Making Work Better
An IWR Insights Report

**INSTITUTE
OF WELLBEING
& RESILIENCE™**

November 2024

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Contents

Introduction

Organisations are struggling to address the problems of burnout and overload that continue to impact the wellbeing and engagement of their people. Recent research, drawing on global data, found widespread overload and burnout, which disturbingly, was becoming an entrenched challenge across industries[1,2]. This untenable situation has produced a growing demand from workers and leaders for human sustainability—the concept of organisational responsibility for creating long-term value for people as human beings, protecting wellbeing and enabling development[2]. A dramatic increase in New Zealand's burnout risk in 2024 saw 50% of workers at risk of severe burnout in June, an ominous trend driven primarily by growing job insecurity[3]. Together, these findings reflect a growing consensus: we need new ways of working, not just new ways of coping with work.

Working with people leaders in New Zealand and Australia during 2023 and 2024 I observed their growing realisation that self-care and personal resilience were insufficient to address these problems. All too often, this came with a notable absence of energy and ideas for meaningful workplace change.

Determined to inspire workplace action this study set out to find real-world examples of organisations successfully making work better for their people. Through late 2023 and the first half of 2024 I conducted an online survey of NZ workers which confirmed the prevalence of similar workplace challenges and burnout risk.

The picture which emerged from the survey was of respondents struggling with burnout symptoms but sending a clear message about the skills they wanted their people leaders to develop—clarity, adaptability, accountability, and caring for staff wellbeing and development. Successful communication, flexibility, wellbeing and staff development initiatives were helping mitigate the worst effects of challenges in some workplaces but were not being uniformly adopted.

Following the survey, a cohort of organisations successfully making work better for their people were identified, spanning sectors, size, and ownership models. Through in-depth interviews, they shared the strategies, values, and practices they adopted to drive organisation transformation, become future-fit, and improve people wellbeing and organisation performance.

Five keys to progress emerged from analysis of these organisations, including both leadership skills and organisational practices. They provide practical, useable strategies, that offer hope and a roadmap for change to organisations wanting to improve employee wellbeing and organisation performance.

These five keys to progress are: driving workplace transformation through listening, transparency, and co-creating solutions; building a culture of care and support; finding new ways of working for a future-fit workplace; fostering purpose and belonging to enhance wellbeing and engagement; and growing future-fit leadership through empowerment, connection, and adaptability.

Finally, through discussions with these organisations, I observed aspirations for the future that signal changes in the criteria organisations are using to evaluate their success. These changing aspirations point to a new way of working where success is measured not only by business outcomes but also by the sustainable wellbeing of its people.

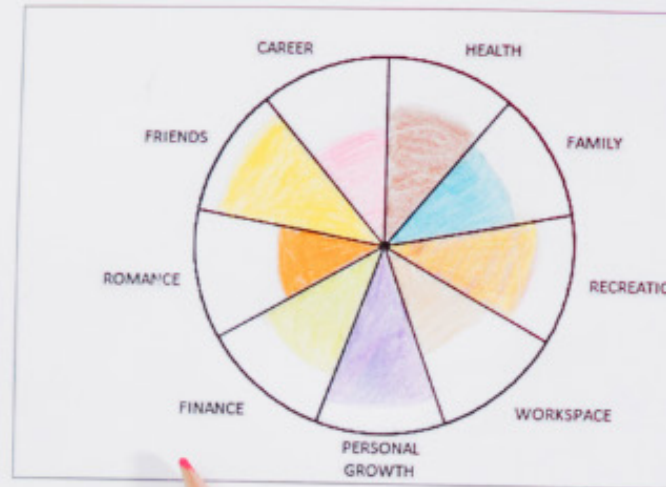May this report serve you as a blueprint for action.

Dr Denise Quinlan

> "
>
> *...we need new ways of working, not just new ways of coping with work.*
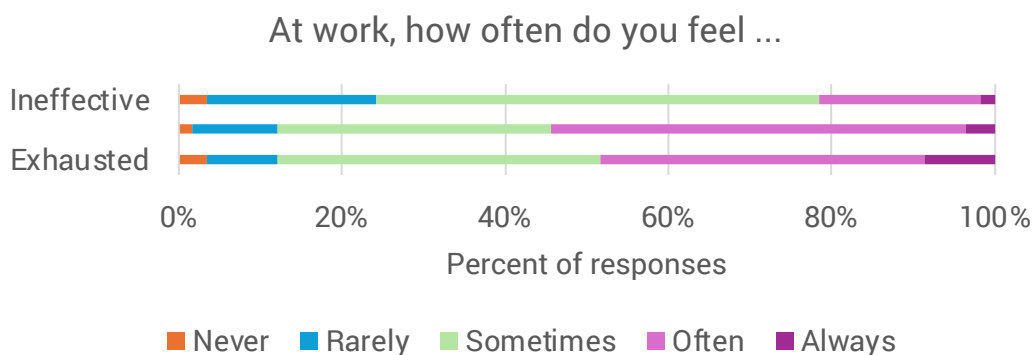
WORK – LIFE BALANCE

Workers are struggling but know what they want from their leaders

## Unsustainable workloads and burnout risk

Over 80% of respondents were enthusiastic about their work often or sometimes. Yet, they also reported feeling exhausted sometimes or often at work. Over 70% felt ineffective, with 20% feeling that way often or always. The exhaustion and ineffectiveness suggest that most of the respondents were at risk of burnout.

