

2427638 - Assignment 1.1

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Critical Evaluation of the “Wellness at Work” Infographic

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Strengths of the Infographic.....	3
3. Message, Audience, and Structure.....	3
4. Colour and Contrast.....	4
5. Typography, Readability, and Font Consistency.....	4
6. Quantitative Information (Graphs and Data Presentation)	5
7. The Building Metaphor (Levels 1–4).....	5
7.1 Directional Expectations.....	5
7.2 Imagery vs Meaning	5
7.3 Level 4 Discontinuity	5
8. Historical Roadmap	6
9. Footnotes and Split Attention	6
10. Cognitive Load Summary	6
11. Improvements	7
12. Conclusion	7
References:.....	7

1. Introduction

The Wellness at Work infographic, produced by the Global Wellness Institute, attempts to summarise how workplace wellbeing has evolved, the factors that contribute to a supportive organisational environment, and how wellbeing initiatives may influence business outcomes [8]. It brings together a timeline, a structured wellbeing model, and several quantitative claims in a single visual. While the design is ambitious, certain choices mean that interpreting the information requires more mental effort than necessary. This discussion evaluates both the strengths and limitations of the infographic and draws on cognitive-load theory and perceptual design research [1]–[3], alongside UK public-sector guidelines such as ONS visualisation standards, GOV.UK accessibility requirements, WCAG 2.2, and Healthy Working Wales frameworks [4]–[7].

2. Strengths of the Infographic

One of the infographic's most positive qualities is its immediate visual appeal. The building metaphor is eye-catching and conveys a sense of structure and progression [8]. The attempt to link wellbeing practices with organisational outcomes is also clear, and the historical timeline at the bottom provides a sense of how thinking has changed over time. Including numerical indicators reinforces the central message and adds a level of credibility. Together, these elements show that the design has a solid conceptual foundation, even if some aspects reduce clarity in practice.

3. Message, Audience, and Structure

The overall message that investing in staff wellbeing supports stronger organisational outcomes is quickly identifiable. This benefits an audience likely to include managers, HR professionals, and organisational leaders seeking a broad overview [8].

However, the structure makes the viewer work harder than necessary. Three separate areas (statistics at the top, the building metaphor in the centre, and the timeline at the bottom) have to be mentally connected. Mayer and Moreno's research shows that when related information is physically separated, cognitive load increases because the viewer must integrate the pieces themselves [2]. This is not just a usability issue; it has an ethical dimension as well, since people with limited working-memory capacity or neurodivergent processing patterns may find the layout disproportionately demanding.

4. Colour and Contrast

Colour is used effectively to create visual separation between different thematic areas and contributes to the infographic's initial impact [1], [8].

That said, several choices hinder readability. The large yellow sections are visually intense and can draw attention away from other content, something Ware notes can disrupt visual focus [1]. In addition, several text background combinations fail to meet WCAG 2.2 contrast requirements [4]. Poor contrast is more than an aesthetic issue: it can make the content inaccessible to users with visual impairments, conflicting with GOV.UK expectations for public-sector communication [5]. These factors introduce avoidable perceptual strain and increase the cognitive effort required to interpret the information.

5. Typography, Readability, and Font Consistency

The infographic uses contemporary, clean typefaces and groups text into short blocks, which is helpful [8].

However, in practice, many text elements are too small to read comfortably without zooming, something GOV.UK guidance actively advises against for public information [5]. The design also uses more than one typeface and varies weights and spacing. Although subtle, these inconsistencies create visual noise and make it harder to identify the hierarchy of information. From a cognitive-load perspective, small or inconsistent typography forces users to devote attention to deciphering text rather than absorbing meaning [2]. These issues particularly affect people with low vision or dyslexia and therefore raise accessibility concerns.

6. Quantitative Information (Graphs and Data Presentation)

Including numerical percentages helps support the message that wellbeing practices can influence organisational performance [8].

However, the infographic does not use any conventional graphs (such as bar charts or pictograms). ONS guidance emphasises that numerical information should ideally have visual anchors to help viewers interpret scale and proportion [6]. Without these, the viewer must mentally imagine what the values represent. Several figures also lack context. A range like 25–65% communicates very little, and very precise values such as 147% may give an impression of accuracy that the underlying data cannot meaningfully support. Tufte notes that presenting precision without explanation can be misleading if readers assume more reliability than is warranted. Simple visual cues or contextual annotations would reduce cognitive effort and align more closely with Few's guidance on quantitative communication [3].

7. The Building Metaphor (Levels 1–4)

7.1 Directional Expectations

The building metaphor aligns conceptually with wellbeing frameworks that emphasise building foundations before achieving higher-level outcomes [7], [8].

However, the way it is presented requires bottom-up reading, which contrasts with Western readers' natural top-down expectations. Unless the graphic were intended for display in a vertical or floor-mounted context (which is not communicated), users must pause to determine the intended reading direction. This uncertainty adds to cognitive load and may particularly hinder viewers who rely on predictable information flow.

