

Roundtable Discussion: What Makes a Good Workplace?

Some years ago, the University of Sydney received support from the Business Council of Australia to undertake research to identify “excellent workplaces” across Australia. The research report describes excellent workplaces as those that are: *“So extraordinary in their performance as to cause us to stop and remark on them. They are the leading workplaces, the exemplars of productivity.”*

There were 15 **“drivers of excellence”** identified in the study.

The weekly topics based on the Drivers of Excellence

Week 1: The quality of working relationships

People relating to each other as friends, colleagues, and co-workers; supporting each other, and helping to get the job done

Week 2: Workplace leadership:

How the immediate supervisor, team leader, manager or coordinator presented himself or herself. Their focus on leadership and energy, not management and administration

Week 3: Having a say:

Participating in decisions that affect the day-to-day business of the workplace

Week 4: Clear values:

The extent to which people could see and understand the overall purpose and individual behaviours expected in the place of work

Week 5: Being safe:

High levels of personal safety, both physical and psychological, emotional stability and a feeling of being protected by the system

Week 6: The built environment:

A high standard of accommodation and fit out, with regard to the particular industry type

Week 7: Recruitment:

Getting the right people to work in the location, employees sharing the same values and approach to work as the rest of the group

Week 8: Pay and conditions:

A place in which the level of income and the basic physical working conditions (hours, access, travel and the like) are met to a reasonable standard - at least to a level that the people who work there see as reasonable

Week 9: Getting Feedback:

Always knowing what people think of each other, their contribution to the success of the place, and their individual performance over time

Week 10: Autonomy and uniqueness:

The capacity of the organisation to tolerate and encourage the sense of difference that excellent workplaces develop; a sense of being the best at what they do

Week 11: A sense of ownership and identity:

Being seen to be different and special through pride in the place of work, knowing the business and controlling the technology

Week 12: Learning:

Being able to learn on the job, acquire skills and knowledge from everywhere, and develop a greater understanding of the whole workplace

Week 13: Passion:

Energy and commitment to the workplace, high levels of volunteering, excitement and a sense of wellbeing, actually wanting to come to work

Week 14: Having fun:

A psychologically secure workplace in which people can relax with each other and enjoy social interaction

Week 15: Community connections:

Being part of the local community, feeling as though the workplace is a valuable element of local affairs