Aveoca Consultancy Project

A brief corporate wellness case study

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Abstract

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Abstract

While most of this consultancy project paper will is based on the science and research within the field of applied positive psychology and coaching psychology (Biswas-Diener, Linley, Govindji & Woolston, 2011), successful initiatives have to start with a clear, integrated analysis, goal or vision, and planning process to be sustainable over time. As positive psychology does not offer such a planning process, we will use the Harvard School of Public Health “Integrated Approach to Worker Safety, Health, and Well-Being” (Sorensen et al., 2013, p.1) The key characteristics are: “Leadership commitment, participation, policies, programs and practices focussed on positive work conditions, comprehensive and collaborative strategies, adherence, and data-driven change” (p. vii).

Best practice shows that for a sustainable implementation of an intervention in an organisation there has to be a multidimensional approach to an issue (Wilber, 2005). A problem is best addressed on a personal or individual level (subjective & objective), on a social or collective level (intersubjective) (Lomas, Hefferon & Ivtzan, 2015), as well as on a structural level. To maximise the success of an intervention, we also believe that whenever possible, the intervention should be planned around the “Six Sources of Influence” (Patterson & Grenny, 2007) (see Figure 1) to avoid perceived additional demand on the individual and creating a more engaging job demand and resource balance (Van Woerkom, Bakker & Nishii, 2016).

Figure 1: Six Sources of Influence

To analyse and implement current best processes and practice, we will utilise the key concepts of “Positive Organisational Scholarship” (POS) (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2011) and Behaviour (POB) (Youssef & Luthans, 2007) supported by “The Psychologically Healthy Workplace” (PHWP) (Grawitch & Ballard 2016). Additionally, we will make use of some behavioural economic applications based on Daniel Kahneman’s Nobel Prize-winning findings (2002) on judgment and decision making (Kahneman, Lovallo & Sibony, 2019) to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of “Positive Psychology Interventions” (PPI’s).

Introduction

As a multinational management consultancy firm, Aveoca is employing more than 300,000 highly-trained staff. While the company is well-regarded the management team is concerned about the following issues:

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<th>Issue:</th>
<th>Probable cause:</th>
<th>Solution focus:</th>
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| **Burnout leading to high levels of absenteeism and turnover** | Knowledge-driven, sedentary workforce in a highly competitive (stress prone) business environment | a. Design of work  
b. Work-life balance  
c. Psychological capital (PsyCap) |
| **Underutilization of company health facilities and services** | Lack of clear value proposition, lack of leadership communication and leading by example, | a. Organisational identity and symbolism  
b. Employee involvement  
c. Communication |
| **Potentially unethical and illegal practices by a small group of employees** | Financially reward, and individual goal drove company culture | a. Mindful Organizing  
b. Employee growth and development  
c. Positive ethics & moral courage |

Preventing Burnouts and Absenteeism

Financial service companies, operating in several international markets, practically work around the clock. They work mostly sedentary, in a constant overload of information (Misra & Stokols, 2012), at a fast pace and in a stress-prone and highly competitive work environment. Employees very often suffer from a lack of sleep (Grawitch, Barber, & Justice, 2010) unregular and unhealthy eating and stress coping habits (Wethington, Glanz & Schwartz, 2015), lack of time for recreational activities (Joudrey & Wallace, 2009) and social connections. Leading to a lack of energy and self-control when it comes to working hours and life-work balance (Haar, Roche & Brummelhuis, 2018), burnout and depression (Ahola, Hakanen, Perhoniemi & Mutanen, 2014).
Design of work (job) in the POS literature is looking at five positive outcomes: “satisfaction with the job, satisfaction with opportunities to grow and develop at work, internal work motivation” (Oldham, 2012, p.652), altruism, creativity, and positive action (practices) (Loi et al., 2011; Güntert, 2015). Examples for applied models for organisational job design are: Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), Job Demands–Resources theory (JD-R) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), Job Crafting (Tims, Bakker & Derks, 2013) (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Design of work models

