

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHY AND HOW SHOULD WE  
INTEGRATE IT IN THE WORKPLACE?  
THE EXEMPLE OF KWERK**



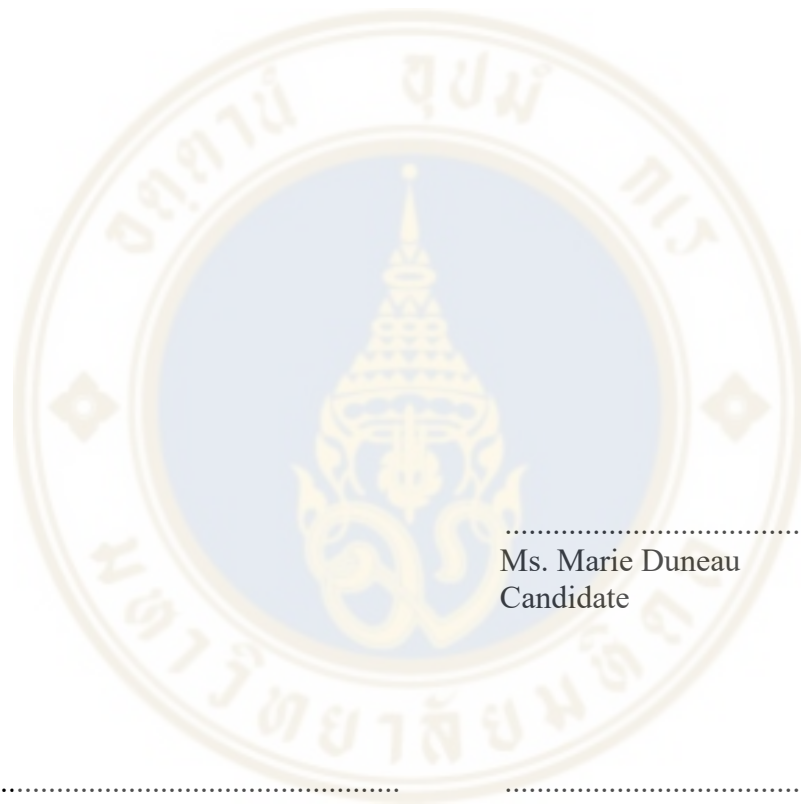
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**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHY AND HOW SHOULD WE  
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THE EXAMPLE OF KWERK**

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Marie Duneau

**PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHY AND HOW SHOULD WE INTEGRATE IT IN THE WORKPLACE ? THE EXEMPLE OF KWERK.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Times have changed, societies and mentalities have too. Today, people are more open, self-aware and conscious that we cannot fully separate our personal life from our professional one. We are complex beings and although we can control our emotions, feelings and thought to some extent, we cannot suppress them depending on the environment we are in. For this reason, and because we spend a major part of our time at work, it is important to be self-conscious and work on the deeper side of ourselves while in our workplace.

We have entered a couple generations ago in a new era: the digital era. These wonderful, life-changing technological advances, however, come at a cost: overstimulated, always reachable, we have become highly stressed and we have lost touch with ourselves. More and more companies have understood this change in our societies and the intrinsic need of our newer generations to understand themselves better, be considered and accepted for who they truly are and following happiness as much in their personal space as in the professional setting. These companies are trying to adapt to this new era by offering more comfortable and attractive working environments, better working conditions or more adequate salaries. However, these aspects are not the whole answer to the new issues we are facing today: personal development might very well be the key.

We will see in that paper how this awareness arose through time and what personal development is about (Part 1), then we will discuss how to integrate it in the workplace through the example of Kwerk (Part 2), and we will finish by discussing the strengths and weaknesses as well as the limitations of integrating personal development in the workplace.

**KEY WORDS:** personal development/ workplace/ kwerk

29 pages

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Firstly, I would like to stress that the main reason why I chose this topic results from my own story. I was born in a family where western as well as alternative medicines and psychology are topics which were discussed on a daily basis. Hence, I grew up with a deeper awareness and a different way of apprehending life, compared to most of the people of my age. Very young already, I was very curious and passionate about the human being in his globality, and all the techniques of personal development. I started resorting to these myself and soon enough I could feel the incredible positive impacts it had on me. This only encouraged me even more to pursue this path as soon as I will be finished with the studies I had chosen to follow.

Self-awareness and self-improvement are a journey: it is an ongoing process of constant learning. Conscientization of our personality, working on our strengths and weaknesses is not only helpful in our private environment but it is also a wonderful tool for our professional life, for our career. What are the benefits? Personal development helps you grow as a person by for example improving your skills and boosting your confidence. In challenging times as we are in now, this could represent a very precious help, if not a necessity.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **WHAT IS IT AND WHY SHOULD WE INTEGRATE IT AT WORK ?**

#### **2.1 Broad definition and delimitation**

Let us start by defining the one term around which this paper was articulated: “personal development”, or “personal growth” is very broad term which encompasses a wide variety of activities.

Indeed, from pretty grounded and rational methods to basically purely spiritual ones, everybody can find the one that suits them best. However, all those very diverse methods share a common goal : act as a powerful tool that will enable a person to gain in awareness and consciousness, as well as reach her full potential.

This can happen when the person becomes aware of traumatic events that occurred during childhood or/and adulthood, uncovers all mental constructions, limitations and fears that resulted from it, and starts working on those until breaking free from them.

Then, the more that person will understand herself and free herself from those old patterns, the more her true aspirations, desires and needs will come up.

Moreover, our adult lives are shaped by past events and circumstances we, our relatives and friends may have experienced. These experiences are expressed in our adulthood through our motivations, aspirations and behaviors and are powered by our desire to fulfill certain needs.

