



THE HEALTHY WORKPLACE NUDGE



How Healthy
PEOPLE, CULTURE,
and **BUILDINGS** Lead
to High Performance



Introduction:

The Elephant Whisperer

Analogous to our conscious mind as the rider on an elephant, it can choose and announce what it wants, but the elephant is larger and going to go where it chooses. The nudge referred to in this book is anything that makes it easy for the elephant to pick the better path. It's not about directing employees to swallow something new—it's about engaging people. It's also about culture and creating a highly social process that results in a successful outcome. The process of creating a new environment provides the context to learn a new way of working.

PART I



Slow-Moving Storm

A History of Warnings and Apathy

Chapter 1:

A Slow-Moving Storm

The Existential Threat to Business and the Economy

This is about a set of problems: the systems, ideas, habits, and walls that prevent people from attaining what they do best and enjoy most in America's workplaces. At the core is the rising rate of chronic disease and the cost of healthcare to manage it. Health coverage costs an average of \$18,000 per employee in 2018, but that cost will increase to \$25,245 by 2023—equating to \$25 million for a company of 1,000 employees. The mother of all wake-up calls is that federal spending on healthcare will rise to 40 percent of GDP if the current rate continues. The only way corporations can survive the constant threat of disruptive innovation is to develop healthy employees who bring energy to work.

Chapter 2:

The Rainbow in the Storm

Medical Science Meets Building Science

The story really centers on a new vision for built environments as places that increase and protect the health of those who occupy them every day. There is an inescapable need for businesses and our economy to mount a national movement toward wholeness. By exploring the relationship between buildings, human health, and happiness, we can focus on buildings that improve human lives as the ultimate high return on investment. More than 80 percent of a company's expenditure is the cost of people, and people spend more than 90 percent of their lives in these workspaces. We need to broaden the focus, from environmental sustainability to human health and happiness, as a holistic expression of not just sustaining, but thriving. Wellness approaches are failing, and we need leadership to engage in a multidisciplinary unified approach to winning the hearts and minds of employees.

Chapter 3:

Storm Damage

The Cost of Forgetting

The human side of complicated workplace equations means bridging competing pressures of responsibility for people and absorbing costs that rise faster than profits. The way to negotiate this is through personal engagement on the part of leadership in humanizing the workplace—placing importance on knowing employees and what struggles they may have.

Chapter 4:

Stress

Portrait of a Killer

The focus of wellness programs has been physical health; meanwhile, stress is the clear driver behind chronic illness. Well-being must come before wellness, or we can't get to the root of the problem: The source of most employee stress is the very structure and culture of the workplace. In many business organizations, the benefits world is often a grand adventure in missing the point—packaging proposals of care through an efficient delivery system to impose what is done “to” not “for” individuals. The new view is about creating different structures that are more aligned with grooming cultures from leadership that cares. Leveraging ecosystems of support and environments that continually reinforce why and how employees are valued is the key to success. At Google, a realization that their culture was burning out too many people with high turnover launched two efforts to better understand performance and resiliency. The results are some keys to survival for a new era of work—reducing friction (process and environment) and creating psychological safety.

PART II



Is There Shelter from the Storm?

A Search for Wellness

Chapter 5:

In Search of Wholeness

What better place to discuss the language of wellness than Mayo Clinic? The definitions of wellness and well-being are as varied as the number of respondents—but the need for a common understanding of the lexicon is vitally important. The common definitions have no context; thus, no meaning. The differences between wellness and well-being centered around the meaning of holistic—and at the core was the need to humanize any approach—because most “wellness” programs have been delivered with a one-size-fits-all tactic. The efforts most valued by humans are inexpensive, centering on creating connection, encouraging community, designing convenience, and feeling valued. Ultimately “well-being” was the right term, based on its origins that fleshed out to be: good + spirit. That was the right fit to explain a practice of human flourishing, which Aristotle defined as Happiness—being human at work is the opportunity to grow and flourish through mastery.