At work, how often do you feel …

Ineffective

Exhausted

Percent of responses

Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Many reported unsustainable and overwhelming workloads, confirming burnout risk. Over 20% reported their workloads were often unsustainable, while 36% reported feeling often or always overwhelmed by their workloads.

**Do you ever feel your workload is...**
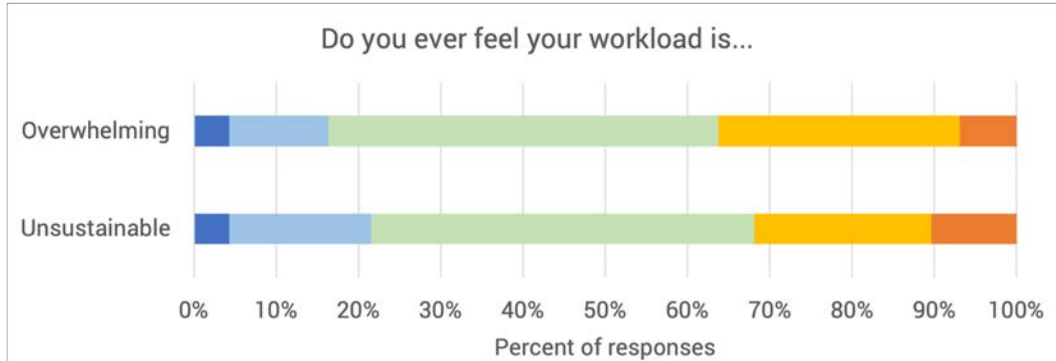
Challenges

Challenges around wellbeing, burnout, staffing, engagement, change and culture were expected to impact survey respondents' organisations in the next 12 months, to a moderate to significant degree. Innovation and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) challenges were expected to impact their businesses moderately. Hybrid work was expected to have only a minor to moderate impact, suggesting most respondents thought this challenge had already been addressed.

Together, Wellbeing and Burnout were the most significant challenges expected in the year ahead with Change and Culture close behind. Facing change was the largest extremely significant challenge. Change processes often increase uncertainty and stress, so even those designed to improve wellbeing and workload may first further undermine wellbeing and increase burnout.

Which of these challenges will have significant business impact for your organisation in the next 12-18 months?
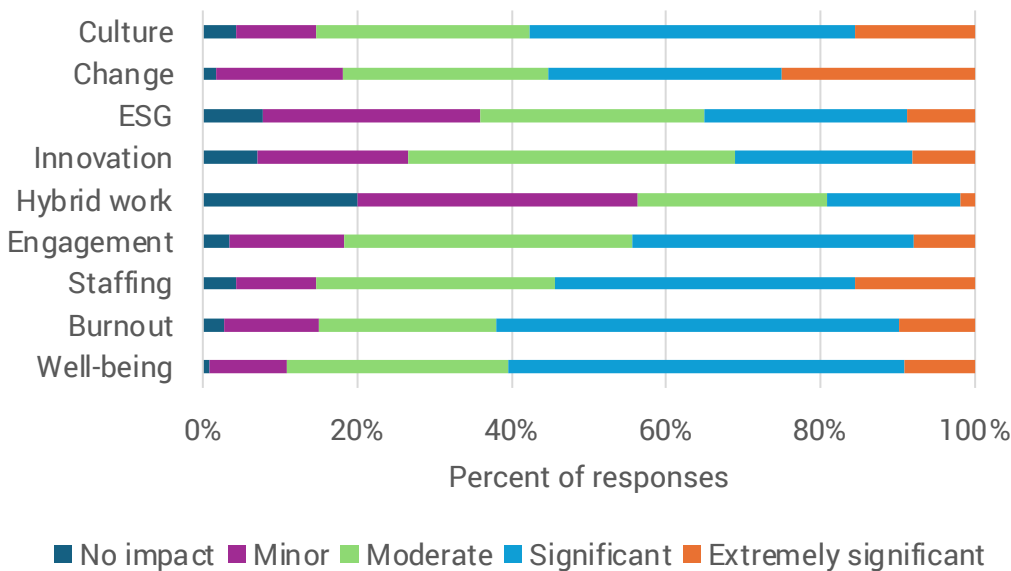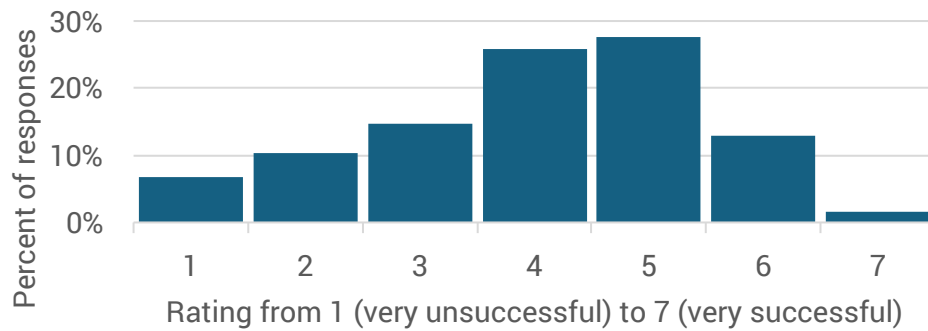
The scorecard so far – limited success

