

Wellbeing in the Workplace



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Wellbeing refers to the overall state of being happy, healthy and content, both mentally and physically. It encompasses various elements such as physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing, social connections, and a sense of purpose and fulfillment in life.

At the Sustainable Business Network, we use a model for understanding health from Māori – the concept of ‘te whare tapa whā’ – created by Professor Mason Durie. The model describes health and wellbeing as a wharenuī/ meeting house with four walls, and a connection to the land forming the foundation. When these things are in balance, we thrive. When one or more of these is out of balance, wellbeing is impacted.

As we spend large proportions of our lives at work, being cognisant of wellbeing in this context is essential. Creating a healthy, safe and productive workplace is the foundation for long-term business success

Employee wellbeing is crucial for many reasons, including:

- **Productivity:** Physical health contributes to sustained energy levels, while mental wellbeing can enhance focus, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.
- **Engagement:** Employees who feel supported in their overall wellbeing are more likely to be engaged in their work. This can lead to higher levels of commitment and loyalty to an organisation.
- **Retention:** Employees are more likely to stay with an organisation that values their health and happiness, reducing turnover costs.
- **Collaboration and team dynamics:** Employees are more likely to work well together when they feel good about themselves and their work environment.



- **Reduced stress and burnout:** Initiatives such as flexible work arrangements and mental health support can help prevent burnout.
- **Legal and ethical considerations:** Neglecting employee health and safety can lead to legal consequences and damage to an organisation's reputation.

It's not the number of hours your staff are present in the workplace that determines their contribution to your business, it's how motivated your staff are when they are there. And, while human motivation might be a complex topic, it's clear that being healthy, safe, and feeling valued as a person (not just a worker) are strong components.

How can I create a healthy, safe and productive workplace?

There are many ways to create a work environment where your staff feel safe, valued and content.

Good employment practices and wellbeing initiatives might include:

- **Health and wellness programmes:** Options include fitness programmes, health screenings, and wellness challenges.
- **Flexible work arrangements:** Flexibility around work hours and locations has become standard practice for many workplaces. Generous leave entitlements, including maternity and paternity leave, as well as time for study or professional development, are also being offered more frequently.
- **Mental health support:** Access to mental health resources, counselling services, and stress management programmes.
- **Training and development:** Support for employees to develop their skills and advance their careers. This can contribute to a sense of purpose and achievement.



