



Stress Management Society
...from distress to de-stress

The SMS Guide to Organising a Wellbeing Event

Simple steps that make all the difference



2011

HOW TO PLAN **A STRESS-FREE WELLBEING EVENT**



Report from The Stress Management Society

You're about to start planning a wellbeing event? Congratulations. You are about to start a project that is going to have a significant and lasting effect on people's lives. You are going to give them the space to step back from their challenges and stresses for a little time, and encourage them to fill the gap with more meaningful and healthy choices.

That's all very well, but you're not sure what to do next to make it a success?

Well, good news. You're in the right place for some expert advice.

The Stress Management Society (www.stress.org.uk) has put on hundreds of wellbeing events in the last decade, ranging from corporate days and team-building sessions to events at high class spas and even hugging sessions on major London train stations.

There's nothing we can't help you with. So you're in good hands.

In fact, we are asked so much to provide help to others planning wellbeing events that we decided to write this guide and make it available to you free.

So let's begin.

OBJECTIVES



Before you jump into WHAT you're going to do, you need to be very clear on WHY you're doing it.

In fact, it's not just why YOU are doing it. It's also what everyone else who is a sponsor or a contributor wants to get out of it.

Just consider, for example, what each of the following people might see as the objective for a wellbeing day in a company:

- **HR** – to reduce staff absence and boost morale
- **Occupational Health** – to help tackle some of the wellbeing targets in an organisation
- **Finance director** – to save more money in the long run than such an event costs
- **Managers** – to improve skills/resilience in their teams but have people away from their desks for as little time as possible
- **Staff** – to take a (legal) break from work, get some expert advice on areas that concern them and take away some corporate giveaways!

It's tough satisfying everyone's objectives. So be clear before you start whose objectives are going to be the yardstick of success for your event – usually the person supplying the budget or responsible for wellbeing in the organisation.

Business case

It is worth looking out for key statistics in your industry that strengthen your business case for running such a wellbeing event. For example, according to government statistics from Dame Carol Black (government adviser on wellbeing at work) **every pound spent on wellbeing at work returns £3 value to the employer in increased productivity and £6 in enhanced efficiency.**

GET SOME 'SOCIAL PROOF' OF HOW THINGS STAND NOW

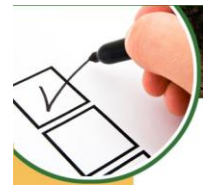
Now that you know your objective, now you can set up some sort of measure to compare now (before the event) with the future (after the event) to prove that you hit the objective.

So you are going to take the temperature of people's experiences and opinions now, and then shortly after the event you are going to do exactly the same questionnaire or survey to see if there is a discernable difference.

This is such a critical piece of work to show that your work is satisfying objectives and making a difference, but many people don't think about it until it's too late.

Here are some suggestions for measurement:

- **Questionnaire** – either sent round via email, through an intranet link, or externally to a service like SurveyMonkey.com which enables people to give answers confidentially.
- **Statistics** – gather key stats about what's to be measured (sick days, reported morale from the last staff survey) and decide if those stats are specific enough to be your benchmark. If not, do a questionnaire or a survey or revise the stats to give you something meaningful.
- **Key questions:**
 - What's your biggest wellbeing problem at work? (E.g. demands, deadlines, not enough breaks, time pressure, budget pressure, speed of work)
 - How do you rate us on tackling these issues?
 - What solutions do you think would solve the issue? (At this point suggest three or four core solutions – including the wellbeing event you are planning.)



- How do you rate us? (Ask people what they think of the help they receive with their wellbeing issues at work so you can see if there is uplift after you put on your wellbeing event.)

If you need help putting together an audit survey, get in touch with us at 0844 357 8629 or info@stress.org.uk.

THE RIGHT TEAM

First of all, make sure you have a team to help you. After all, this is a wellbeing event and if you try and do it all on your own you will probably implode from the pressure!

So spread the load.



Put together a project team or a steering committee that can help make decisions and take the action required to make your event a reality.

