

Energising Leadership

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How do you
optimise the energy
& motivation in
your team?



“Your first and foremost job as a leader is to take charge of your own energy, and then help to orchestrate the energy of those around you.” Peter Drucker

Numerous studies demonstrate that employees exhibiting robust physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing tend to show enhanced job retention rates and notably improved job performance. In contrast, individuals exposed to less favourable work environments tend to manifest higher degrees of disengagement, attrition, and burnout. Given the fact that a significant portion of adults' waking hours is spent at work, employers wield substantial influence over their employees' wellbeing. As the leader representing the organisation, you play a pivotal role in shaping this opportunity for the betterment of all stakeholders involved.

Energising Leadership represents an approach that cares for individuals and strives to inspire and empower

The contemporary, invigorating Energising Leadership approach diverges from traditional, directive approaches. It is characterised by leading through example and fostering a workplace culture that serves as a source of inspiration and empowerment, especially during times of rapid change and escalating demands. In this approach, the emphasis lies in understanding the drivers that motivate and energise individuals and teams to thrive, rather than assuming compliance and merely survive. A genuine concern for one's teams is integral, accompanied by active listening and a commitment to learn how to cultivate a nurturing work environment. This awareness stems from the understanding that such an environment ultimately benefits all stakeholders, including employees,

teams, the leader, and the organisation as a whole. The foundation of energising leadership starts with prioritizing self-care. This imperative aspect is fundamental for leaders, enabling them to consistently exert a positive influence on the energy and motivation of their teams. Moreover, as an energised leader, you are better positioned to adopt a holistic perspective, encompassing both the demands and resources associated with your employees' roles. Your pivotal role lies in maintaining a delicate equilibrium between these factors, ensuring ample supply of energy resources while minimising excessive energy demands, especially in the long run. It is essential to recognize that an abundance of energy resources not only fosters a sense of well-being among employees, but also enhances their capacity to thrive and perform sustainably, even in the face of challenging circumstances.

The changing nature of work calls for a matching change in leadership style

In today's dynamic and challenging business landscape, characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), change is occurring at an unprecedented pace. The traditional workplace has undergone a significant transformation in recent decades, in particular with the recent shift to remote work and the subsequent adoption of hybrid work models. The current work world is globally and digitally interconnected, and change is not only constant but also rapid and unpredictable.

Amidst this backdrop of relentless change, mounting complexity, and the increasing cognitive demands placed on individuals, the pressure to perform remains an ever-present force. This unrelenting pressure often results in heightened stress levels and an inherent difficulty in disengaging from work for fear of missing out professionally, productively, or socially. Consequently, individuals frequently resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms, undermining their personal energy and wellbeing precisely when they are most needed. In this demanding environment, addressing these challenges becomes paramount for both individuals and organisations alike.

As the nature of the workplace undergoes dynamic shifts, leadership styles must likewise evolve. Prioritizing the cultivation of high, sustainable energy, striking a balance between job demands and the provision of adequate or abundant job (energy) resources, and maintaining a focus on

motivation and empowerment are some of the hallmarks of this new leadership approach.

Your influence as a leader on the energy and performance of your people

The Job Demands Resources model (see below), a widely used and scientifically accepted model, explains how the organisational environment impacts employee engagement, wellbeing, energy levels, and performance. The basic tenet of this model lies in the notion that employees must possess adequate energy resources to effectively navigate the various work-related stressors, commonly referred to as job demands, that they encounter. Chronic high job demands lead to strain and health impairment (the health impairment process), whereas high resources lead to increased motivation and higher productivity (the motivational process).