Encouragingly, more people viewed their organisations as successful in tackling challenges than not - however more than 25% sat at neutral.

Overall, how successful has your organisation been in addressing its people challenges over the past 12-18 months?


Half of the actions regarded as effective clustered around communication (including regular staff meetings, updates from leaders, transparency and 'real conversations'), leadership (approachability, empathy, listening and team building, rewarding success and managing poor performance), and business changes (restructuring, increased flexibility, acting on feedback, recruiting to address workload, and changing systems that 'cause more work'). Other actions related to professional development, engagement, specific hybrid and flexible work changes, and a range of wellbeing supports (including EAP provision, mental health programmes and leave, and resilience workshops).

Survey respondents viewed actions oriented around communication, development, flexibility, and wellbeing as most effective.

What actions have had the most positive impact in addressing these challenges?
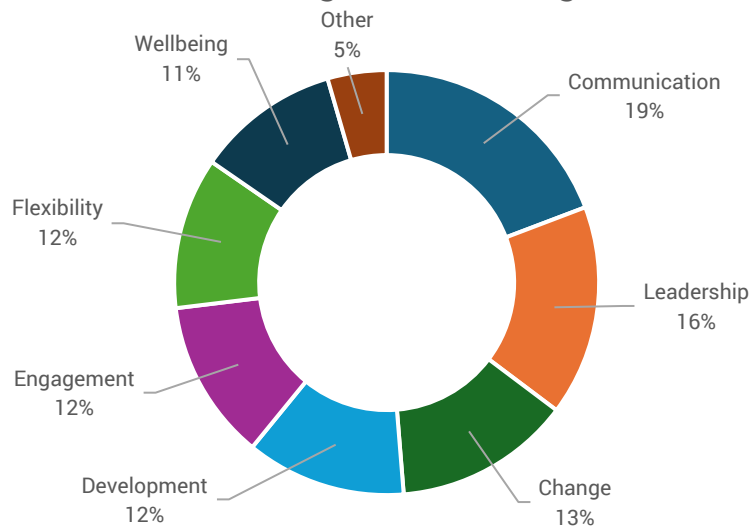
Skills for people leaders to develop

In open text survey responses a loud and clear demand came through for leaders to become more skilled at open, transparent and honest communication, including listening to understand staff needs, and 'having the hard conversations'. They wanted people leaders who can prioritise and make decisions effectively, provide clarity and support, manage conflict and ensure accountability. Expecting challenging times ahead, respondents wanted adaptable and resilient leaders who can respond effectively to uncertainty and changing circumstances.
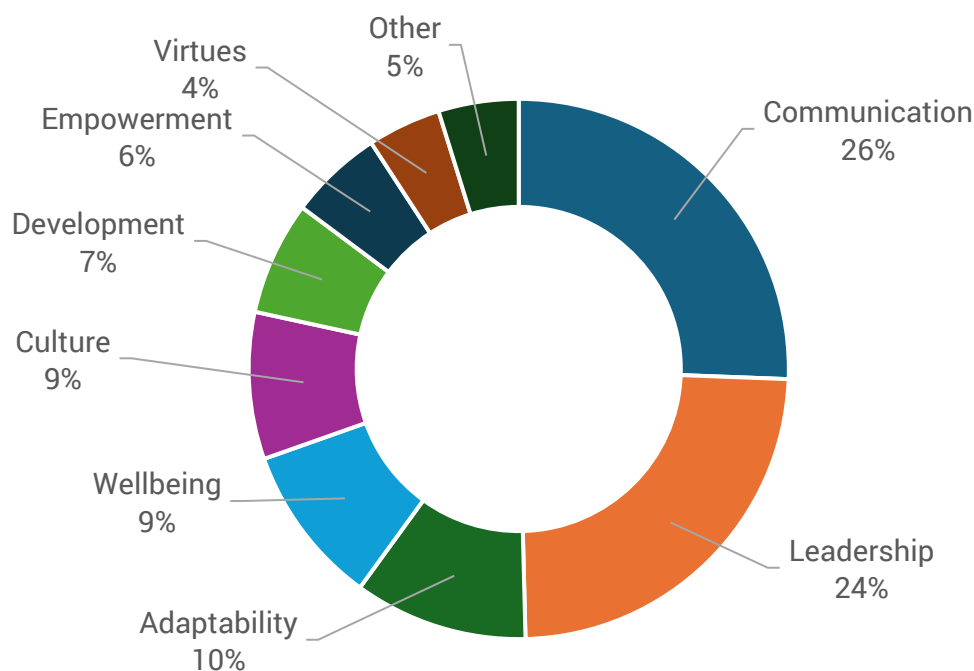
Staff reporting higher burnout were more likely to want skills in their leaders to address wellbeing challenges (including burnout, workload, mental health support), and for them to acknowledge good work.

