Optimizing Wellness in the Trust & Safety Industry

Project Comprehend:
A Concentrix + Webhelp
Research Study
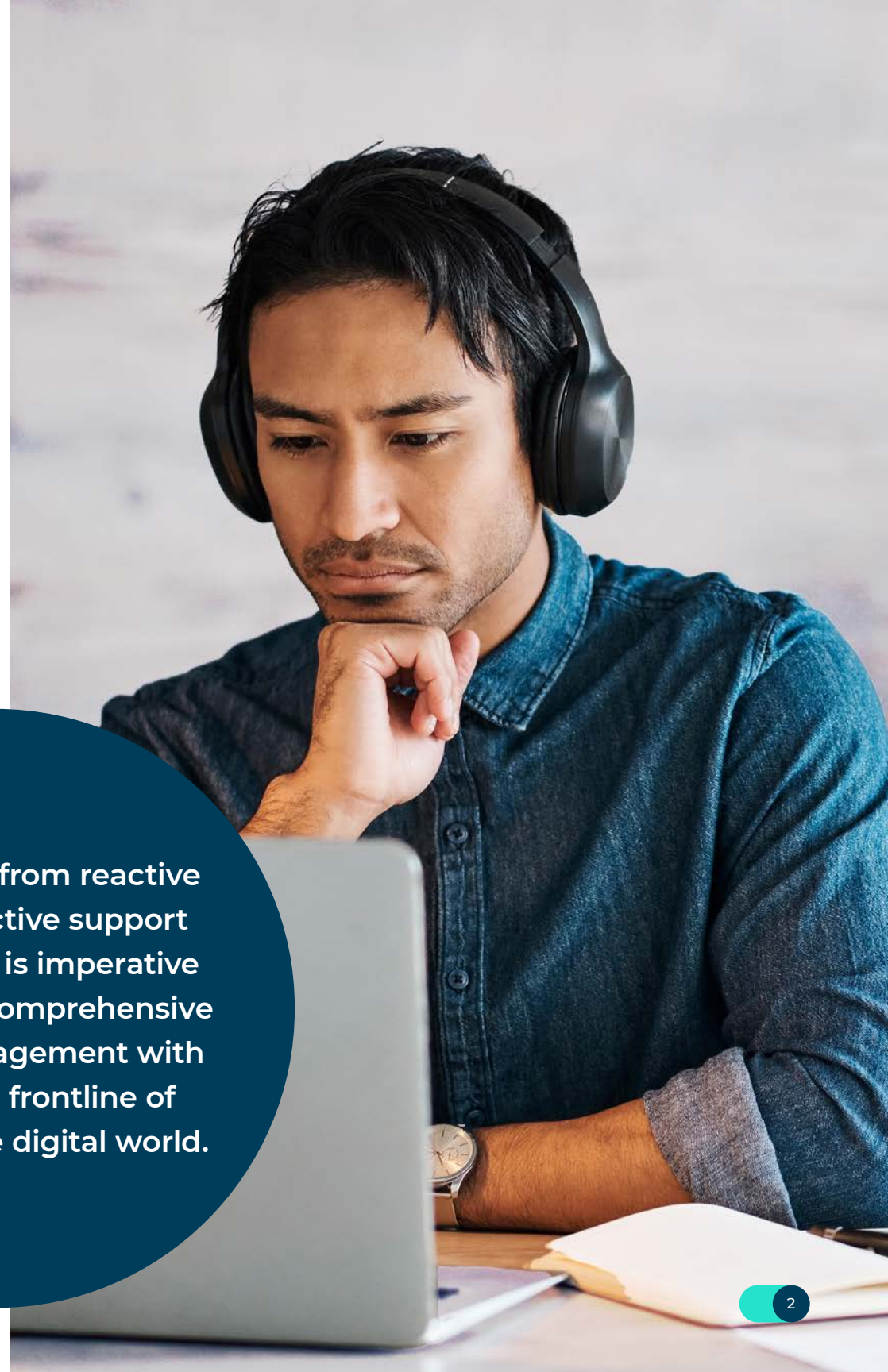
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Introduction

The trust and safety industry has entered a period of transformation—and the wellbeing of trust and safety (T&S) experts must be prioritized from a psychological and physical perspective.

