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*Strategic Wellbeing*


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# Guiding principles: Choosing a workplace wellbeing provider

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Organisations that prioritise the wellbeing of their employees have better business outcomes, lower absenteeism and **presenteeism**, and fewer injuries. They experience higher productivity and customer satisfaction – as well as fulfilling ethical and legal duties to look after their people. Policies, procedures, leadership, organisational culture and work environment are areas of the business that impact on one’s wellbeing. When managed poorly, these can also become psychosocial hazards at work.

To build a safe and healthy organisation, a strategic and systematic approach to wellbeing is required. For that, organisations are turning towards specialised workplace wellbeing providers who offer high impact and evidence-based solutions and help mitigate psychosocial risks.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW WHICH WORKPLACE WELLBEING PROVIDERS ARE RELIABLE? WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR WHEN CHOOSING A WELLBEING PARTNER?

### 1. Evidence-based practices.

You want to work with a wellbeing provider that grounds their practice in robust and rigorous research. That means they use pioneering and contemporary research findings and are grounded in best-practice frameworks to inform their processes – leading to lasting organisational and individual behaviour change.

What should you look for? Be wary of wellbeing providers that hide behind a promise of being “evidence-based” without any ongoing commitment to **scientific rigour**. A sound evidence-based provider will be able to show evidence of their process for continuous improvement, team development and up-skilling, and will be able to back up their service offerings with clear research-backed rationale. They will have a sound, evidence-based understanding of specific challenges facing your organisation and will tailor their approach accordingly.

Be sure to ask what frameworks they use in their approach. The best practice is to lean towards and be informed by international ISO 45003 standards and government Health and Safety guidelines.

### 2. Credibility and experience.

With the worldwide pandemic and the rise of the wellbeing industry, there are a lot of new companies that have come to the market to offer support to organisations. Many of these come from the tech sector. They may be bringing innovation and technological solutions to workplace wellbeing but may be lacking the psychological experience or expertise to create a real and safe behaviour change.

Check what qualifications your consultant has. Ask about their experience in delivering similar outcomes for other clients or ask for their references too.

The credibility and experience of mental health workshop facilitators are also important. In New Zealand, the practice of psychology is regulated by the Psychologists Act 1981. When choosing a mental health training provider, look for qualified and registered psychologists. If people experience distress or were recently exposed to trauma, they may be susceptible to group discussions about mental health in the workplace. These dynamics can be skillfully managed by a trained professional who understands your employees’ challenges.



A facilitator’s ability to name those challenges, and to flexibly respond and adapt to what is in the room, is important not only for your employees’ training experience but will also improve the retention of their knowledge, skills, and understanding of mental health and wellbeing after the training.

Chat with the workplace wellbeing provider about their quality control processes. These include internal structures (such as training, supervision, and peer review), and external checks (such as programme evaluation, pre- post- measures, feedback and reviews from previous customers).

**3. Measurement and assessment.**

To develop and design an effective wellbeing strategy or programme, conducting initial assessments is recommended. It allows you to benchmark organisational wellbeing. This will ensure a more targeted investment, meaning you will know what you need to address first and, therefore, set the right priorities. The best practice is to assess psychosocial risks within the organisation to inform systemic changes.

For example, an organisation where people struggle with high psychological distress due to low levels of psychological safety (they feel they can’t trust their team-mates or leaders) will benefit from a very different wellbeing strategy to an organisation whose people are generally thriving but need greater support for embedding healthy habits at work (such as taking regular breaks).

Prior to signing up for the service, discuss their measurement tools and enquire about the expertise of those who have designed any tools they use (are they trained in research methodology, psychometrics, and wellbeing theory?). How comprehensive are their assessment questions (do they cover all domains of wellbeing, and the work and non-work factors that contribute to it?), and how actionable are the insights (will these clearly inform action?) Will their assessment tell you who needs support first, and what support you – or your organisation – should give them?

**4. Data protection and privacy policy.**

When you discuss a wellbeing assessment tool with your workplace wellbeing provider, get your head around their data protection and privacy policy. Make sure you read the fine print about what any third party can do with your data!

**5. Inclusive and bicultural practice.**

Cultural awareness and experience working with diverse groups include knowledge of non-western health models and theories, extending support to whānau through acknowledging a community approach to wellbeing and mental health, and providing representative and relevant contexts and scenarios during workshops for the diverse groups that make up your organisation.

Culturally appropriate content and delivery methods impact people’s feeling of being socially connected and understood and increase their sense of belonging to an organisation, creating greater behaviour change through tailored support. A one-size-fits-all solution from a company on the other side of the world may not suit your diverse population.

Check the providers’ client list on their website and enquire about the cultural theories that they use to inform wellbeing and mental health workshops content.

To end the list, in our many years of experience at Umbrella, one of the most important things we’ve discovered, when working with a client, contractor or consultancy firm, are the benefits of building good and long-lasting relationships with mutual respect and open two-way communication. Workplace wellbeing does not exist in a vacuum but is closely intertwined with everything else that happens within your organisation. Look for a complete wellbeing provider whose people have experience in the real world, and who offer relevant support throughout all stages of implementing a wellbeing initiative and beyond.

If you consider Umbrella Wellbeing as your complete wellbeing partner, we recommend booking an introductory phone call with our team to discuss your needs.

**Umbrella Wellbeing**  
 – a team of psychologists who provide end-to-end workplace wellbeing support. We partner with organisations to consult on strategic wellbeing, build leadership skills and competence in managing wellbeing and mental health, and help develop high performing and resilient teams.

