

# **Workforce Vitality in the new Normal**

# Executive Summary

**For all countries, whether at the beginning of the curve or beginning to see the way out, COVID-19 has imposed new stresses on individuals and companies alike, as we all struggle to stay healthy, balanced, and engaged.**

For individuals, the difficulties of staying employed while staying isolated, juggling family obligations, and weighing health risks against economic needs are complex and interconnected. For companies, the need to take care of their people while keeping the lights on poses a difficult trade-off. But as Adecco Group CEO, Alain Dehaze has said, “Don’t waste a crisis”. In other words, look for what has been in development and use this as a chance to accelerate innovation. Look for what will stick, quickly spin up, test, and re-tool. In the context of health and wellbeing, the Adecco Group Foundation is doing exactly that.

Over the past 18 months, the Foundation team has developed a simple, integrated model of health and wellbeing that we believe will be of immense value to employers of all types, and to the individuals who comprise them. Unlike many other models, it hinges on what makes interventions stick. We have accelerated the last testing phase of the project in order to share not only the model, but the methodology behind it, essentially ‘open-sourcing’ it for the collective good.

The genesis of the model came from the Adecco Group’s own need to adopt a more holistic approach to wellbeing, moving beyond programmes for physical and mental health, and taking a more needs-based approach. A piece of research with the Economist Intelligence unit confirmed that this was a common need among multinational companies across 10 geographies. By using a mixture of research and the know-how of a multistakeholder expert working group, underpinned by design thinking, we pioneered not only a new model of wellbeing; we created a methodology for running social innovation projects that we believe can be replicated across a variety of topics.

The Workforce Vitality Enabler model hinges on the interplay of 4 Elements of wellbeing: Physical, Mental, Social and Purpose; and 4 Enablers of interventions: Policy and Practice, Culture, Environment and Technology and Tools. The application of these two sets via design sprint methodology allows an employer to do two things: 1) identify deep needs of the target population in order to appropriate solutions, and 2)

test exiting interventions for ‘stickiness’. We have tested the model in a variety of different settings, both inside and outside the Adecco Group. This has provided enough evidence to show that the model does work and can be applied in a range of contexts. In addition, it has proven a useful tool in finding organisational issues not directly related to health and wellbeing. For example, change management and internal culture. This indicates broader applicability and a strong underlying need for such tools.

In the face of the COVID19 crisis, we need to ensure that health and wellbeing remain a key focus, even in the most challenging situations. Our aim is to make both the model and the underlying methodology available to the public, in hopes that it will help both employers and employees to think through what they need to come through the crisis and build a more resilient workforce and an enabling employer environment as we start to look toward recovery.



# Context

The [study we ran with the Economist Intelligence Unit \(EIU\)](#) showed that over 150 multinationals across 10 geographies consistently struggled to effectively ensure a holistic health-promoting environment for their employees. That was the beginning of our journey, and we were convinced that health and wellbeing were top of mind for most companies – but they struggled to know where to start and how to make interventions stick. That was then.