In an attempt to define it more concisely, personal development is an assembly of tools and techniques enabling an individual to reach self-achievement. It is closely similar to the pursuit of happiness. However, just like happiness is not a destination but a way, personal development is a lifetime process made of several steps of evolution which need to be followed and fulfilled in the right order. This is what the “Pyramid of needs” we inherited from Maslow depicted:

lower needs need to be satisfied before an individual can reach high levels of needs. In this way, physiological needs, which are necessary to survival, need to be satisfied in order to enable fulfillment. This pyramid is as valid in the personal aspects as in the professional area: at work, this evolution could manifest as a desire to rise within the ranks for example.



**Figure 2.1** the “Pyramid of needs” from Maslow

## **2.2 From when it all started... to the generation burnout**

In July 2009, the France Telecom scandal took place: a series of suicides of employees threw the company and some managers under serious examination. This is when it all started...

This event publicly uncovered the tough reality employees were enduring in some companies, and we started to talk about “occupational hazard” (in other words, any injury or ailment resulting from one’s work or work environment).

From then on, stress at work, psychosocial risks and burn out were not to be ignored any longer. The term “occupational hazard” quickly evolved to take mental health into account: stress, turnover, absenteeism, demotivation, internal tensions as

well as addictive behaviors and patterns are the direct demonstration of these psychosocial risks and need to be taken into account.

However, these risks were difficult to identify due to the lack of adequate assessment tools and the usage of an individual approach to stress, dealing with those on a one-by-one basis. While properly assessing to prevent those risks from happening did not seem to be an adequate answer to the problem, many companies (especially startups) started to research a way to get and keep employees happy and well at work.

The France Telecom drama somehow forced people to become more aware of their relation with their work. Pathologies went under study and were given names: Burnout, bore-out, brown-out... Those terms have become very common nowadays, however, many people still ignore what they actually refer to... So let us go through them.

### **2.2.1 Burnout**

One of the most common work-related pathologies to be diagnosed nowadays is the “burnout”, which refers to professional exhaustion. In 2014, 3.2 million people were subject to one, according to a report written by Technologia.

The burnout was first introduced by the American psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Herbert Freudenberg. While working long shifts at a hospital in New-York, at night he was volunteering in a free clinic in charge of helping underprivileged people.

After a few months, he started to lose weight and became not only less attentive to his patients but even cynical. He took a few days off and slept the whole time.

Following this event, he tried to understand this “disease” he was suffering from. As he became aware that others at the clinic were presenting the same symptoms, while they all loved their work, he was more than ever motivated to uncover the source of this new phenomenon.

Meanwhile, in 1981, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (created by Christina Maslach, an American psychologist) saw the light of day : this survey enabled to diagnose a burnout according to 3 indicators, which were examined among a sample of supervisors and managers in the human services:

emotional exhaustion: intense tiredness which is not released by sleep, pain throughout the body, anxiety disorder, loss of temper, recurrent loss of memory and limited focus, skin reactions (eczema, psoriasis...), irritability and oversensitivity, uncontrolled crying etc. It also results in a loss of interest in a job they previously liked.

depersonalization: the person shows signs of negativity, dark humor and even cynicism (the latter one is the most characteristic aspect of a burnout and the one that fundamentally differentiates it from a depression).

personal accomplishment: feeling of professional failure, loss of purpose in a job the person used to like, inefficiency and loss of self-esteem on all levels (professional, personal).

Although still not recognized as a disease nowadays but only as a “syndrome”, the burnout is very serious and has tremendous impacts not only on someone’s mental and physical health but also on their work. Indeed, people suffering from a burnout show a significant loss of interest in their work, disengagement as well as a loss of self-esteem. In this way, work accumulates and as people are working more slowly due to their intense fatigue, it’s an infernal spiral which undeniably comes at the cost of a strong loss of (professional and personal) self-esteem.

Following the burnout, the bore out saw the light of day: it refers to the fact of being deadly bored at work. It can occur when there is not enough workload, tasks are very repetitive or meaningless, the job is automated or lacks responsibility and challenge. People lose touch with the sense of their work and lose total interest in their job, become disengaged and demotivated.

This triggers a psychological disorder through intense frustration and a deep loss of purpose, leading to physical illness. The consequences at work are a high dissatisfaction of employees who come to feel a deep fatigue and boredom, as well as a loss of self-esteem.

Falling into burnout is a long process, so it is a real vicious circle that employees can keep up with for years without realizing it : urged to keep working long hours to reach goals and get recognition for their hard-work, those individuals will use all their energy resources until the last drop before “falling down”.

The worst thing is that recovering from a burnout is even longer than getting into one. Indeed, when not recognized and treated on time, it can trigger a severe

depression or a deep anxiety, itself potentially leading to some excessive behaviors such as using alcohol, drugs etc. This makes the recovery much longer and much harder.

However, although very long and difficult, the recovery from a burnout is often associated to the idea of “Phoenix” who gets reborn from its own ashes. Indeed, people who got through it get to see and apprehend life as well as their relation to work very differently. They thus come to operate a wide change in their life on all levels.

### **2.2.2 Bore-out and brown-out**

The brown out (literal meaning: when the electricity shuts down) is pretty close to the bore-out : it refers to a total loss of sense in somebody’s job which has become absurd, also called “bullshit jobs”, due for example to repetitive and non-interesting activities. However, the main difference that is characteristic of a brown-out is that people used to enjoy their job!

The brown out is very hard to notice. For this reason, many employers are shocked when very good performers suddenly resign or join another company.

### **2.2.3 Why should we talk about this ?**

Burnout, brown out, bore out... All those work-related pathologies are highly costly for companies. Not only do they result in a direct financial loss, but they also often deprive them from their top-performing employees.