The ladder to well-being requires higher and broader commitment at each level:

Bottom Rungs – Tactical Goals

- Repackaging current benefits
- Reducing cost and risk

Middle Rungs – Strategic Goals

- Attract and retain talent
- Gain competitive advantage
- Enhance the brand

Top Rungs – Transformational Opportunities

- Rude awakening
- Transforming the business
- True alignment to values and culture
- Changing the industry

Chapter 6:

Why Happiness Before Health

Dr. Amit Sood at Mayo Clinic’s Mind Body Initiative touched a deep chord as the basis for the work: “Happiness comes before health.” For us to be happy, our minds must be able to function in the rhythms of focus and renewal—then we can achieve high performance and it allows us to “manage energy, not time.” The workplace can become a happy place, but it comes only by design—by removing the friction, the failure of things to work for us. Creating an environment with various work configurations, furniture solutions, and space applications that offer variety, along with a range of analog and technology devices to give humans choice and autonomy, provides a frictionless work environment. Dr. Mike O’Neill’s work in human performance and happiness in the workplace subordinates engagement to happiness. “Engagement has become primarily an instrument for achieving improved productivity,” he says. “Focusing on the broader notion of happiness, or a sense of well-being, naturally results in engagement.”

Chapter 7:

Where’s the Data?

Inconvenient Truths

The ROI on wellness initiatives never became a reality. The promise was somewhere between a 300-600 percent return on every dollar spent for employee wellness programs, but there is no data to support that it happens; and if it did, every company would be desperately increasing their programs—but they are not. Al Lewis, founder of the Disease Management Association of America, began his career in the prevention health movement. But Al wants truth to come from data, and his “crusade” is to make it the “one source of truth” for the wellness industry. One of the inherent issues that the data points out is that workplace wellness spending is \$43 billion out of \$3.7 trillion—the smallest slice of the pie. With daily access to the nation’s workforce (remember 90 percent of our

time is spent in these workplaces) it is a huge opportunity as a platform for change. And, because the nature of the kind of change needed is behavioral, it is a more complex challenge that requires a combination of different activities:

- Focus on culture
- Prioritize physical design of environment
- Improve communication
- Strategic thinking

The first question to ask is, “Are employees human *resources* or *human resources*?” The former is utilitarian and focuses on output; the latter is relational and human-centered.

Chapter 8:

The Mystery of Hospitality

Experiencing the Human Touch

When leaders go beyond the mechanics of their decisions, policies, and programs to see things that ripple through the lives of individuals in their organizations, the counterbalance of personal consideration goes a long way towards developing a happy and healthy workforce. Leaders can start improving the health, happiness, and vitality of their organization by reducing friction. “Tone at the top” refers to leaders creating an environment of honesty and integrity for improving ownership, meaning, and accountability. Can the workplace be restorative? Using the tenets of hospitality in a

workplace, where people spend so much of their time, proves to be restorative when lobbies look—and, more importantly, feel—like upscale hotels. When reception staff act like a concierge, they bring human warmth to what often can be a cold and sterile environment. The message from top down is “We care about you, the people who make this organization successful with our customers” by making an investment in humanizing the workplace. Some new labels are emerging to describe the human-centered organization:

- Firms of endearment
- Conscious business movement
- Social entrepreneurs
- Benefit corporations
- Servant leader organizations
- Deliberately developmental organizations

PART III



Magical Nudges

The Road to Health
and Well-Being

Chapter 9:

Nudge Thinking

How Small Things Lead to Big Results

Richard Thaler won the 2017 Nobel Prize in Economics. He is well-known for changing the nation's approach to 401(k) programs, which moved from an opt-in to an opt-out structure. That little "nudge" increased 401(k) participation from 30 to 90 percent—something that was for the good of the individual to save for retirement. The same theory holds true with well-being. A nudge makes "doing the right thing" easier than selecting the "wrong thing" by tipping the better choice into the "automatic" or "no brainer" realm. Cultural nudges flow out of behavioral economics and shift people toward better health and well-being, and other individual and group benefits. Behavioral economics has become an emergent force and aligns with our work on health and well-being as the difference between our autopilot, intuitive side and our more deliberate, reflective side. Designed nudges can influence workplace strategy, physical work environments, work design, and the social network effects on humans in the workplace. Workplace nudges basically "reframe" decision-making by redesigning environments to remove constraints that get in the way of automatically making the right choice—they serve as a tool for managing environments in a way that supports well-being.

Seven pillars behind nudge thinking:

1. Default
2. Appealing
3. Intuitive
4. Simple
5. Feedback
6. Forgiving
7. Norms

Using the domino strategy of progressively bigger nudges, the groundswell effect can be transformative. By altering the

environment that shifts choices, this leads to influencing behavior until it becomes habit; as habit scales to the population, it builds a societal norm. New norms provide powerful opportunities to capitalize on inherent interests in work to strengthen emerging ideas. This is what can drive creativity and innovation.

