my own diary, I spend less time in stuffy meeting rooms and am less exposed to the stresses within corporate environments. Yes, there are some downsides:

you have to organise your own health insurance; you don't have the support of a corporate health programme; and it's much harder to gain access to regular medicals and health checks.

"I'm also acutely aware that my success depends on what I do myself (there's no corporate machine working on my behalf) so I can see clearly the link between my energy levels and the results I achieve. Maintaining those energy levels is vitally important to me, and that means good nutrition and lots of fresh air and exercise."

This sentiment is echoed by Wayne Henderson, a former Booz & Company Principal, now an independent consultant who lives in Australia and the UK. Henderson feels it is ultimately about control. "You make the decisions; you have the freedom and flexibility to decide what you do, and this

can be incredibly liberating. It often has a good outcome for your mental wellbeing." Henderson is pragmatic, understanding that there are downsides of working for oneself, including financial unpredictability, but his motivations are more intrinsic. He became an independent when his first child was born, as he was travelling extensively across Australia. Being independent now means he has taken back control.

### Planning ahead

Inga Umblija has been an independent consultant since 2007, and is currently delivering a major programme across the Nordic region. "Planning for pay gaps is key," she says. Umblija has learnt to save money as a buffer to carry her through quieter periods, otherwise she says she would never take a day off. "You have

to look at it over a year and plan downtime."

The longer she has worked this way, the better she has become at managing her time, and the happier she has been. Last year she took a month off, devoting much of it to yoga. "That would be hard for a full-time employee to do," she adds. Emer Wynne, a former EY Senior Manager and now independent consultant, agrees, and suggests "investing in any short spaces between projects, using that time to reflect, re-energise, capture learnings and recommit to purposeful work".

Life in the professional gig economy can be fraught with anxieties, but it can also be liberating: it is ultimately a choice. Independents must pursue a different kind of success to that of their full-time counterparts, a success based on individual wellbeing maintained through a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Our work and our legacy are core to our sense of purpose, and the opportunity to have freedom of choice can enhance our mental and physical wellbeing.

As businesses increase their use of independent consultants, this will in time provide additional benefit of financial security to the freedom they already enjoy. However, as humans we need attachments and a plan, we need routines, we need interaction and we need purpose. Having self-discipline and courage to embrace the independent life can lead to heightened wellbeing, and happiness, but it is a journey that is not without its challenges. The independent's life has to be managed skilfully, with that in mind. ■

How you design a building can radically affect the wellbeing of your workforce. HATTIE HARTMAN looks at some of the best examples around the world

# CONCRETE AND PLAY

Progressive organisations from Silicon Valley to Sydney are radically rethinking the design of the buildings in which their employees operate. Working with architects to create physical structures that better encourage well working and wellbeing, these visionary designs are creating healthier environments and dynamic, stimulating spaces.

According to Rick Fedrizzi, Chairman and CEO of the International WELL Building Institute in New York, an organisation leading the global movement to transform our buildings and communities in ways that help people thrive, this shift builds on the concern with building performance that characterised the first wave of sustainability to what he calls “the second wave of sustainability”, which centres on human performance.

## Engaging environments

Clients are increasingly looking for physical workplaces that support new ways of working and stand out in the marketplace to help them recruit and retain the best talent. Younger employees particularly value flexibility and human interaction and want – demand – to work in environments that, among other things, incorporate quiet places for critical thinking, active workstations that encourage physical activity throughout the day, and breakout spaces conducive to collaboration.

With almost 800 projects in the pipeline across the globe, the WELL Building Standard, launched in 2014, sets out seven core concepts that enhance health and wellness. These range from measurable features such as air quality, daylight levels and thermal comfort to intangibles such as beauty and sense of community, as well as ready access to healthy food and opportunities for exercise.