T&S experts are constantly exposed to content of all types—images, videos, graphics, motions, gameplay—that can be violent, abusive, racist, pornographic, and include social and cultural content that might be in opposition to personal beliefs and orientation.

There's no doubt that this work comes with a heavy emotional price. Adding to the work pressure, T&S experts' analytical skills, flexible decision-making skills, and cognitive adaptability are constantly being challenged to adapt to different emerging formats, technology, and trends across varied cultural/social contexts. Transitioning from reactive care to proactive support and empathy is imperative to building a comprehensive model of engagement with those at the frontline of protecting the digital world.

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Concentrix + Webhelp's Project Comprehend research was recognized in 2022 by Best in Biz Awards North America as Enterprise Product of the Year.

A problem exists in the realm of psychological assessment because research in the field of job satisfaction, wellbeing, and stress have confirmed that all studies to date have been flawed by the issues associated with memory, subconscious and conscious bias, and lack of objective quantitative data measuring stress and wellbeing levels. While this problem doesn't reduce or minimize the importance of the research conducted to date, combining this research with an objective model based on quantitative data offered meaningful insight to our pursuit of this research.

In industries where the mental and physical health of the individual must be prioritized, we must challenge ourselves in building layered methodologies that enable a greater understanding of how to best support the individual. Using such a mixed-methodology enables us to go beyond the limitations of both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Building a proactive strategy to mental health care in the workplace has been extensively explored from a productivity, performance, and cost analysis standpoint. Specifically in the trust and safety industry, there is even extensive research to prove XYZ.

However, the existing research hasn't gone deep enough, as the problem of inherent bias persists. Instead of accepting the norm, we propose digging deeper to put innovative methods at the forefront of using data to define and drive wellbeing strategy forward.

The goal of this research is to truly understand what makes a wellness intervention beneficial to the individual and improve the approach to wellness. In understanding the benefit, entire operating models can be aligned more closely with creating a continuous, positive impact, thus building a program of holistic support, rather than relying solely on reactive wellness interventions.

Lisa Kavanagh
Vice President, Global Delivery Practices

CONCENTRIX + Webhelp

Scope of the Study

Project Comprehend 1.0 was a six-month neuroscientific study involving over 400 T&S experts across six lines of business on two social media accounts, including video and written content moderation.

Using screenless heart rate monitors, the hormone oxytocin was measured across the cohort, alongside operational and demographic data.

Using an advanced neurotech platform from Immersion, the key measurement outputs were "engagement" and "psychological safety," which enabled visibility on the high and low points of each individual's shift, building greater transparency on the **lived experience** of moderation work.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Understand what interventions and programs enhanced individual and group wellbeing.

- Inform strategies around training, operations, and leadership management.

- Optimize the levels of support to those who need it.

Research Overview

The two social media accounts studied in the research included low, moderate, and high content complexity types.

- **Low content complexity** is low impact content that requires correctly reviewing profiles and written content, along with policy guidelines. This work is straightforward and extremely repetitive in nature.

- **Moderate content complexity** is mostly low impact content, with some egregious content. It includes a variety of both video and written content and requires some creative thinking.

- **High content complexity** is more challenging, egregious content. It includes a wide variety of written or media based content and requires applying logic and problem-solving to policy adherence.

The research data was collected using heart rate monitors and a neural-hormone based technology platform that identifies individual oxytocin production based on intelligent algorithms and statistical analysis. This system enabled an objective and biological measurement of individuals' psychological and engagement levels, which offered the unique opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of day-to-day activities on wellbeing. The data was aligned along T&S expert schedules, resulting in greater insights into the overall trends.