Hence, preventing them from occurring would be greatly beneficial not only to employees themselves but also to the companies: investing more in the wellbeing of their employees would result in better retention as well as higher performance and benefits.

According to a study, in France only 67% of employees would be satisfied with their wellbeing at work and one out of two considers the company doesn’t use enough means to improve the situation.<sup>1</sup> They explain this by a lack of hierarchical consideration towards their contribution, as well as an uncertainty regarding their future in the company.

Also, according to a study conducted by Stimulus in 2017, about one out of four employees in France suffers from “hyperstress”, a high level of stress which can get harmful for one’s health.

Finally, the cost of lack of wellbeing rose from 10% to 15% of the global economic performance. Everybody knows what “EBIT” stands for: “Earnings before interests and taxes”, or in other words “economic performance”. Now, very few know what the “IBET” is about: it stands for “Indice de bien-être de travail” or “Index of wellbeing at work” and it goes between 0 and 1. In 2017 (based on the data from 2015), the IBET in France was estimated at 0,75. This means that there is a lack of about 25% of the total added value, that could in turn generate a better performance economically-wise. These lost costs were estimated at almost 13k euros per employee every year, where about 80% (around 10k euros) could be saved.

In conclusion, the cost of angst at work is high for companies and reversing the trend could lead to high benefits.

Moreover, those pathologies were born with Capitalism. France is a capitalist country, it has been for a long time already and especially since the industrial revolution at the beginning of the 19th century.

According to the Cambridge dictionary, Capitalism is “an economic, political and social system in which property, business, and industry are privately owned, directed towards the greatest possible profits for successful organizations and people”. Capitalism is thus about making the “greatest profits”. It is about money and wealth, and this is what most companies are built upon.

However, does money necessarily mean happiness or achievement? It does not. As Frederick Herzberg demonstrated in 1959 in his “Two-factors theory” on motivation, there exist two types of motivational factors that must be met in order to reach satisfaction at work:

Hygiene factors (also called “dissatisfiers”), such as good working conditions and relationships with colleagues, company policies and rules or even salary: these must be met in order to prevent dissatisfaction from happening. In other words, these factors are required but do not necessarily lead to job satisfaction.

Motivation factors, or “satisfiers”, are all about fulfillment: personal growth, higher level of responsibility, recognition etc. These factors actually have a direct impact on job satisfaction.: when met, the individual can be happy at work.



**Figure 2.2 “Two-factor Principles” from Hertzberg**

According to this theory, it appears clearly that money doesn't make a person happy. A certain level of wealth is required for someone to have a feeling of financial safety, but if the other factors are not reached, job satisfaction and happiness in the workplace cannot take place. For this reason, companies must take into account and make sure to satisfy more fulfilling levels of their employees' needs and aspirations.

Moreover, it has often been said in the workplace that we should “leave our personal worries and issues at the door” (and the other way around). However, we are human beings and what most fundamentally differentiates us from machines is our emotional ability. There does not exist such a thing as a button that we can switch to “leave our emotions at the door” when it suits us.

In a study on psychological benchmark conducted jointly by the Universities of Washington and Osaka, researchers have analyzed the human-robot interaction in order to measure success in building increasingly humanly robots. In an attempt to grasp the complexity of the Human being, although very promising interactions were made, they said that “to understand ourselves as a species is one of the profound undertakings of a lifetime. »

We are indeed a highly complex assembly of interactions and, for this reason, thinking that we can dissociate ourselves from our emotions seems unrealistic. What we can do, however, is train our brain to control our feelings, thoughts and emotions better. This way, we may be able to not be thrown out by these anymore.

It has become fundamental to reintegrate each component of which a human being is made, in order for people to reconnect with their themselves on a deeper level and then, reach their full potential. To do so, personal development will be a powerful tool and by integrating it in the working environment, individuals will have the opportunity to not only become aware of this need, but also and mainly to actually turn to it.

## **2.3 Why is it more relevant today than ever ?**

Today, it appears more relevant than ever to take the human being into account in his wholeness and include personal development in the workplace when we look at those events and the experiences people have gone through in the past 50 to 70 years. As we have previously seen, from occupational hazard to burnout to happiness and wellbeing at work, our societies have been deeply shaken and have evolved out of it. The employees coming from the last generations and those to come are tremendously different from what they used to be in the past : the society is changing, and companies must adapt to those changes in order to stay afloat.

### **2.3.1 The impact of time and generations**

There was a time when the concepts of happiness or wellbeing at work were not even a thing, when nobody ever wondered about how pleasant or unpleasant their job was or how fulfilled they were. This time goes way back... If trends have drastically changed in the working environment, people have too in the few last generations. It is thus primordial to take these differences into account in order to understand and better assess the way our world is today and its evolution over the recent decades. To better understand how Societies and trends have changed, we shall go back to where it might have all started.



On September 2nd, 1945, the Japanese delegation and the US formally signed papers of surrender, officially marking the end of the World War II, the most destructive conflict in history yet. Following this, everything was to be rebuilt: buildings, infrastructures, countries, men, families...