In March, International Towers Sydney

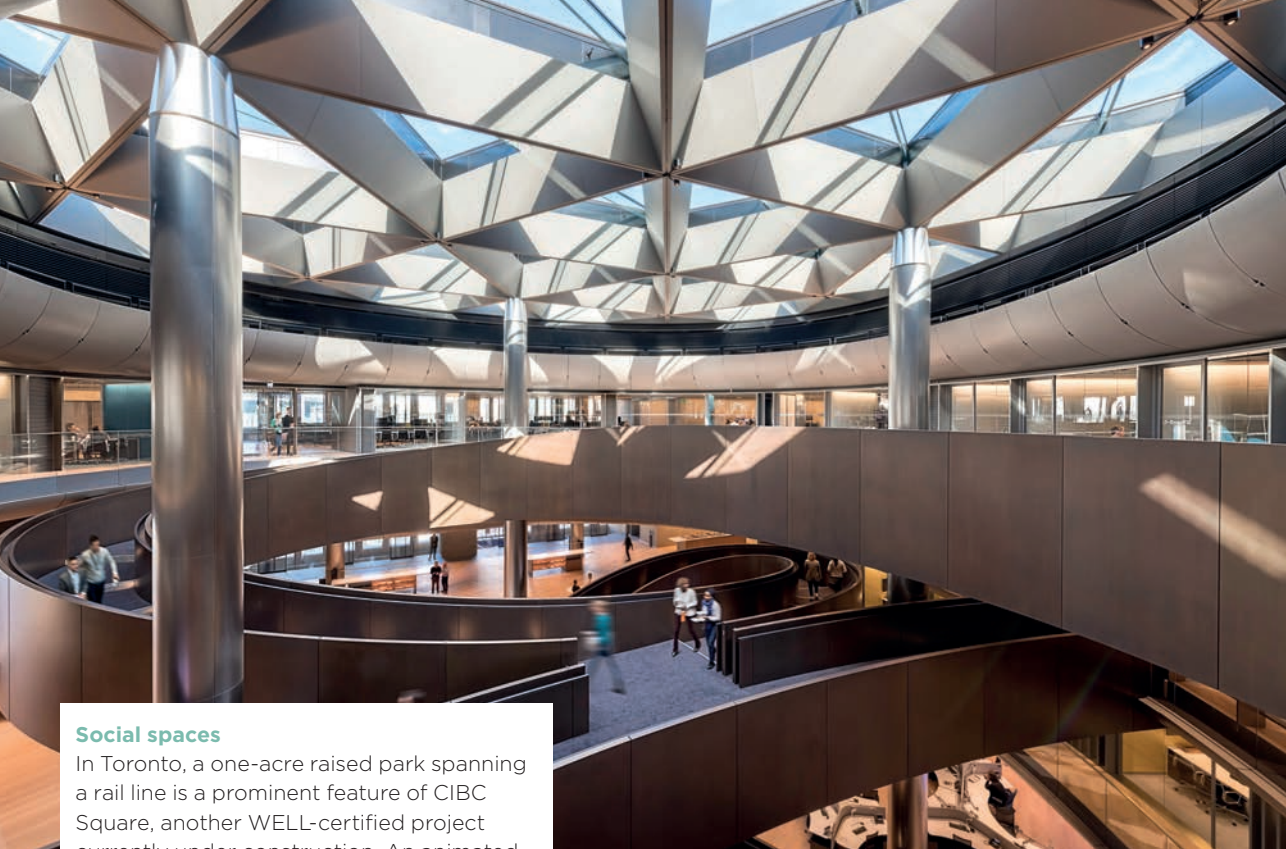


THIS SPREAD: TIMOTHY SOAR

(ITS) at Barangaroo, designed by London-based RSHP for Lendlease Group, was the first project globally to achieve the WELL certification’s top ‘platinum’ rating. Architecturally this was expressed in large, flexible floor plans – approximately 2,600 square metres, with generous ceiling heights of almost three metres.

Lift shafts, conventionally located near the centre of the floor plan, are offset so that office layouts can be designed more flexibly, either as a single workspace or subdivided into zones, each with its own ‘sense of place’. To encourage employees to exercise more, inter-floor connections by stair for multi-floor tenants are increasingly in demand so that tenants can use stairs rather than lifts to move between floors. All of these design elements require architects, designers and clients to think intelligently at the initial design stage and consider carefully where stairs may be needed, ensuring that holes can be made at these locations in future. →

Left and above: the mixed-use White Collar Factory project in London



### Social spaces

In Toronto, a one-acre raised park spanning a rail line is a prominent feature of CIBC Square, another WELL-certified project currently under construction. An animated public realm with restaurants and retail at the base of the building, also integral to Barangaroo in Sydney, is easily accessed by employees. The fourth floor, which links directly to the park, incorporates co-working spaces, as well as a choice of eateries with outdoor terraces, encouraging employee socialising. Less visible design features that respond to the wellness agenda include acoustically enhanced glass and LED lighting that mimics circadian rhythms.

Two exemplary one-off office buildings recently completed in London have raised the bar in workplace design that stimulates better wellbeing and well working. Foster + Partners' eight-storey Bloomberg building, which accommodates 4,000 employees, is designed around a generous helical bronze ramp – a place for social interaction and physical activity – that links all the office floors. Both employees and visitors take a lift from street level to the sixth-floor 'Pantry', a social hub that houses a café and seating areas with spectacular views overlooking St. Paul's Cathedral. Unusual for a deep-plan office building – one in which the horizontal distance from the external wall is many times greater than the floor-to-floor height – the Bloomberg headquarters is designed to operate with

### FOUR GROUNDBREAKING PROJECTS

#### International Towers

**Location** Barangaroo South, Sydney, Australia  
**Client** Lendlease  
**Architect** Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners  
**Completion** 2016  
 Three complementary towers positioned to maximise sunlight and views on a site that links the city centre to the waterfront with a new public realm. Cores have been shifted to the side of the building, resulting in daylit lift lobbies and highly flexible floor plates.

#### CIBC Square

**Location** Toronto, Canada  
**Client** Ivanhoé Cambridge and Hines  
**Architect** Wilkinson Eyre 2020  
**Completion** First phase 2020; second phase 2023  
 Twin 250m-high (49-storey) towers face each other across a rail corridor, linked at high level by a one-acre sky garden adjacent to Toronto's Union Station. The park is intended as an extension of the workplace, with some offices and meeting rooms benefiting from views into the park.

#### Bloomberg

**Location** London, United Kingdom  
**Client** Bloomberg LP  
**Architect** Foster + Partners  
**Completion** 2017  
 Public arcade, museum and fountain at street level, public and employee reception at sixth-floor 'Pantry' level with dramatic city views and café. Sculptural central ramp to encourage walking between floors, bespoke lighting that incorporates heating and cooling, four-person desk pods with adjustable-height desks.

#### White Collar Factory

**Location** London, United Kingdom  
**Client** Derwent London plc  
**Architect** AHMM  
**Completion** 2017  
 Generous public realm and lobby with café, self-finishing materials to provide stable thermal comfort, visible and attractive stairways to encourage use, operable windows at 16th floor for natural ventilation despite busy urban site.



Left: Bloomberg's striking sculptured central ramp

Above: the 'platinum'-rated International Towers Sydney

Below: the raised one-acre park at CIBC Square in Toronto

natural ventilation during the UK's temperate shoulder seasons. Bronze fins on the façade open and close as part of the ventilation strategy.

### Architectural delight

At Old Street, known as London's 'silicon roundabout' because of its constant churn of tech startups and creatives, White Collar Factory, a mixed-use project by Derwent plc for the speculative office market, is executed with a stripped-down aesthetic of exposed concrete that exudes cool. The use of concrete is not only about looks; it is a material with high thermal mass, which means that it absorbs changes of temperature slowly and contributes to thermal comfort by reducing temperature swings. Unusual in a 16-storey building on a busy urban roundabout, windows can be opened above desk height.

