



Where to Start: SME Handbook

A starter kit for keeping your team
healthier and happier





Your Wellbeing Handbook Part 1:

Why Staff Don't Change (and What To Do About It)

You've probably tried it before.

You put something in place to help staff, maybe a rota system, or a reminder to "take your breaks." And yet... people keep skipping lunch, leaving late, or looking frazzled.

It's easy to think: *"My staff just won't do it."*

But here's the truth: it's not that they don't want to. It's usually that one of three things is missing. Once you know which one, you can fix it.

That's the COM-B model:

- **Capability** (do they know how?)
- **Opportunity** (is the environment set up for it?)
- **Motivation** (do they feel it's worth it?)

Capability: *"Show me how."*

In a Limerick salon, junior stylists complained of sore wrists. They'd never been shown how to prevent strain. A senior stylist gave a 10-minute demo on hand stretches. Now it's part of the daily routine.

If staff don't know what to do, they won't do it.





Opportunity: *“Make it possible.”*

In a Waterford garage, one mechanic was trying to quit smoking. The owner set up a “fresh air break” rota, so he could step out for a walk instead of a cigarette. Other staff joined in.

If the environment doesn't allow it, the behaviour won't happen.

Motivation: *“Give me a reason.”*

In Meath, the boss of a legal firm knew that several staff were doing Dry January. He joined them and celebrated those sticking with it each Friday with nonalcoholic prosecco and baked treats. Suddenly, the whole office was cheering each other on.

People do things when they feel it's valued.

Quick Diagnostic Checklist

Next time something isn't sticking with your team, ask yourself about their **Capability, Opportunity and Motivation:**

- Do they know how?
- Do they have time and space?
- Do they feel it matters?

If the answer is no, that's your fix.

Your Action Step This Week

Pick one wellbeing habit in your business that isn't landing. Run it through COM-B. Fix the missing piece.

Most times, it's not the people. It's the setup.





Your Wellbeing Handbook Part 2:

Make it Easy Attractive, Social and Timely

Telling staff to just “be healthier” doesn’t work. Neither does buying a box of apples and hoping for the best.

The UK’s Behavioural Insights Team cracked it with their model: **Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely (EAST)**. When you design habits with these four in mind, they tend to actually stick.

Easy: Make it the simplest option

In Donegal, a team working in the local council wanted to lose weight for their summer holidays. Together they agreed on a simple rule: bring in healthy lunches on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays to eat together. They even shared recipe cards.

People do what’s easy.

Attractive: Make it rewarding or fun

In Cork, a logistics company ran a “Charity Challenge Month.” Each department picked a cause, and every kilometre walked or cycled added to their fundraising total. Competition was friendly, money went to charity that mattered to them, and staff were moving more.

People do what feels rewarding.





Social : Involve others and show it's normal

In Wicklow, a café owner started a weekly “beverage with the boss” slot. One staff member sat down with her for 15 minutes, no agenda. Soon, staff started doing it with each other too. Bonds grew across shifts.

People copy what they see.

Timely: Tie it to a routine

In Kildare, a small office introduced a “lottery lunch.” Each week, 2 names were drawn at random and those colleagues got a free lunch together, on the company. It became a fun Friday ritual, and staff who’d never usually chat ended up laughing over sandwiches.

People act when you connect it to a regular moment.

Your Action Steps This Week

Choose one of the four: Easy, Attractive, Social, Timely.

- Easy: remove a barrier
- Attractive: add a reward
- Social: model it yourself
- Timely: create a new ritual

Try one idea this week. Small, real, and consistent is what sticks.





Your Wellbeing Handbook Part 3:

Tiny Habits, Big Impact

Big changes are scary. “We’ll all get fit this year.” “No more stress in the shop.” “Everyone eats healthier.” Sounds great until real life kicks in.

That’s why James Clear’s *Atomic Habits* is so powerful. His point? Don’t start big. Start tiny. Attach new habits to existing routines. Shape the environment. Build an identity. And repeat until it’s just the way we do things here.

Start Tiny

- Take 60 seconds to stand, stretch, and roll your shoulders
- Send a quick thank-you text or WhatsApp to a teammate.
- Share one positive story in the daily huddle.
- Write a quick note of praise for a staff member.

Habits stick when you shrink them to two minutes or less.





Stack Habits

- After I clock in, I will drink a glass of water.
- After I switch on my computer, I will write down my top 3 priorities.
- After I log off for lunch, I will invite one colleague to join me.
- After the Monday check-in, I will thank someone for their help last week.

Stack new habits onto existing routines: *“After I do X, I’ll do Y.”*

Shape the Environment

In Dublin, a courier company noticed drivers grabbing crisps and chocolate at every stop. The boss stocked the office with healthier snacks - protein bars, fruit, yoghurts - right by the clock-in machine. Suddenly, staff had an easy swap.

Change the environment, and you change behaviour. Plus, it’s easier to replace one unhealthy habit with a healthier one, rather than give it up altogether.

Build Identity

In Galway, a retailer started a staff volunteer group. Every month, two people had time off to work with a local charity. They began calling themselves *“the kind shop”*. Soon, looking after each other and the community became part of their team identity.

People stick with habits when it becomes who they are.





Stay Consistent

In Dublin, a DIY store started a weekly “fixed it” award. Every month, staff anonymously wrote down who had gone over and above to solve a customer problem. The winner got a free day’s holidays . They did it every month, without fail. A year later, the ritual is part of the company’s culture.

Habits stick through repetition, not perfection.

Your Action Step This Week

Pick *one* of these:

- Start tiny - support a small change
- Stack it - link a habit to a daily routine.
- Shape it - make the healthier choice easier.
- Identity - frame it as “who we are.”
- Consistency - repeat until it becomes a ritual.

Do one this week. Then repeat. That’s how culture shifts.