Respondents wanted leaders with better skills to build inclusivity and psychological safety in their work environment. People also wanted leaders able to prioritise staff development and growth.

The impact on staff of leaders' personal qualities and capacities was reflected in requests for emotional intelligence and strengths of character or virtues in leaders. In particular they specified justice, trust, curiosity, humility, integrity, courage, compassion, patience, confidence and a positive attitude.

What skills do your people leaders most need to develop to successfully address these challenges?

Virtues 4%
Empowerment 6%
Development 7%
Culture 9%
Wellbeing 9%
Adaptability 10%
Other 5%
Communication 26%
Leadership 24%

Where organisations were rated as unsuccessful in addressing challenges, support for wellbeing, open and honest communication, listening to ideas and collaboration, were more likely to feature in the skills wanted in their people leaders.

Armed with this snapshot of workplace challenges, the strategies organisations were implementing to address them, and the leader skillsets staff believed were in short supply, we set out to find workplaces already making work better for their people. The next section shares their insights which address many of the issues raised in this survey.

Building better workplaces — five keys to progress

Organisations making work better for their people

This second part of this study set out to inspire workplace action by sharing real-world examples of organisations that are successfully making work better for their people. The insights from these companies reflect a shift in how effective businesses view their relationship with employees. The old adversarial dynamic has given way to a more collaborative approach, where employees are seen as central to organisational success.

A key part of this shift is recognising the intrinsic value of the people behind the work. These

organisations have committed to listening to employee concerns and taking meaningful action to support them. But it goes beyond simply addressing issues—employees are treated as partners, co-creating solutions that range from improving worker wellbeing to enhancing customer experience and aligning with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals.

This renewed understanding of employees acknowledges their need for connection to purpose and community, and the real limits of what

people can give before their health and personal lives are negatively impacted.

The organisations whose stories are shared here traverse a range of sectors including energy, banking, telecommunications, engineering consulting, digital design, construction, education, and insurance. They range from a small family-owned business with 60 employees to large companies employing over 5,000. Some are for-profit companies, while others are employee-owned, B-Corp certified, or state-owned.

Despite differences in size, resources, and stages of their wellbeing journey, all these organisations recognise that wellbeing is crucial to their future success. For some, staff shortages, increasing demands, and growing pressures from both environmental and legislative changes have elevated wellbeing to a strategic priority, complete with board-level support and dedicated budgets. These companies also understand that wellbeing is shaped not just by individual skills but by workplace structure, culture, and leadership.

These organisations are achieving success in areas like productivity, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and job satisfaction. Here are the five key changes they've made:

- Driving workplace transformation through listening, transparency, and co-design
- Building a culture of care and support
- New ways of working for a future-fit workplace
- Fostering purpose and belonging to enhance wellbeing and engagement
- Growing future-fit leadership through empowerment, connection, and adaptability

These themes do not however describe a sequence. While for many organisations, listening to staff concerns sparked action, in others, connection to purpose and building belonging drove development and change. These strategies intertwine and reinforce each other. Rather than 'one and done', they describe an upward spiral of growth, where listening is ongoing, responding to changing conditions.

1 Driving workplace transformation through listening, transparency, and co-design

The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns in New Zealand triggered a wellbeing crisis that employers could no longer ignore. The crisis sped up workplace changes, shining a spotlight on hybrid work, employee wellbeing, and the evolving dynamic between employers and employees, summarised by ASB as a change 'from a transactional to a relational culture'. While findings from our survey group showed that listening was not as widespread as many workers wished, the organisations in this group were definitely listening. They acknowledged the urgent need to adapt to the future of work, characterised by deep listening, transparent communication, and co-designing solutions with employees.

> " *...partnering with our people, listening and meeting them with the support they need.*

While no organisation claimed to have fully resolved these challenges, companies such as Mercury, ASB, Spark, Kiwibank, and Paperkite shared how listening to their staff became a valued part of operations. Feedback went beyond addressing employees' problems; their ideas on how to improve work processes and deliver better customer outcomes has become an integral part of operations.