Here are the key roles that will have to be allocated. Each segment can be split into smaller task lists to help spread the responsibilities still further to several people:

- **Core decision making** – on objectives, budgets, dates, resources that can be allocated. Those involved here will be budget holders or portfolio holders in the organisation. The more senior the better. The decisions and parameters set out in this group will be fulfilled by other members of the project team who will deal with:
- **Venue** – booking the room(s), decorating, signage, parking allocation, facilities management resources on offer such as laptops/plasma screen/OHPs/internet access.
- **Booking participants** from outside the organisation – includes researching the right people with the right services, negotiating fees, booking and confirming all details to those coming in to take part in the event.

- **Ensuring buy-in from staff** – identifying who should take part, and getting them there on the day. Also getting buy-in from managers who might not want their teams to disappear en masse for someone else’s event. (See Marketing below).
- **Corporate giveaways** – research, design and order corporate giveaways branded with company colours and/or messages. www.stressmoodcards.com
- **Surveying** – both before the event, and after to get feedback. Draw up questions, and get them out in the most appropriate way. Check they have been completed and chase for feedback if necessary.



THE RIGHT SCHEDULE

The amount of time you need to plan a good event depends on what you’ve got in mind. A simple event like booking a therapist for on-site neck massage, or a talk to managers on spotting stress in their teams can be organized with a single phone call. A day-long event with many activities, contributors and products branded with your company message on wellbeing will take a little longer.

But the thing that in our experience takes the most time is your internal marketing. You will need at least a couple of weeks – and in most cases a bit longer – to promote your event to the people who you want to attend. In an ideal world, we’d recommend you leave yourself 3 months to plan and deliver a wellbeing event (after all you don’t want to end up in hospital recovering from the experience yourself!).

Ask yourself these key questions:

- Who do you want to attract to your event?
- How will you reach those people?
- How long a lead time do you need (ie if there are staff newsletters, how far in advance do you need to submit copy?)

MARKETING

DO NOT 'BUILD' YOUR EVENT AND HOPE THAT PEOPLE WILL COME!

We've seen plenty of events – many of them excellently conceived and executed – that have fallen flat because very few people turned up.



Remember it's usually not compulsory to attend wellbeing events. People have to volunteer their time away from their desk to be there. They may feel pressure (real or imagined) from colleagues or managers that might stop them coming. They might be so stressed that they don't think they can afford the time. They may have other things they want to do with their day or their lunch hour. They might be on holiday (note – avoid half term or school holiday times if at all possible!).

They need to know days – weeks perhaps – in advance and they need to keep hearing the message (albeit from slightly different angles) so it sinks in. They need to be told what benefits they will get from the event again and again

Draw up a schedule of communication (use every comms facility available to you such as newsletters, e-zines, intranet, email, instant messaging, posters in the canteen, manager briefings, etc.

Talk to communications about what's available to use, and see if they can work out a schedule for you complete with deadlines that you need to hit to get them stuff in time for publicity



Here's a good marketing plan to work to:

What objections do you think people will have that could stop them coming. Then think of how you can neutralize those objections.

So for example might someone have an uncooperative boss or colleagues who think such events are a waste of time? Make a point of getting managers and teams on side, explaining why it is essential their department benefits from this

event. Maybe even involve a departmental team competition to get people fired up a little more...

Or is having an event during lunch hour a problem? Why not include lunch as part of your event – some sandwiches are probably not going to break the bank and will be a great draw.

Once you've taken steps to neutralize objections, then your job is to 'sell' the event like fury, always focusing on the benefits of taking part! Explain what's in it for the people you want to attend. Spell out why they should take time out from their day or lunch break to attend.

Here are some tips on how to promote your event:

- Give your event a name. Create a simple brand identity for it – use the name or a logo (try clipart for this) on everything relating to the event to drive home the branding.



- Create some excitement by having a countdown on the intranet of the number of days till the event.

- Run quizzes to get people thinking about the issues you want to tackle.

- Have competitions, for example a photo competition where people can send in pictures of them dealing with a wellbeing issue at work.

- Remember that decoration can really heighten the buzz around an event, so print the event name on balloons which you use on the day (put them all over staff reception to get people talking, and have someone walking round the organisation handing out balloons all day to promote what's going on).



- Create goodie bags for people to take away after the event filled with follow up useful info or corporate giveaways that underline the messages of the day.

FINDING PROFESSIONAL THERAPISTS

The person with the responsibility for sourcing and booking outside suppliers for a wellbeing day has a very important job.