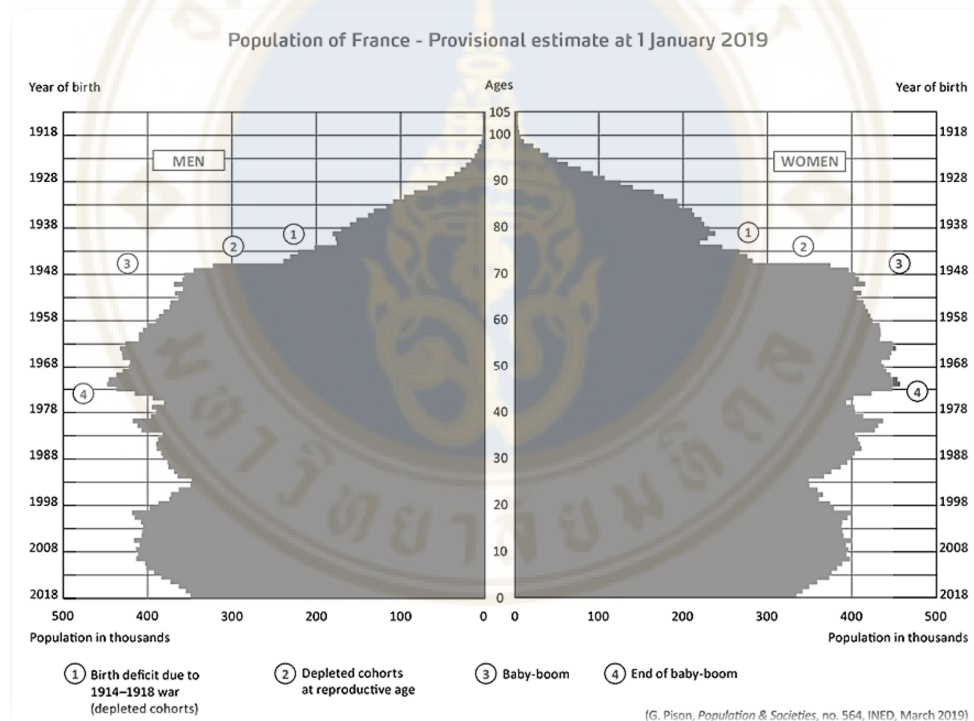
The babies who were born after the WWII are called the “Baby Boomers” (1945-1965). This generation, born at a time of deep renewal, marked the first impulse towards a new way of apprehending work and life in general. Although this generation was loyal and hard-working, they did expect to be recognized and compensated for it. That was the first change from past generations for which work was a precious gift, their way of putting bread on the table for their family.

Then, around the time internet was invented (1969 in the USA) came the “generation X” (1965-1980) : this generation was born at the very beginning of a transitory process, when new and soon-to-be endless opportunities were about to open in the world. This generation also is a transition between the baby boomers and the millennials. They are looking for a slightly more work- life balance and network-oriented. However, they struggle to find this balance because they are not very flexible and fear to lose their job.

Everything really shifted with the “Millennials”, also called “generation Y” (1980-2000). By then, internet was widely spreading throughout Europe and as a consequence, not only the labor market but also everybody’s lives and routines were about to be challenged by those technological advances. These workers were born truly as part of a new era: they grew up using electronics, the internet and online social communities (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest etc). This generation is sometimes called the “generation WHY” because they are constantly questioning themselves as well as their lifestyles and life choices. Focusing a lot on happiness, wellbeing and satisfaction at work, their job is not at the center of everything for them: they highly value taking time to decompress and feel fulfilled. Their career choices are purpose-driven, so they tend to go through professional reconversion if it is needed, and they are not afraid of quitting a job for a better opportunity or to be happier. This generation is also highly entrepreneurial, they do not fear taking risks and responsibilities.

Finally, the “generation Z” includes all those who were born from 2000 until today. Technology is literally in these young people’s DNA. It has been part of their routine since their very young age and they have even been evolving simultaneously with the latest technological advances. We sometimes call them the “Silent generation” : they are so fully absorbed by the technology they were born in, that their social interactions are mainly digital (personal as well as professional). For this generation, life and work must go smooth, lead to happiness every day. They are highly volatile and adaptable, and work has become a simple means to achieve their dreams.

### 2.3.2 What are the forecasts for the coming years?



**Figure 2.3 ‘G.Pison, Population & Societies’ book number 564 (March 2019)**

According to the ages pyramid in France on January 1st, 2019, the majority of the French population would stand between two age groups: mainly those born between 1945 and 1975 (aged between 45 and 75 years old): baby boomers and generation X. These two groups are either retired or at the peak of their career

Those born between 2000 and 2015, aged today between 5 and 15 years old. They are the generation Z, the digital generation.

We can conclude that in the coming years, the baby boomers who are not yet retired will be, while the generation X which is currently at the peak of their career will have to adapt to those technological advances and the new working environments that will be triggered by the newest generations. Indeed, the population will then mainly be made of generations which are highly demanding in terms of wellbeing and happiness in their life in general but also at work: generations Y and Z. They have a very different relation to work, which is either more a means to make money to enjoy their life or a job they actually enjoy. Also, they do not fear switching from one job to another if it provides them with more self-fulfillment. The labor market has to adapt to these changes in order to retain its workforce by keeping them satisfied and happy.

However, as previously stated, these last three generations (especially X and Y but also Z), although quite fundamentally different in terms of mindsets, are very complementary. The generation Z, highly creative and naturally good with technology, has the potential to help the previous ones get through the end of their career.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **HOW SHOULD WE INTEGRATE IT AT WORK: THE EXAMPLE OF KWERK**

#### **3.1 Kwerk: what is the business about ?**

##### **3.1.1 About Kwerk and the cofounders**

Kwerk is a coworking business. The main activity is renting out desks to companies who need more flexibility (start-ups, small companies or even bigger companies with need of international bases) : single desks in shared spaces as well as private, closed offices. The second activity is hosting and coordinating seminars for companies (those renting desks or offices, as well as external ones).

Kwerk was founded in 2015 as a joint effort by Lawrence Knights, an HEC graduate in corporate marketing, organization and strategy and CEO, and Albert Angel, architect designer. They met in New York, where they were both working, and then moved to Bali for a few years before coming back to Paris with the aim to open the most attractive office in the World.

