FOR CHROS, HEADS OF PEOPLE AND THE BUDGET HOLDER

The Senior Layer

A brief for the budget holder

Why five years of rising wellbeing spend has not moved your senior attrition, what the largest UK study of the category actually found, and what to do about it that can be measured thirty days later.

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THE ARGUMENT IN ONE PAGE

What this brief asks you to consider

You are being asked to approve something that looks adjacent to a category you have already funded and been disappointed by. That is a reasonable thing to be sceptical about, so the argument is set out in full here rather than left to a conversation.

- **The category does not work.** Across 46,336 employees in more than 230 UK organisations, participation in employer wellbeing provision showed no association with better wellbeing. Not mindfulness, not resilience training, not apps, not coaching.
- **One thing did separate.** Employees who took part in volunteering, unrecognised service to someone who cannot repay them, reported better wellbeing than those who did not. It is the only item on the menu that did, and it is the one item almost nobody has treated as a leadership intervention.
- **There is a reason the rest fails.** Every failed intervention adds something: a technique, a habit, an app. What is wrong in a senior layer is not an absence but an attachment, and you cannot remove an attachment by adding a technique.
- **The work is small and measured.** A baseline instrument across the layer, one residential block, thirty days of private practice, then the same instrument again. The change between the two readings is the deliverable and the only claim made.
- **The measurement costs nothing.** The audit is free at any volume whether or not a programme follows, so the decision in front of you today is not a spending decision.

> **The honest summary**
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> Nothing here proves that this programme will improve your numbers. What the evidence supports is narrower and still worth acting on: the things you are currently buying are not separating from doing nothing, and the one thing that did separate is the mechanism this programme is built on.

THE EVIDENCE

Of everything on the menu, one thing worked

In the largest study of its kind, a researcher at the University of Oxford examined 46,336 employees across more than 230 UK organisations and compared the wellbeing of people who took part in employer wellbeing provision with those who did not.

Mindfulness sessions. Resilience and stress-management training. Wellbeing apps. Time-management courses. Financial wellbeing programmes. Coaching. Relaxation classes. Sleep support. Across the board, participation showed no association with better wellbeing.

The exception

Employees who took part in charity and volunteering work did show better wellbeing than those who did not. It is the only category that separated from the noise.

William J. Fleming, Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom. Industrial Relations Journal, 2024.

What this evidence does not say

This is cross-sectional survey data. It shows an association, not proof of cause, and the direction could run the other way: people who already feel well may be likelier to volunteer. Any analyst you hand this to will find that in ten minutes, so it is stated here rather than discovered later.

It does not weaken the part that matters to your decision. Whatever else is true, the provision currently being funded is not distinguishable from doing nothing, and one mechanism is.

THE MECHANISM

Why the rest of the category fails

Look at what every failed intervention has in common. Each one adds something. A technique, a vocabulary, an app, forty more minutes in a calendar that was already the problem.

What is wrong in a senior layer is not an absence. It is an attachment.

> *“For twenty years, every satisfaction they have felt has been paid out against credit or return. Nothing in their working life has given them anything with neither attached.”*

That is a trained response, and the job trains it. It makes a person excellent at delivery and progressively unable to feel the delivery. It is why the promotion landed flat, why the exit interview was not about money, and why a capable leader cannot answer when you ask them directly what is wrong. They do not know. Nothing has ever asked them to find out.

The intervention therefore works by removal rather than addition, and it has to be felt rather than explained. A senior room will argue with a teaching. It cannot argue with something that happened in its own body an hour ago.

Why this document does not describe the exercise in full

The central exercise depends on participants not knowing what it is for until after they have done it. This brief is a public download, so the part that must stay unread is not in it. A sponsor gets it directly. If this document is circulated to a cohort before their block, the exercise stops working, and we would rather postpone than run a briefed cohort.