The dominoes that fall, starting from smaller to bigger are:

1. Nudge
2. Healthy building
3. Reduce friction
4. Develop leadership of caring
5. Leads to healthy culture
6. Ultimately a happy workplace

Chapter 10:

The Healthy Building Nudge

The Invisible Power of the Workplace

In creating a culture of happiness and health, the best companies have two things in common: Leadership is committed and engaged and they invest time and effort to build healthy cultures. The cost of designing a space that supports health and well-being is nominal, but the impact is huge. The 15-foot perimeter around us where we spend 90 percent of our time can impact our body systems:

1. Cardiovascular

- Sitting decreases the heart rate and blood flow, sending less oxygen through your body.
- Movement raises metabolism and flushes the stress hormone, cortisol, out of your body.
- Environmental nudges can be designed into space to lessen stressors such as noise and distractions, and increase movement.

2. Digestive

- Relaxed eating, especially with individuals' social network, activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which releases dopamine (pleasure) and oxytocin (connection).

- Environments can be designed to create the spaces that support communal connections and reduce stress if they are located conveniently.

3. Endocrine

- Regulates metabolism, immunity, and mood.
- Daylight curtails endocrine disruption and stress—outdoor spaces created for social or work activities offer saturation of daylight (and vitamin D from sunlight).

4. Immune

- Being frequently overloaded from fatigue and stress (they are intertwined) means poor sleep and susceptibility to viruses and metabolic syndrome.
- Designing recovery areas that nudge people to take breaks reduces stress.

5. Integumentary

- Serves as external protection that works with immune system.
- Designing spaces away from cold drafts or overheated areas and providing hydration stations helps to regulate body temperature and proper water intake.

6. Urinary

- This is the primary system for removing toxins.
- Areas designed for stress reduction, accessible refresh areas (for healthy food/beverage), and stations that continually remind people to hydrate are essential to keep the body cleansed.

7. Reproductive

- Stress and electromagnetic fields affect reproductive system, balance, and mood.
- Stress reduction space (indoor or outdoor) and technology-free zones can contribute to improving reproductive health.

8. Muscular

- Space plays a monumental role in maintaining muscle tone and flexibility to remove main causes of neck, shoulder, and back pain.
- Plan space to nudge movement to shared services, between connected communities within the building, and toward adjustable furniture to support physical ergonomics.

9. Skeletal

- Serves as “body armor” to protect organs and nervous system.
- Supportive planning and furniture reduce stress and lessen fatigue.

10. Respiratory

- Building systems to reduce CO2 levels and limit toxins improves respiratory health.
- Make outdoor space accessible and supportive of work activities to increase movement and supply fresh oxygen that is not recirculated.

11. Nervous

- Cognitive and autonomic functions occur through the nervous system.
- Design in appropriate tools to support cognitive processes for both focus and relaxation.

Chapter 11:

The Financial Nudge

The Return on Humans (ROH)

“A company is a modern-day tribe. Hiring someone for your company is akin to having a child. If you have hard times in your family, would you ever consider laying off one of your children?” – Simon Sinek

In the pursuit of cost savings (remember the iceberg graphic that shows 5 percent of the overall building cost), we continually try to squeeze “pennies of support on the top and lose dollars of engagement on the bottom,” as David Radcliffe from Google says. Instead, the approach could be based on a much more powerful financial equation, particularly when the revenue per employee is considered. The cost for space and technology is a fraction of the contribution to corporate financial health. Eliminating the tangible elements may be easier to put on a spreadsheet, but the consequences of making it harder for employees to do their work (friction) will most likely completely negate any savings on paper.

Flipping the conversation might be the best approach based on our biggest investment. There is a way to impact and introduce prevention that does not need behavioral change—build healthy buildings. It is a start to delivering prevention in a passive way. If we add designed nudges to the interior spaces, we can leverage the building as an intervention tool, costing much less than downtime—or worse—loss of human capital.

Chapter 12:

Becoming Your Best Self

Rest, Engagement, Boundaries, and Deep Work

The demands of modern life switch us to a constant “on” state, preventing us from finding recuperative rest or restoration to bring balance to our lives. Biologically speaking, there is an imbalance between our parasympathetic nervous system (rest-and-digest switch) and our sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight switch). These two systems try to work in concert while the autonomic nervous system (autopilot switch) tries to orchestrate. When we overtax the first two—the third takes over: Autopilot is our deferral, and not very productive. The ability to consistently achieve deep and present work depends on recovery, mindset, engagement, and the vigilant elimination of distraction.