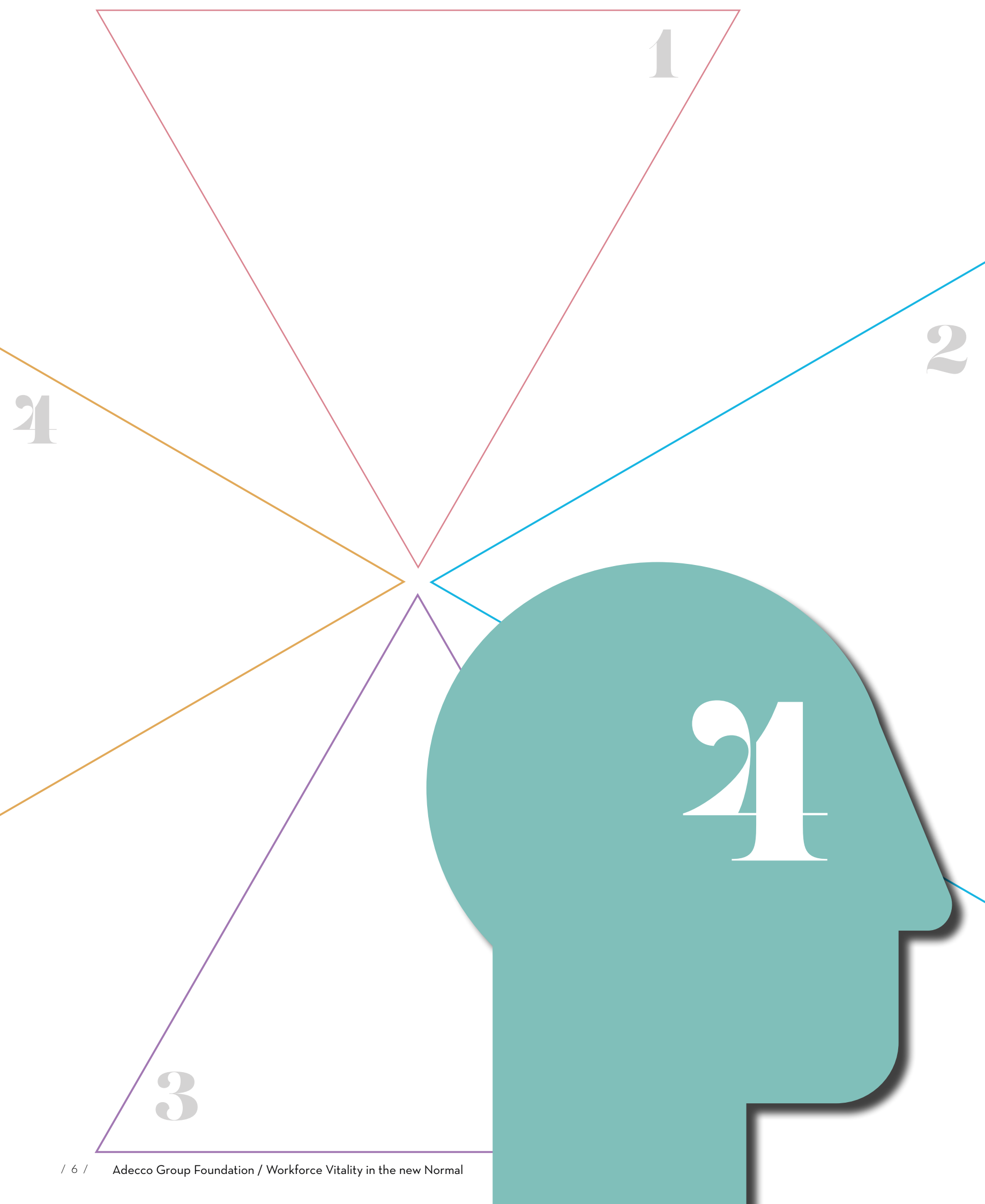
In the current context, I have ceased to count, let alone respond to the deluge of blogs, webcasts, town halls, op-eds, videos and expert talks about how to stay healthy during the crisis. My last Google search of ‘wellbeing COVID’ returned 114 million hits. Every demographic has its view from healthcare workers to LGBTQ, from blue-collar workers to student associations. The prevalence of the topic points to the fact that this is both a salient topic and an unresolved problem.

Faced with the challenges of working remotely, or in many cases, not working at all, people across the globe are struggling with how to hold it together, physically, mentally, and socially when so much of our infrastructure

for interaction and support has disappeared overnight. Of the top 12 hits in my Google search, 10 were related to mental health, one was general health and only one was related to helping the most vulnerable. All of them were from employers, organisations, or pundits offering advice or laying out guidelines. However, none were from the ground up.

Were current offerings by employers actually working before the crisis? The EIU study found that most health and wellbeing interventions by multinationals fell short of the desired impact. A 2018 study by the University of Illinois also found no difference in health outcomes after one year of participation, including self-reported health and productivity, between employees who took part and those who did not. ([http://www.nber.org/workplacewellness/s/IL\\_Wellness\\_Study\\_1.pdf](http://www.nber.org/workplacewellness/s/IL_Wellness_Study_1.pdf))

If this was the case then, will the current crisis exacerbate the problem, or will it drive innovation and accelerate good practice that might have been starting to take hold? We believe that the Workforce Vitality model in its simplicity can enable both.