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<th>Model:</th>
<th>Short description:</th>
<th>References:</th>
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<td>Job Characteristics Theory (JCT)</td>
<td>Aimed to identify the characteristics that contributed to employee effectiveness, flourishing and intrinsic motivation, emphasizing on the core job dimensions: Skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback.</td>
<td>Hackman &amp; Oldham, 1976; Piccolo &amp; Colquitt, 2006; Wegman et al., 2018;</td>
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<td>Job Demands–Resources theory (JD-R)</td>
<td>Aimed to provide an integrative view of job characteristics emphasizing on job demands and resources and taking the factor of stress into consideration.</td>
<td>Bakker &amp; Demerouti, 2014 Bakker &amp; Demerouti, 2018; Dreison, 2018;</td>
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<td>Job Crafting</td>
<td>Job crafting refers to the proactive changes employees make in their work tasks and their working relationships to increase meaning, social and structural resources, and challenging job demands</td>
<td>Tims, Bakker &amp; Derks, 2013; Bakker &amp; Demerouti, 2018; Bruning &amp; Campion, 2016;</td>
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From an organisational job design point of view (Oldham & Fried, 2016), we suggest the C-Suite reviews the tangible, physical, organisational resources. (Helfat, 2017). To reduce the sedentary work habit (objective physical level), we encourage implementing adjustable or flexible workstations that allow employees to work in different standing or walking positions (Stephano & Edelheit, 2012). Introduce walking meetings and nudge employees to use the stairs instead of the elevator. To increase the general subjective employee well-being, it would be worth to review, room layouts, access to clean water, quality of room light and air, acoustical comfort, and room decoration (Timm, Gray, Curtis & Chung, 2018).

While there is evidence that an introduction or expansion to remote and flexible work arrangements can increase work-life balance and reduce turnover intentions (Timms et al., 2015), in Aveoca’s case, as a multinational company with cross-cultural teams, we suggest making this a regional decision as not every culture responds positively to flexible work opportunities (Peretz, Fried & Levi, 2018). Additionally,
we suggest introducing mandatory “no system access” times to prevent employees from working
overtime or even on weekends regularly (Golden, Chung, & Sweet, 2017; Yuan, Wu & Tang, 2018) and
therefore increase employees work-life balance (intersubjective social level) by default (Vlaev, King,
Dolan & Darzi, 2016).

According to Luthans & Youssef-Morgan (2017) PsyCap integrates four positive psychological resources:
hope – “persevering toward goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals to succeed”(p.17.2);
efficacy – “having confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks”
(p.17.2); resilience – “when beset by problems and adversity sustaining and bouncing back and even
beyond to attain success (p.17.2); and optimism – “making a positive attribution about succeeding now
and in the future” (p.17.2). They also share the “positive appraisal of circumstances and probability for
success based on motivated effort and perseverance” (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007, p. 550; Luthans,
Youssef & Avolio, 2015) that are crucial to overcoming the stressors at work. Within the workplace,
these capacities can “be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement
and to create a sustainable competitive advantage through people.” (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007,
p.8)

Several studies within the service industry (Aveoca) have confirmed that high levels of PsyCap are
positively related to job satisfaction (Abbas, Raja, Darr & Bouckenooghe 2014), create increased well-
being, and health outcomes such better weight management and lower cholesterol levels, and can
increase satisfaction in relationships (Lorenz, Beer, Pütz, & Heinitz, 2016). Utilising PsyCap, coaches and
managers can “leverage to tap into still largely uncharted territories of human strengths, thriving, and

For an Aveoca (individual subjective) intervention we focus on the PsychCap capacity of efficacy. Our
level of self-efficacy is defined on different levels: cognitive (thoughts shape our reality), motivational
(beliefs shape our motivation and expectancies), affective (avoidance behaviour is influenced by
perceived coping self-efficacy), selection (we expose ourselves to situations we believe we can master)
(Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 2002; Stajkovic et al., 2018).

As Aveoca has in-house coaches as part of their human resource practice, we suggest a series of
mandatory career development coaching sessions. Coaching questions increasing efficacy could be:
recall past successes (mastery experiences), possible role models (social modelling), how to create
situations for success (social persuasion), how to reframe negative experience (psychological responses)
— starting with a pre-defined set of employees (Vieira & Palmer, 2018).