The name “Kwerk” was taken from the word “Quirky” in order to emphasize unconventionalism and eccentricity. People are encouraged to be themselves and embrace their difference. This is reflected in Kwerk’s values:

- Happy to be wacky
- Embracing a pioneering spirit, believing only nothing is impossible
- Working for pleasure, living in the moment lets us express our full potential
- Giving is receiving
- Body and mind in harmony
- Mindful working
- Team spirit

- Working like on the first day, accepting who we are and cultivating our difference can be truly liberating.

Kwerk offers various services to its members :

Firstly, those required by any coworking space: fully equipped desks/offices, access to common areas, unlimited internet connection, access to meeting rooms, printers...

As well as an operation team from early morning until evening

But also some exclusive Kwerk services : a “Kwerkwell” wellness program (we will talk about it later on), gym and other sporting rooms as previously stated, full equipped showers (high-quality cosmetics as well as clean towels, hair dryer etc...).

Although Kwerk is seen by most people as a coworking space, Lawrence Knights and Albert Angel have made sure for everyone to know that it is not. Kwerk is an office where individuals and businesses are enabled to flourish and achieve their dreams.

How? Kwerk’s ambition goes beyond representing an attractive and luxurious office, where talents can meet and achieve great things together. These talents are also provided a unique and integrated expertise to stimulate and retain the best of them: the Wellworking.

### **3.1.2 Facts and figures**

Due to confidentiality matters, I did not have access to the exact facts and figures regarding Kwerk’s activity and performance. However, in 2019 the revenue was up to more than 15 millions euros, 80% coming from desk rentals and the 20% left from the seminars activity : the business is profitable.

The revenue for 2021 was estimated at more than 30 million euros, twice as much as it was in 2019. This growth was expected partly due to the upcoming opening of two new offices in Paris (Kwerk “Madeleine” and “Saint Honoré”, both in the 8th arrondissement), even more luxurious and high-standardized than the previous ones.

### **3.2 Kwerk: what do they do in terms of personal development**

Although Kwerk main activity and revenues come from renting out desks, the concept of “wellbeing” is also at the core of the business.

For this reason, there is a gym for personal training, as well as a room for yoga/meditation and one for group classes.

All “clients” (companies renting out desks or offices at Kwerk) or “members” as we call them (but not only, employees too!) are encouraged to actively participate to those activities, which are part of a program specifically designed by Kwerk’s wellness team: the “Kwerkwell”.

#### **3.2.1 Kwerk, pioneer of the Wellworking**

The concept of wellworking is founded on five pillars:

An immersive design, meant to stimulate our five senses by the usage of a particular lighting, vegetal spaces, the choice of certain materials and fabrics, Kwerk perfume diffused all day. The main goal is to ensure everyone can feel comfortable and at ease in these office

An attentive and multidisciplinary team to help and accompany members every day.

Therapeutic workstations: therapeutic chairs, adjustable desks etc are made available to all in order to foster wellbeing throughout the day

One-of-a-kind program: the Kwerkwell, a wellness program of both physical and mental activities based on the idea that mind and body go hand in hand

A qualitative ecosystem fostering open-mindedness, business opportunities and amical interactions. For example, an “Afterkwerk” (after work by Kwerk) is thrown every month by the Experience Manager team and all members are invited to join in the Lobby and gather around some nice finger food and drinks.

#### **3.2.2 The “Meditations by Kwerk”**

According to a study on the benefits of a regular meditation practice, directed by the psychotherapist Géraldyne Prévot-Gigant, meditating has proven useful in reducing stress as well as depression relapses by about 40%, lowering arterial blood pressure, enhancing higher quality sleep and promoting happiness in the workplace.

At work, a regular practice of meditation promotes a better focus, a stress reduction and enhances creativity. It also appeared that meditating at different times of the day has different effects on people:

Meditating in the morning generates a stable state of calmness such as people are more resistant to the stress emanating from their work and better able to put things into perspective. This in turn leads to more qualitative and respectful interactions with colleagues and collaborators.

On the contrary, meditating in the evening enables people to disconnect with work and their day, by cooling down their minds and preparing it for a restorative night of sleep.

Finally, because there are no specific times dedicated to meditating, it is highly recommended to take a few minutes during the day if the need is being felt. Micro-meditations during work hours are highly powerful in enabling people to prolongate a deep concentration state. How? By reconnecting to themselves on a deep level, people are more self-aware, control their emotions better and so can regain energy instead of losing it by fighting their feelings and thoughts.

To conclude, meditating on a regular basis is a powerful tool for those who are looking for better stress management and emotional control, as well as enhanced and long-lasting focus.

How does meditation work on the brain? Meditation is “a conscious mental process that induces a set of integrated physiologic changes termed the relaxation response”. Some cerebral images (functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI)) which were taken as part of a neurologic study revealed changes in activity and blood flow (Significant ( $p < 10^{-7}$ ) signal increases) in some brain regions during meditation. The most active ones are the “prefrontal cortex” (in the front of the left brain), the “parietal cortex”, the “temporal cortex” and some other parts.

Here are the following functions of these parts of the brain:

The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain associated with the production of positive hormones, themselves in charge of enhancing better immunity defenses and so better health. It is also implicated in planning complex behaviors and moderating social behaviors, personality expression and decision making.

The parietal cortex processes all somatosensory input from the external environment, received by the body through all five senses (vision, audition, touch, smell, and taste). It then interacts with sensory areas of the brain to select relevant information in the given context and makes it available to other areas of the brain for the planning and execution of physical movements.

The temporal cortex processes auditory information from the ears (reception and selection).

Those results indicate that the practice of meditation activates neural structures involved in attention ((pre)Frontal and parietal cortex) and control (pregenual anterior cingulate, amygdala, midbrain and hypothalamus) of the autonomic nervous system, elicited by the relaxation response. For this reason, meditation is considered as an efficient complementary treatment for many diseases.