Based on participants' engagement and psychological safety levels, they were plotted along the following **Emotional Presence Persona Quadrant** into four categories: *emotionally present, emotionally unsupported, disengaged,* and *crisis.*

Emotional Support Persona Quadrant

Physiological Safety Levels

Engagement Levels	Zen	Very Safe	Safe	Unsafe	Very Unsafe
Captivated					
Absorbed	**Emotionally Present** Positive wellbeing / positive engagement			**Emotionally Unsupported** Negative wellbeing / positive engagement	
Interested					
Indifferent	**Disengaged** Positive wellbeing / negative engagement			**Crisis** Negative wellbeing / negative engagement	
Turned Out					

Participants were positioned along this quadrant throughout their working day in an effort to validate the hypothesis of content complexity affecting wellbeing. Attention was also paid to key components like the demographic makeup of each work type alongside this quadrant, as well as the performance of existing wellbeing interventions, including breaks and the effect of production of wellbeing.

Wellness

Impact of Wellness Time

The study showed that the amount of wellness time provided to individuals has a positive impact on their wellbeing. Those with less wellness time allocated experienced significantly higher rates of positioning within the *emotionally unsupported, disengaged, and crisis* personas. T&S experts doing low content complexity work, where they have one-third of the amount of wellness time as compared to those doing moderate high content complexity work types, were **five times** more likely to experience positioning in the *emotionally unsupported* and *crisis* personas.

Moreover, early research indicated that some work types do not need planned wellness sessions. Instead, T&S experts require wellness time to remove themselves from screens and have personal time. It was shown that in the high content complexity cohort that attending wellness sessions did not impact emotional presence scores. However, when further investigated, these higher content complexity cohorts had higher levels of wellness time dedicated to their wellbeing, which later we discovered had a proven impact against the low content complexity cohort.

T&S experts doing low content complexity work with less wellness time were **five times** more likely to be positioned in *emotionally unsupported* and *crisis* personas.

Impact of Work Type on Wellness Benefit

It was proven that different wellness sessions had different levels of impact on individuals depending on their work type, and the number of sessions required per week differed per work type. It was previously believed that highly energizing social wellness sessions will have an overall positive impact, as these sessions have a proven history of improving mood. However, the findings identified a more unique trend that different work types play a significant factor on the impact and types of the wellness sessions.

The primary categories of wellness sessions included:

- Social wellness

- Spiritual wellness

- Cognitive wellness

Those in low content complexity cohorts, where the workflow is often described as monotonous, benefited most from activity-based sessions. It is hypothesized that they do require mood bosting strategies because of the repetitive nature of this work, which we have seen with music and entertainment type activities excelling.

In contrast, these exact wellness sessions were seen to have minimal or even negative impact on the more complex content cohorts. In the moderate and high content complexity cohorts, it was established that more cognitive and spiritual wellness sessions had a more positive impact on individuals, with cohorts benefiting most from sessions like calming breathing exercises. It is hypothesized that those in more complex and variable cohorts experience higher rates of irregularity and creative thinking in their work, thus requiring more stabilizing and grounding techniques to gain the greatest benefit.

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Wellness Support Design

Across the three content complexities, certain times and days of the work week have been identified for trending significantly lower than others.

- **Lower content complexity** cohorts require interventions between the hours of 6 and 8 during their shifts, and on days 2, 3, and 7.

- **Moderate content complexity** cohorts require interventions on hour 8 and on day 5.

- **High content complexity** cohorts require interventions on hour 1 and 2 and on day 2.

Consequently, it's proposed that operations teams incorporate this into their workforce management flows and wellness calendars to optimize individuals' sense of wellbeing—including coordinating more wellness sessions to occur during trigger hours and days.

Operations teams should coordinate more wellness sessions during trigger hours and days.

Demographic

Experience Modeling

The study found that the length of time that individuals work in the content trust and safety industry has an impact on their emotional presence in specific work types. Those who have less experience in moderating content have higher emotional presence in lower content complexities, where the work is more repetitive and easy to succeed at. However, this has shown to become boring and monotonous, and there's a strong correlation between overexposure to monotonous work and the development of mental health disorders.

