

Building a healthier,  
higher performing  
Canadian population  
and economy...  
one organization at a  
time.

April 22, 2020 Webinar

How Healthy Organizations  
Can Prepare Now for Post-  
Pandemic Recovery,  
Graham Lowe, PhD



**Your Speaker: Graham Lowe, Ph.D.**

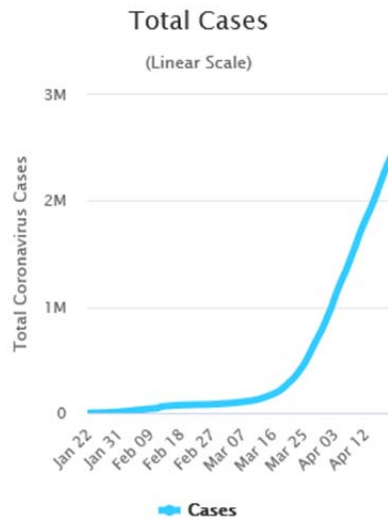


# How Healthy Organizations Can Prepare Now for Post-Pandemic Recovery

by Graham Lowe, Ph.D.  
Wellness Works Canada Webinar  
April 22, 2020



## COVID-19: The new (Ab)normal



### **Big Challenges AND Opportunities...**

- What is your 'Road to Recovery'?
- This is an opportunity to rethink & redesign work, and business strategies
- How effective are pandemic work adaptations?
- How do you support employee well-being and engagement?
- What are key lessons for the recovery?

## The economy is in a medically induced coma

- **McKinsey:** “The shock to our livelihoods from the economic impact of virus-suppression efforts could be the biggest in nearly a century.”
- **Canada:** By early April, > 3 million apply for COVID-19 job benefits
- **US:** 2 week job loss = 10 mil; 108 weeks recession job loss = 8.8 m
- **ILO:** 38% of global workforce affected
- Accentuating inequality



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## The post-pandemic world...

### **3 big trends:**

- de-globalization
- big corporations grow stronger
- wider spread of digital services

Economist, April 11, 2020

The  
Economist

### **THERE IS A 4<sup>TH</sup> TREND:**

#### *CHANGING WORK PRACTICES AND NORMS*

- Successfully moving work processes, teams, culture, management style, and communications to virtual, then back again
- Finding better ways of working and doing business
- Critical to shape this trend to benefit your workforce and the organization

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## Canadians' reactions

THE  
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GROUP

### ***EKOS National poll, first week of April:***

- Most Canadians believe we're in a recession
- Most expect personal finances will get worse
- Most experiencing stress because of the pandemic (highest in 35-49 age group)
- Plummeting confidence in our economic future



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## Extensive work disruptions

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### ***During the week of March 22-28..***

- 4 in 10 workers worked from home, 70% (4.7 million) because of COVID-19
  - *Well-educated knowledge workers most likely to work from home*
- 2 in 10 workers were absent from their jobs, 72% (2.8 million) because of COVID-19
- A total of 7.5 million Canadians have had their work life disrupted by COVID-19



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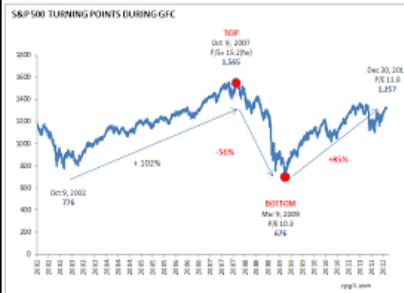
# What do we know about homeworkers?

## *Institute for Employment Studies, UK. March 2020 on-line Homeworkers Well-being Survey:*

- Significant decline in musculoskeletal health
- Declines in nutrition and exercise
- Concerns about poor sleep and increased fatigue
- Concerns over finances, isolation, energy, work-life balance, and family health
- Work motivation holding up, especially if in regular contact with boss
- *No comparable Canadian data*



# Lessons from past recessions



- Downsizing increases stress and diminishes the health of those laid off and 'survivors'
- Poorly executed downsizing/restructuring reduces organizational capabilities
- To avoid survivor syndrome, empower workers to redesign work tasks and processes to fit the renewed mission; respond to employees' concerns; and support individuals and teams to actively manage the changes
- Some companies came out the 2008-09 Recession stronger because employees were engaged in reinventing the business strategy and redesigning work

## Pandemic Paradox



“The Coronavirus Will Change How We Work Forever,” *Newsweek Magazine* (March 30, 2020)

- Remote work on the rise pre-pandemic
- Numerous surveys show unmet demand for flexible work arrangements
- Benefits = engagement, well-being, and ‘working smarter’
- **BUT** homework was quickly and externally imposed...and has costs
- **CAN YOU ADAPT IT AS A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY?**

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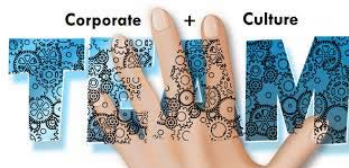
## Homework: Challenges create opportunities...

- Monitor employee experiences
- Develop resilience (basic psychological safety skills)
- Find new opportunities for learning, collaboration and innovation
- Acknowledge and support dependent care responsibilities
- Trust levels will go up if remote work is handled well
  - ✓ **Actions:** daily team huddles; personal check-ins; transparency; involve workers in decisions that will affect them; over communicate!



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## Maintaining a positive culture



- Culture is the critical link in an organization's well-being – performance chain
- You can't take culture for granted during trying times: You must actively reinforce it
- Positive cultures have widely shared people-centered values that guide behaviour
- Well-being goals are integrated into how the organization operates, thinks, and acts
- Culture is a strategic advantage, a rallying point for a motivated workforce
- The sense of community in healthy organizations reflects a culture of trust and ethical responsibility

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## An inclusive approach to change



- Making improvements must be a shared responsibility
- Each employee can show leadership through values-based behaviors that contribute to a positive workplace community
- Training managers and employees in resilience skills will build change capacity
- Encourage employees to take initiative to improve their work environment
- Inclusive leadership is sound OD and health promotion practice

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## Think of your workplace as a community



Todd.Ramsay.Art (on Instagram)

- ✓ A workplace community has a caring culture
- ✓ Employees can rely on each other when things get tough at work
- ✓ Everyone feels accountable for being a good organizational citizen. It is an expected part of how you go about your job.
- ✓ It is a psychologically healthy and safe workplace
- ✓ Supervisors/managers play a supportive role
- ✓ Gallup: “My supervisor cares about me as a person.”

## Defining resilience

- Thriving despite adversity
- Bouncing ‘forward’
- Managing stress
- Adapting to change
- Finding new strengths



**Individuals *and* organizations  
can learn to be resilient**



## Psychological Capital: Beyond Resilience



- The broader concept of “psychological capital” (PsyCap) encompasses a person’s capacity to be resilient, and also to be hopeful, confident and optimistic
- These combined positive traits are robust predictors of well-being and performance
- PsyCap is positively contagious, rippling out across the organization

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## CREATING HEALTHY ORGANIZATIONS

Taking Action to Improve Employee Well-Being



REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

Graham Lowe

# THANK YOU!

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