

# Gallagher Breakfast Seminar with Bruce Daisley

Event Summary from 10 October 2019



Insurance | Risk Management | Consulting



**UK business faces some serious issues: the kind of deep-seated issues that make Brexit seem like a mere bump in the road. We're talking of course about the huge problems of staff turnover, skills shortages, high levels of sickness absence: all of which boil down to one overriding issue – namely low levels of employee engagement.**

Organisational wellbeing represents the answer. It's how you make working life a better experience for all your people. How you make them more than just "stick around". Businesses need people motivated to proactively give effort, provide ideas and play their part in the overall goals. And, in turn, how you gain a competitive advantage as a workplace that simply works better. But few have got this nailed down.

In our recent breakfast seminar, our guest speaker Bruce Daisley, EMEA Vice President of Twitter and best-selling author of *The Joy of Work*, took us on a whistlestop tour of a world of research and his own personal experience and insights to offer his top tips on how to learn to love work again: the key to greater job satisfaction and greater commitment to the organisation.

He was followed by Matt Frost, Business Development Director, Gallagher Communications, who looked at how and why injecting the human touch into workplace communications - particularly around wellbeing and benefits - could lead to a better relationship between employer and employee.

Why is the employer / employee relationship so pivotal? Because it leads to trust. And trust leads to better engagement, productivity, corporate reputation. All of which translates into better business.

Unfortunately, all of this might not be realised by the majority of UK businesses because nearly three fifths (56%) lack a pre-defined benefit communication budget. This represents one of the key findings of Gallagher's 2019 Benefits Strategy and Benchmarking Survey, a sneak preview of which was provided at the breakfast briefing.

Benefits and wellbeing go hand in hand. And, by extension, benefits and employee engagement go hand in hand. But the existence of this correlation does not mean benefits alone are a golden bullet for engagement.

It is undeniable, however, that employers see the value a highly rated benefits package can bring to their organisation. The two most common changes organisations are planning next year, according to our benchmarking survey, entail that employees will see their benefits improve and become more tailored to them, which is likely to impact their levels of engagement and productivity: 78% of employers are looking to enhance benefit packages.

Overall though, organisational wellbeing is a product of the environment in which these are promoted. And that requires a truly holistic, all-encompassing approach. We call this Gallagher Better Works: an approach that centres on your people's physical, emotional, career and financial wellbeing. It gives HR departments an enormous toolbox of solutions to help promote better organisational wellbeing.

Meanwhile, for everyone who attended our breakfast briefing, here's a recap. For those who didn't, here's what you missed. We look forward to seeing you at the next Gallagher Better Works Breakfast Seminar in 2020.



BRUCE DAISLEY  
EMEA Vice President  
Twitter, Inc

*“The idea that you  
can work on and on  
is an illusion”*

## Rediscovering the Joy of Work

*Guest speaker Bruce Daisley, EMEA Vice President of Twitter and best-selling author of The Joy of Work, provided his top tips on how to fix work culture.*

Bruce Daisley believes work culture is in a predicament and there's no easy solution. During his seven years at Twitter, he found that as the company grew, the highly motivated approach of many of the staff diminished. This wasn't something isolated to Twitter either. He learnt that across the globe, only around a quarter to a fifth of all workers were engaged. In a bid to find out why, Bruce started a podcast called Eat Sleep Work Repeat where he invited experts - psychologists and academics - to discuss issues related to work culture.

What became clear to him is that we're currently witnessing two big megatrends. The first, he explained, started about 15 years ago when mobile phones entered the workplace. Mobiles have increased the length of the working day from 7.5 to 9.5 hours. Consequently, we have created workers who are perpetually busy and stress levels have gone through the roof.

The second megatrend Bruce highlighted is around artificial intelligence (AI) and the idea that machine learning will steal our jobs. In his opinion, this is hard to visualise. He says it's true that machines will handle administrative jobs, but those jobs that require ingenuity and creativity will still require the human touch.

*“Stress kills the capacity  
to be creative”*

*“We can only form  
trusting relationships  
with a maximum of 150  
people. Have we created  
organisations that go  
way beyond that?”*

Added to these megatrends, he explains, there are two contributing factors at play: Positive Affect and Psychological Safety.