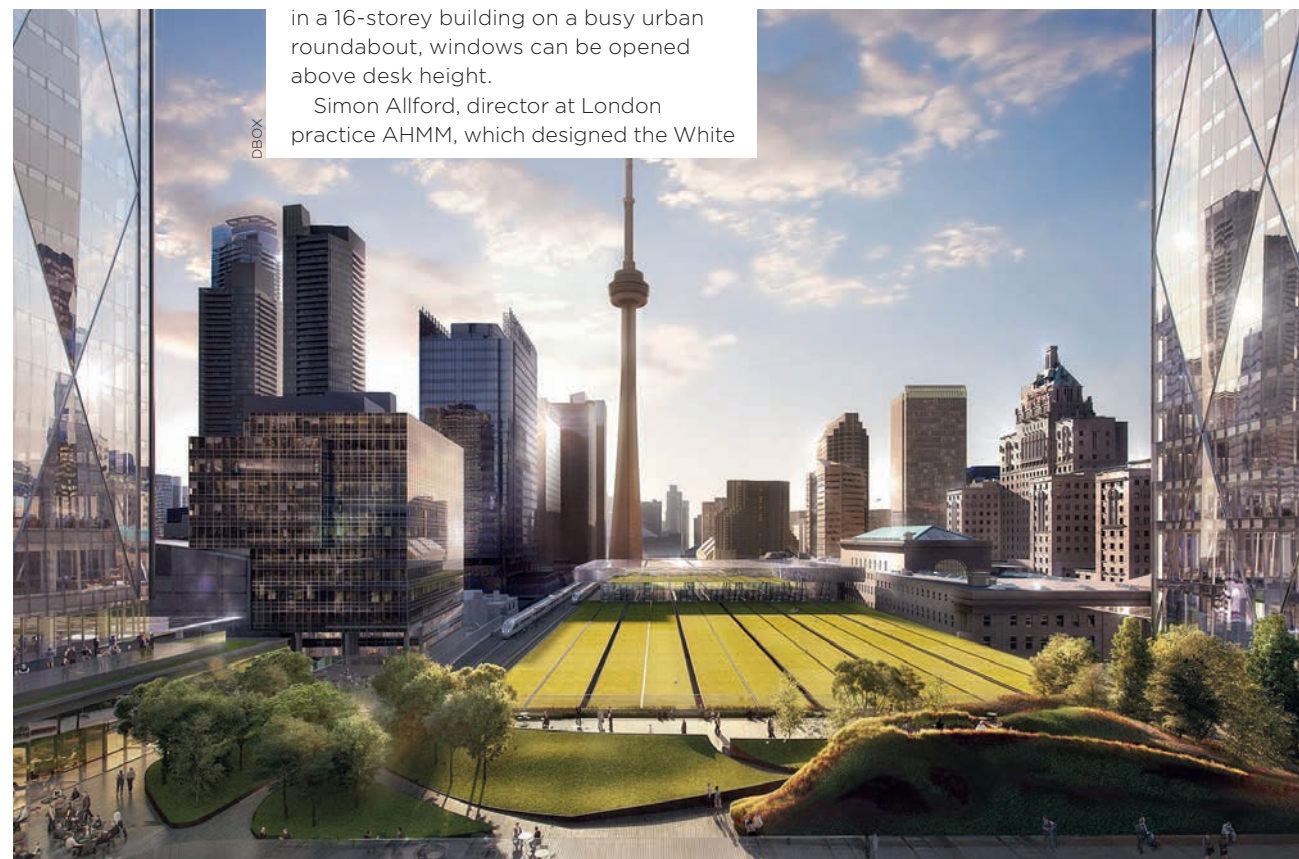
Simon Allford, director at London practice AHMM, which designed the White

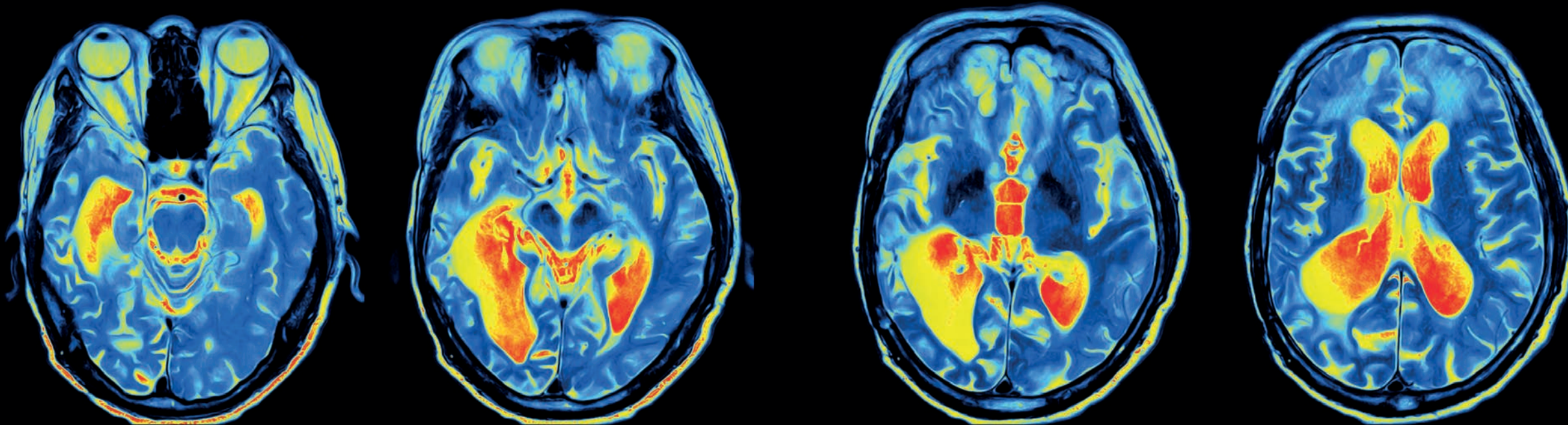
Collar Factory, observes that 'architectural delight' is critical to wellbeing in a work environment. This means a pleasant route through a generous entrance, lifts and stairs that are easy to see, good daylight without excessive solar load, natural light and comfortable acoustics throughout circulation and workspaces.

Historic buildings can also be adapted to create exceptional contemporary workplaces that stimulate well working and, in turn, a more content workforce. The 55 Amsterdam building in Paris, built in 1929 in the city's 8th Arrondissement, reopened last year with three additional floors, an internal garden courtyard and a basement restaurant and conference room daylit by exterior courtyards.