**The model:  
4 elements  
and 4 enablers**

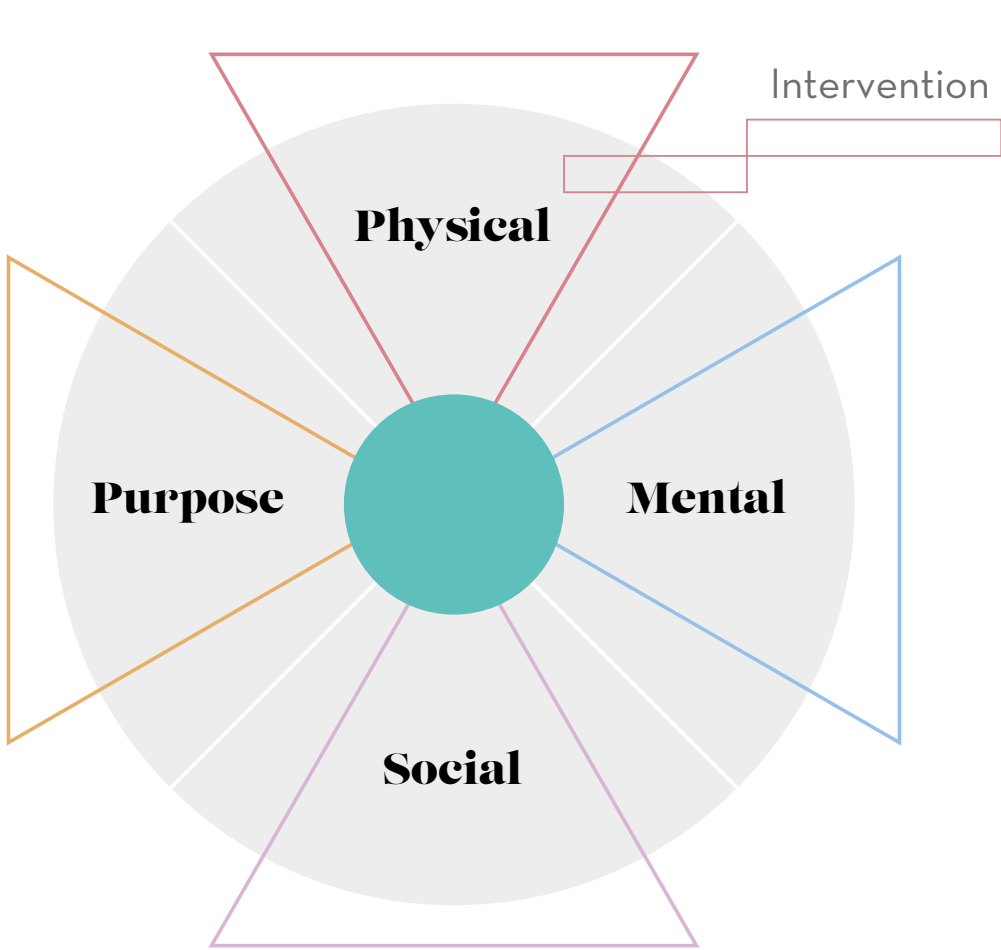


# 4 elements of wellbeing

While there are many versions of basic elements in use, we found that most included physical and mental, with little ambiguity. However, most left out social and purpose. To holistically support the individual and help him or her to thrive, these are crucial. Our taxonomy defines the following:

- 1. **Physical:** How a person's physical state and lifestyle choices impact the health of their bodies and ability to realise their full potential.
- 2. **Mental:** How an individual's state of mind shapes their thoughts, perceptions and identity, and influences their behaviour.
- 3. **Social:** : How a person connects with and engages with others - from their sense of belonging and the richness of their relationships, to how they exhibit empathy, exercise responsibility and express respect. In a corporate environment, it falls most commonly under diversity and inclusion and employee engagement.
- 4. **Purpose:** How a person's beliefs, principles and preferences motivate them to invest time and energy beyond their basic needs in the service of others. Purpose is the element that we found missing in most models. We feel that it is crucial because it is tied to personal values and an understanding of contributing to long-term change or improvement. In the current crisis context, a sense of purpose and contributing to the greater good is vital to staying connected, motivated and stable.

The model is clear and simple. It hinges on a set of 4 elements of wellbeing, overlaid with a set of 4 enablers. For our purposes, we agreed on these definitions. As every context is different, each organisation may wish to tailor the definitions. The important element is not so much the definition as the interaction among them.