### **3.2.3 The Wellness ritual by Kwerk : MindBody**

Kwerk has set a Wellness ritual which is meant to promote well-being and deep relaxation of its members. It is senses-based, all senses are being triggered.

First of all, coaches, prior to classes, and myself when setting the room for the Meditation By Kwerk (every day from 3:45pm to 4pm), are expected to burn some palo santo in order to cleanse the atmosphere from any disturbing smells as well as energetically, promoting a deeply relaxing environment.

Then, each class has been attributed a music playlist. The goal is simply to set the right mood for each of these moments that the members have carefully chosen for a particular purpose, may it be to cool themselves down after a long day or, on the contrary, to find some more energy.

How is Wellness by Kwerk designed to adapt to its members?

The class level is adapted to that of the present members on a case-by-case basis. This is only possible because the professional coaches have been carefully assessed and chosen by Kwerk to embody this altruism as well as caring and attentive abilities towards people. Two of the most important values in the Wellness ritual are “Non-judgmental” and “Confidential” behaviors.

All sets of classes have also been structured and adapted in order to satisfy each and every different need that were identified during the studies that were conducted



by Kwerk prior to establishing the Wellness ritual. In this way, three different types of classes were created:

The “Flow” signature classes (60 minutes):

Flow: a complete, rhythmic and dynamic yoga session which combines muscular workout, sequencing and breathing. It is designed to evacuate toxins and reduce stress.

Power Flow: a mix between yoga and HIIT, a fractioned training with a maximum impact. The best way to burn lots of calories while evacuating stress!

Candlelight Flow (Seasonal): Passive yoga poses (primarily sitting and laying down) and stretching. The main goal of this session is to relax deeply.

The “Mind” signature classes:

Mind is a complete routine practiced in full consciousness: breathing, poses and meditation. Once again, the aim is to reduce stress but also to revitalize oneself.

Meditations by Kwerk: a 15 to 20 minutes guided meditation break, every day at 3:45pm!

The “Pulse” signature classes (45mn):

Have fun and workout - A collective experience made of challenges and cardio exercises - Boost motivation, cohesion and mutual help.

HIIT Pulse: several exercises designed to trigger a faster metabolism and strengthen muscles. Come and burn a maximum of calories in only 45 minutes!

TRX Pulse: training in suspension to work on all the muscles by using your own weight. The gain? To reinforce one’s body and slim down one’s waistline.

Core Pulse (Seasonal): Core building and muscular strengthening, in order to better one’s back support and posture.

Booty Pulse (Seasonal): Tailbone reinforcement for a sexy booty!

Other classes:

“Santé du dos”: yoga poses taught with a special attention on the back area. The aim of this class is to align and decompress the spine while stretching the whole body safely.

Boxing: a mix of kickboxing and Thai boxing, designed to enable oneself to gain in self-confidence and strengthen the mind while reducing stress.

Pilates: postural work and deep muscular strengthening.

“Barre au sol”: series of exercises on the ground with full respect of articulations, to better one’s physical condition and flexibility.

According to some studies that Kwerk staff have conducted (I did not access full access to those surveys but I was given the results), results clearly show that the wellworking is successful:

92% of member confirm that their posture is better since they joined Kwerk, and 65% have less back pain than before

95% feel their body more tonic and have more energy

86% declare having better stress management abilities

### **3.3 My personal experience at Kwerk**

#### **3.3.1 In the shoes of an Experience Manager Junior Intern at Kwerk**

##### **La Défense : my missions**

On September 2nd, 2019, I started my internship at Kwerk La Défense as Experience Manager Junior Inter by the side of Guillaume Deri (Experience Manager Senior), Kei Nagata (Experience Manager Junior) and Michael Lelouard (Experience Manager Coordinator).

As an Experience Manager at Kwerk, you are expected to provide the very best experience to all your members day after day. This does not only include performing basic but necessary daily tasks that are inherent to running such an office and managing people, as well as prioritize at all times, but it also means paying extra attention to details and being highly receptive to people’s gestures and behaviors in order to “read between the lines”. As Kwerk was founded around the concept of wellbeing at work, through the Kwerkwell, we are in charge of coordinating this program with the wellness team. Indeed, being part of an Experience Manager team, you are constantly interacting with other staff members and other departments in order to achieve greatness and deliver the best experience possible.

As part of the Experience Manager team, there is not such a thing as a “common day”. Every day brings is different and brings new unforeseen events to

manage. However, a non-exhaustive list of the “daily tasks” could resemble to the following:

Every day at arrival, go for a look around the whole office in order to control that the place is neat and clean, that appliances are working properly, that all the material that we make available to our members is here, make sure there are enough towels in the showers for those who will go to the gym etc. Everything needs to be consistent with the Kwerk standards to generate a “WOW” effect: to blow people’s minds when they arrive

Addressing members issues and satisfying their requests on a daily basis

Organizing and managing, in collaboration with the events team and the experience coordinator, the room setup and orders for seminars.

Every day at 3:45pm, I am in charge of the “Meditation By Kwerk”

Unfortunately, I had to quit my previous internship after two months because I did not feel like I was being challenged enough and I was not happy with the activities that I was given. For this reason, I have only been at Kwerk for one month so far, hence I am still being trained on the “basic” tasks. I will gain more responsibility and work on more challenging activities and projects as soon as I will master these ones but for now, I do not have an extensive amount of missions to share about my internship at Kwerk.

### **3.3.2 Which impact did working at Kwerk have on me ?**

My experience at Kwerk was very insightful to me, for several reasons. First of all, of all my working experiences of all sorts, Kwerk was the first company in which I was allowed and even encouraged to take time during my working hours, to focus on my wellbeing...

