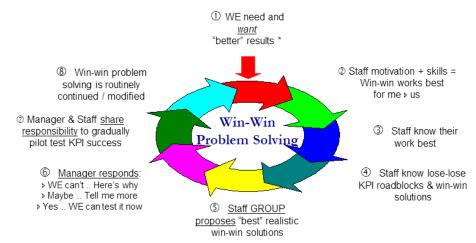MCSS' module #5 "Win-Win Problem Solving": Activating the missing two-way link between workforce mental health and their on-the-job KPI results

"This is a good place to work" or "It's a sweatshop" are very subjective … deeply rooted, often unhealthy mindsets largely determined by a work team's culture, less so by the "facts".

Applied research at the Canadian Institute of Stress shows that a simple employee-driven method we call "Win-Win Problem Solving", built into routine team management, is highly effective in creating and, then, protecting a "This is a good place to work" mindset and more mentally healthy culture. It works like this …

① WE need and *want* "better" results *

② Staff motivation + skills = Win-win works best for me ▸ us

③ Staff know their work best

④ Staff know lose-lose KPI roadblocks & win-win solutions

⑤ Staff GROUP proposes "best" realistic win-win solutions

⑥ Manager responds:
▸ WE can't .. Here's why
▸ Maybe .. Tell me more
▸ Yes .. WE can test it now

⑦ Manager & Staff share responsibility to gradually pilot test KPI success

⑧ Win-win problem solving is routinely continued / modified

Win-Win Problem Solving

* Better levels of stress, satisfaction, co-worker engagement at work **✚** team KPI success and appreciation

Background: As today's workplaces change more rapidly and become more demanding, lose-lose problems can grow like viruses in an unprotected computer … causing loses for employees' mental health [levels of stress, satisfaction and engaging work relationships at work] and, simultaneously, loses for the productivity, quality, etc. aims of the employer. And, because employees often neither care nor dare, or have the time to report, "We have a problem", these lose-lose problems compound into toxic drains on business operations.

One example from the several thousand lose-loses we've seen employees identify and then solve: Over 1200 customer service reps at the headquarters of a large financial services company, who often were busy on several phones at once, were now asked to log and profile every call using seven call factors. They felt that this additional distracting work, while keeping customers on-hold, not only added more stress but also drained their satisfaction in trying to give top notch service.

The full lose-lose showed up when the CSRs confessed that quite often they just invented the seven-factor data at the end of the day. Ouch! ➜ Employees' win-win proposal was simply to profile only 20% of the calls … a real cost saving which not only gave the company more reliable data about customers but also fell within the employees' view of reasonable daily stress. As several such win-win proposals from the CSRs were phased in, employees began to re-engage with their work.

Unlike other business process improvement methods, win-win problem solving not only produces significant cost savings. It also places equal value on employees' feelings and insights about working well. As one airline reservations agent said, "Finally, they're respecting that I know my job and my customers better than they do".

Results: Reflecting employees' more positive mindset, indicators tracked have shown 32% and 38% improvement in measures of work stress and of work satisfaction respectively, plus a 62% gain on the key "engagement" factor … plus a 52% reduction in their disability days … because they wanted and chose to return to work sooner. Note: These outcomes are based on pre-post metrics in Pilot group [N = 302] vs Matched Control group [N = 309].