**Utilising Health Facilities & Services**

Corporate wellness research and best practice show that health and wellness initiatives are most
successful when connected to the organisational identity, given organisational symbolism and
incorporated with a strong communication strategy (Aldana et al., 2012; Dailey & Zhu, 2017).

From a POS perspective, “organisational identity focusses on ways that organisations direct their
collective power and energy toward the flourishing of their stakeholders (Dutton & Sonnenshein, 2008)
and the community and environment (Ruepert et al., 2016) they operate in” (Coulson, 2019, p.4).
Organisational symbols (Figure 3.) “can be functional (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994) or expressive (Ashforth, 1985). When they are collectively shared (communicated), they can create a common sense of organisational identity and reality and focus” (Coulson, 2019, p.5).

Through the POS and POB lens, effective communication strategies include at least three means of communication (visual offline or online, audible, and interactive) and are repeated a minimum of seven times (Quirke, 2017). Communication can spread knowledge, generate understanding, overcome isolation, improve problem-solving and enable coordination. The delivery through communication technology (like tracking apps or performance or challenges, or games) can enable, pool intelligence, speed activities, conquer distances, and expand networks (Browning, Morris & Kee, 2012).

Figure 3: Organisational (cultural) Symbolism, designed by Coulson (2019)

Additionally, it is crucial to get employee involvement in creating health and well-being offers to increase engagement, create an internal word of mouth marketing for the offers and to recruit multi hierarchy influencers (ambassadors) (Keller & Fay, 2016). Research suggests that employees will engage and work more productive when they believe that they are in control of their work (activities), receive feedback on their performance (tracking, gaming, challenges, competitions), are given meaningful activities, and are rewarded and appreciated. (Posthuma, Campion, Masimova, & Campion, 2013)

Practice shows that employee ambassadors (influencers) are the most successful tools to promote the initiatives and corporate mission statements to promote employee health and well-being (Markey et al., 2018). Creating employee wellness offers for a cross-cultural employee base could additionally cause
religious and traditional as well as labour law challenges (Nadeem et al., 2018). We would, therefore, suggest to the C-Suite to:

- Incorporate the promotion of a healthy workforce into the corporate mission statement followed up by an internal communication strategy tailored to all leadership levels. (structural level). Review HR complimentary vendor cooperation options and services (Health care provider newsletters, sponsored regional or international challenges) (Bray & Bray, 2012).
- Create a global corporate wellness brand and marketing strategy under the global human resource department with regional authority for initiatives, management of resources, rewards and event planning. (organisational level) (Stephano & Edelheit, 2012).
- Create local employee committees and task forces to implement the health and fitness offers, that are relevant and motivating to the regional workforce and customised to the employee and organisational resources. Emphasising on a choice catalogue that includes cardiovascular, strength and mindfulness exercises (James & Zoller, 2018). (individual level)

While financial rewards for participation in health and wellness activities have been common practice for the last several years of corporate wellness program planning (especially in the US), experience shows that they don’t create sustainable mindset or habit change (Chao, Visaria, Mukhopadhyay & Dehejia, 2017). Instead, research shows that creating a group dynamic and subtle peer pressure, additional to employee ownership, influencers and buy-in, can create cultures of health even in highly stressful work environments (Edmunds & Clow 2016).

**Preventing unethical or illegal employee practices**

Different financial markets have different laws, and many grey spaces are not in detail regulated by the law. Unethical behaviour can happen out of greed for a larger bonus (Deckop, Giacalone & Jurkewicz, 2015), to speed up career advances, under perceived peer pressure or a company culture that maximises short-term profits (Cruver, 2002), combined with a lack of self-regulation and locus of control through stress and ego depletion (Baumeister, Bratslavsky & Muraven, 2018). It can also be caused by a lack of information, awareness, mindfulness, and staff education, or a lack of quality control and management diligence (Treviso & Nelson, 2016). To change individual behaviour or increase positive individual attributes and positive ethics on employee and management levels there has to be a mindful organisational structure in place.

