

# VISION ZERO

## Wellbeing: Managing Mental Health by Vision Zero

VISION ZERO  
PRACTICE



# Wellbeing: The New ISSA Tool for a Growing Challenge at the Workplace - Managing Mental Health by Vision Zero

## Author

**Pernille Thau**

*Human House Denmark*

*Mental Health and Wellbeing from a Vision Zero Perspective is understood as an integral part of workplace health and safety. The mindset assumes that all accidents, harm and work-related ill health are preventable. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of creating a work environment that proactively supports the psychological wellbeing of employees. There are a lot of reasons why organizations would benefit from increasing their focus on wellbeing, including attraction and retention of employees and managers, social media reputation, as well as productivity and cost-efficiency.*

## The Vision Zero Guide on Wellbeing

Human House is proud co-author of the ISSA Vision Zero Guide on Mental Wellbeing: *“How to create a healthy work environment and promote wellbeing at work with Vision Zero”*. The Guide aims to support leaders and managers by providing ample background information on wellbeing at work. It is a comprehensive mindset that aligns with various international guidelines and standards, and it builds upon the ISSA Guide for Vision Zero and its 7 Golden Rules. The Guide also provides tools to measure and manage wellbeing at work and emphasises the importance of proactive measures and a participatory culture in creating an environment where employee wellbeing is paramount.

## The Vision Zero Maturity Scale Model

The Maturity Scale Model is a tool that aims to provide organizations with an understanding of their prevention level in relation to safety, health, and wellbeing. It helps them reorientate their practices towards reaching a higher level of prevention. Organizations can be at different steps on their journey towards wellbeing prevention. Some might be passive or only reactive as issues emerge while others might be active having implemented several actions to promote wellbeing at work. The journey can be viewed as a development starting from little to no engagement in preventive measures on the passive level, towards a more active engagement to actively fostering a safe and healthy workplace at the creating level. As the figure below demonstrates it, ultimately evolves into a stage where preventive measures are seamlessly

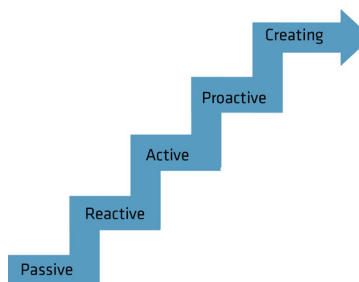
integrated into the daily operations, becoming a central focus for management:

## Assessment of the organizations' prevention level

On the passive level wellbeing is not a priority in the organisation. The reactive level marks a lower tier of commitment, where the organisation only focuses on wellbeing in case of, for example, many stress incidents or conflicts. Companies on the active level have wellbeing policies but might sideline them in daily operations meaning that there is not always consistency between words and actions in the organisation. Those at the proactive level address wellbeing issues like employee stress and take steps to prevent these problems. This means that wellbeing is prioritised and focused on by preventing psychological ill health before it occurs. At its most advanced level, the creating level, wellbeing is an integrated part of business leadership with an ongoing daily focus. At this level, there is a focus on creating the best workplace to attract and retain managers and employees.

The Maturity Scale Model prompts reflection and dialogue and serves both as a benchmarking tool and a roadmap for organizations striving to achieve a higher level of prevention. Once you have assessed the prevention level of your organisation, it is time to take measures towards reaching the next prevention level. This is where the 7 Golden Rules on Wellbeing come into play.

**Figure 1.** *Organizational prevention levels: Vision Zero Enterprise Maturity Scale Model*



*Source: Inspired by Professor Patrick Hudson - adopted and further developed by Human House.*

“ There are a lot of reasons why organisations would benefit from increasing their focus on wellbeing, including attraction and retention of employees and managers, social media reputation, as well as productivity and cost-efficiency. ”

## Vision Zero - 7 Golden Rules on Wellbeing

The 7 Golden Rules on Wellbeing of Vision Zero serve as a comprehensive framework to elevate workplace wellbeing. To successfully create a healthy workplace and reach a higher prevention level on wellbeing, the Vision Zero Proactive Leading Indicators (PLI) should be used and implemented. However, before we dive further into Proactive Leading Indicators, let's take a closer look at the 7 Golden Rules.

### The 7 Golden Rules

The first rule *take leadership* emphasises how leadership commitment is paramount and that leaders are urged to actively demonstrate their dedication to the wellbeing of both managers as well as employees.

The second rule *identify hazards* underlines the importance of identifying hazards through wellbeing risk assessments, especially during changes in the organisation and work processes.

Setting proactive wellbeing targets through leading indicators helps organizations measure their progress which is suggested in rule number three called *define targets*.

The fourth rule *ensure a safe and healthy system* points out that establishing an ethical framework ensures integration of wellbeing into all systems.

Safety in machines, equipment, and workplaces, including IT systems design, is moreover, according to rule number five *ensure safety and health in machines, equipment, and workplaces*, essential to prevent health risks.

The sixth rule *improve qualifications*, involves enhancing the competencies of leaders, managers, and employees in relation to wellbeing.

Finally, investing in people by involving them in regular and systematic wellbeing dialogues fosters, according to rule number seven *invest in people*, a culture of continuous improvement and engagement.

Figure 2. 7 Golden Rules



## Vision Zero - Proactive Leading Indicators

And now back to the Proactive Leading Indicators. They represent dynamic and actionable processes, activities, and performances that extend beyond merely managing existing risks and maintaining current standards. They emphasise the recognising, creating, using, and evaluating opportunities for continuous improvement, thereby offering a higher potential for impactful outcomes. Some of the reasons for using Proactive Leading Indicators are focusing on activities that generate good SHW, predicting future SHW performance, identifying strengths and weaknesses, providing timely, proactive, and relevant feedforward and feedback, and allowing for benchmarking.

### How can we set Proactive Goals for Wellbeing?

To successfully create a healthy workplace and reach a higher prevention level on wellbeing, organizations should develop and implement Proactive Leading Indicators (PLI) aligned with the 7 Golden Rules of Vision Zero.



**This article was presented at the A+A 2023 held in Düsseldorf from 24 to 25 October 2023.**

**A publication of the International Section of the ISSA on Information for Prevention.**

**Published in 2024.**