7.2 Imagery vs Meaning

Some imagery does not fully support the meaning of the associated text. For example, the section describing mindfulness and rest is illustrated with a busy workplace scene [8]. This weakens the dual-coding principle, reducing the benefit of combining visual and verbal cues [2] and creating potential for misinterpretation.

7.3 Level 4 Discontinuity

The shift from practical workplace behaviours in Levels 1–3 to broad organisational outcomes in Level 4 is abrupt. Because the connection is not shown visually, the viewer must infer how these ideas link, which adds cognitive burden.

8. Historical Roadmap

The historical timeline offers helpful context by showing how workplace wellbeing thinking has changed over time [8].

However, the bottom-to-top orientation is unusual and conflicts with typical chronological layouts. ONS guidance highlights the importance of intuitive directionality for time-based graphics [6]. The “Present Day” marker is also ambiguous, and the icon used does not clearly communicate its purpose. These issues introduce friction and may disadvantage users who depend on conventional temporal cues, raising accessibility concerns in line with Healthy Working Wales principles [7].

9. Footnotes and Split Attention

Including citations is a positive feature that improves credibility [8].

However, placing the footnotes far from the statistics they reference forces viewers to scan the entire page to match numbers with sources. Mayer and Moreno describe this as the split-attention effect, where related elements separated across space make comprehension slower and more effortful [2]. This also has ethical implications: users with visual-tracking or working-memory difficulties may find this separation particularly challenging.

10. Cognitive Load Summary

Overall, the infographic communicates an important and well-intended message and incorporates an engaging metaphor and relevant data [1]–[3].

Despite this, several aspects—small and inconsistent typography, low contrast, mismatched imagery, dispersed content, missing visual anchors, and non-intuitive reading order, introduce avoidable extraneous cognitive load [2]. These issues overlap with accessibility concerns and may inadvertently exclude users with visual, cognitive, or perceptual differences. Although the conceptual basis is strong, the final design demands more effort from the viewer than necessary.

11. Improvements

To improve clarity, reduce cognitive load, and strengthen ethical compliance, the infographic should consider the following enhancements [1]–[3], [6]:

- Reduce highly saturated background colours.
- Increase text size, improve contrast, and use consistent typography.
- Add directional cues to clarify reading order.
- Ensure imagery accurately reflects the concepts described.
- Reorient the timeline into a top-down format.
- Add visual anchors or simple charts to support quantitative values.
- Move footnotes closer to the associated data.
- Indicate display context if designed for large-format or vertical viewing.

12. Conclusion

The Wellness at Work infographic presents meaningful ideas and attempts to communicate them in an engaging way. However, several design choices introduce unnecessary cognitive load and raise concerns relating to accessibility and interpretation. Applying principles from cognitive-load theory, perceptual research, and public-sector communication standards would make the infographic clearer, more intuitive, and more inclusive [1], [3]–[7]. With improvements to colour, structure, typography, imagery, and data presentation, the design could convey its message more effectively.

References:

- [1] Ware, *Information Visualization: Perception for Design*.
- [2] Mayer and Moreno, *Nine Ways to Reduce Cognitive Load*.
- [3] Few, *Show Me the Numbers*.
- [4] WCAG 2.2.
- [5] GOV.UK, *Accessibility Requirements*.
- [6] ONS *Guidelines for Effective Data Visualisation*.
- [7] *Healthy Working Wales*.
- [8] Global Wellness Institute, *Wellness at Work Infographic*.

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

64/100

Generic Assessment Criteria	Marks available	Marks awarded
1. Engagement with Literature Skills		
Reasonable amount and reasonable quality / credibility of sources. Referenced throughout the text using IEEE standards however the bibliography should reflect IEEE standards better. There should be a structure to the listing, author(s), title, publication / publisher, issue and possibly page, date accessed if a website.	10	6
2. Knowledge and Understanding Skills		
A nicely written report that carries a reasonable narrative flow based on knowledge from research. Some knowledge based on research demonstrated and referenced reasonably well.	15	10

A little more detailed discussion would have been beneficial however some good consideration of cognitive load.		
3. Cognitive and Intellectual Skills		
Some reasonable recommendations for improvements based on points raised. More detailed discussion of the improvements would have been desirable.	1 5	8
4. Practical Application Skills		
Good use of colour within the visualisations however, would more colour to the infographic have created more interest and held attention better rather than a large amount of white space? Clear heading and good use of graphics with footer for sources too. Reasonable use of visualisations clearly answering certain questions. Does the message in the infographic answer all the questions posed? Reasonable balance of visuals and text however, does the text add to the message or create cognitive load?	5 0	3 3
5. Transferable Skills for Life and Professional Practice		

A well presented and sectioned document with all the expected elements.	10	7
There isn't really a need for referencing in the conclusion as it is a summary without the need for new information.		

PAGE 1
PAGE 2
PAGE 3
PAGE 4
PAGE 5
PAGE 6
PAGE 7