# 4 enablers of wellbeing

While the 4 elements appear in many different iterations across various models, it is the 4 enablers that set the Workforce Vitality model apart. The enablers are the combination of essential factors that make an intervention stick. A successful intervention is likely to be surrounded by all 4 enablers in a complementary and interconnected manner. If any of the 4 are dropped, or they don't fit together, the likelihood that the intervention will achieve its desired impact dramatically decreases. Our taxonomy defines the enablers as:

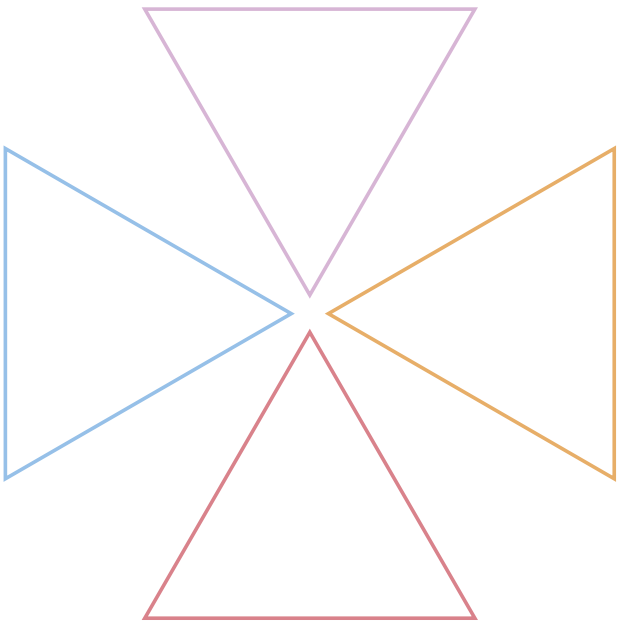
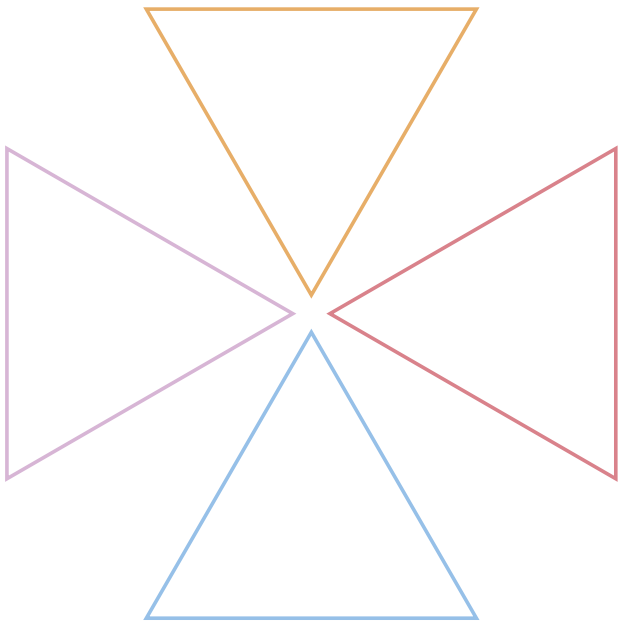
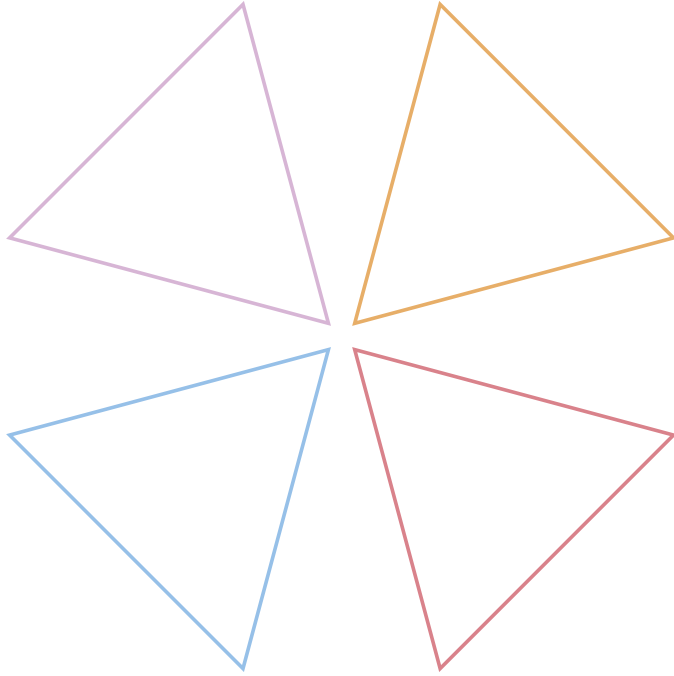
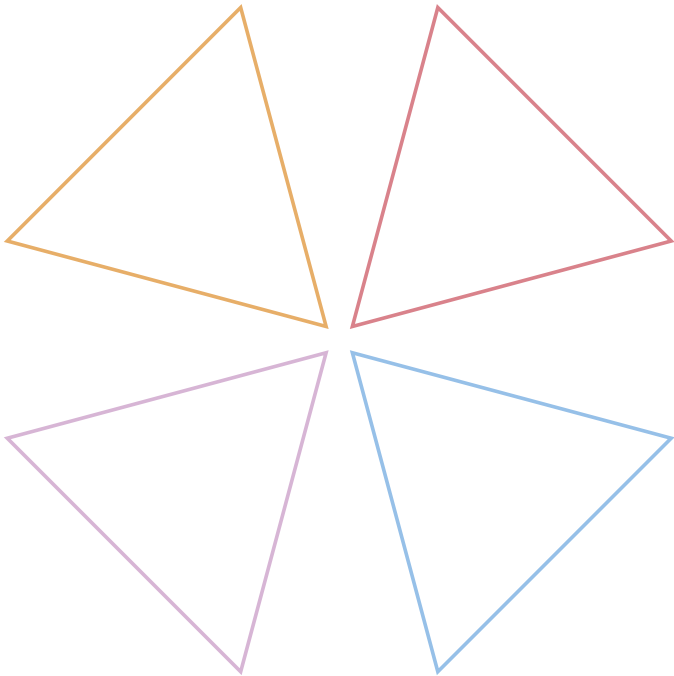
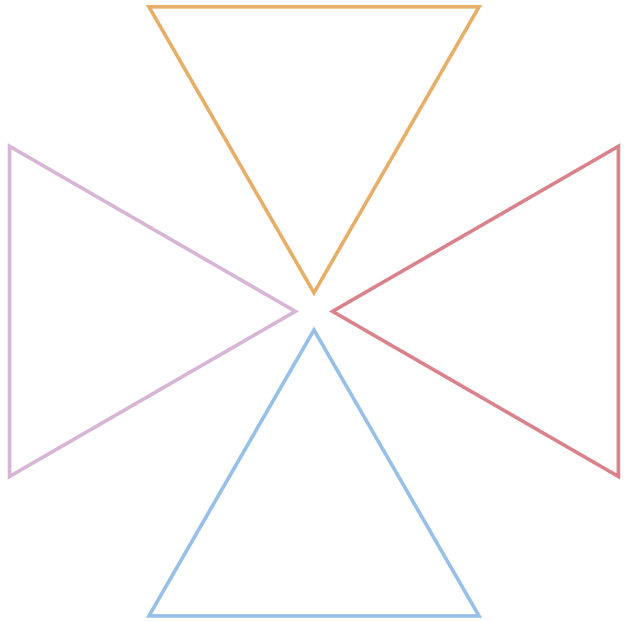
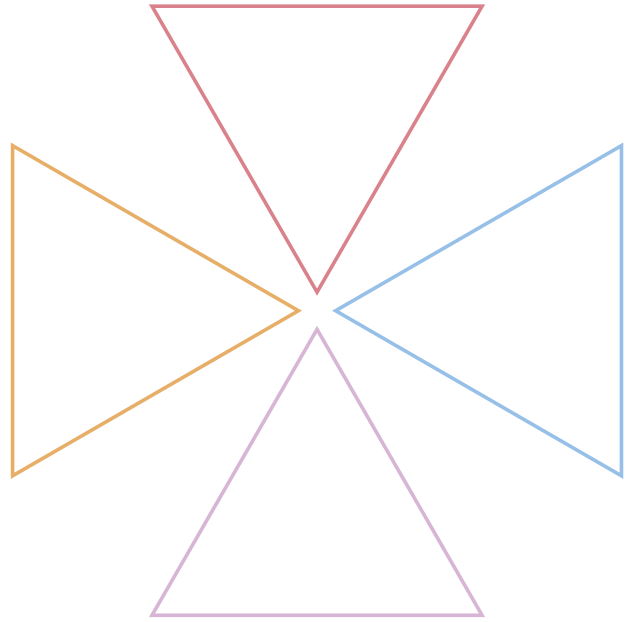
- 1. **Policy and practice:** Structures must support and reinforce behaviour through both rules and motivation. Without strong policies, practice can easily fall apart. Without motivation, policies can be difficult to enforce. For example, a mental health policy can fail if not supported by manager behaviours to ensure there is no backlash from usage.
- 2. **Culture:** An enabling culture sets the precedent of 'how we do things and why', reinforcing intrinsic motivation and not just extrinsic rules. For example, a flexible working policy can be undermined by a culture that frowns on working from home or reinforced by one that supports work-life integration.
- 3. **Environment:** Physical and organisational elements of where we work must support wellbeing. E.g. a healthy eating initiative can fail without pleasant places to eat and share together.
- 4. **Technology and tools:** These must be low-threshold, integrated, financially accessible and simple. For example, forcing employees to carry cash will be less enabling than linking a credit card to one's badge.