“Does anyone expect someone to sleep well if they are interrupted all night? I don’t think anyone would say yes. Why do we expect people to work well if they are interrupted all day at the office?”

– Jason Fried, CEO, Basecamp

Our approach to work is driving us to sprint, but we are not “training” in the same way athletes train. Allowing our bodies to work/focus and restore at intervals that will serve us, and the work, is critical to performance, so listen to that wearable device by standing, walking, and resting throughout the day—and night. Become a champion sleeper to allow your brain to recharge, and find places in your workplace that allow you to do focus work. If those places don’t exist then there needs to be a call to action—those places make a difference in our performance and for the organization.

PART IV



Haven in a Heartless World

The Need for Safe Places

Chapter 13:

How They Did It

Creating Ecosystems of Care

These are success stories of companies that encompass common traits focusing on just a few essential principles and habits. They maintain a strong discipline rooted in a deep understanding of their own character, ecosystem, and people—these are fundamentals that transform organizations: They are “in touch” with their company. The approach can vary, and needs to, because each “elephant” is different and the “nudges” to change course need to attune to that elephant.

Cleveland Clinic: Clarity, Focus, Simplicity

Three Key Elements to Success:

1. Clear, resolute, engaged leadership
2. Focus on 5 normal outcomes for employees
3. A comprehensive push for culture change *

* This is often the most challenging and hard to define, and in Cleveland Clinic’s case they were focused on physiological health, but these can apply in the larger context of well-being within the organization and apply to how space supports a cultural shift.

1. Make culture a priority
2. Make room for “aha” moments (If they can do it – then so can I.)
3. Provide options
4. Knock down barriers; reduce constraints
5. Nudge to make the right choice
6. Incentivize in a big way

Barry-Wehmiller: “We Just Need to Care”

The mission at the company? Take care of people because it is the right thing to do with an expectation that leaders run the business to support that mission. The expectation: the by-product is that they will support clients better, but it’s not the primary driver. Other examples of healthcare management are in this chapter.

Being an effective leader in the pursuit of a happy workforce utilizes consistent tools: Pick the few priorities that make the big differences; focus time and attention to reinforce those priorities and **RESOURCE** them; be the mission’s first officer and **STAY REAL**.

Chapter 14:

Courageous Leaders and a Culture of Care

Adapting to change means learning while leading. Culture can make change difficult. That’s why 70 percent of change initiatives fail and the reason the survival rate of S&P 500 companies has dropped from 60 years to under 15 years since 1960.

It’s the culture, stupid!

Healthy cultures can adapt, bounce back, let go, cooperate cross-functionally, serve each other, and add value to the whole community.

Unhealthy cultures impose pecking order, resist cooperation, allow a sense of entitlement, fight back through passive resistance, tolerate toxic individuals (“bad actors”), react rather than flow, have myopic views, and carry a persistent low-grade anxiety and fear.

Culture is inevitable and invaluable. Healthy cultures are intentional and designed. Shadow (“fuzzy” or unhealthy) cultures spread like invasive species and cause employees to wait for someone to tell them what to do, how to do it, and then circle back to make sure it was done right. It is time-consuming and expensive—too many managers who are overworked and ineffective can’t see the shadow culture that is quietly consuming the life out of the organization.

Shadow culture is the elephant to ride. In some cases, leaders have never learned to tame or teach the beast, so they are happiest when it sleeps. If something disturbs the habits or habitats, that shadow culture will ignore, wait it out, complain, resist, or sabotage

the initiative for change. “Elephant whispering” relies on skill to engage, train, and transform the relationship into one that carries the organization forward. Pushing strategy at the cost of ignoring the culture often creates collateral damage, strengthens divides, and/or settles into a stand-off. Leaders must decide whether they want the elephant to be a powerful partner, a sleeping dead-weight, or a destructive force on the organization.

Chapter 15:

The MeTEOR Story

Extreme Ownership

As a successful leader you accept responsibility for everything and blame no one or anything else. This is a challenging prospect, especially when faced with cultural identification that does not align with the vision of “what you want to be.” The story of MeTEOR outlines the reality of coming to grips with the kind of organizational change needed to transform into the vision of success: making hard decisions about policy and unspoken “rules” of behavior to move in the right direction.