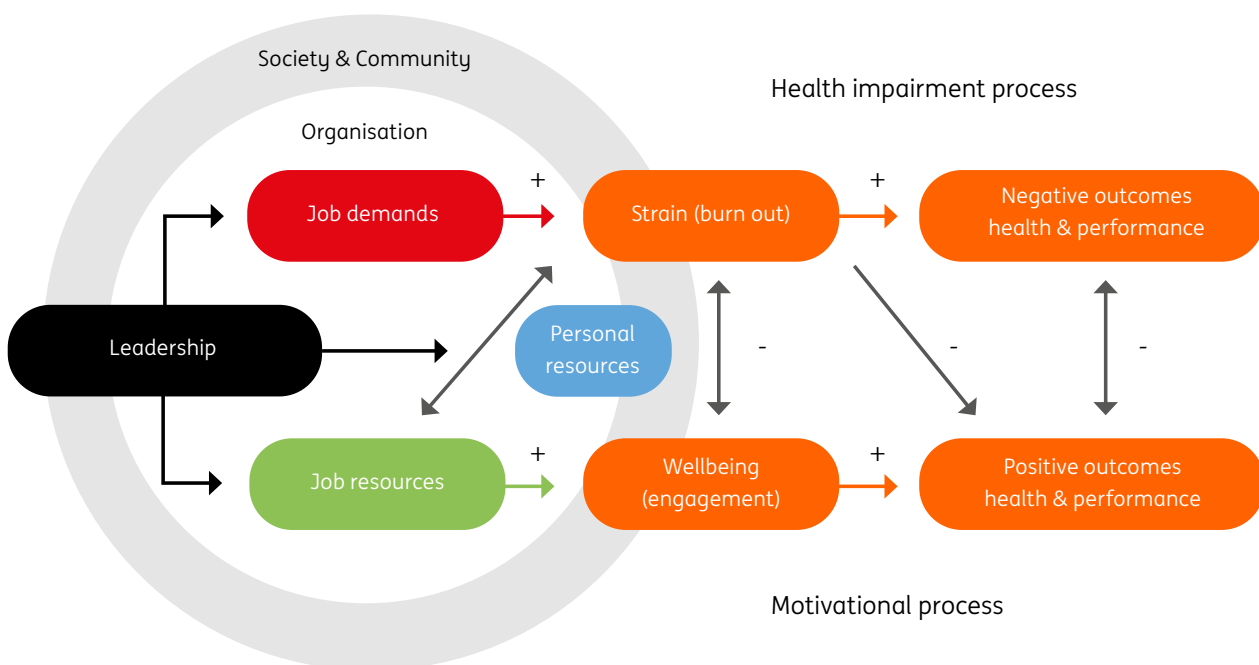


Figure 1 Extended Job Demands-Resources Model, Source: Wilmarshaufeli.nl

Individual factors contributing to energy, motivation and productivity may vary, and what invigorates one person may not necessarily have the same effect on another. Yet certain elements do hold universal importance as they are aligned with the fulfilment of core or evolutionary human needs. These unifying elements transcend individual differences, as they are intricately linked to the fulfilment of fundamental and enduring psychological needs.

Job (energy) resources are positively valued physical, social, or organisational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce the negative impact of excessive job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development. As a leader you would do well to take into consideration the energy resources that have the greatest impact on employee motivation, wellbeing and engagement. Extensive research shows them to be the following:

- 1. Purpose** – the desire for a clear, personally meaningful purpose in one's role.
- 2. Autonomy** – the freedom to make independent decisions and the significance of personal control.
- 3. Connection** – the innate human desire for social connection and belonging.
- 4. Opportunity for growth** – the natural human wish for progress and development, both personally and professionally.
- 5. Opportunity for recovery** – the need for psychological detachment from work, mental and physical relaxation, and control over leisure time.

As a leader you can establish a foundation that resonates with individuals on a core level by understanding and harnessing these shared drivers of energy and motivation. Recognising the common ground upon which these factors are built, allows you to cultivate a work environment that fosters sustained energy and motivation, catering to the diverse yet interconnected needs of your workforce.

Notwithstanding the leader's role, any model which considers the work environment must take personal resources into consideration, because human behaviour on the work floor results from an interaction between personal and environmental factors. Personal resources refer to the aspects of the self that are associated with a person's resiliency and ability to impact one's environment successfully. For example, personal resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, self-confidence and a positive attitude about one's future at work can all increase engagement and reduce burnout.