## 4 ENABLERS

- Culture & brand
- Policy & practice
- Environment
- Technology & tools

# Flexible application of the model to different scenarios

The beauty of the model is it can be used to test existing interventions, improve existing ones, or to identify needs and then ideate possible, relevant solutions. The following case snap-shots demonstrate the application to each of the three scenarios.





Case study: Felfel

# Existing intervention

The Adecco Group moved into a new HQ office and wanted to use the new surroundings to foster a culture of collaboration, healthy eating, and work-life balance. A new catering solution had been piloted just before the move. **Felfel** is a local social enterprise started by Manu and Daniela, a husband and wife team dedicated to healthy eating, interaction and social impact. Fresh, seasonal food is delivered daily in recyclable boxes and stocked in large refrigerators. The containers are picked up in non-polluting vehicles by locally recruited part-time workers and stay-at-home parents. This alone is a good start. But it is the holistic package at the Adecco Group that drives impact.

Applying the 4 enablers to the intervention yields:

- 1. Policy and Practice:**  
company policy forbids eating at desks and in conference rooms. This is observed by everyone from the CEO outward.
- 2. Culture:**  
people can take a break, socialize, exercise, sit in the sun, and recharge.
- 3. Environment (physical and organizational):**  
a light, airy cafeteria was created in the new building, with all kinds of seating from long communal tables to high stools, to booths and sofas. Picnic tables are provided outside. Everyone takes a break; many do sports over lunch. This behaviour is expected and rewarded, not penalized.
- 4. Technology and tools:**  
the Felfel account is tied to an employee's badge, so no cash is needed. Staff scan their food on-site, with a substantial company subsidy for lunch purchased between 11:00 and 14:00. In an expensive neighbourhood, this makes healthy eating also the cheapest, easiest, fastest option available.

If any of those enablers were removed, the uptake would drop. For example, in the previous office building, Felfel was offered but without a subsidy. Uptake was limited, and employees chose cheaper, less healthy options nearby. Now with all four in place, the uptake is strong and sustainable.







Case study: Pontoon

# Improvement of an existing business practice to incorporate wellbeing

One of the test groups was Pontoon. A provider of outsourced recruitment and contingent workforce solutions. Through the design sprint, the team identified their NextGen young associates as the target audience. These young people tended to be starting a first job, perhaps living away from home for the first time, adapting to adult life and corporate culture at the same time, and often feeling a bit at sea. Pre-workshop interviews allowed us to shape a handful of personas from this population and focus on a better understanding what needs were not being met. In the design process, which included members of the NextGen programme themselves, it was discovered that what they lacked was a sense of social integration,

belonging and stewardship. They wanted guidance, feedback, nurturing, and a peer group. As a result, Pontoon changed the onboarding approach for NextGen associates, added coaching touchpoints and created a sense of community with the existing Industrial Placement Associates. The team also invented 'lunch and laugh' development calls that also encourage a sense of belonging and the element of fun. In addition, they created a community alumni associates, which helped them identify strong influencers in their client base. The existing associates and alumni associates support Pontoon's digital campaigns and thought leadership events.

The Wellbeing of our associates is a priority and thanks to the case study they profit from a much more structured approach.