There are therapists operating in the UK who are not all they seem. Some are not officially qualified or recognized by industry bodies. And others do not have professional indemnity insurance. Such a lack could be against health and safety procedures in your organisation – so when choosing, choose wisely.

Alternatively you could take doubt away by using a professional database of therapists. The Stress Management Society has such a database, for example, which includes all our members. This searchable database includes therapists and healthcare professionals right across the UK. All our members are accredited, they are all background checked, they all have references and they all have insurance.

Therapies, treatments or demonstrations you could choose to include in your event which our members can help you with include:

- Interactive Therapies like head/neck/body/foot massage, acupuncture or reflexology
- Demonstrations of ergonomics, desk yoga and desk massage
- Heart Health
- Stress Awareness
- Health Screening for stress, blood pressure or cholesterol
- Know your numbers – BMI, blood pressure, weight, cholesterol
- Drumming for teamwork
- Coaching
- Self Hypnosis



Venue

If you've got a fantastic idea for a wellbeing event, sometimes you need a different venue outside your company. After all a healthy eating summer picnic works fantastically well in a park or a meadow – and not so well in the boardroom. So if your space doesn't lend itself to your project, get in touch. We can usually find you the perfect setting for your wellbeing event.



We have run events for people before, for example, at luxury spas like [Senspa](#), water rafting or dragon boat racing. There's lots of choice!

In fact there are significant advantages to getting people out of the office for a wellbeing event. Even if it's just for a few hours. It really focuses their attention on your event and elevates it to something special and memorable, and people don't have the chance to nip off and check their inbox for emails either.

Confidentiality

Often wellbeing events involve confidential discussions of people's health situations, health screenings or therapies that might involve removing layers of clothing. Please ensure you have planned ahead to provide comfortable, discreet and confidential areas for such activities to take place. If people don't think your arrangements go far enough, they simply won't participate.

THE RIGHT GIVEAWAYS

You can really underline the message of your event with the right giveaways. That's the thing that might sit on a person's desk or pop into their wallet for days, months even years. And all the while, it keeps 'transmitting' the message of your event.

So what are some good options?

Popular giveaways are things like pens and sweets. And although those have their place, they are ultimately disposable or difficult to 'brand' in a way where you can reproduce a message. (You can't get more than a line or two on a pen, for example, and it's difficult to read.

Instead think about things that people will retain and that are big enough to carry a message, e.g.:

Mouse mat – sits on the desk, can be printed with any message you like including campaign details, website addresses, phone numbers. Can even carry wellbeing technology (ask about our mouse mats that double as stress testers for example).

Stress mood cards – credit card sized durable tester cards that never wear out and can be used time and time again to test how stressed people are. Have a high retention rate, and a high pass-around rate too as they are something of a talking point.



Products that appeal to the senses like **Aroma Dough** or wellbeing sprays.

The Keep Calm And Carry On range – choose from a wide range of office products incorporating the Keep Calm And Carry On branding.

Combine this with your corporate message on wellbeing, and you have a stylish winner on your hands!

Change the wording to fit with your message (e.g. Keep Calm And Walk to Work, Keep Calm And Eat Healthy, etc).

And choose whatever colour suits you best – your corporate colours, for example.

Quantities

When ordering, remember that you should aim to have something for everyone who attends. Obviously events are not all about the giveaways, but tell that to the disappointed few who didn't get a mouse mat or a goodie bag.

Frequently we see companies under-ordering. So to avoid disappointment, we recommend you order a bit more than you think you need but make sure they are long life products branded generically with broad brush health and wellbeing messages. Any extras can just sit the cupboard ready for next time.

Takeaway literature – don't let people leave without giving them something to read. This gives you more time with them getting the message over. Also make sure you have good write ups about your event on the intranet complete with photos (and we recommend that you spend the modest fee needed to book a photographer for the day so you get some amazing publicity shots for the future. Put those pictures on the intranet and let people order them for their department or themselves for a small fee and you offset the cost of booking the photographer.)

AFTER THE EVENT

Feedback – make sure feedback is asked for at the event if possible when people leave, or done the next day. Task someone with coordinating it.

And if the event has been a success, let The Stress Management Society know about it. We will enter it into our National Stress Awards.