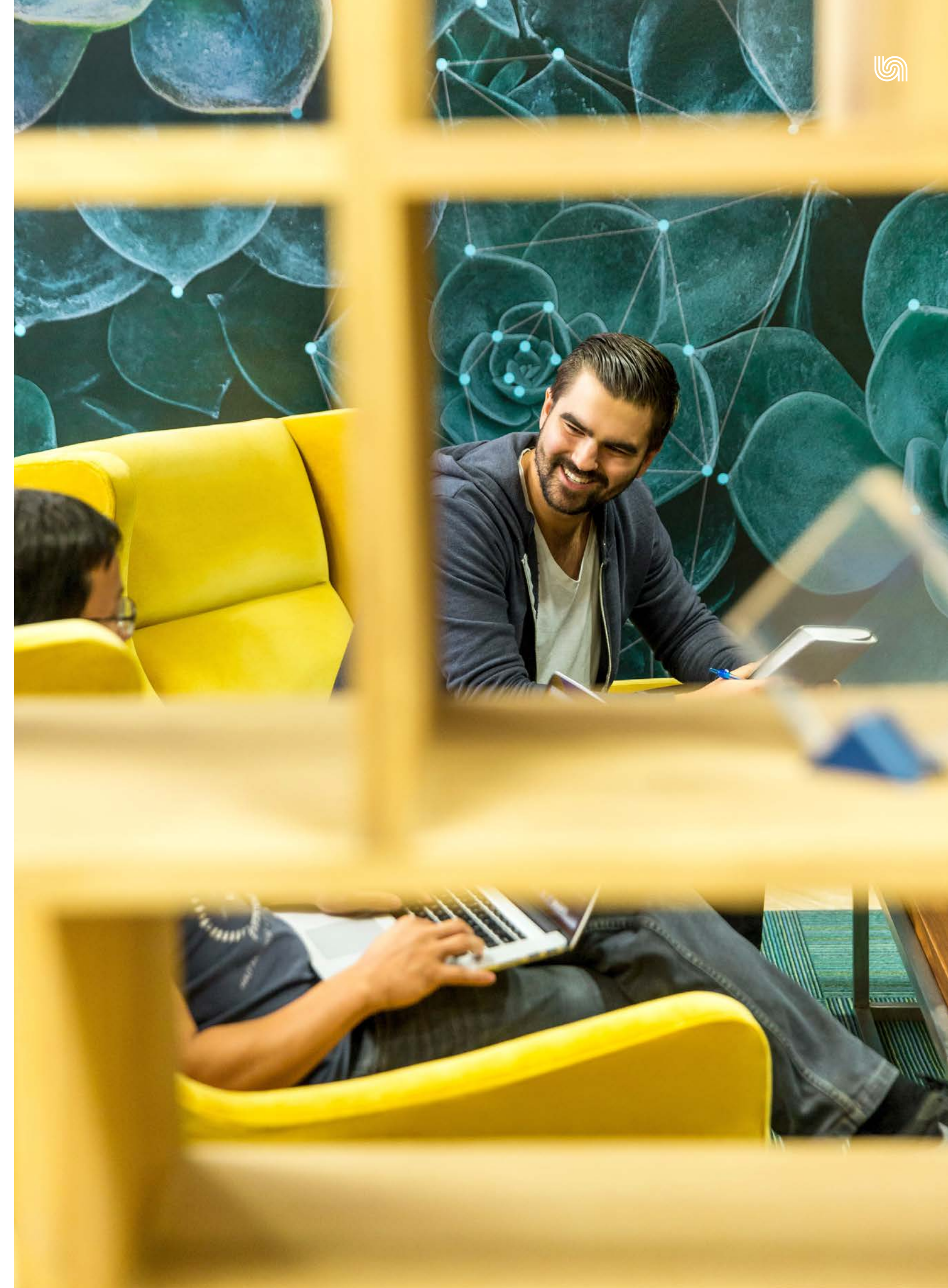
Policy & practice

It's one thing to create a policy for your workplace – whether for health and safety, work-life balance, or professional development – and another thing to consistently live those policies in practice. Indeed, creating a culture that supports the principles within the policies might be the most difficult – and valuable – challenge you experience when supporting your team.

Operating at a principles level, rather than a detailed prescriptive level, may be the best place to start. Confirm principles, be clear about the intentions behind a given policy, and allow team members as much flexibility as is feasible to make it work for them.

Include your staff when creating policies and ask for feedback once they've been put in place. This will help to ensure your policies are effective. It's also just as important to retire policies that no longer serve their purpose.

Always strive towards creating an environment where team members are trusted, so they can contribute their perspectives without fear of being slighted, ignored or disadvantaged. The best workplaces of all are FUN ones! You can seek out professional advice on activities and attitudes that can foster a healthy organisational culture, from organisations like [Capability Group](#).





Community involvement

As a business owner, or manager, you are responsible for negotiating entitlements and expectations between the business and your team members. But, you are also a broker between your team members and society. It is increasingly common for team members to be given a day or two per year to contribute their skills and expertise – or even just their presence – in ways that benefit society.



Some businesses close branches nationwide on the same day so staff can volunteer on projects around the country. Others leave it up to individuals or teams to nominate a day and activity. These activities benefit both the community, and the wellbeing of your employees.

Examples of social activities include running marketing or financial planning workshops in the not-for-profit sector and volunteering for charity work or community events. Environmental activities might include beach clean-ups with organisations like Sustainable Coastlines and planting days with SBN’s regeneration projects.

Ideally, from a whole business perspective, these contributions to society are an opportunity to play a role in addressing or solving some of the problems that have relevance to your business – whether that’s place-based (e.g. financial literacy and school funding in your staff’s communities) or theme-based (e.g. cleaning up waterways that your business draws water from). Alternatively, you might place the emphasis on finding

opportunities that fit with the skills and interests of individual staff members.

Be careful to manage expectations of all people involved – both in the community sector and your business. Everyone should understand the aims, objectives and the level of commitment involved.

Below is the SBN policy for Community Involvement that you can use as an example when developing your own.

Aim	To identify and participate in at least one practical community-based activity each year, for the wellbeing of the local community as well as SBN staff.
Actions	Staff will receive a paid day off to attend a riparian/tree planting session.
Record & report impact	This activity will be recorded using images and a brief story describing the event including location, participants, number of trees planted and photos. Staff will give feedback on this session as part of their annual Staff Survey.
Personal action	"This year I will attend an SBN regeneration project planting day, as a health and safety volunteer."

Resources

Employment New Zealand

Employment New Zealand has more information on many of the topics we've covered in its Workplace Policies section. Among other topics, you can find some great introductory resources on work-life balance and employee performance.

Worksafe

Worksafe is the government body responsible for monitoring and improving workplace health and safety within Aotearoa New Zealand. It has released SafePlus, a voluntary health and safety performance improvement toolkit.

Diversity Works

Diversity Works NZ is a national membership organisation. Its mandate is to help businesses develop more diverse and inclusive workplaces, and to reap the rewards of that diversity. It hosts the annual Diversity Awards and has a range of resources.

Mental Health Foundation

Mental Health Foundation has a range of resources to support mental health in particular, in the context of both work and home.



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