Case study: ICRC

# Identification of needs and new applications

Since its creation in 1863, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been dedicated to humanitarian responses in some of the toughest places on Earth. Leadership normally rises through the ranks starting from fieldwork. This has yielded an incredibly strong culture and sense of purpose. At the same time, working conditions in the field are often harsh, emotional stress immense, burnout common and expectations high. As leaders strive to transform the organisation into a sustainable, modern entity, they find that while organisational purpose is very strong, they often struggle to support the physical, mental and social needs of their staff. Through the Workforce Vitality design sprint, the participants delved into why there is a prevalent culture of overwork, often leading to burnout. In the end, they identified an

urgent sense of drive as the root cause, a belief that there is so much to be done that one cannot say no without failing the mission of the organisation. This is so strong that it becomes an intrinsic driver, and therefore even harder to crack. As a result of the sprint, adjustments are being integrated into onboarding processes and practices – for new staff joining the ICRC and staff changing positions within the organization. Based on the model proposed, efforts are being made to integrate elements related to physical, mental, and social wellbeing to create a culture where employees can more openly discuss their concerns or stress, and solutions can be found for their needs to be met. The intent is to shift the culture overtime to create better balance, without compromising the passion that underpins the drive and commitment of the staff.

The applications of the model are endless, and in our design sprints we have found that the exercise often identifies other organisational issues in need of solutions. Now that we have tested with a range of audiences and contexts, we have strong overall evidence of the model's applicability. We will continue to run test sprints once we come out of crisis mode, in order to continue to improve on the model and disseminate its value.







# Open-sourcing

# the innovation process

While the model is crucial and highly appropriate at this moment,

---

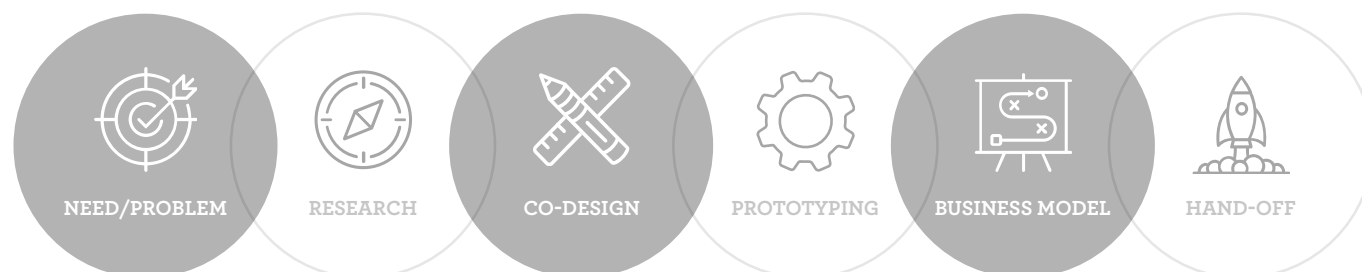
**we believe that methodology is nearly as important as the end result**

---

because it can be replicated for nearly any topic. Thus, we want to share the approach in hopes that others can pick it up and use it to drive change in their own organisations.

As mentioned, the methodology is underpinned by the Design Thinking process. We worked closely with John Kembel, founder of [d.global](#), the non-profit consulting firm spun out of the Stanford University Design School ([d.school](#)). In his over 30 years of design thinking, John had never seen it applied to social innovation projects in this way. He was instrumental in working with us to adapt the DT that is often applied to product design. In addition, we worked with the World Economic Forum's Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which runs similar projects with the aim of producing recommendations for policy and action. Both existing approaches hinge on good needs finding and the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders, in particular the end user. Our model shares these elements. Where it differs from both is that the end result is a product, service or way of doing business that has social impact integrated from the beginning.

# The six phases of our innovation process



As in all design thinking processes, the **needs and empathy** step is crucial. We spent substantial time delving into needs and defining what we wanted to solve, and for whom.



Only then did we undertake the rigorous **research** with the EIU to understand the landscape, benchmark existing practice and further identify gaps. The research phase then gave us a clearer sense of the players and who needed to be in the room to create viable solutions.



The crux came in the **co-design** phase. We hand-picked a group of about 15 experts to form a multistakeholder working group. It was comprised of top thinkers from neuroscience, sports, behavioural psychology, nutrition, recruitment, insurance, telecoms, and manufacturing. We ran this group through two design thinking workshops. In the first, we further defined the needs statements and personas for whom we were solving, and then drafted the basic model and ideated possible ways it could be implemented. Afterward, we spent time testing the possible solutions and refining the nascent model for about 3 months. The second design thinking workshop focused on creating 'pull' for the model to make it business critical for an employer. Out of that workshop, came the idea of applying the model not only to typical employees but also to non-traditional ones like associates (temporary), part-time or gig-workers. Based on the second workshop, the group drafted refined and prototyped the model.



