



# Mental wellbeing requires visions for the future

**World Mental Health Day on 10 October provides companies with an opportunity to consider how they will proactively take responsibility for creating the working life of the future and strengthening mental wellbeing.**

*By Kristine Seest*

10 October is the day designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) as World Mental Health Day. The aim is to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts that support mental health.

In Denmark, the initiative has gained extra momentum, thanks in particular to the Velliv Foundation, which supports the day with financial support for companies that launch activities during week 41 aimed at creating dialogue and learning about mental health in the workplace.

»World Mental Health Day gives HR departments and management an opportunity to stop and reflect. How do we support employee wellbeing in a fast-paced everyday life with many tasks and high expectations? How do we create a framework that promotes both performance and mental health? What

should the future of working life look like for us? These are important questions for companies that prioritize wellbeing – not just in week 41, but all year round,« says Senior Specialist Maria Ebbesen from WTW Corporate Health & Wellbeing.

She believes that both vision and ongoing focus are important in reversing the trend of stress and breaking down the barriers to achieving a work environment with good wellbeing.

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Companies need to be less reactive and more strategic in their efforts to improve the working environment

**Søren Egens Petersen**

Practice Lead, Corporate Health & Wellbeing

## Companies need to be less reactive

The statutory workplace risk assessment (APV) is one of the first places management in many companies look for answers when they want to

improve employee wellbeing and reduce absenteeism due to illness.

Workplace risk assessments and other wellbeing surveys provide insight into the current working environment and paint a picture of the current state of employee wellbeing, but figures from WTW show that many companies do not supplement the surveys with a more long-term focus.

WTW's survey of health and wellbeing initiatives shows that 78 percent of the organizations surveyed record sick leave, while only 57 percent have wellbeing anchored as a strategic goal.

»Companies need to be less reactive and more strategic in their efforts to improve the working environment. Wellbeing is much more than just numbers. HR and management must also look beyond the measurements and proactively define how they want the company to look as a workplace a certain number of years into the future. Concrete initiatives must be supported by ambitions and visions. Without them, we see how quickly follow-up on initiatives and focus are lost,« says Practice Lead Søren Egens Petersen from WTW Corporate Health & Wellbeing.

The big question is how a company defines what it wants to look like as a workplace in the future – one suggestion is that the company should focus on creating hope for the future.

## Danes do not believe in the future

The Change Tracker 2024 analysis from the consulting firm Operate shows that only about one in ten Danes believe that society will be much better in ten years than it is today – and that it is particularly the health sector that Danes are worried about.

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**Mads Bab** | Strategic Advisor

WTW has invited Mads Bab, a strategic advisor in management and organizational development, to give a talk in connection with World Mental Health Day. Mads Bab believes that companies have an important role to play and that Danes lack hope and faith in the future.

»Danes' lack of belief that the future will be better is an alarming indication for society as a whole, but also for any organization that depends on human initiative, cooperation, and strategic development. When the future is perceived as threatening or bleak, we risk losing the raw material on which all development is based, namely the hope that things can get better and that together we can succeed in what we set out to do,« says Mads Bab.

He points out that the WHO's definition of health is about real wellbeing and not just about sick leave, which can be measured.

»The biggest problem is not the lack of investment in mental health, because organizations seem to repeat a pattern where they create a new pilot project, new measurements, and a new report. The new initiatives must be showcased, and unfortunately long before they have taken root in the culture. In such a reality, mental health becomes a tick in a spreadsheet or just another workshop,« says Mads Bab.

WTW, which advises companies on prevention, wellbeing, and the working environment, and Mads Bab agree that the mental wellbeing of employees must be improved by working systematically with visions for the future as an approach to long-term goals for wellbeing and drive – goals that should be as natural for the organization to strive for as financial key figures.