

GLWS® RESOURCE

The leader wellbeing blueprint

Turn leader wellbeing from a people and business risk into a key strategic advantage.

Knowing leader wellbeing matters is one thing. Acting on it is another. This is the blueprint we put to any organisation serious about making that shift - and the practical model GLWS® uses to help HR turn it into a measurable, manageable lever rather than a soft issue.



A measurable strategic asset



A system to address, not just individuals



A lever you can track over time

PART ONE

The blueprint

Leadership wellbeing is a “wicked problem” - complex, systemic and hard to shift. But it is measurable. And once you can see the drivers, it stops being a soft issue and becomes something you can successfully manage.

The most effective HR leaders reframe it into three practical levers the business already understands:



Demand

What leaders are being asked to carry.



Resources

What sustains them.



System

How culture, rhythms and processes amplify or reduce the pressure.

1

Position leader wellbeing as a strategic asset. Treat your leaders' capacity to perform, deliver and support others as directly dependent on the preservation and growth of their own mental, psychological and physical reserves. Leaders are humans too. Manage them with the same seriousness as any other strategic asset.

2

Address psychosocial risk holistically and systemically. Tackle the organisational systems, roles, workloads, technologies and practices eroding your leaders' wellbeing rather than assuming their finite capacity to absorb pressures the system itself created and imposed on them.

3

Cultivate a leadership culture of psychological safety and trust. Make it safe for leaders, at all levels, to voice concerns, take considered risks and hold honest conversations. Leaders can't create psychological safety, trust, connection, belonging or high performance for others if they don't experience those conditions themselves.

4

Invest in holistic leadership development. Build the foundational wellbeing, psychological and digital-era capacities leaders need *before* asking them to develop or be accountable for everyone else's - development that starts with the leader's own baseline.

5

Redesign leaders' work for human sustainability. Find and fix the root causes of low wellbeing in how leadership roles are actually structured and run, so high performance doesn't come at the cost of the people delivering it.

6

Improve leaders' wellbeing to improve wellbeing leadership. The two are inseparable - a leader can only lead others toward wellbeing from a place of their own. Every action above begins at the same point: knowing where your leaders' wellbeing stands today.

PART TWO

How GLWS® delivers against each stage



Every stage above starts in the same place: knowing where your leaders actually stand. Here's how the GLWS® system delivers against each one.

Blueprint stage	How GLWS® delivers
1 Position leader wellbeing as a strategic asset	The Personal Wellbeing Report and de-identified Group Report turn 'we should care about this' into an evidence base leadership can act on - individually and organisationally - built on 13+ years of leadership-specific research (10,000+ leaders, 1M+ responses), not adapted from generic employee engagement tools.
2 Address psychosocial risk holistically and systemically	Because GLWS separates Working Well from Living Well, the same relational item can be traced to its source. A leader flagging isolation or damaged relationships in their personal life is a different intervention to one flagging toxic working relationships or distrust in their boss at work. Pair that with Balance & Boundaries and Vitality data, and you can tell whether a relational strain is a personal-capacity issue or a symptom of overload, role design, or culture - the difference between coaching the individual and redesigning the system.
3 Cultivate psychological safety and trust	Authentic Relationships and Resilience & Equanimity aren't abstract HR aspirations in GLWS - they're measured, item by item: trust in the boss, absence of toxic working relationships, feeling respected and taken seriously, being part of a supportive team. Most engagement surveys ask one generic "I feel safe speaking up" question. GLWS decomposes psychological safety into its component parts so an organisation can see which element is present or missing, for which leaders, rather than a single blended score that tells them nothing actionable.
4 Invest in holistic leadership development	The Personal Wellbeing Report gives every leader a development pathway built from their own results, not a generic program applied to everyone. Accredited Practitioners are equipped with item-specific coaching guidance to sharpen their debriefs, while leaders themselves draw on GLWS's evidence-based content through AI-assisted coaching - including the self-awareness and judgement needed to lead well through AI-enabled change.
5 Redesign leaders' work for human sustainability	At cohort level, the same items aggregate into a systemic signal. If "feeling trustful in the boss(es)" or "being well treated by colleagues" scores low across a leadership group - not just for one person - that's not a coaching issue, it's a structural one. That's the exact evidence Group and Team Reports are built to surface, and it's what turns "leaders should build more trust" into a specific redesign brief for HR.
6 Improve leaders' wellbeing to improve wellbeing leadership	Stakeholder Review & Next Steps turns individual and group data into strategic recommendations - on work design, leadership behaviour and psychosocial risk - closing the loop from measurement to action.