Healthy workplaces create long-term value, says Lendlease's Chief Executive for property in Australia, Kylie Rampa: "If business can cut time lost to absenteeism and presenteeism by providing work environments that enhance employees' health, it has broad economic benefits." The buildings described here truly benefit well working. Will yours be next? ■

**Hattie Hartman** is an editor at *The Architects' Journal*, London.





# INSIDE THE MIND

## JOHN JAKENFELDS EXPLAINS HOW CUTTING-EDGE NEUROSCIENCE RESEARCH IS HELPING US UNDERSTAND DECISION-MAKING, BEHAVIOUR, LEADERSHIP AND MORE

The art of managing ourselves more wisely lies in how well we really know who we are. One critical way to do that is to have an understanding of the workings of the brain. By doing so we can *really* help change our behaviours and improve our well working lives.

So what do we know about the brain the burgeoning field of neuroscience and how its work is changing perceptions?

Since the turn of the millennium, research has accelerated globally through scientific

methods such as MRI scanners, enabling a better understanding of what actually happens in the brain when we experience situations. Almost 100 different neurochemicals are produced by a variety of parts of the brain and even in other parts of the body such as the gut. Understanding what they all do is an enormously complex task, made more challenging because many parts of the brain work together as a network. We are still at the early stage of this particular voyage of discovery.

### A little learning is a dangerous thing

Though we now have a better understanding of what is actually happening inside our brains, our picture of how it affects our behaviour is still incomplete. Indeed, the academic community has been concerned in recent years about the degree to which areas such as imaging and biochemistry findings have been taken out of context. The inferences of what these findings mean for how we behave have at times led to misleading conclusions being drawn.

Professor Vince Walsh, Professor of Human Brain Research at University College London – Europe's top university for the study of neuroscience – notes there are a few fundamentals that do have a solid biological underpinning. These include such vital areas as sleep, creativity and group psychology.

The evidence base is very solid for the value of consolidating information during deep sleep and its impact on well working. The parallel is with rest days between gym sessions; that's when you actually build the muscle broken down during a session. Walsh points out that we sleep for 37 per cent of our lives, yet we don't value its importance for effective brain functioning as much as we should.

He highlights that there are also biological means through which we can have good ideas. These are essentially through getting ourselves relaxed – but not too relaxed. This allows “long range interactions” to occur between networks of brain regions. In effect, we are getting out of the way of the brain.

Think of how creative your thinking can be when you are walking the dog or mowing the lawn, for example. Such everyday endeavours create just the right ‘brain’ environment with little conscious effort. →

## The three musketeers, updated?

Walsh comments that the best kind of diversity in a team is psychological diversity. It can take stress out of decision-making at work. He notes that there is good evidence of three kinds of decision-makers: 'gunslingers' (fast, indiscriminate), 'poker players' (who play the odds, but real life doesn't give you all of the facts) and 'chickens' (those who wait for the moment to cross the road to a decision). Few of us are good at more than one of these styles and there is no such thing as a universally good decision-maker. What's the optimal number in a team? The evidence suggests that four might be the largest manageable number. The brain cannot process conversations with more than three other people; indeed it can't track more than that number of things spatially. Imagine trying to catch three balls versus five.

Adam Waytz, Associate Professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, is the co-author of a 2013 *Harvard Business Review* article titled 'Your Brain at Work' which highlighted four proven brain control networks, including setting aside unfocused free time for creativity. He adds: "There has been much more progress in the field and much more acceptance [of the value of neuroscience] even since we wrote our article. The research is getting better and better at identifying patterns of neural activation that can differentiate people on different skills. For example, there are neural differences between highly

creative people and less creative people." In his article, Waytz notes that being a successful leader requires prioritisation and outsourcing of tasks; this in turn requires a realistic acceptance of the number of tasks our brains are capable of handling, which is less than we think.

## Nothing new under the sun

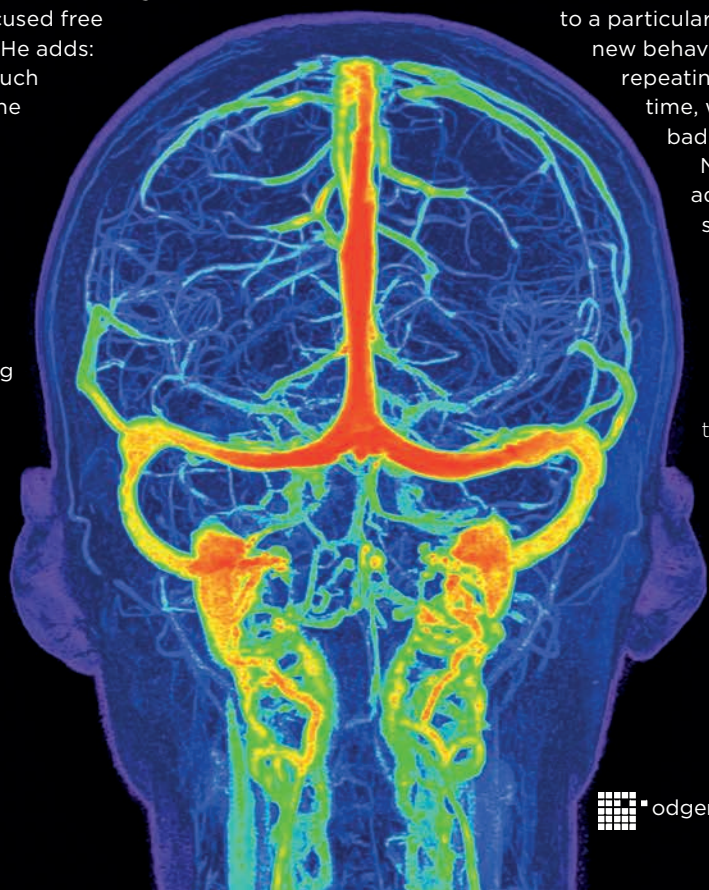
Insight on the behavioural changes possible comes from Professor Patricia Bossons, formerly Director of the Coaching Centre at Henley Business School, now at Massey University in New Zealand, and co-author of *The Neuroscience of Leadership Coaching*. She notes that insights from neuroscience give us different ways to understand why we react and behave in the way we do.