In line “with the POS focus on positively deviant leadership (Haskins, 2018), mindful organising includes social processes that promote the performance of high-reliability organisations (HROs) (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Agwu, Labib & Hadleigh-Dunn, 2019)” (Coulson 2019, p. 8)

“Mindful organising (Vogus, 2011) processes cultivate stakeholders collective ability to act with wisdom and compassion, be present and mindful at work, to notice unexpected events (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011) and correct errors (Brummins, 2017), leading to increased work ethic, a lower work waste, workplace safety (Enya, Dempsey & Pillay, 2018), and well-being (Morganson, Rotch & Christie, 2015)” (Coulson 2019, p. 8). (see figure 4)
Within the POB literature, positive ethics are actions by employees and leadership that are positively deviant (Spreitzer & Sonenshein, 2004) and are perceived as morally praiseworthy. Kidder & McLeod (2005), describe positive ethics as “moral courage”. “A person who is courageous in the face of ethical challenges does the right thing even if it’s not popular, refuses to stand idly by while others engage in unethical or harmful behaviour, and will not sacrifice aspirations when confronted by academic or ethical setbacks.” (Kidder & McLeod, 2005, p.2)

Ethics at work on an organisational level can be achieved through increased employee and leadership growth and development efforts (Kangas et al., 2018) and produce best results if aligned with the organisational mission, goals, overarching values and strategies (Salas & Weaver, 2016).

Regular and strategic access to training and development opportunities (Hammond & Churchill, 2018) has shown to lead to employee motivation, job satisfaction, higher work-life balance, greater organisational commitment, less emotional exhaustion leading to lower turnover intentions, increased organisational effectiveness ethics and quality of work, and greater overall well-being. (Grawitch, Trares & Kohler 2007).

At Aveoca we propose to implement microlearning additionally to the existing growth and development program, to re-enforce company policy, positive ethic behavioural patterns and company values. Microlearning is a short-form learning tool that is meeting target learning and business needs, that can be implemented in high frequency (penetrating the subconscious mind) (Kump, Moskaliuk, Cress &
Kimmerle, 2015), without disrupting the flow of the business, while improving retention and application (Jomah, Masoud, Kishore & Aurelia, 2016; Emerson & Berge, 2018). These microlearning sessions can be implemented in different audible and visual or interactive forms and can be delivered through online or offline communication tools. The strategy should include skill delivery sessions in organisational policy (structural level), sharing best practices, feedback and team success stories in dealing with ethically difficult situations (organisational level), as well as short individual or group mentoring, and coaching calls (individual level) including character strength exercises (Linkins, Niemiec, Gillham & Mayerson, 2015) in “moral courage” (Worline, 2012), and self-assessments scales in money ethics (Tang, 1995), money attitude (Klontz, Britt, Mentzer & Klontz, 2011) or money beliefs and behavior (Furnham, 1996).

Together with the increased efforts in mindful organising and creating a positive organisational identity, reinforced values through organisational symbolism, positive communication and training as well as increased employee involvement to promote life-work balance and physical and mental re-creation we believe we can address all of Aveoca’s concerns on multiple levels.

Conclusion

In high demand, information overload, and high stake working environments like Aveoca, we would reduce initiatives that increase the demand on time and energy (Hakanen, Schaufeli, & Ahola, 2008) on individuals and focus on changing the environment and organisational scholarship instead. We would aim for implementing nudges (Tawse, Patrick, & Vera, 2019) and more default options as adding more choice options could lead to not making choices at all (Schwartz, 2004) and increased ego-depletion, that could lead to increased unethical behaviour and unhealthy work-life balance choices (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, & Muraven, 2018). Our strategy is based on reducing perceived demand on the individual, increase personal contact and relationships (Ahola et. al., 2014) within a highly digitalised environment and increasing the perceived support from the organization to increase retention, job satisfaction, organisational integrity and subjective-well-being (Rezaei, 2019, Alleyne, Hudaib & Haniffa, 2018; Kim, Moon & Shin, 2018)