Kiwibank, for instance, engaged 2,200 of its 2,700 staff to create a new staff-focused purpose statement, continuing to track progress through listening tools. Mercury's engagement surveys focus on transparency, collaboration, and purpose-driven goals, with staff regularly sharing feedback. During the pandemic, Mercury also introduced weekly "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) sessions. Connecting leaders and people online, these sessions fostered increased trust and remain ongoing.

At Paperkite, transparency extends to clients, who are involved in the process of creating project proposals and cost estimates, ensuring alignment and shared goals. Beca, an employee-owned organisation, fosters high levels of communication and engagement, with participation rates of 84-86% and 10,000 comments the norm for an employee survey. Extensive consultation processes are balanced by high staff commitment for initiatives.

When 60% of Spark employees reported struggling during lockdown, the company introduced a co-designed wellbeing framework, focusing on a healthy work environment, mental health, connection, and energy management. Leaders sponsored initiatives, playing a key role by openly sharing their own stories, helping embed change and reduce stigma in disclosing mental health challenges. Spark's approach to workplace change is now characterised by 'partnering with our people', listening and meeting them with the support they need.

2 Building a culture of care and support

For the organisations in this group, supporting their people was seen as a moral duty, good business, or 'just what we do'. There was growing recognition that life presents many challenges, and workplaces should help when they can. This support often included mental health care and compassionate leave for illness, bereavement, menopause, or fertility treatments.

At Kiwibank, compassionate, parental, and sick leave applied to diverse family structures. To reduce the stigma around mental health leave, Kiwibank introduced a "Supported Leave" category, bundling mental health, compassionate, and domestic leave together.

Recognising the importance of recovery for wellbeing, some organisations have introduced a quarterly wellbeing day, which differs from annual leave in that it cannot be accrued. At Kiwibank, uptake for this initiative has been high, with staff reporting using the day primarily for self-care.

Paperkite acknowledges the need for recovery during the workday. After intense client sessions, where staff are expected to do what it takes to 'be on', they were expected to 'be off' for the rest of the day, and encouraged to recharge, in whatever way worked for them.

Many organisations in this qualitative study also provided health insurance—not a common benefit in New Zealand. Scaffolding company Scafit goes even further, offering life and trauma insurance. General Manager Nicki Crowley noted that after losing a staff member to illness, they realised the insurance not only supported the family but also provided peace of mind for other employees.

Scafit's care extends to practical support for its predominantly young, male workforce, many of whom join straight from school. This includes an all-day breakfast on-site and a discretionary fund to help employees in times of crisis. Scafit also funds regular visits from clinical psychologists to ensure staff have timely access to mental health support.

Company support for staff extends to personal and professional development with on-the-job coaching and skills training that includes self-awareness and goal-setting. Managing Director David Crowley explained, "staff used to come to work to eat their lunch in the truck. Now they are focused on the job, and teams support each other to work more effectively." Over the past decade, despite flat prices in the industry, Scafit has doubled its productivity, demonstrating the worth of a people-centric approach.

In contrast to Scafit's 10-year journey, Rothbury, an insurance broker with 500 staff, more recently made wellbeing a strategic initiative with board approval. In its first year, Rothbury focused on leadership and providing better support for employee wellbeing. A partnership with Clearhead, an EAP provider, is part of a broader initiative covering physical, mental, financial, and social wellbeing. In just one year, the popularity of these tools and resources became part of the company culture, helping to reduce stigma around mental health and burnout.

'A culture of care has to reach everyone where they are', explained Sarah Stack, Lead Partner, People and Culture at Spark. For larger organisations like Spark and Mercury, effective care and support has also meant making sure both customers and staff are aware of available support. Spark aims to embed wellbeing into its daily operations, 'every way, every day', ensuring it reaches every employee through a variety of channels and formats.

3 New ways of working for a future-fit workplace

The leaders in this group of organisations have recognised the importance of creating workplaces that are sustainable for their people. Flexible working, experimentation, and innovation in response to changing conditions are now seen as essential for business survival. Unlike some organisations that have resisted flexible work, Kiwibank has embraced it. "You've got to flex within the flex," says Chief People Officer, Charlotte Ward, emphasising the focus on achieving outcomes rather than location. Successful flexibility was viewed as not 'one and done' but requiring 'a continuous conversation' on what's best for the staff member, their team, the work and the customer.