Her work shows that there is a fairly small set of typical challenges which make up the majority of those that leaders face at work. For each of these, it is increasingly possible to hypothesise what might be happening inside the brain. It enables us to explore strategies for dealing with those challenges.

By consciously replacing a habitual behaviour that occurs in response to a particular trigger with a new behaviour, and by repeating it time after time, we can change bad habits for good.

Neuroscience advances are starting to provide a rationale for ways in which behaviours can be changed for the better. And surely that is something to be applauded. ■

**John Jakenfelds** is the Chair of the Life Sciences Practice, based in Odgers Berndtson's London office.



ALAMY

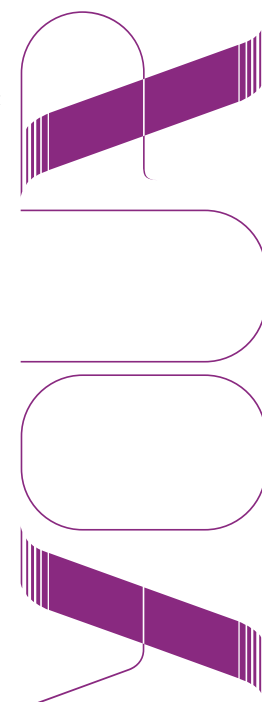
## 1 EATING FROGS FOR BREAKFAST

Mark Twain famously said that if the first thing you do in the morning is to eat a live frog, you can go through the rest of the day knowing the worst is behind you. So do the toughest thing first in your day when energy, willpower and motivation are at their highest levels. The rest of your day will seem easier in comparison.

## 2 FORGET MULTITASKING

Multitasking doesn't actually exist. If anything it should be called 'code switching' and includes a refractory period in which you get nothing done (while the brain resets and refocuses). Your brain is a serial processor, not a parallel one. So focus on one thing at a time and your productivity, recall and efficacy will improve.

DR BRYNN WINEGARD offers eight ways to help make your brain more productive



## 3 FOCUS AND FLOW

Flow is the brain's preferred state of operation. It happens when you are doing something you know and like, but find slightly challenging. Finding flow is hard, but you will know it when time, distractions and space disappear. Facilitating flow is critical for getting maximum amounts done.

## 4 CHEWABLE CHUNKS

Break big tasks up into smaller tasks. Tackling smaller tasks requires less willpower and will feel much easier. Not only that, you will get a jolt of dopamine every time you

finish one of the smaller tasks. Dopamine functions as a neurotransmitter – a chemical released by neurons (nerve cells) to send signals to other nerve cells. The brain includes several distinct dopamine pathways, one of which plays a major role in the motivational component of reward-motivated behaviour.

## 5 THE ULTRADIAN RHYTHM: HONOURING ENERGY CYCLES

In chronobiology, an ultradian rhythm is a recurrent period or cycle repeated throughout a 24-hour day. In contrast, circadian rhythms complete one cycle daily, while infradian rhythms such as the human menstrual cycle have periods longer than a day. Like your circadian rhythm, which circulates daily, your ultradian rhythm circulates every 90 minutes. To be maximally productive,

focus for no more than 90 minutes followed by a 15-minute break. Even 15 minutes of light walking will help the brain do all it is intended to. Physical activity helps with sleep, focus, concentration, flow, dopamine production, memory, learning, motivation and more.

## 6 DO IT WITH DOPAMINE

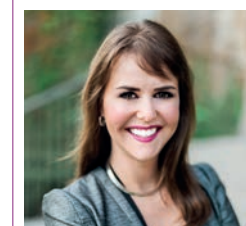
Dopamine is not the 'feel-good' hormone we once thought it was. Instead, dopamine is the 'action' hormone. Whatever we want to do, we have to use dopamine, so find ways to get that surge by eating cheese, soybeans, beef, lamb, pork, fish, chicken, nuts, seeds, eggs, dairy, beans and whole grains.

## 7 CHECK LISTS

Every time you check something off your list you get a surge of dopamine, so make a list, and check things off.

## 8 POWER OF PLAY

Like 'flow', the brain prefers to be in a state of play. Do things you enjoy. The 'distraction effect' is important in that tasks properly 'gamified' distract us into liking them more and thus getting more done – without even noticing it!



## ABOUT DR BRYNN WINEGARD

Winegard completed her formal education in Neuroscience, Psychology, Marketing, and Strategy and now helps others through speaking to businesses around the world about 'Building Better Business Brains'. [drbrynn.com](http://drbrynn.com)



Zee Yoong Kang

KENNY CHEN talks to Zee Yoong Kang, CEO of Singapore's Health Promotion Board (HPB) about its preventative healthcare programmes

**S**ingapore has a number of desirable attributes that appeal to multinational companies (MNCs) looking for a headquarters in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region: great infrastructure, a stable political regime, a superb commerce, finance and transport hub, good weather and education, and much more.

Just two years ago, Cushman & Wakefield, the US-based global commercial real estate services company, published a report that identified Singapore as the number-one APAC headquarters choice for MNCs, with 4,200 firms located in the country. Therefore, anything adverse that happens in Singapore could have repercussions on how MNCs may operate in APAC.

#### Diabetes dilemma

Although rising affluence brings many attributes, it also brings the spread of so-called 'lifestyle diseases' such as diabetes. Indeed, no fewer than 16 per cent of patients in Singaporean hospitals are expected to be suffering from the disease by the year 2040. It's a crisis that is being tackled by the Singaporean government through, among other initiatives, preventative healthcare. Indeed, many other nations unwilling or unable to recognise their own impending diabetes problems should look closely at how Singapore is dealing with this issue.

In 2016, Singapore's Health Minister declared: "A Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health study estimated the total economic burden of diabetes for working age adults at more than a billion dollars a year." However, Singapore is not standing idle while this crisis burgeons.

Established in 2001, the Singapore Health Promotion Board (HPB) is committed to promoting healthy living in Singapore and



A healthy lifestyle is at the heart of HPB's plan for the future of Singapore



Roadshows form an integral part of the strategy



Encouraging people to monitor their own health is vital

is at the forefront of fighting the onset of chronic diseases. Using mainly 'soft' approaches, as well as collaborating with companies and food manufacturers, it has been highly successful at encouraging people to live healthier lifestyles. Zee Yoong Kang, CEO of HPB, says that his agency's mandate is "to encourage Singaporeans to live more healthily through diet and physical activities".