So far, we looked at the critical role job (energy) resources play, and the role of personal resources. On the other side of the equation lie the job demands, the physical, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and psychological costs and energy expenditure. Conflicting goals, social threats (e.g., the absence of safety, social cohesion and support), role conflict and work-home conflict are some examples that have the potential to sap employees' energy, focus and motivation.

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It all begins with you

As a leader, this balancing act between work resources and stressors begins with the effective management of your own energy, in other words leading by example. In the words of legendary management guru Peter Drucker, “Your first and foremost job as a leader is to take charge of your own energy, and then help to orchestrate the energy of those around you”.

When you as a leader demonstrate a balanced and healthy approach to managing your own energy, your team is more likely to be inspired by such behaviour and wish to match it. When you prioritise self-care and manage your energy well, it sends a powerful message about the importance of energy management, which can

positively influence the entire team’s behaviour.

On a personal level, managing your own energy helps you build resilience and adaptability. This, in turn, equips you to remain sharp and focused during demanding times so that you can better handle challenges and stress. Effective energy management can support and improve emotional intelligence, enabling you to better connect, understand and care for your employees’ emotional wellbeing, leading to stronger bonds and more positive interactions. Lastly, by managing your personal energy you can avoid burnout and fatigue, maintain a sharp mind, and ensure sustainable leadership over the long term.



A reflection moment:

How can you as a manager ensure that your employees have access to sufficient energy resources? What do you and your employees

need to be able to connect well? And how do you manage factors such as autonomy and opportunity for growth?

Your impact as a leader

1. How do you personally impact the key energy resources of your team members? In your opinion, which of your behaviours serve as an example for or contribute to these resources?

Purpose

Autonomy

Connection

Opportunity for growth

Opportunity for recovery

2. Which three of the behaviors you chose do you think are the most effective?

3. Which behavior will your chose to focus on?

From Energising Leadership to an Energising Workplace

From the discussion so far, it may appear as if wellbeing is limited to the individual leader and their team. Yet collective wellbeing encompasses more than mere individuals or even individual teams. For it to be effective, health and wellbeing at work must consider individuals, teams, leaders, and the organisation as a whole. To do this, it may be useful to examine how to support this at four different levels within an organisation:

Organisation: energy and wellbeing considerations must be integrated in strategic initiatives, processes, and policies across the organisation to be effective. Ideally, when these are considered or formulated, the lens of the five job resources and five job demands can be used to assess the potential impact, benefit or otherwise on the work force.

Leaders: an investment in employee energy must be backed by senior managers to have an effect. This can be done, for example, through setting a personal example and adopting or leaning towards a leadership style that encourages autonomy, social connection, and consideration of individual needs.

Team: team dynamics play a major role in energy and well-being, so team leaders should be trained and given the resources to create healthier workplaces. Given the Job Demands Resources model job resources vs. demands areas, specific training can, for example, be given to enhance connection (e.g., on creating psychologically safe environments), increase social safety (e.g., learn about emotional intelligence), or develop additional skills that promote team focus and team agility.

Individual: having meaningful work is one of the key drivers for wellbeing on the work floor. Purpose-driven organisations can support their employees to find meaning in their work by integrating their purpose into their business strategy and recruiting people whose personal purpose and interest align with that of the organisation. Equipping individuals with practical tools, such as mind management, coaching skills and boundary setting, will empower people to develop their self-efficacy and ability to thrive in ever-changing circumstances.

Summary

Enabling an energetic, motivated, and thriving workforce is not a luxury but a survival imperative in a complex, fluid and rapidly changing work environment. Organisations and leaders would do well to adopt a systemic approach to energy that takes into consideration the demands vs. resources of their employees, and apply these insights in strategic initiatives, processes, and

policies at the organisational, leader, team, and individual levels.

As the leader representing the organisation, you play a pivotal role in balancing your own energy, inspiring your people to follow your example, and creating opportunities for the growth and betterment of all stakeholders involved.



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