It is true that, as a member of the experience management team, we were always very busy and running everywhere so we did not have plenty of time to participate to those wellness activities. However, my manager made it clear that we should make the time to do so, twice a week. Then, at least once or twice a week, I would go to meditate with the members in the afternoon or I would go to a group class.

Also, several times a week, after finishing my day, I would spend an hour or two in the gym before going home. Having that kind of equipment right at work, for

free, is a true blessing. Indeed, if it is quite common in some countries, in France it is not so much yet.

During my internship, I was very dynamic and fit. Not only was I very active all day long, running everywhere, but I was also doing a lot of workout. Thanks to all of that physical activity, I felt much less tired than I used to in my previous internship or in the past when I was less active. My body felt much stronger and I was much less subject to backpain. When I did feel some, I would try to find one therapeutic chair to sit on, and after a while It would get better.

Also, although our missions could be quite stressful, I found a good refuge in those moments where I could cool down for a while : during meditation for example. I could not participate as often as I wish I could have, however even the few minutes I spent in the room, preparing it for the members to come, burning some palo santo while playing relaxing music, were magic moments for me : I could in those few instants let go of lots of internal tensions and accumulated stress.

Finally, one aspect I really appreciated at Kwerk is that I didn't feel like I was "expected to be smiling and happy at all times" like I did in my previous internship. Indeed, it has become very common in all those companies which are promoting happiness and wellbeing in the workplace, to be "expecting" or even "requiring" their employees to always be and look delighted at work... This is what we call an "injunction au bonheur" ou encore "happycratie" in France: because of all the (most of the time, mostly financial) efforts companies are investing in their employees' wellbeing, they ask from them to be thankful by showing a happy face and displaying happy behaviors at all times.

I did not feel this pressure at Kwerk, even though of course I was expected to be kind and smiling to our members. I knew if something was wrong, I was allowed to talk about it, to address the problem, and we would try to work in out as a team.

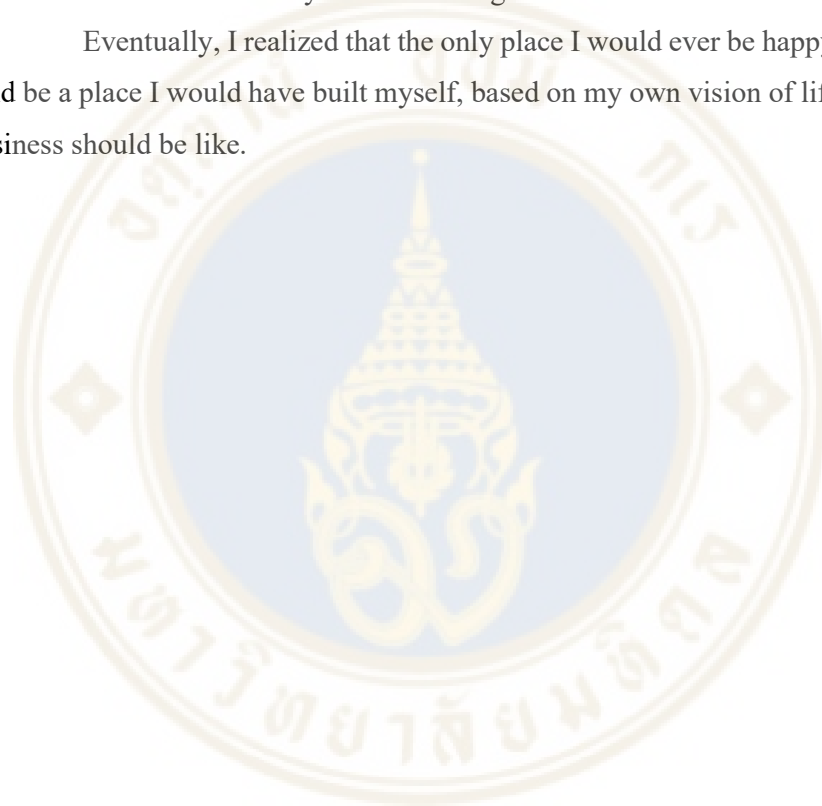
However, if I really enjoyed those few months working at Kwerk, I have also encountered some difficulties.

Mainly, this experience has made me realize that I did not feel like I belong to this kind of working environment. I struggle with having to make somebody else's vision my own vision and that feeling that I have no real responsibility nor power : I proposed a few ideas how to potentially solve some issues we encountered, but I felt

like there was no time or room given to trying those ideas out. I felt like my ideas were not heard or considered, which made me feel quite powerless several times.

Also, I found it very frustrating for someone who is as much passionate about wellbeing as me and working in a company with such a marvelous concept, to see that the priority was most of the times on other subjects than those relating to the wellness. The main reason who I chosen to do my internship there was this aspect, and it often looked to me like not enough was done in that direction, that maybe the words they used to describe what they do were stronger than their actions.

Eventually, I realized that the only place I would ever be happy and fulfilled would be a place I would have built myself, based on my own vision of life and of what a business should be like.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **LIMITATIONS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

#### **4.1 Strengths at Kwerk**

##### **4.1.1 Passionate and devoted teams**

As my then soon-to-be manager told me during my interview for this internship: “At Kwerk, we don’t hire people only for their competences, but also and mainly for their personality.”

I really enjoyed this vision, which is that one I truly believe in : when people are passionate about their job, considered by their colleagues and managers, as well as motivated, they can develop all competences. However, when there is no fit with the company culture and intrinsic motivation, all the competences in the world could not suffice to make the overall adventure successful on the longer run.

Kwerk’s most likely strongest suit resides in its people, its teams, its employees: they are all passionate about their job and they fit the company culture in the sense that they too strongly agree with and value wellbeing. Everybody is kind and smiling, it was a pleasure to work side-by-side with my colleagues during my internship. Contrarily to other companies where I’ve been before, this “happy look” was not only a façade, it was real. This is one of the main strengths of Kwerk.