"Like most countries over the last 30 years," adds Zee, "Singapore has followed the model of building a healthcare system of specialists to treat acute diseases. However, with greater affluence and an aging population, chronic disease management will be the healthcare challenge of the future. Singapore is facing it earlier because of our greying population, but I believe all countries will face the same issue over the next 10 to 20 years."

#### An ounce of prevention

Zee says that Singapore's healthcare system needs to evolve in two specific ways: the first is a shift to a greater focus on prevention with early detection and promoting a healthy lifestyle, while the second is creating care teams to manage people's health within their communities.

When it comes to encouraging businesses to help their employees live healthier lives and manage chronic diseases more effectively, Zee is unequivocal: "Healthy living is not something you can foster by holding talks. We realised that people change their behaviour when you change the culture and environment around them. This can range from providing a more healthy diet to leaders being role models for healthy living and managing their staff's workload to prevent burnout.

"We emphasise to employers that this is →

# Singapore's health crusade



important for their bottom line. As society ages, it will be more difficult to hire staff, so companies need to retain current staff by encouraging healthy living and lessen the impact of early retirement due to chronic diseases.”

Zee says that he is impressed by the way in which some companies in the APAC region have been implementing a creative way of encouraging healthy living.

He adds: “We have partnered with many companies in pushing healthy lifestyles. For example, Seagate Technology International [the US data storage company] distributed steps trackers to its staff for the first season of our National Steps Challenge™’s Corporate Challenge [see box out] and its managers led the initiative to actively encourage their staff to run and walk. As a result, employees took an average of 21,000 steps, which is the equivalent of walking 15-16km per day. So it requires on-the-ground leadership by senior management to mobilise the entire workforce to change the way they live.”

### Hidden impact

The likely effect of this healthcare crisis on the workplace and lost productivity is plain, as Zee confirms: “There’s a huge hidden impact on the workplace. Managers tend to focus on the wrong things. I personally sit on the Workplace Safety and Health Council of Singapore, and we realised

Zee Yoong Kang (left) with Kenny Chen of Odgers Berndtson’s Singapore office

### NATIONAL STEPS CHALLENGE™

Launched in 2015, the National Steps Challenge™ is a highly successful programme that has been oversubscribed every year. It has a reward system where vouchers are awarded for every ‘steps’ milestone reached.

The Challenge has seen one million sign-ups and each day participants upload their steps data to HPB’s Healthy 365 mobile app through their smart phones. This is an extraordinary feat considering that there are only three million adult Singaporeans. Unsurprisingly, it is the largest programme of its kind in the world.

Since the introduction of the programme, seven per cent more Singaporeans are now meeting the recommended physical activity levels.

that the focus among employers is typically on accidents and deaths. But there’s a bigger hidden problem of early retirement. People are forced to stop working as they are physically unable to work due to chronic diseases such as high blood pressure or diabetes. The statistics don’t capture that but the truth is we are losing people to early retirement. So we are working with employers to tackle the problem at its root and to encourage their employees to lead healthier lifestyles for greater work longevity.”

So profound is the fear of the effect of a diabetes epidemic in Singapore that the government has declared a ‘War on Diabetes’. Says Zee: “We have been taking a more upstream approach. Over the last few years, we have already been aggressively working with companies to offer low sugar drinks under the ‘Healthier Choice Symbol’ programme. As a result, the average sugar content in packaged drinks in Singapore fell from 9.5 per cent to six per cent. We are taking similar approaches with other food manufacturers and restaurants to introduce wholegrain products. We have been encouraging schools and government premises not to sell unhealthy foods so as to set an example to Singaporeans.

“We can genuinely say Singapore is the most aggressive country in the world in terms of actively promoting healthier foods with programmes such as the National Steps Challenge™.”

Zee recognises the difficulty in alerting the population to the health risks just by using above-the-line advertising, which is why the HPB also organises roadshows and free exercise sessions in public spaces. “The goal,” says Zee, “is to create a ‘street presence’ and instil a vibe among the public that living a healthy lifestyle is the norm rather than the exception. We are highly successful with this. Across these programmes, we have seen about 200,000 in attendance.” ■

**Kenny Chen** is a consultant in Odgers Berndtson’s Singapore office



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# ME, MYSELF, I

Leaders who are self-aware and recognise how others see them can be transformative for any company and create better well working conditions, says DI RIX

Imagine asking your customers, suppliers, peer managers and work colleagues to rate you and your leadership style. How would you feel? Happy? Apprehensive? Keen to see the results? Well, 360-degree feedback now forms the backbone of all good leadership coaching and leadership potential programmes and, critically, it can be transformative for the wellbeing of an organisation.

## Personal perception

In the ever-complex, chaotic, digitised, challenging world leaders find themselves in, it is no longer good enough to be an expert in your field. Talented leaders, according to Eric Beaudan, Odgers Berndtson's Toronto-based Global Head of Leadership Practice and author of *Creative Execution*, must have the ability to see themselves as they are perceived by others, to discover and understand the areas where they need to grow and develop as a person in order to become more effective.

Beaudan believes the talent agenda is now on a par with company strategy, organisational efficiency, cost management and technology. Leadership

development, he adds, is one of the biggest shifts the corporate world has seen over the past five to 10 years.

"Companies recognise that you can have all the technology in the world and the best strategy possible, but without the right talent you are not going to get results." Studies back up his convictions. A recent McKinsey survey found that 82 per cent of Fortune 500 companies don't believe they recruit highly talented people. And of those that do, only seven per cent think they can retain them.

## Awareness and reflection

Colorado-based Renee Moorefield, CEO of Be Well Lead Well and chair of the Global Wellness Institute's Wellness at Work Initiative, agrees with Beaudan. "What we do is to get leaders to understand that who they are shapes how they operate. It's about looking at what are my worldviews, my values, my vision, and asking if they are working.

