

Gallup: Wellbeing Is the Next Employee Engagement

By Tom Rath

In recent decades, major change initiatives such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and employee engagement have taken hold in organizations—and for good reason. They’ve reduced costs and fueled growth. As a result, early adopters have gained a competitive edge. This leads us to question where the next seismic shift will occur. After exploring this matter in great depth over the last five years, the answer is clear. The next major workplace initiatives will focus on wellbeing.

Gallup’s global data suggest that there is no metric that captures more variance in human behavior than wellbeing. When defined as “all the things that are important to how we think about and experience our lives,” wellbeing becomes the most important measure for gauging the influence your organization has on employees, customers, and the communities you serve.

Much like when Gallup initiated its foundational studies of employee engagement in the 1990s, we have now carefully researched the wellbeing of the world’s citizens from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe; our study spanned 150 countries representing 98 percent of the world’s adult population. Our teams were able to establish the relationship between wellbeing and everything from healthcare costs to productivity levels. Even if organizations don’t see themselves as being in the business of wellbeing today, they will be in a few years.

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While something as broad as wellbeing might seem difficult to quantify, it actually is not. Our global research, published in the book *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*, identified the following interconnected elements people look for in life—across nationalities, faiths, and cultures:

- career wellbeing: how you occupy your time and liking what you do each day
- social wellbeing: having strong relationships and love in your life
- financial wellbeing: effectively managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security
- physical wellbeing: having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis
- community wellbeing: the sense of engagement and involvement with the area where you live.

Much like Six Sigma, TQM, and engagement metrics, these five domains of wellbeing can be measured, connected to business outcomes, and systemically improved over time. As a number of leading organizations are already learning, the ability to show employees and customers precisely how your organization affects their lives may be the leadership currency of the next century.

Tom Rath is the author of several bestsellers, including the recently released *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements* and *Strengths Based Leadership*. He leads Gallup’s workplace research and consulting practice; tom@gallup.com.

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