- **Positive Affect:** Positive affect goes to the heart of understanding that the decisions you make are controlled by the mood you're in. When we're at work, positive affect helps us do a better job.
- **Psychological Safety:** To help individuals and teams do their best work, we not only have to be in the right mindset ourselves, but to feel comfortable and safe among our colleagues. This is psychological safety.

## The dangers of decision fatigue

Silicon Valley companies often claim to have a great work culture. But having worked in that environment, Bruce doesn't think they have all the answers. Take technology entrepreneur and billionaire Elon Musk as an example. The co-founder of PayPal – just one of his many business ventures – famously stated that: “Nobody ever changed the world on 40 hours a week”.

He works 120 hours a week, sleeps under his desk in a sleeping bag around three times a week and believes that unless you're working 80 hours a week, you're barely showing up. This is incredibly dangerous for young people to hear, adds Bruce.

In 2014, economist John Pencavel looked at how many hours the optimum working week might contain. He found that the output of physical labour declines after 55 hours. If this is true about physical labour, is it also the case with mental labour? asks Bruce.

He goes on to discuss the findings of neuroscientist Daniel Levitin, who talks about information overload in his book *The Organised Mind*. Levitin says there's a limit to how many decisions we can make in a day. In other words, the evidence shows that our brain is far more finite than we might think.