Conversely, more experienced T&S experts experience higher emotional presence in higher content complexities, where the work is more varied and requires greater critical thinking. However, for new hires, such complexity can cause difficulties relating to uncertainty and imposter syndrome.

It is proposed that for new hires, a rotational model is introduced whereby individuals begin with low content complexity before building enough experience to advance to moderate or higher content complexities.

This rotational approach has been proven in our metacognition research, which identified that a three to four month rotational work model enabled staff to achieve higher rates of cognitive awareness. Moreover, such rotating workflows enable greater critical thinking and problem solving.

Consequently, to achieve greater wellness and cognitive awareness, new hires should start on low content complexity work types for a set period before advancing towards higher content complex work types, as they gain experience and exposure to this work. This will enable them to achieve job satisfaction as well as enhance their emotional stability.

The influence of external social factors is brought to the forefront with the differences in emotional presence based on age.

Impact of Age

Both cohorts in our study showed a majority within the 21-29 age group, although one cohort was slightly more likely to be over age 30 (20%). While existing population data indicates that Gen Z experience higher levels of stress and depression than older generations, this research proved unique, as the 21-23 year-olds were less likely to be in the *crisis, disengaged*, or *lacking emotional support* quadrants than 24-30 year-olds. This suggests that 21-23 year-olds are more resilient to content than anticipated.

The influence of external social factors is brought to the forefront with the differences in emotional presence based on age. The younger generation are more exposed to content due to the very nature of their lifestyle and technological upbringing. Consequently, they are more desensitized to content complexities.

Additionally, younger cohorts are more exposed to a positive mental health culture, and therefore are more self-aware and conscious of their wellbeing and able to identify when they need breaks or require additional wellbeing support. This is indicated in the research, which also shows that the 21-23 age group prefer more breaks, suggesting they value time out from this work.

Moreover, those who are over age 30 experience a significant increase in emotional stability. While this needs to be investigated further, it is common in the general population to see a decrease in mood and anxiety disorders based on age.

Impact of Leadership

Scheduling Adherence

Throughout this project, we identified a significant lack of visibility on schedule adherence and schedule reporting. Enabling privacy and individual choice in schedule and production management is a key element to enabling greater protection of T&S experts.

Without visibility on the real experience lived by T&S experts, we cannot understand their needs, and, therefore, are unable to build tangible interventions to help improve their working lives.

The most prominent example of this is the lack of standardized break times. It was identified that in 4 of the 6 cohorts, females were taking significantly shorter breaks than their male counterparts. As a result, in 3 of the 4 cohorts, their psychological safety was comparatively lower. This is replicated in shift timings, as those who experienced higher rates of *disengaged* and *crisis* personas recorded longer shifts.

While we offer significant flexibility in allowing T&S experts to build their own personal schedules, they may not know the psychological impacts this personal design is having on their wellbeing. To build a wellness-led design, optimized scheduling adherence must be encouraged in order to create more meaningful rest times and improved work-life balance.

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Research Key Takeaways

By building a greater understanding of T&S expert wellbeing, interventions that currently exist can be optimized to better support wellness in the trust and safety industry.

- Wellness by design can be incorporated into the structure of T&S experts' schedules, based on the type of work they do. Whether it's optimizing the timing and day of the week or the content of the session, this research has given an early indicator that there's opportunity to improve the way wellness interventions are delivered.

- Operationally, the research confirms that a rotational work model based on tenure at the business can prove to be a more effective model at managing psychological safety and engagement.

- Early data has shown that T&S experts in low content complexity work have higher wellness needs. This requires additional research to fully understand the needs of these cohorts.

Safeguard Trust and Safety

Concentrix + Webhelp's Trust and Safety practice is uniquely designed with wellness at the core of everything we do, providing a safe and secure environment for our T&S experts to work in. Our global team of clinical professionals has experience in the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, counselling, and mental health care, and are supported by physical and mental wellbeing practices that are recognized by the industry for research-led innovation.

Learn more about how we build scalable and resilient support teams to protect your customers' online experiences and your brand reputation:

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