"If my vision is to create a more effective organisation, am I up to it? Am I willing to transform myself and be the kind of leader that will enable my team and others around me to thrive?"

Spotted by Beaudan through his potential leadership assessment programme three years ago is the new CEO of Siemens Canada, Faisal Kazi. "The programme really helped me reflect on myself and my management style, and how people perceived me. When Eric highlighted the fact that some of my leadership strength scores were among the highest he had ever seen, it gave me real confidence to leverage myself.

"Siemens has an extremely strong set of values, and I realised that Eric was proposing very similar ones, like the importance of being candid, more open, bolder, more visible and approachable, and that excited me."

Self-awareness, says Beaudan, is crucial to wellbeing. "If you can't manage yourself, and be composed and resilient as a leader, it's hard to lead a team or manage and lead an organisation. It is right at the centre of what being an effective leader is."

## Maximising talent

Following his coaching, Kazi has introduced the concept of 'Why?', encouraging staff to question why they are doing things beyond the financial reward and also to get involved in Siemens' 'Business to →

ALAMY

“

I was always pushing my team to perform better and we always did well, but we only discussed work; I knew nothing about them as people

”

Society' programme, which measures the impact the company is having in Canada. Kazi says his team now takes more responsibility, freeing him to spend less time on the operational side of the business and more on strategy and championing Siemens' charitable giving.

Moorefield suggests: "The leader's role is no longer one of control and management, but one that's facilitative, more about coaching and maximising the skills, capabilities and talents of others so they can shine. We help leaders shift from a reactive orientation to a more generative one. That doesn't mean being innovative and brainstorming, it means being a leader who is inspired by a deeper sense of vision and purpose, serving something greater than yourself and being able to enrol people into that vision and create a shared energy so they are internally motivated."

#### Talk among yourselves

Leadership coaching came late in the day for Najib Doubiani, the recently retired Technical Director of the Middle East and North Africa Coca-Cola Business Unit. Based in Morocco, the company brought in Be Well Lead Well four years ago as part of its 2020 Vision.

"After 35 years working

16-to-18-hour days leading a team of 70 engineers and scientists, we learned for the first time that it wasn't shameful to sit and talk about ourselves and ask 'what is in this for me?'. We realised we had been really missing something.

"For the first time, we gave as much time to thinking about how we could change things for our own wellbeing as we were giving to thinking about the company's health." For Doubiani, it was important to choose a few areas where he wanted to embed change for life: more time with family, eating better, regular exercise and, last but not least, inspiring his team.

"We wanted to get rid of the joke that someone who left at 7pm was taking a half day's holiday." He set about creating office relaxation and exercise areas.

"I was always pushing my team to perform better, and we always did well, but we only ever discussed work; I knew nothing about them as people. So we set up a formal breakfast every month to talk about everything but work, and organised trips with colleagues and their families."

Justification for the changes came a year after implementing the leadership programme. Having boosted their performance targets, Doubiani's team won Coca-Cola's prestigious 'Best Improvement' award for implementing the company's 2020 strategies.

Despite some success stories, globally workplace wellness programmes – now a \$40bn industry – have a long way to go. As Moorefield says, many companies provide stress-management programmes but then send workers back into a toxic office environment. That creates even lower morale. "Programmes have to include a cultural shift or they will never be more than a programme. When human beings are seen not as resources but as human beings, as an amazing bit of potential talent to nurture, that will change everything. And that's all down to the job of a leader." ■



The lush green 'living wall' at Nixon Peabody's headquarters in Washington, DC

**S**o-called 'biophilic design' – that is, bringing the outdoors indoors – is gaining significant momentum among companies eager to improve employee health, output and retention.

The word biophilic stems from biophilia, meaning a 'love of nature'. Coined by German-born American psychoanalyst Erich Fromm and subsequently popularised by American biologist Edward O. Wilson in the 1980s, it is radically changing the way companies, architects and designers think about well working and the workplace environment.

#### The urban jungle

With the rapid rise of urbanisation, Wilson noted that big cities were becoming more and more disconnected from nature. It's his belief that we all have a deep-rooted genetic connection to the natural world, and that upsetting or ignoring this critical factor can radically affect our general wellbeing.

In its purest sense, biophilic design moves away from the traditional office design system – serried rows of isolated (and isolating) cubicles – to a more

open, human-centred approach. Living walls, potted plants, sustainable materials, natural light and scents can all be utilised to the greater workplace good. Indeed, some of the most dynamic businesses across the globe have grasped the biophilic nettle (as it were) as part of a holistic approach to the design and layout of their offices, and the resulting wellbeing effect on their employees.

Plants can be seen as a quick win when it comes to enhancing an indoor working environment, and are the obvious first choice for the biophilic designer. But it is how plants and foliage are deployed in a building that can have the most dramatic effect, as the images shown here testify. Incorporating direct or indirect elements of nature into the workplace can reduce stress, blood pressure levels and heart rates while increasing productivity and creativity.

#### Friendly foliage

Employees accustomed to the sad sight of a single wilting specimen on a windowsill or a selection of potted plastic dust-traps shouldn't underestimate the power of well-chosen, properly maintained, air-purifying foliage. Research conducted by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, SUNY Upstate Medical School and Syracuse University showed that cleaner, fresher air can as much as double the cognitive performance of office-based workers. And this comes in addition to the many other benefits indoor plants are shown to have, including relieving stress, improving the visual aesthetics of an office and absorbing sound in noisy, open-plan rooms. →

ERIC LAIGNEL/PERKINS+WILL

PETER BENNETTS

# Living, breathing workplaces

Can the presence of plants and nature in the workplace really improve employee well working and performance?

LOUISE HOFFMAN reports

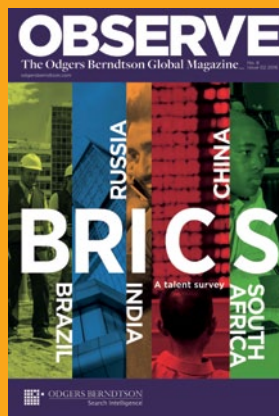


At Medibank Place in Melbourne, greenery can be seen from every workstation

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In Money Penny's new £15m office plants enhance both work and social spaces

MONEYPENNY

One of several companies to have introduced nature to its working environments is Australian private health insurer Medibank, which puts the psychological and physical health of the business at the heart of the design for its Medibank Place office complex in Melbourne.