At employee-owned engineering consultancy Beca, flexible working is an expectation, with staff permitted to adapt at their own pace. To support this, Beca introduced training in effective leadership of hybrid teams, and changed its graduate programme to assist new employees develop social and work skills to successfully transition from online learning to professional teamwork. Two new workspaces have been designed for sustainability and employee wellbeing, prioritising walkable access, public transport, and with different working areas to meet the diverse needs of different workstyles.
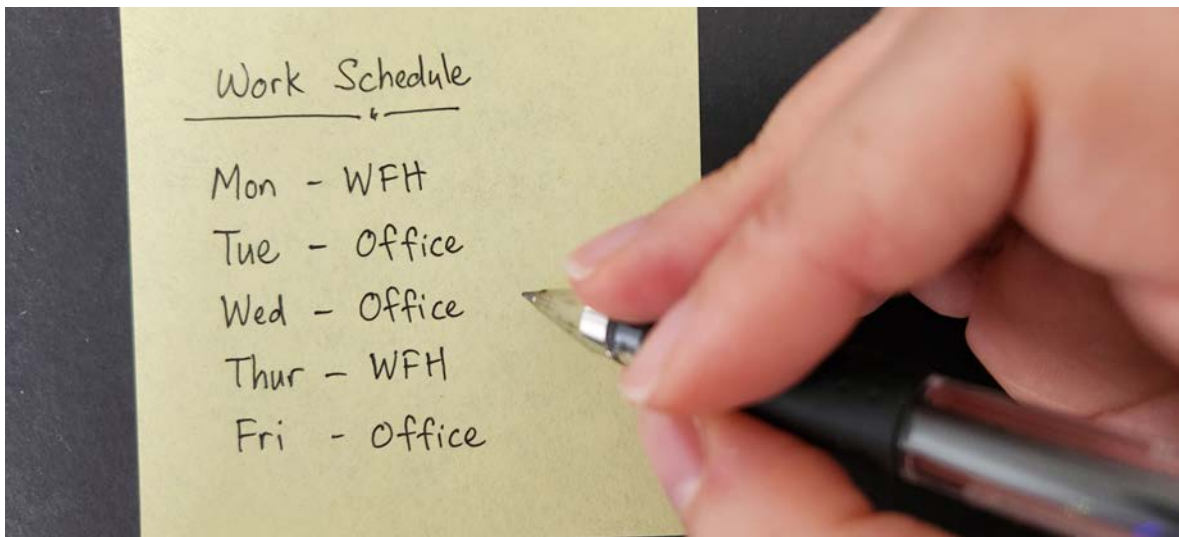
In the education sector, Rāroa School introduced the 'no single point of failure' approach, where every staff member shares responsibilities with a colleague, ensuring no one person holds sole responsibility. This initiative was developed to prevent burnout and support staff wellbeing, recognising the growing pressure on teachers supporting students.

To address the increasing complexity and challenges of student needs, the school developed a pastoral care framework categorising student needs on a scale from 1 to 5, with advice, support and intervention provided as needs progressed in severity. Teachers were trained to recognise and address lower-level needs, while more serious cases received support or intervention by specialised staff. This structured system provided clarity through a shared understanding and approach to student needs, reducing teacher anxiety and overwhelm, and demonstrating care and support for both students and staff.

Digital design company Paperkite has embedded feedback and collective learning into its work culture, with dedicated in-office Fridays for team collaboration, feedback sessions, and gratitude sharing. New hires always start on a Friday, in an on-boarding day where they get to know their colleagues and see the culture in action.

Practical operational changes have also played a significant role in improving employee wellbeing. Examples include adjusting the default meeting length to 50 minutes to allow for recovery time and introducing protocols for better-managed meetings. Recognising that language can alter perception and drive behavioural change, Spark encouraged managers to adopt a 'tapering' approach to workload, ensuring that employees have time to recover after intense periods of work, much like athletes preparing for and recovering from events, and implicitly acknowledging that operating permanently at peak workload is unsustainable.

Additionally, organisations like Mercury and Spark have shifted mindsets around implementing new initiatives. Rather than waiting for perfection, staff are asked to focus on what is "right for now", emphasising adaptability and usability. At Paperkite, new changes are introduced as experiments, becoming part of everyday practice only after they prove successful.

4 Fostering purpose and belonging to enhance wellbeing and engagement

The organisations interviewed for this study understood that workers seek more than just a paycheck—they want a sense of purpose and belonging in their work. These businesses recognise their employees as individuals who desire connection and motivation beyond the daily grind.

At Mercury, Kiwibank, and ASB, commitment to purpose was clear through extensive listening and open communication with staff, resulting in new mission statements that reflect the values and goals of the workforce. These new mission statements were no longer just marketing tools but meaningful statements that unite and motivate teams behind the sense of purpose that brings them to work each day. This practice of actively listening to employees also fosters a sense of belonging, making workers feel included and valued.

ASB's people promise is built on three pillars: belonging, trust, and growth. This promise is expressed as "We see you, we back you, we lift you," representing a commitment to acknowledging employees as whole individuals and supporting their long-term career growth. Leaders across ASB are held accountable for delivering on this promise to their teams.