THE PROGRAMME

Three movements, thirty days apart

1. The baseline

A short self-report instrument across the senior layer, taken on a phone: 24 questions over 8 domains, about four minutes, no login. Individuals receive their own result in full. The sponsor receives an aggregate picture of the layer, suppressed entirely below five respondents in any reporting group. This is the control measurement, and it is what lets the Day 30 figure be defended rather than described.

2. The Intensive

A residential block on a working campus: a kitchen that feeds hundreds a day, a dairy, grounds. Real work with real consequences if done badly. Inside it each participant performs one unglamorous act of service under three conditions that must all hold at once: the person receiving it cannot repay them, will not know who did it, and no record of it is made. No pre-framing and no explanation of purpose. A debrief follows, and the debrief is the intervention.

3. Thirty days, held privately

One unrecognised act of service per week for four weeks, logged by the participant and reported to nobody. Not to the sponsor, not to the manager, not to HR. That is a design decision and the one most organisations want to change. The moment the log becomes a compliance item the act acquires a return, and it stops doing the thing that made it work. A tracked contribution block is five wasted weeks.

Then the same instrument again

On Day 30 the baseline instrument runs a second time. The change between the two readings, at the layer, is the deliverable.

WHAT IT INVOLVES

Cost, conditions and what you receive

What it costs

The audit is free, at any volume, whether or not a programme follows. There is no per-seat charge for measurement and no licence to renew.

A cohort is priced on its size and the residential venue, so there is no single list figure that would be honest in a document. The number for your cohort is given out loud in the first conversation, not in a proposal a week later, and it does not change afterwards.

What we need from you

- **A named sponsor** who sends the audit link under their own name. Sent by an HR system, it gets the response rate an HR system gets.
- **A defined population:** a level and above, not a hand-picked list. A hand-picked list tells the people on it that they were picked, which changes their answers.
- **A confidentiality statement in writing,** in your own words, saying individual results belong to the individual and that nothing from this reaches a performance conversation. The audit does not run without it.
- **One held date,** because the Intensive is residential and the Day 30 re-measure is fixed to it.

What we never ask for

Budget approval before the audit. A signed statement of work before the conversation. Access to anybody's performance data, at any point.

Who sees what

The individual receives their own result in full, and no one else receives an individual score, named or otherwise. The sponsor receives the layer and never the person, suppressed below five respondents per group, because a group of three is not anonymous whatever it is labelled. Responses are not sold, syndicated or used to train anything. If this is going to be read in a calibration meeting, do not run it.

WHO RUNS IT

Ganga Narayan Das

Trained as a Ceramic Engineer at NIT Rourkela. In 1996 his father died and the system he understood stopped working, which became a research question he has not put down since. Nineteen years as a monk followed, spent testing the Gita's protocol on himself under sustained pressure.

The conclusion he returned with is an engineer's rather than a devotional one: the people who wrote these texts were systems engineers working on the most complex system available to them, and they described mechanisms modern neuroscience is only now naming formally. What exists now is the applied version: an instrument that measures state, a protocol that changes it, and a re-measure that says whether it did.

- Work delivered with KPMG, NPCIL and TIMA.
- Presented at the United Nations Environment Assembly, UNEA 4 and UNEA 6, Nairobi.
- The clinical and acoustic side of the protocol is documented separately at neural-acoustics.com.

Is this religious?

No, and the answer needs to be more specific than that, because somebody will have to defend it to an employee forum. Nothing is worshipped and nobody converts. There is no ritual a participant is asked to join, no deity invoked over them, and no belief anyone is asked to hold or profess. The source text is read for what it says about attention, attachment and a mind under pressure, and where it describes a mechanism the mechanism is used and named in plain language.

The central exercise requires no belief at all. An atheist and a devout participant of any tradition do identical work and arrive by the identical route, because the route runs through their own nervous system rather than through an idea. In corporate material it is called a contribution block, which is what it is.

The next step

Run the audit on yourself. Four minutes, no login, no cost, and no one will call you about it. Then, if the picture concerns you, one thirty-minute call.

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