

Let's talk about Whistleblowing

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The problem

The handling of whistleblowers by organisations doesn't always produce a successful outcome for either the whistleblower or the organisation.

There is, possibly, a small proportion of whistleblowers who speak out for their own purposes. They make the genuine whistleblower's life a misery.

Genuine whistleblowers are highly likely to speak out because they must; their intentions are often to put right something they see as being wrong; and their personal values make them disregard fearing the consequences of blowing the whistle.

However, the consequences can be dire.

It is not uncommon for whistleblowers to be treated so badly that their careers end abruptly or are blighted for long periods. They may, also, become ill with the stress created by the way in which the whistleblower's message is handled, and the intense focus on the whistleblower that whistleblowing attracts.

When the organisation doesn't react positively, and explore the issues raised, the situation can become intimidating for the whistleblower; the organisation loses the potential opportunity for improvement, and the whistleblower runs the risk of losing a career, and everything that goes with that, such as relationships, reputation, opportunities to work and income.

It needn't be like this.

Incubating whistleblowing

The features of organisations that accompany a whistleblowing situation, are shown, in the table below, alongside the features of organisations where whistleblowing is unnecessary.

	Incubating whistleblowing	Encouraging openness
Context of the event Culture Tone Climate	Hostile to the workforce; restrictive controls over the workforce; people live in fear of speaking out. They speak out to a third party – the media, for example.	Positive; triggers psychological wellbeing in the workforce; expects contributions to future success of organisation
Reaction by the organisation to a whistleblower	Rejective; dismisses observations	Receptive; explores observations
Reaction of the whistleblower	Stress	Achievement
Action by the organisation	Defensive	Positive; triggers remedial action and prevention activities.

Whistleblowing doesn't exist:

- if the workforce is encouraged and expected to speak out about anything that might improve the success of the organization;
- when leaders and managers are positive and active about whatever observations are made;
- in organisations that have eliminated blame or fear from the tone, climate or culture that influences everything;
- when leaders and managers recognise that the success of their organisation depends on the workforce feeling psychologically well, strongly motivated and with a positive attitude towards them;
- when leaders and managers recognise that they don't know best, aren't the heroic leaders, and listen to their workforce.

What needs to change?

The big change, which is essential, is the elimination of fear – the fear of the consequences of saying or doing something that might place a job at risk or create an atmosphere that is intimidating and threatening. Fear is endemic in organisations. Even those who say they are not fearful, frequently reveal their reticence at speaking out about the inappropriate actions and behaviours of others at work.

Introducing a different climate and culture into organisations is challenging, and some would say, too difficult.

Creating a new climate is about creating a new 'normal'.

It is an organisation development matter attached to leader and manager development. It is a transforming approach that's required, and that involves the top people, if it is going to work.

What needs to change is a basic understanding that the combined intelligence of the workforce is greater than the combined intelligence of its leaders and managers. Simply because leaders and managers are in a 'power' position in relation to the workforce doesn't mean the exercise of that 'power' should inhibit the processes needed to attain strong social engagement between the workforce, its work and organisation. The type of engagement requires places an expectation on the workforce to openly contribute to the future success of the organisation by speaking out when improvements can be made. The exercise of 'power' and achieving engagement should not be in conflict.

Whistleblowers are often disengaged from their leaders and managers, but highly engaged in their work. It is the dis-engagement between leaders, managers and their workforce that needs changing, whilst retaining the high degree of engagement with work.

Here's what you need to do...

You need a framework within which the attitudes of leaders and managers can be reinforced to focus on the psychological needs of individuals in the workforce.

It is the triggers to achieve psychological wellbeing at work that eliminate the need for anyone to blow the whistle.

If people at work feel psychologically well, are suitably motivated, and able to concentrate, they will improve the productivity and performance of the organisation, as well as improve their own performance.

A central part of the process, and a significant trigger in provoking individual psychological wellbeing, is for individuals to feel they 'own' the organisation and 'own' their working contribution to its success.

The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda

The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda is the framework that helps organisations develop, and leaders and managers understand, and apply, the skills needed to secure success (however that is defined in each case), by focusing on the psychological wellbeing of the workforce.