Chapter 16:

Starting a Movement

How Second-Chair Leadership Can Change a Company

There are obvious differences between sitting in the first chair and sitting in the second chair as leaders. First chair leaders depend on technical tools—there is not always a recognition of the relationship between belief and the balance sheet.

But there are strong subtleties of differences that might not be so apparent. The role of second chair leaders is working as artisans, crafting social capital in ways that most first chair leaders cannot. They work inside the ecosystem using their toolbox of enthusiasm, good reports, and great stories that don’t show up on a spreadsheet. Second chair leaders must confront choices between well-being of employees or profits, but, in fact, we know that

happiness and well-being lead to improved engagement, greater performance, strong resiliency, and sustained profits.

Second chair leaders have the innate ability to be first chair leaders in the pursuit of change, in the trenches with credibility that is derived from dissatisfaction, curiosity, transparency, and conviction.

What is the issue that won’t go away, and who has similar interests that want to make positive change instead of simply complaining? Now you can take the movement forward.

Chapter 17:

Haven in a Heartless World

The Promise of a Good Workplace

These are still exciting early days of watching the workplace health and well-being ecosystem take shape—becoming more human, and increasingly allowing individuals to manage their own time, space, tools, and preferences. It will also continue to integrate working roles with real-life needs and constraints.

Good work and workplace is one social invention with the resources, reach, and reasons to make them havens in a sometime heartless world. The stories of the companies recounted here are, for right now, still outliers, making employee happiness a centerpiece of their culture and business strategies. They have broken through old barriers and demolished old paradigms about the value of workplace well-being as “too expensive.”

As Chris Gorthy from DPR Construction says, “The choice is no longer between cost, well-being, sustainability, and creating an incredible workplace. With the right team, engaged early, you can maximize the benefits of all four goals.” Great point—scale it anyway you need to.

Planning how you will work and live together provides the single most effective tool to understand what your organization is today, and what it could be tomorrow.

These 7 mind shifts (paradigms, patterns, assumptions, and structures) are essential to this new era of business:

- Change the environment
- Well-being comes before wellness
- CARE for people before we can help
- Build a healthy building
- Design work for an individual's natural strengths
- Build social capital
- The age of balancing cost and well-being has ended

Our mission was to find a new narrative with hope, humanity, and high performance as a testimony to a new order. Better workplaces give measurable boost in employee happiness, therefore engagement and productivity—it's a business imperative.



Book Club Questions

Introduction:

The Elephant Whisperer

1. How do you think the analogy of a rider on an elephant fits?

PART I

Slow-Moving Storm:

A History of Warnings and Apathy

2. What is most concerning about illness and its impact on healthcare coverage in the future?
3. How can we have more influence over the investment in buildings as a way to leverage the investment in human capital?
4. What humanistic leadership stories can you share?
5. What ways can organizations understand levels of performance and resiliency?

PART II

Is There Shelter From the Storm?

A Search for Wellness

6. How can we create connection, encourage community, and design convenience into the workplace? How can we make people feel valued?
7. What are some ways to move up the ladder to an organizational state of well-being? How can programs be shifted from tactical to strategic and ultimately transformational?
8. Why does happiness need to come before engagement?
9. Regarding wellness program success, what is the rationale of a focus on well-being over wellness?
10. What is one thing that leadership can remove that might be “low hanging fruit” to improve happiness and vitality in their organization? What are some specific examples?

PART III

Magical Nudges:

The Road to Health and Well-Being

11. Do you believe that behavioral economics and nudge theory bring this conversation into a business realm and hold value for leadership to “buy in?”
12. What specific issues related to physical impact (the body) have you experienced or witnessed in the workplace?
13. How do you think “flipping the conversation” to investing in space to leverage human capital (ROH) will help the discussion? What might be missing?
14. When should we draw the line on demands from work usurping the demands on our bodies and minds? How can we put it into practice?

PART IV

Haven in a Heartless World:

The Need for Safe Places

15. How can the elements of clarity, focus, and simplicity from Cleveland Clinic’s success be translated into other organizations and their initiative for well-being in their workplace?
16. When can you tell a culture is unhealthy? What can you do about it to help support change?
17. What are some ways to start a well-being movement?
18. How can you help the argument about a well-being movement “costing” the company more?

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