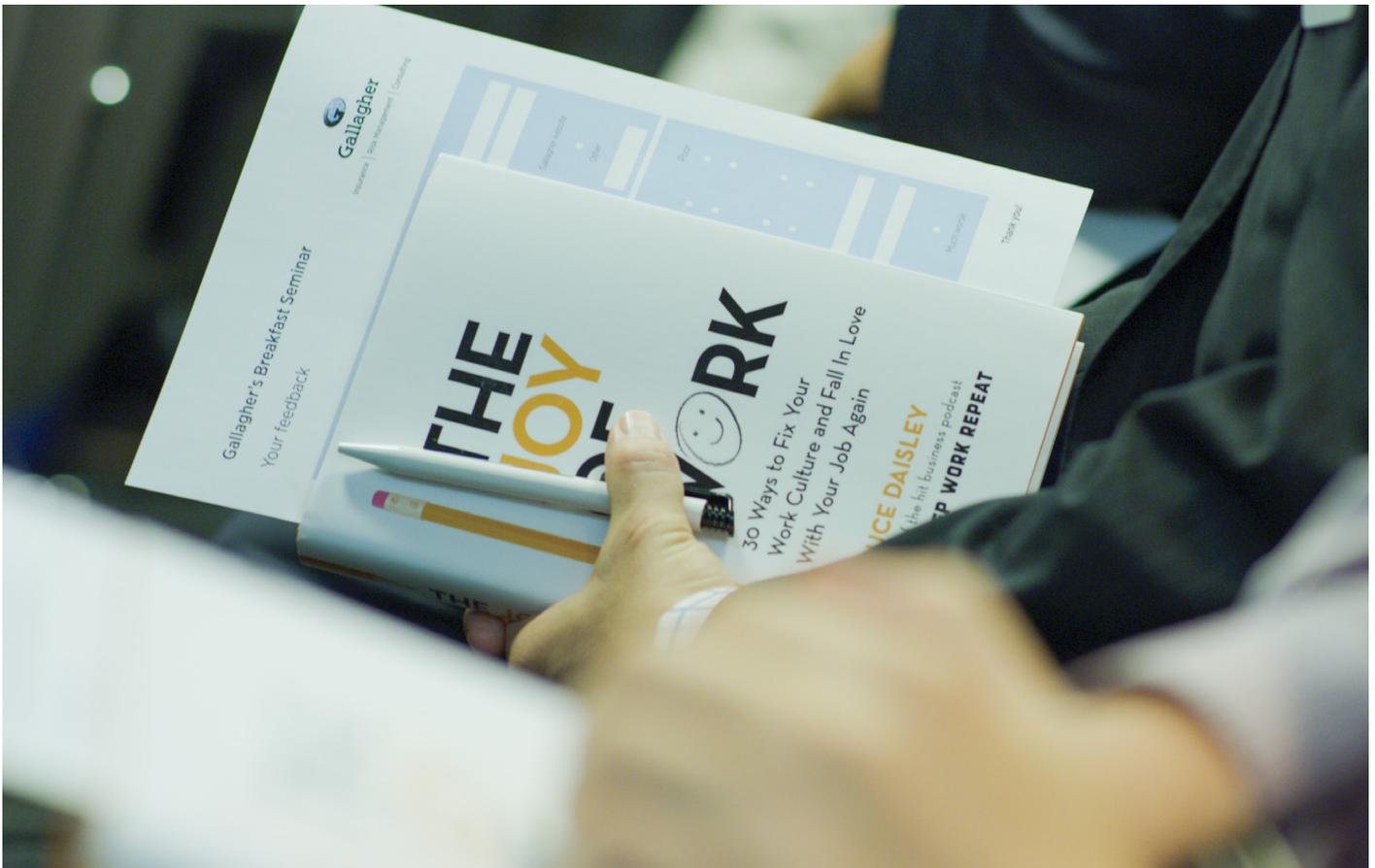
## Learning to love work again

Overload represents the biggest challenge facing all of us, says Bruce. According to *Harvard Business Review*, the average executive – or manager – spends 23 hours a week in meetings. The average office worker spends closer to 16 hours. That's between 2 – 3 days a week in meetings.

When we try to make progress at work, it's the emails and meetings that get in way, he says. We need to find a way to get these things out of our team's way when we are trying to improve engagement.

So, assuming distractions are limited, how can we learn to love work again? Bruce highlights a couple of obvious ones: sleep more and get happier friends! The former is obviously more controllable than the latter.





On top of these, he outlines five key ways to help us love work:

### 1. Understand how we think

Our best ideas don't come to us when we're sat staring at a screen, hand on our mouse. Hollywood screenwriter Aaron Sorkin gets his best ideas in the shower, which is why he has 8 - 10 showers a day and installed one in his office. Our brain's daydreaming 'default' mode is when most of our creative thinking happens.

### 2. Understand how we team

All the evidence suggests that humans derive joy from being in synchrony with those around us. When we feel connected to others, it's transformative and energising. Think how you feel when you're dancing with others, singing in a choir or celebrating sporting success. It can lead to better work too. For example, in 1920, Harvard psychologist Floyd Allport observed that the simple fact of working alongside someone – even if they're working independently – increases productivity: the slower worker speeding up to be in sync with the faster worker.

### 3. Understand how we relax

The power of a shared break. Research on call centre workers found that those who went on a 15-minute shared break were 19% less stressed and had a 23% performance increase. The human connection that takes place in the workplace is a massive contribution to enjoying work.

### 4. Understand how we settle in

Dan Cable, a London Business School professor, asked new starters in a call centre at a technology firm Wipro to reflect on: "What is unique about you that leads to your happiest times and best performance at work". Just getting them to think about this made them immediately feel more at home in Wipro and after six months: they were far more likely to still be in their job; their customers were happier, 72% vs 61%; and employee retention improved 57%.

### 5. Understand how we belong

One of the trends over recent years is the growth of workplace loneliness. A survey last year by Relate suggested that 42% of British workers say they don't have a friend at work. Meanwhile, a study by Professor Julianne Holt-Lunstad found that isolation increases the risk of a person's premature death by 50%, whereas obesity increases it by just 30% in comparison. In short, 'belongingness' is a human need, says Bruce. At work, a feeling of belonging among the people with whom we spend five days a week is essential to workplace happiness. This brings obvious considerations for all employers, but especially where remote workers and contractors are concerned.

Understanding all of the above and encouraging humanity in the workplace – or, as Professor of Management Sigal Barsade describes it 'companionate love' – will help both employees and the bottom line. Barsade's own research (involving 3,200 employees across seven different industrial sectors) suggests that 'companionate love' is accompanied by greater job satisfaction, greater commitment to the organisation and also greater accountability.