If individuals feel psychologically well – clear mind, in control of their actions, and able to make choices without fear – they have the opportunity to perform at their peak. The organisation needs to give individuals the opportunity, and to turn the opportunity into high productivity by creating the conditions in which individuals thrive. The elements in The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda provide leaders and managers with the triggers to help individuals thrive at work.

The ways in which the agenda helps is by setting out the systemic approach to climate change in organisations.

The aims of the WellBeing and Performance Agenda are to:

- a) Eradicate a climate of fear, and
- b) Eradicate the routine causes of stress, by
- c) Create the conditions for people to thrive, and
- d) Create the conditions for people to concentrate, be motivated with positive attitudes, and to perform at their peak because they want to.

There are two key principles underpinning the Agenda.

Psychological Responsibility – is the responsibility that individuals must maintain their own psychological wellbeing, and to do no psychological harm to anyone else.

The implication of this is that leaders and managers must encourage the workforce to speak out when any individual feels their psychological wellbeing is compromised in any way. This only happens when individuals trust their leaders and managers to guarantee there is never an adverse consequence for speaking out about their health.

There are sound economic reasons for psychological responsibility. They are the prevention of psychological presenteeism – people coming to work in body but not in mind. Psychological presenteeism accounts for huge resource losses because of low productivity and under performance. When individuals feel able to speak out about their health, it reduces the losses attributable to

psychological presenteeism. Further reduction in losses, and increases in performance and productivity, arise from implementing the remainder of The Wellbeing and Performance Agenda.

Sharing Responsibility for the Future Success of the Organisation – is the responsibility that leaders and managers place on everyone in the workforce to actively share responsibility for the organisation’s, or team’s, future success.

The implication of this is that each person is expected to speak out about any ideas, or observations, or critiques, about any aspect of the organisation they believe could be improved to make the organisation more successful tomorrow compared with today. Each member of the workforce is expected to have ideas for improvements, not simply making observations about deficiencies.

The rationale is that the combined intelligence of the workforce is greater than that of its leaders and managers. Therefore, the workforce will have the answers in relation to improving processes, relationships, approaches and other matters relevant to future success.



Psychological Responsibility and Sharing Responsibility rely on the workforce speaking out to their leaders and managers about potentially sensitive matters in the interests of making the organisation and its workforce more successful and more productive in the future. This eradicates the need for whistleblowing.

Leadership

It takes a special type of leadership to achieve great success.

Adaptive Leadership is a process of leadership based on the principle of sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation amongst the entire workforce.

The process doesn't detract from individual leaders and managers remaining in authoritative positions and being held to account.

What it means is that the workforce provides greater help to leaders and managers in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. When the workforce feel it 'owns' the organisation, it ensures it moves from strength to strength. Leaders and managers effectively act as agents for the workforce.

Whistleblowing R.I.P.

Many organisations need to transform themselves into 'fabulous and high performing places to work' in order to eliminate the prospect of individuals blowing the whistle on something.

Some organisations are more vulnerable to whistleblowers than others, because of the ethical requirements of people working in the organisation. It is when the values of individuals, influenced by their ethics, are compromised that whistleblowing becomes a possibility, but only in situations where trust between the employee and the leaders and managers doesn't exist.

The creation of a positive working environment, based on the WellBeing and Performance Agenda, and adopting Adaptive Leadership to make it happen, will eliminate the need for individuals to follow their conscience and blow the whistle, as they will be expected to constantly contribute their ideas, observations and suggestions for making tomorrow more successful than today.

About MAS

Our work focuses on the prevention of stress at work. Why? Stress costs and inhibits performance!

There are three interlocking features that prevent stress at work –

- Creating and sustaining a culture and environment where managers and workforce are fully engaged with the organisation and are *provoked into peak performance*.
- Leaders and managers exhibiting the behaviours that encourage commitment, trust and engagement which will *provoke peak performance in others*.
- Building and sustaining personal resilience against challenging situations which will *provoke peak performance in individuals*.

Our purpose is to help organisations achieve peak performance and productivity; to strengthen corporate and personal resilience and to prevent stress from occurring in the first place;

Our approach is to help organisations establish psychologically healthy workplaces by facilitating the implementation of our WellBeing and Performance Agenda framework.

