

Preface

This is the revised edition of a book first published in 2011 about well-being, productivity and happiness at work, and about ways to preserve and promote such phenomena. This new edition brings the information right up to date by including detail on recent research advances into well-being at work. We also introduce new topics such as what we need to consider about well-being in the context of an aging workforce, and how mindfulness can be used to improve well-being. This edition also includes six new well-being case studies that have been conducted in the last few years to demonstrate how companies are taking the well-being of their employees very seriously. We are very pleased to be able to provide information on the well-being approach of the following case study contributors: BT; John Lewis Partnership; the Civil Service; Network Rail; Rolls-Royce and Tesco Bank.

As with its predecessor, the book is remarkably timely. Globally, the importance of well-being is increasingly being recognized. Not long ago, the then first lady of the USA, Michelle Obama, raised awareness of the importance of mental health and well-being through a number of high-profile speeches and through the launch of initiatives designed to support people to greater well-being. More recently in 2017, the UK Prime Minister Theresa May spoke about the need for everyone, including the government and employers, to do more to support mental well-being.

In spite of these recent references, the basic idea about well-being and quality of life as political goals is not new. Lennart Levi, Emeritus Professor of Psychosocial Medicine (Karolinska Institutet), explored this notion in his introduction to the first edition of this book.

According to Greek physician Galen, employment is “nature’s physician, essential to human happiness”. Although according to John Stuart Mills “it is possible to do without happiness. It is done involuntarily by nineteen-twentieths of mankind”, William James maintained that “how to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure”.

A prerequisite for all this is that people, indeed, have a job, and that this job is of reasonably good quality. This is nicely summarized in the European Union’s Lisbon strategy “More and Better Jobs”. Unfortunately, countless European workers remain unemployed or have jobs that are patho- rather than salutogenic.

This book explores the important elements of all these issues.

The book’s first part considers why well-being matters. It begins by telling the story of how individuals can benefit from improved well-being in the workplace before analyzing the demonstrable benefits for organizations, such as lower sickness absence, improved retention of talented people, and more satisfied customers. The first part concludes with a discussion of how well-being relates to employee engagement.

Part 2 considers what is meant by well-being, including both positive emotions and the sense of purpose in life. This Part also explains how well-being can and should be measured.

Part 3 focusses on what influences well-being, and looks both within as well as beyond working life.

Part 4 takes a look at the benefits of well-being, with emphasis on building personal resilience as well as ensuring a healthy workplace as two key objectives.

Part 5 presents six important chapters with highly illustrative and relevant case studies, from BT; John Lewis Partnership; the Civil Service; Network Rail; Rolls-Royce and Tesco Bank.

This book is an essential resource for occupational health practitioners, managers, scholars, and researchers. Indeed anyone who is concerned with health and productivity issues in workplaces can benefit from the information included.

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WELL-BEING

Productivity and Happiness at Work

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