MATT FROST  
Business Development Director  
Gallagher Communications

*“Better business requires a totally different way of thinking”*

*“Whatever’s going on in your business, you need to humanise it”*

*“Trust is built on your employees’ opinions of the organisation”*

## From logical to emotional communications

*Matt Frost, Business Development Director, Gallagher Communications, says moving from logical to emotional communications can drive better employee wellbeing and benefits engagement.*

The statistics are depressing. Staff turnover is costing the UK around £4bn a year. And churn is increasing. It costs about £30,000 per person each time someone leaves! That excludes salary - it can take 5 to 6 months for people to simply become profitable. What’s more, nearly three fifths of all sick days relate to mental health. More than 8 in 10 employees are not engaged. When will there be good news!

In short, getting and keeping the right talent in a business is the thing that’s keeping CEOs awake at night. Or at least it should be, because that’s what will make the business run better.

Despite a multitude of discrete initiatives to help tackle these issues (and a few companies lauded - rightly or not - as paragons of perfection) it’s debatable whether we’ve moved the needle at all. The relationship between employer and employee is still not clear.

Better business requires a totally different way of thinking. It’s time to flip everything on its head. Start at grassroots level and focus on solving the people agenda: namely improved employee engagement, loyalty and buy-in. Get that right and everything else will follow.

The key is organisational wellbeing: the bringing together of the physical, emotional and social to help business’ make working life a better experience for all their people.

### **The human touch**

Communications are a key component of organisational wellbeing. Capability in internal comms, business comms and benefits comms will drive change within businesses.

Whatever’s going on in your business, you need to humanise it. If you’re going through a round of redundancies, think how you might help those people in other ways – support with CV preparation and perhaps career counselling – rather than just spouting terms and conditions and policy process.

Take benefits, for example. When talking about benefits, we miss the human connection. We forget that there's always a human behind the benefits we're offering. Letters from insurers are mechanical. They contain no emotion whatsoever. Neither do they contain anything from or about the employer.

Consider this quote by American poet and author Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel".

We need to start injecting some emotion into the benefits we offer. Back up all the terms and conditions with real-life stories about how those benefits are helping real people.

Technology obviously plays a huge part in benefits communication. But it's all too often seen as a replacement for human interaction.

And let's face it, HR systems are complicated. Anyone using them generally has no idea where they go. Compare that to Google: 100% focused on answering your questions.

## Why now?

Why are we talking about this now? Because for the first time in business, the customer no longer comes first. A good reputation may help you drive business in the short term, but it will only get you so far. These days, consumers won't buy a product unless they trust the company behind it.

And trust is built on your employees' opinions of the organisation. Edelman's 2019 Trust Barometer found that three quarters of people (76%) believe that how a business treats its employees is a key indicator of trustworthiness.

Organisations need to take this and apply it to the problem of churn and productivity.

We find time and again that when you engage employees on wellbeing and benefits, their scores against measures such as enjoying work, intending to stay, recommending as a great place to work, all go off the charts. All of this, in turn, translates into better business results.

### Sources:

1 Replacing an employee costs £30,000 report says, Acas website [Accessed October 2019].

2 The evidence: Case study heroes and engagement data demons, Engage for Success, 2016.

The government sponsored MacLeod report<sup>2</sup> demonstrated some years ago the return on investment (ROI) of engagement initiatives via case studies across various industry sectors. For example, retailer Maplin evidenced links between employee engagement and store sales performance. The better half of its stores which managed engagement well outperformed their sales budgets by £500,000 more than the other half of the stores and grew year on year sales by £1 million more.

Royal Bank of Scotland established links between employee engagement and business performance, customer service and employee wellbeing. The top 10% of business units compared to the bottom 10% by engagement delivered twice the business performance, incurred half the voluntary turnover, had customer service scores 5% higher and had absence rates 2% lower.

At Gallagher we help organisations improve employee engagement by taking an holistic approach to organisational wellbeing. We call this Gallagher Better Works. It's a belief that the physical, emotional and social are all connected. And unless you can make those connections and make working life a better experience for all your people, all the programmes and mechanics you put in place are unimportant. You'll just be firefighting.

If you'd like to find out more, or learn how we can help your business bring out its better, please schedule a meeting with your Gallagher consultancy or email

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