

# WELL-BEING

Productivity and Happiness at Work

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# FOREWORD

This book is about well-being, productivity and happiness at work, and about ways to preserve and promote such phenomena. It is also remarkably timely.

Not long ago, French President Nicholas Sarkozy established a distinguished commission to report on ways to measure the well-being of an entire population. In 2008, the British government received a major report, prepared by an equally distinguished commission, on “Mental Capital and Well-being”, including many proposals for political implementation. And even more recently, Great Britain’s present Prime Minister David Cameron commissioned his country’s official statistics Agency to prepare an index intended to measure national well-being, as a complement to current measurements of its Gross National Product (GNP).

In spite of these recent references, the basic idea about well-being and quality of life as political goals is not new. According to Greek physician Galen, employment is “nature’s physician, essential to human happiness”. Although according to John Stuart Mills “it is possible to do without happiness. It is done involuntarily by nineteenth-twentieths of mankind”, William James maintained that “how to gain, how to keep, how to recover happiness is in fact for most men at all times the secret motive of all they do, and of all they are willing to endure”.

A prerequisite for all this is that people, indeed, have a job, and that this job is of reasonably good quality. This is nicely summarized in the European Union’s Lisbon strategy “More and Better Jobs”. Unfortunately, countless European workers remain unemployed or have jobs that are patho- rather than salutogenic.

This book deals with essential aspects of all these issues.

Its first part is concerned with why well-being matters. It tells the story of the benefits for individuals of well-being in the workplace and

goes on with an analysis of demonstrable benefits also for organizations, including lower sickness-absence, better retention of talented people and more satisfied customers/users/patients. It further discusses how well-being is related to employee engagement.

Part 2 is devoted to what is meant by well-being, as it includes both positive emotions and a sense of purpose in life, also explaining how it could and should be measured.

Part 3 has its focus on the determinants of well-being, within as well as outside working life.

Part 4 aims at the benefits of well-being, with building personal resilience as well as healthy workplaces as two major objectives.

Part 5 presents nine important chapters with highly illustrative and relevant case studies, from both public and private sector workplaces and both from the US and a number of EU Member States including Great Britain.

All this is presented and discussed in considerable depth by the eminent scientists in the chapters of this important new volume. It is an essential resource for scholars, researchers and practitioners in occupational health who aim to make workplaces healthier, happier and more productive for all concerned. It is also an important resource for managers and labor unionists and in general for all those in public and occupational health who are concerned with health and productivity issues in workplaces.

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Stockholm, January 2011

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We hope that this book will be useful and that it will convince many people of the benefits of positive psychological well-being in organizations. We also hope that it will stimulate those with responsibility in organizations to take action.

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