PART THREE

Proof it works: a case study

🕒 SITUATION

A 27-person leadership team (an Extended Leadership Team of 5 senior leaders plus 22 direct reports) at a large insurance organisation was under sustained pressure: heightened regulatory scrutiny and media attention, disruptive leadership transition, new appointments and reshaping of the leadership team's structure, and a spike in operational and compliance demands. Strategy was clear and stable - the real strain was leadership culture and ways of working.

⚠️ PROBLEM

Neither HR nor the leaders framed the situation as a wellbeing issue - their stated concerns were performance uplift, team dynamics, culture and trust. Naming it "wellbeing" risked being dismissed as soft; naming it "underperformance" risked defensiveness. A validated leadership self-assessment measure gave the organisation a third, less confronting entry point into the same underlying issues.

💡 SOLUTION

Each leader completed a confidential individual self-assessment - the GLWS. Results were delivered as individual personal reports directly to each person, then aggregated (de-identified) into a Leadership Team profile and an Extended Team profile, followed by a facilitated workshop and one-to-one debriefs to translate data into a shared, owned action plan.

📊 RESULTS

The data provided a precise, penetrating perspective, not a generic one:

- ✔️ **Reassuring strengths** - trust in the new executive leadership, a strong sense of purpose, and supportive personal relationships outside work all sat above the external benchmark, confirming the team still had baseline resources to stay buoyant through the unsettled period and a solid foundation to build on.
- ✔️ **Concerning deficits** - energy and recovery, workload pace, and switching-off discipline were among the lowest-scoring items in the entire profile.
- ✔️ **A performance-satisfaction paradox** - the majority self-rated their performance as high, yet only a small minority were genuinely satisfied in their roles, and a meaningful proportion had "maybe leave" on their radar. High performance, low satisfaction, and eroding boundaries together are a reliable precursor to burnout and talent attrition - visible in the GLWS data well before it shows up in performance reviews or exit interviews.
- ✔️ **Off-the-clock data** (working evenings, mornings, weekends) - showed the pattern was cultural to this team, not individual - and notably, it was more pronounced in the most senior leadership layer than in their direct reports, meaning leaders were modelling the very behaviours eroding their people's boundaries.

📌 *A leader without recovery casts a different shadow than one who's resourced: less patience for challenge, less capacity to invite dissent, less bandwidth to notice when someone else is struggling.*

PART THREE, CONTINUED

Outcome & measuring the lever

✓ OUTCOME

The fix did not stop at the individual. Actions were split by who actually held the lever:

- ✓ **Individual** - each leader identified one personal recovery commitment and one leadership-shadow reflection to share with peers.
- ✓ **Team** - a communication and escalation protocol, meeting audits, protected recovery time, and a shared "leadership shadow" - collectively owned, not imposed.
- ✓ **Organisational / systemic** - workload redesign, review of meeting culture, and named executive follow-up on issues outside the team's own authority to fix. The strategy and operations manager led a review of leadership team operating rhythms.

Every action was assigned an owner and a timeline, built into a standing cadence of review, and anchored to a 6-month re-measurement to track whether the shifts actually moved the data - closing the loop from measurement to accountability to re-measurement.

Once the fix was underway, three questions kept it visible as an ongoing lever rather than letting it quietly slip back into a soft, unmeasured issue:

- ✓ **Wellbeing as an outcome in its own right** - how exhausted, resilient, fulfilled and engaged are your leaders, and is that moving up or down over time?
- ✓ **What's actually driving it** - the specific combination of factors, and how they differ by function, gender, generation and role.
- ✓ **Wellbeing as a driver of performance** - how it connects to productivity, retention, innovation, risk management and the capacity to adopt AI without intensifying work beyond human limits.

It's a serious agenda. And like any serious agenda, it starts with **measurement** - because you can't improve what you can't understand or see.

Ready to see where your leaders stand? Get in touch at glwswellbeing.com to start with a GLWS® assessment.

ABOUT & REFERENCES

About the author, GLWS® and how we help

Audrey McGibbon is a Chartered Occupational and Coaching Psychologist with over 35 years' experience at the intersection of leadership, wellbeing and organisational performance. She is CEO of EEK & SENSE and co-creator of the GLWS® Wellbeing Framework, one of the most comprehensive longitudinal datasets on leadership wellbeing globally.

"Leader wellbeing is not merely a deeply personal matter and HR concern. It is a strategic asset: measurable, manageable and directly linked to individual and business performance outcomes at every level of the organisation."

Audrey McGibbon, CEO, EEK & SENSE

GLWS® at a glance: independently validated by the University of Melbourne's Centre for Wellbeing Science. 10,000+ senior leaders supported globally. 500+ GLWS® Accredited Practitioners worldwide.

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