Kiwibank's core purpose, "making Kiwi better off," has been a cultural touchstone that drives engagement. Their culture design process focused on four key mindsets: creating a place to belong, working better together, rising to challenges, and keeping the customer at heart. Building belonging for staff came first, representing the solid foundation on which customer service is built. Kiwibank's belief that "if you take care of your people, they'll take care of your customers" aligns purpose with performance.

> ## "
> *We see you, we back you, we lift you.*

As an engineering consultancy strongly focused on sustainability and employee-owned, purpose has always been embedded in Beca's operations. Beca's purpose of "making life better for communities" resonates deeply with their people's professional and personal commitments to sustainability. This purpose-driven approach is reinforced through accountability from employees, many of whom are also shareholders, whose influence and advocacy hold Beca to high standards in both internal and client-facing work.

Belonging at Beca was also strengthened through shared learning experiences, including internal podcasts where employees, including senior leaders, shared personal stories on topics like mental health, bereavement, miscarriage and menopause. These open discussions have helped break down stigma and foster a culture where diverse experiences can be shared, acknowledged and accepted.

Both Beca and Spark have further supported belonging by encouraging staff-led affinity groups for Rainbow, Pasifika, and neurodiverse employees. This grassroots approach to empowerment fosters inclusivity from the ground up.

For many companies in this group, values-driven work was at the heart of what they do. KiwiBank and Scafit have achieved B-Corp status, a certification reflecting their voluntary commitment to high social and environmental standards. For family-owned Scafit, becoming a B-Corp was a natural extension of their decade-long focus on human-centric, values-based business practices.

At digital design company Paperkite, meaningful work is a priority. Company values, developed with staff, include work that makes the world better, and 'tell the kind truth'. These values drive the type of projects they seek, enabling their employees to bring energy and passion to their work. These values also shape their leadership and development efforts, creating a culture that emphasises personal and professional growth.

5 Growing future-fit leadership through empowerment, connection, and adaptability

The traditional command-and-control leadership style is now widely viewed as not fit for purpose by the organisations in this study. Our survey respondents called for greater adaptability from their leaders to respond to uncertainty and change. In this group, that call has been answered. Two key shifts in leadership emerged: an emphasis on developing adaptive mindsets and the need for leaders to empower their teams. In this new approach, leaders are encouraged to seek input from their teams rather than trying to be "the smartest person in the room."

At Spark, leaders played a crucial role in embedding wellbeing into the company's culture. Recognising that not every leader naturally excels at building connections, Spark provided over 600 leaders with tools and frameworks to improve communication and handle difficult conversations. As a result, 89% of Spark's employees reported feeling supported by their leaders.

Spark's wellbeing strategy is built on a partnership with employees. Rather than relying solely on external experts, the company trained 55 staff members as certified wellbeing coaches.

These Mahi Tahi (working together) coaches offered confidential support to individuals and teams, developing modules to help both leaders and their peers.

At Scafit, leadership development went beyond senior management. The company developed and delivered in-house training on conflict resolution, coaching, and goal-setting for all team leaders. Not so much 'soft skills', there was a focus on having "hard and honest conversations" to fix issues, and accountability expected at every level. Scafit's leadership training has gained such a reputation that other industry organisations have requested their expertise, which, as a community-minded company, they have provided.

When Mercury Energy merged with TrustPower, a key goal was to decentralise decision-making, giving autonomy to the staff most directly affected by the issues at hand – their 'front line experts'. This approach has strengthened trust and transparency, helping avoid the typical emotional fallout that often accompanies mergers.

Our survey respondents called for organisations to commit to staff development, caring about the person's growth and not just job efficiency. A commitment to growth was evident across the organisations in the interview group. Kiwibank's Navigator leadership programme, designed to develop future-fit leaders, focused on self-leadership, adaptability, and self-awareness. Instead of an initial roll out to senior leaders, Kiwibank chose to make it available to everyone, reflecting the belief that "everyone is a leader" in navigating change. Similarly, Mercury's adaptive leadership programme was open to employees across all levels of the organisation.

At Paperkite, every employee had a three-year personal and professional development plan that included wellbeing goals, with coaching provided by both a Technical Lead and a Personal Development Lead. This dual focus on technical and personal growth has benefited employees and managers who coach from their strengths.

In place of traditional job descriptions, Paperkite uses a co-created one-page scorecard with new hires, outlining 4-6 key responsibilities and goals. Progress is measured not only by deliverables but also by growth, experimenting and learning from failures, and connecting and asking colleagues for feedback. Each employee presents their year's progress in an annual celebration, shifting from standard performance reviews to a more dynamic and personal reflection on achievements.

Leaders play a vital role in employee wellbeing and shaping company culture, but building trust and empathy can seem abstract. Rachel McKay, People & Culture General Manager at Rothbury, offered this practical advice to leaders: "The first 15 minutes of your day don't belong to you—they belong to your staff. Go and connect. Ask what their priorities are and how you can help."