##### **4.1.2 Huge upfront financial investment**

Another strength of Kwerk, regarding the implementation of Wellness in the workplace, is depicted by the huge financial effort that was made upfront to ensure the best conditions to promote and encourage members as well as employees to care about their wellbeing: the installations, all the equipment as well as the professional coaches and a dedicated team.

Although the quality was not always the best possible (as we will discuss below), however the variety of machines as well as the offer overall is great.

## **4.2 Limitations**

Integrating wellbeing and personal development in the workplace is something which is still quite new as well as complex. For this reason, companies must try out and better their approach depending on the results: only through experiencing they can see where their weaknesses are and which limitations they are facing.

Already during my first month of internship, I was able to find some issues with the implementation of the wellbeing at Kwerk. Either coming from our side or from our members' side, these weaknesses should be addressed.

### **4.2.1 A core concept not made clear enough**

Firstly, overall I sincerely believe there is a misunderstanding of how deeply at the core of the Business the concept of wellworking was intended to be: it is not only an "extra" to benefit from once in a while, when the need is felt. It actually is an integrative part of Kwerk and we must participate to it actively. As previously said, personal growth is a long process we need to work on, on the long term rather than punctually if we want to get benefits out of it.

People might need to be reminded of how important it is, as it only exists because our societies, our mindsets and our lifestyles have evolved in a way that makes it a necessity. Studies too have shown the greatly positive impact it can have on our wellbeing and thus our gain in effectiveness in the workplace as much as in our personal life goals. Now, people need to be reminded to make the time for it by looking at a greater achievement than the present situation only.

A perfect example of this situation is the following: being in charge of the Meditations by Kwerk, I have been directly affected day after day by the realization of how very few people, if any, come to participate despite the amazingness and the uniqueness of having this opportunity in the workplace. I have witnessed the presence of between 0 and 5 people per session, with usually only 1 or 2 if any, while the room

can host up to 10 or 15 people. When I would call for participation, generally the answer would be “Not today, I don’t have the time”.

#### **4.2.2 Allocating more budget for better results**

Also, let’s take a look at the following top 5 spending table in 2019 for all centers :

Investment and maintenance: 34%  
 Cleanliness and consumables: 12%  
 General spending: 12%  
 Building charges, IT, phone: 8%  
 Kwerkwell, coach, equipment: 6%

Form this data, we can deduct that, although Kwerk wants to make itself known as a “Wellworking” business, it might need to attribute a bigger part of its budget to this aspect of the business.

Indeed, as I have witnessed myself, sometimes the equipment that was invested in was not of the upmost quality. This not only would generate a financial loss in the longer term due to the need to buy new equipment again, but it also meant that it would not be as functional as better quality equipment.

Also, there are some activities in which more investment would have raised the participation rate to the wellness program : for example, creating or investing in a much more complete and diversified playlist of meditations, as well as offering more classes.

#### **4.2.3 Choosing between additional income and honoring already-made promises**

One last point that I would like to address is regarding a contract that was made between an external company which has its office in the same building but did not have any in our coworking : technically, there thus weren’t clients of ours.

However, they were very interested in Kwerk’s concept of wellbeing and sports offering. For this reason, a contract was made between Kwerk and that company,



allowing them to access the gym area from a certain time to a certain time every day, and most importantly many group classes were set for them, reserved to them.

The consequence of this, apart from the big financial gain that was generated by this business agreement, was not only that the availability of group classes was reduced for our actual members but also that the gym ended up busy at some moments in the day, sometimes preventing our members to enjoy it.

### **4.3 Recommendations**

For this first point, I would recommend the following ideas:

As it is already planned, one of the first things to do could be to record new meditations. Indeed, we have been using the same panel of about 10 recordings for a while already, so people may be discouraged by the idea of listening again to the same meditation

Also, it could be smart to make the meditation material (headphones and iPad, safely hooked up to the wall to avoid any issue or loss) available at all times, so as that those who cannot join at 3:45pm may come at a time that suits their schedule best

Finally, I believe there is not enough communication regarding the existence of this daily scheduled meditation break. I have been told a few times by some members that they did not even know about it, and many others simply always forget about it. For this reason, either setting a daily reminder through some online channel or insisting about it as being embedded in Kwerk values and so important might appear necessary.

Also, I would recommend creating personal development corners. Because Kwerk is also a lot about books, why not make a corner with a selection of books on a variety of the tools and techniques that one can resort to personally? Indeed, personal growth is not always easy as being part of a group. It might require more confidentiality and intimacy. However, triggering curiosity is the first step towards opening the door to some inner work and thus self-growth.

Another possibility would be to host workshops on a variety of techniques with external professionals, in order to once again create a space where individuals can meet out of interest or simply curiosity and open their minds to new opportunities.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This paper was not written with the pretention to give an absolute answer to such a complex and actual question as how to integrate personal development in the workplace to make and keep people happy and well, hence good performers for the company. If there was such a magical solution, it would be known already.

What we tried to do, however, is to show that there are simple ways in which personal development can be of great help, as demonstrated by the studies that were used in this thesis. For example, by creating a space for employees to go and meditate every day while at work, as a regular practice of meditation has proven to be very beneficial in reducing stress and depression as well as fostering happiness in the workplace.

On the other hand, happiness and wellbeing, although guided by some universal commonalities, remain somehow subjective as well as highly complex to fully understand and master. For this reason, it is fundamental for the company to look at its organizational culture, as well as the culture of the country it is in and the cultures that are present within it. This way, we can start apprehending the environment in which we are interacting and carefully chose how and when to integrate personal development techniques in our workplace, with the goal to make it as successful as possible.

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