Our services include consultancy; applied organisation health psychology; facilitation; assessments; cultural change; leadership and team development, tailored interventions, and one-to-one coaching.

Our programmes include topics such as:

- The WellBeing and Performance Agenda
- Creating a Culture for Wellbeing and Performance
- Adaptive Leadership – Leadership Development Programme
- The Manager’s Role in Resilience
- Team Resilience
- The Manager’s Role in Stress Prevention
- Strengthening Personal Resilience,
- Psychological Responsibility
- Brief Mindfulness
- Train-the-Trainer versions of our Resilience Programmes

Our Products:

Personal Resilience ELearning

An in-depth programme designed to strengthen personal resilience. The programme could be branded for you and made available to your clients and/or for your own workforce.

<http://www.mas.org.uk/personal-resilience-elearning-programme.html>



Derek Mowbray's Guides – innovative, practical resources

- The Guide to the WellBeing and Performance Agenda
- The Guide to Corporate Resilience
- The Guide to Adaptive Leadership
- The Guide to Psychological Responsibility
- The Guide to The Manager's Role in Resilience
- The Guide to Personal Resilience
- The Guide to the Manager's Role in Stress Prevention
- The Guide to Team Resilience

The Guides can be branded and discounted for bulk purchase.

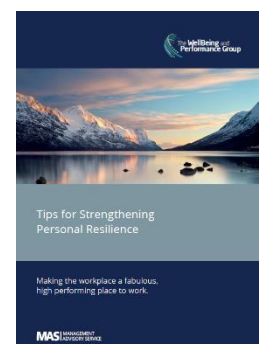
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Tips Booklets

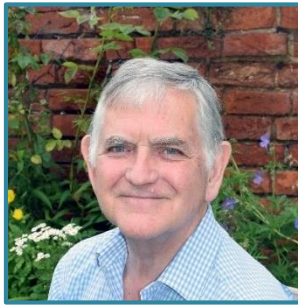
We have an extensive range of high quality tips booklets which make great giveaways to accompany wellbeing initiatives. These could be branded for you.

- Tips for Personal Resilience
- Tips for the Manager's Role in Resilience
- Tips for Fabulous Managers
- Tips for Introducing Adaptive Leadership
- Tips for Taking Psychological Responsibility
- Tips for Creating a Culture of Sharing Responsibility for the Future Success of the Organisation



For details about our products and services, email Barbara.leigh@mas.org.uk or call 01242 241882

About Derek Mowbray



Derek Mowbray BA., MSc., MSc(Econ)., PhD., DipPsych., CPsychol., CSci., FBPsS, FIHM., FISMA..

Derek Mowbray is a Chartered Psychologist and Chartered Scientist, with a doctorate in the psychology of leadership.

Derek specialises in the primary prevention of psychological distress. His work approaches and interventions are well recognised and adopted throughout the UK and beyond. His work in the stress prevention field focuses on the problems at work that may trigger adverse reactions in people, causing them to feel unwell and under intense pressure resulting in under performance. His approach is to use positive psychology to help organisations create and sustain **‘the workplace as a fabulous and high performing place to work’**.

He is an expert in organisation health psychology, which aims to harmonise the relationship between organisations, their leaders and their workforce, with a particular focus on the impact of leaders on followers, their impact on stress, and their positive influence on corporate and personal performance.

He is the architect of **The WellBeing and Performance Agenda**, a framework for helping organisations transform into ‘fabulous and high performing places to work’. He is the originator of **Psychological Responsibility**, which places on the individual a responsibility for feeling psychologically well, and to speak out when necessary, as well as a responsibility to do no psychological harm to others. He is, also, a sponsor of the concept of **‘sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation’** as a principle underpinning organisational success and high achievement.

Derek draws on his personal experiences as a chief executive of several organisations in the public and private sectors in his earlier working life, along with his academic and research experience in organisations, leadership and stress, together with his own continuing experience as a business entrepreneur.

Derek acts as trusted advisor to organisations, expert consultant and facilitator, workshop and seminar leader, and is well known as an inspirational and motivational speaker.

Derek’s mission is to ensure individuals have a fabulous experience from work and the workplace.