Redefining criteria for success

Beneath the practical changes being implemented, there was a deeper shift taking place within these organisations—a change in how leaders defined success for their organisation. Often shared later in conversation, these aspirations revealed a transformation in the way businesses viewed their relationship with and responsibility towards employees, with human sustainability and wellbeing becoming central to how they operated.

Each organisation interviewed expressed future aspirations, signalling a redefined relationship between businesses and their people. At Paperkite, for instance, the company has told employees, "you can fit work around your life," demonstrating its commitment to personal growth and work-life balance. Both Kiwibank and ASB shared the goal of enabling employees to "stay with us for life," fostering an environment of belonging, trust, and growth, with the promise of multiple career paths within the organisation.

Scafit, equally ambitious, aimed to equip every employee with the skills and pathways to one day own their own home.

Taken together, these aspirations reflect a broader shift in how organisations view their role and point to a new way of working where success is measured not only by business outcomes but also by the sustainable wellbeing of people.

> *...you can fit work around your life...*

New ways of working are possible in every workplace

New Zealand organisations face challenges similar to their global counterparts, with leaders required to play a crucial role in resolving these challenges and advancing human sustainability. Through an exemplar group of organisations, this report demonstrates that an effective response to these challenges is possible and already taking place.

Offering equal measures of challenge and encouragement, this report makes clear that regardless of sector, business size, or ownership model, leaders can successfully rise to the challenges facing their organisations. By actively engaging with their people, listening and co-designing solutions, and building a culture of care and support that fosters purpose and belonging, these leaders offer a more effective pathway to workplace transformation. What this report also makes clear is that effective leadership of this transformation requires leaders with a future-fit skillset of empowerment, connection and adaptability. Equipped with this future-fit mindset,

...a future-fit skillset of empowerment, connection and adaptability.

and working with their people, the potential exists for all leaders and their organisations to shape a better future of work. This change is urgently needed and essential for the sustainable wellbeing of our workforce and the wider communities in which we live.

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About the author

Dr Denise Quinlan, PhD, is co-founder and director of the Institute of Wellbeing & Resilience, an Adjunct Senior Fellow at the University of Canterbury, and lectures on wellbeing at work at the Royal College of Surgeons Ireland. A wellbeing researcher with a background in finance and consulting, Denise has taught strengths-based leadership to senior executives from Fortune 500 and leading global organisations. She works to enhance wellbeing, prevent burnout, and enable sustainable performance through immersive retreats and training, workshops and presentations.

Contact us to make work better

Contact Denise on **denise@nziwr.co.nz** or on social media at **@drdenisequinlan** to find out how you could make work better for your people and stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

Appendix

Organisations interviewed for the qualitative study.

- **ASB Bank**, Rebecca (Bex) Wigram

- **Beca**, Engineering consultancy, Kristy Matthews and Chloe Stewart-Tyson

- **Kiwibank**, Bank, Charlotte Ward

- **Mercury**, Energy and broadband communications provider, Brooke Stringer

- **Paperkite**, Digital design company, Rob Holmes

- **Rāroa School**, Intermediate school, Stephen Eames and Matt Boucher

- **Rothbury**, Insurance broker, Rachel McKay and Christie Smith

- **Scafit**, Scaffolding company, Nicki and David Crowley

- **Spark**, Telecommunications company, Sarah Stack

To explore these interviews, an accompanying podcast series will be available from late 2024. For more information go to **www.nziwr.co.nz**.

Methodology and demographics

Study findings are based on an online survey conducted by the Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience between October and November of 2023 and a series of in-depth interviews conducted in late 2023 and first half of 2024.

One-hundred and sixteen leaders and employees from small to large New Zealand organisations responded to the survey. They answered quantitative questions about burnout, workplace challenges, and their organisation's success in addressing challenges in the previous 12-18 months. They qualitatively described the skills they wanted in their people leaders to address these challenges and the actions most effective in addressing workplace challenges.

A non-exhaustive convenience sample of organisations for interview was drawn up from personal network recommendations, attendance at leadership and industry conferences, including judging innovative leadership awards. Semi-structured interviews addressed similar topics to the survey, focusing on strategies to address human sustainability through challenge and change.

Analytical method

Qualitative analysis (survey)

Themes were identified from each set of open-text responses for the Plans, Skills, and Actions survey items. The author discussed and reached high agreement on themes with an external data analyst. The themes present in each response were marked.

Mixed methods analysis

Using standard regression techniques, these different themes were used as predictors of the quantitative scores. This allowed a more detailed analysis of the degree to which responses including certain themes corresponding with higher or lower scores on average.

Qualitative analysis (interview)

A thematic analysis was conducted on interview transcripts using the General Inductive Approach (Thomas, 2006). Five themes were initially identified as best representing the data, with a further theme added after review with an external analyst.