

Human Sustainability: Everything you need to know (for now!)

As a society we are well accustomed to hearing the word “sustainability” in relation to the environment. But put that word in a different context, for example that of “human sustainability”, and some people might be left feeling at best unclear, and at worst uninterested, as they absorb the latest in a string of buzzwords that get floated around and overused. The concept of human sustainability, fortunately, possesses a vital and irrevocable relevance; it prioritises people. It’s no wonder the corporate world is catching on.

At Kamwell, our focus has always been on prioritising people’s health and wellbeing. As such, we are pleased to see this is being increasingly adopted by more organisations. This trend not only validates the importance of our decade-long work supporting working people’s wellbeing, but also promises a future where work is designed around people, not the other way around.

While it might seem obvious to some, we think it’s important to dive into what “Human Sustainability” means. If our peers and clients can synthesise the idea on a personal level alongside us, it blows the potential for creating real and lasting change within the working world, wide open.

What is human sustainability?

Human sustainability refers to the practice of creating and maintaining a world in which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony; ensuring that the social, economic, and environmental resources needed to support present and future generations are continually available and equitably distributed. This encompasses a wide range of efforts and principles aimed at promoting wellbeing, health, and quality of life for individuals and communities, while minimising the negative impact on the planet. Broadly, the key tenets are:

1. **Health and wellbeing:** ensuring access to healthcare, clean water, nutritious food, and a healthy living environment.
2. **Education and skills development:** providing education and opportunities for lifelong learning to empower individuals and communities.
3. **Social equity and inclusion:** promoting social justice, reducing inequalities, and ensuring that all people have access to the resources and opportunities needed for a fulfilling life.
4. **Economic stability:** creating sustainable economic systems that provide jobs, support livelihoods, and foster economic resilience.
5. **Environmental stewardship:** Protecting and restoring natural ecosystems, reducing pollution, and managing resources sustainably to ensure the long-term health of the planet.

What does this have to do with business?

It all sounds fairly utopian when listed out, and to some people these principles might even sound like total no-brainers. But, as we know, there is often a huge chasm between being theoretically aligned with something, and actually living that alignment in practice. Some might call it failure to walk the walk; and the world of work is sadly, often a prime example of this disconnect.

What does this mean for the future of businesses?

We asked ourselves this question and came up with some fundamentals to get us thinking:

- A move away from a mindset where it's about an organisation extracting value from its staff, and instead putting the health and longevity of the individual, the community and the planet at the centre of its practice.
- As a result of the above, redesigning workplaces and workflows to prioritise what they can contribute to the lives of their staff and their communities, rather than the other way around.
- Valuing individuals through recognising and encouraging their needs, concerns and interests.
- A holistic approach that recognises the interconnectedness of the social, economic and environmental elements of life, and views both the individual and the business itself as part of a mutually supportive community.

Final Thoughts

At Kamwell, we've always said that when people are well, they work well. What this shift in the conversation around human sustainability symbolises is that businesses need to be ready to go further than just the odd "away day" or team-building session. They need to be prepared to think radically about what can be changed at the systemic and operative levels, to become truly person-centred, and to reverse the narrative that when things get tough, it's the person who needs fixing, rather than the system itself.

About Us

We are Kamwell, a B Corp certified, multi-award-winning Workplace Wellbeing and Culture Consultancy. We partner with organisations to advance their human sustainability agendas, creating workplaces where wellbeing, equity, belonging, and purpose fuel long-term positive outcomes for everyone involved.

Our industry-leading strategy work, advanced data and analytics, and high-impact programmes address the root causes of poor wellbeing and sub-optimal culture; embed wellbeing as a multistakeholder responsibility; and support organisations to balance economic growth with social responsibility. Our products include:

FOR THE WHOLE ORGANISATION

Wellbeing strategy: create a comprehensive, data-driven and tailored strategy

FOR LEADERS AND MANAGERS

Leading for wellbeing programme: unleash the power of wellbeing-centred leadership

FOR COLLEAGUES

Energise You Programme: put wellbeing at the heart of your organisation

FOR WELLBEING CHAMPIONS

The Culture Catalyst Course: upskill your wellbeing champions to be catalysts for a thriving culture



We'd love to connect, you can reach us on: hello@kamwell.com