The interior spaces now house a total of 2,300 plants, while modular planter boxes and green walls decorate the building's façade. The site also boasts an edible garden, promoting healthy eating to employees, not-for-profit organisations and the wider community.

"When the building was designed we took an active role in ensuring that our people could see greenery from every workstation," says Medibank Group Executive People and Culture, Kylie Bishop. "Medibank Place is a living, breathing building that helps us deliver a healthy workplace."

And help it certainly has. In a survey carried out four months after the team moved into the new building, 79 per cent of employees said they were working more collaboratively; 70 per cent said they feel

healthier; 66 per cent were more productive; and the company saw a five per cent reduction in absenteeism.

#### Outside in

International law firm Nixon Peabody worked with American architecture and design firm Perkins+Will to bring biophilia to its Washington, DC office. The building's three-storey staircase now rises up from a rock bed with a lush green living wall as its backdrop, and the interior spaces are flooded with natural light, affording the vast majority of employees line-of-sight views to the outside world.

Employee buy-in is, as always, crucial in fostering a healthy work environment – especially when improvements to the look and feel of the office are intended to be of specific benefit to the workforce. "The opportunity to create a feeling of ownership by a group is a fun and positive experience in itself and shouldn't be missed," says Tim Polisano, Senior Designer at office interior design firm Morgan Lovell.

"Like anything, if you impose it on people, leave it to the last minute or install it as an afterthought it's much less likely to be successful. It could

even become an item of ridicule."

Ed Reeves and Rachel Clacher are founders of UK-based telephone answering service provider Money Penny, which also has a US division and a fourth-place ranking in *The Sunday Times* 'Best Places to Work' list in 2017. The company has just built its own £15m office complex, and Reeves and Clacher were pioneering in their approach to creating a brand-new environment for their workforce.

"When we made the decision to build a new headquarters we asked ourselves, 'how we can make sure staff will be happy there?' The answer was simple – ask them!" says Reeves. The design of their building is therefore based almost entirely on feedback from the 500 employees, with every aspect tailored to staff wellbeing and happiness. Floor-to-ceiling windows maximise natural light, plants enhance both work and social spaces, and every workstation has natural ventilation.

"There are tangible benefits to a company's bottom line from enriching the workspace with natural elements," Reeves continues. "We found that when people put plants or any other form of enrichment into a workspace, they felt better and performed better."

Unsurprisingly tech giants such as Google, Apple and Amazon invest heavily in biophilic designs, but the challenge going forward will be for companies around the world to recognise that bringing nature into the workplace isn't some kind of fluffy 'add-on', but an absolutely vital element for fostering employee well working. ■

# Turning over a new leaf

*Observe* selects seven plants that have the power to improve air quality, remove toxins and aid well working



## PEACE LILY

An elegant feature in a boardroom, reception area or executive office, the peace lily is tolerant of low light and is among the most powerful of natural air purifiers.



## GOLDEN POTHOS

In NASA tests, this plant removed up to 73 per cent of air-polluting volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from a sealed room. It can also flourish in low light.



## ROSEMARY

More than just an old wives' tale, researchers at Northumbria University in the UK have proved that this fragrant herb really can improve memory and alertness.



## BOSTON FERN

The Boston fern is said to act as a humidifier, restoring moisture to dry office air. It does require specific care, however.



## ENGLISH IVY

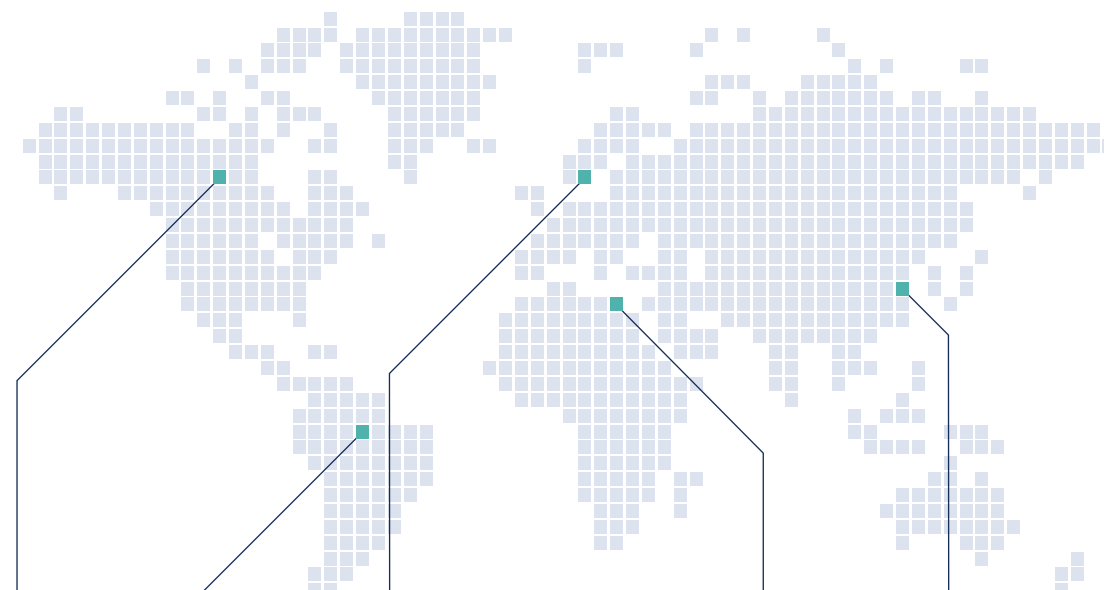
This plant can withstand relatively low light levels, requires minimal care, and can remove lots of toxins from the air in poorly ventilated rooms.



## JADE PLANT

For minimal maintenance, the jade plant (also known as the money plant or friendship tree) is an aesthetically pleasing winner. It's also considered by some to be a symbol of good luck.

ILLUSTRATIONS: CHARLOTTE DAY



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