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ENGAGING TEAM MEMBERS THROUGH ACTIVATED MANAGERS: MANAGERS' INFLUENCE ON WELL-BEING

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Employers are faced with the challenge of increasing engagement in well-being offerings. One often overlooked component of increasing engagement is the manager. A growing body of research indicates that managers account for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement.^{1,2}

Managers on the Move is a highly interactive, day-long workshop designed to underscore manager's critical role in promoting multiple domains of well-being within their teams. The workshop emphasizes, that regardless of what is happening in the rest of the organization, each manager has the capacity to create an oasis of well-being within their team by taking three simple steps to become "multipliers" of well-being.

- Do—Embody well-being and lead by example.
- Speak—Persuade team members to join through explicit and effective communication.
- Create—Optimize the environment and design systems to develop an infrastructure to make well-being easy and "normal."

A mixed-method sequential approach is currently being used to evaluate the workshop's effectiveness. Qualitative feedback is captured at the end of each workshop from all participants who are prompted with open-ended questions such as, "What did you love?" and "What would you change?" In addition, several objective self-report measures are being administered to managers, and where

possible team members of the participating managers, before the workshop and 3 to 6 months after workshop attendance. To date, matched pre- and post-data are available for 251 participating managers (mean age = 45.7 years; 49% female) and 242 team members (mean age 41.8 years; mean years of employment at the organization = 9.1).

Measures administered to managers assessed productivity (Well-Being Assessment for Productivity (WBA-P)),³ engagement (Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9)),⁴ and well-being (i.e., Cantril's Self-Anchoring Striving Scale).⁵ In addition, managers responded to a 27-item assessment of the extent to which they were engaging in behaviors that are indicative of doing, speaking, and creating. Responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=never to 5=always. Alphas for each subscale range from .73-.79. A sample item from the Do subscale is, "I take time to do things that restore my energy." Team members complete the productivity, engagement, and well-being assessments, as well as the items from the "Do" subscale (i.e., are they engaging in behaviors that embody well-being?).

Among the managers overall, we saw very dramatic effects, including 66% reporting increased productivity, 50% reporting higher engagement, and 37% moving from struggling or suffering to thriving. Specifically, we saw statistically significant decreases in productivity loss due to well-being related barriers at work ($t(246) = -3.7$, $p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = -0.22$) and personal well-being related barriers ($t(246) = -2.3$,

$p = .023$; $d = -0.11$) at post-assessment—translating to a small effect ($d = .26-.30$) for presenteeism (see Figure 1).

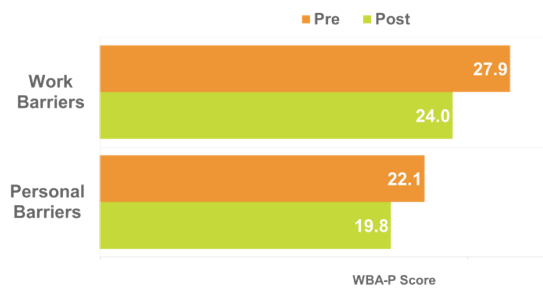


Figure 1. Managers report higher productivity at post-test

At pre-test, approximately 49% of participating managers reported low or average engagement. Among those, 24% were classified as “highly engaged” on the Utrecht at follow-up. We also saw substantial increases in well-being. At pre-test, 40.6% of managers were classified as struggling or suffering. Thirty-seven percent of them reported that they were thriving 3 to 6 months after participating in the workshop. Finally, we also saw statistically significant improvements in each domain of managerial influence (do, speak, and create), with effect sizes ranging from $d = .29$ to $d = .42$ (Figure 2).

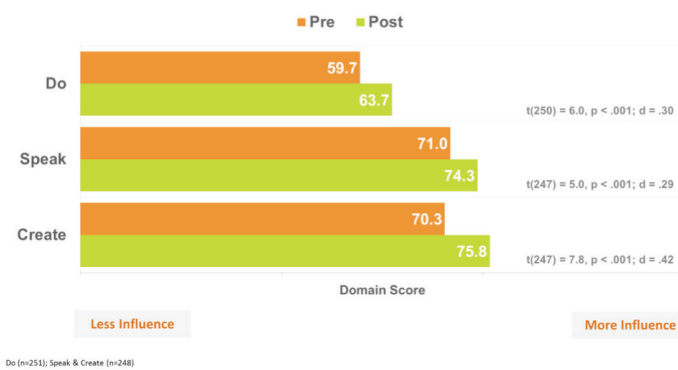


Figure 2. Managers are doing, speaking, and creating

We also saw encouraging results among the team members of participating managers. Although the differences were not significant, there was a reduction in both work and personal barriers to well-being, resulting in higher productivity.

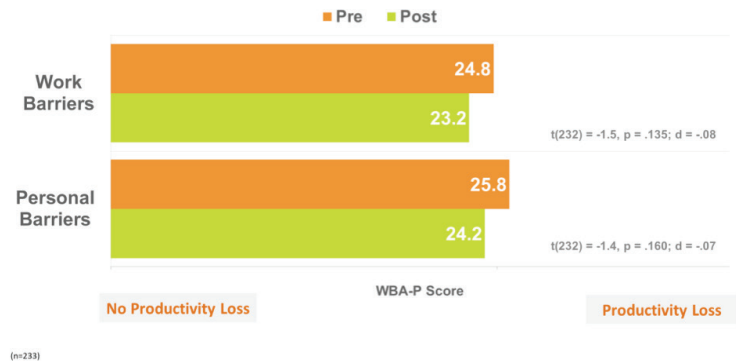


Figure 3. Team-member productivity

Among the 64% of team members who reported low or average engagement at pre-test, 15% reported being highly engaged at follow-up. Approximately 50% of the team members were struggling or suffering at baseline. Thirty-three percent moved to thriving at follow-up. Though the difference from pre- to post-test on the “Do” subscale items was not significant, about 25% of team members reported increases in healthy eating, exercise, self-care, sleeping, and feeling grateful.

While additional longitudinal data are needed, these results suggest that robust manager-led initiatives have the potential to create a movement in an organization—a movement that not only enhances the well-being of managers and team members, but also contributes to important organizational outcomes, such as engagement and productivity.

This collaborative initiative is an example of the power of iteration leading to innovation. In addition to making revisions to the workshop, the assessment for Managers on the Move has been updated over time. It began as a lengthy paper survey that was eventually refined and implemented in Survey Monkey. The assessment process has now been further refined using available data. We have programmed it on a flexible software platform that will enable automatic

reminders to participants to complete the follow-up assessment, more streamlined aggregate reporting to participating organizations, and the addition of follow-up text messaging to participants. Such follow-up messages are one of many options being considered to contribute to the sustainability of the momentum that the Managers on the Move workshop creates. Other options include introducing solutions and programs via partners who can build on the movement (e.g., mindfulness platforms, financial well-being programs) and creating or reviving internal mechanisms to support the movement (e.g., book clubs, community service initiatives).

Our team invites you to join our effort to unlock the power of the manager as a linchpin in our multi-pronged efforts to enhance the well-being of our organizations. Keep us posted on your findings, and we'll do the same.

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