Through design sprints we then tested and refined the **prototype** in different settings (various types of employers and employees).



We then crafted a **business model** based on attraction and retention of talent, to anchor the concept strategically within a company.

We are now in the **hand-off** phase of building various vehicles to take the model forward, in the Adecco Group and elsewhere.

6

# The way forward

---

**As the Adecco Group Foundation is a social innovation lab, we build things not to keep but to share.**

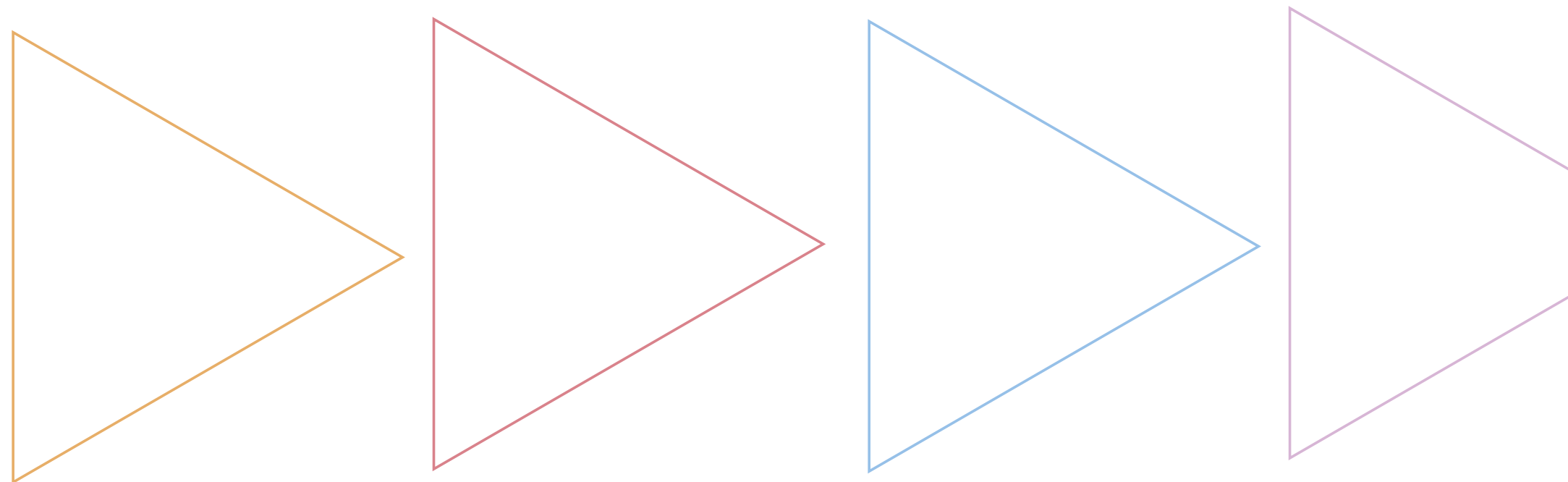
---

In sharing both the model and the methodology here, we hope that others will be able to adapt it to their own contexts and use it to drive impact.

Looking ahead to the post-crisis world, we hope that health and wellbeing have been brought to the forefront and looked at carefully not just as an asset but as an essential, while being positioned as an integral part of the new normal. Our vision is that in the future, health and wellbeing will be a seamless, nearly invisibly integrated part of what employers offer, and will be essential to their license to operate.

At the same time, we hope that the crisis has served to shed light on good employer practice and bad, those with integrity, and those with ulterior motives. In the post-crisis world, we hope that employees will expect a good employer to invest in their holistic wellbeing and share their values because it is part of the license to do business.

As others take this work forward, we only ask that they share their learnings with us at the Foundation, to continue to help us continue to refine both the Workforce Vitality Model and the social innovation project methodology. Through this ongoing collaboration, the co-creation and testing of new models, we hope to drive sustainable impact and to empower others to do the same.







## Acknowledgements

### Project team

#### For the Adecco Group Foundation, Innovation Lab

Jacqueline Maag, Lead Workforce Vitality Innovation Pilot

Cynthia Hansen, Head Adecco Group Foundation

Francesco Camillo, Head of Art & Design Adecco Group

John Kembel, Founder of d.global

### Research partner

Economist Intelligence Unit, Peter Swabey, EMEA Editorial Director, Thought Leadership

#### Special thanks to the expert working group

