

CREATING SHARED VALUES



AN EXPERT INTERVIEW WITH DEE EDINGTON + JENNIFER PITTS

WELCOA[★]
WELLNESS WORKS HERE

CREATING SHARED VALUES

with
DEE EDINGTON & ASSOCIATES

ABOUT DEE EDINGTON, PH.D.



Dee Edington Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus, School of Kinesiology, University of Michigan and Founder and Director Emeritus, Health Management Research Center. In 2009 he published a capstone book of 30-years at the HMRC: *Zero Trends: Health as a Serious Economic Strategy*. Edington co-founded Edington Associates (2011) and co-authored a book (2016) with Jennifer Pitts: *Shared Values and Shared Rewards: Positive Organizational Health as a Win-Win Philosophy*.

ABOUT JENNIFER PITTS, PH.D.



Jennifer S. Pitts, Ph.D. has been exploring the health-related influence of social support, engagement in treatment decisions, and meaning in life and work for the past 25 years. Dr. Pitts served as Director of Outcomes and Analytics at Pfizer Health Solutions for 12 years. Most recently, she has focused on the impact of positive organizational cultures on the ability of employees to thrive in their work and lives.

ABOUT RYAN PICARELLA, MS, SPHR



As President of WELCOA, Ryan works with communities and organizations around the country to ignite social movements that will improve the lives of all working people in America and around the world. With a deep interest in culture and sociology, Ryan approaches initiatives from a holistic perspective that recognizes the many paths to well-being that must be in alignment for long-term healthy lifestyle behavior change. Ryan brings immense knowledge and insight to WELCOA from his background in psychology and a career that spans human resources, organizational development and wellness program and product design. Prior to joining WELCOA, Ryan managed the award winning BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee (BCBST) Well@Work employee wellness program, a 2012 C. Everett Koop honorable mention awardee. Since relocating to Nebraska, Ryan has enjoyed an active role in the community, currently serving on the Board for the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition in Omaha. Ryan has a Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Northern Arizona University.

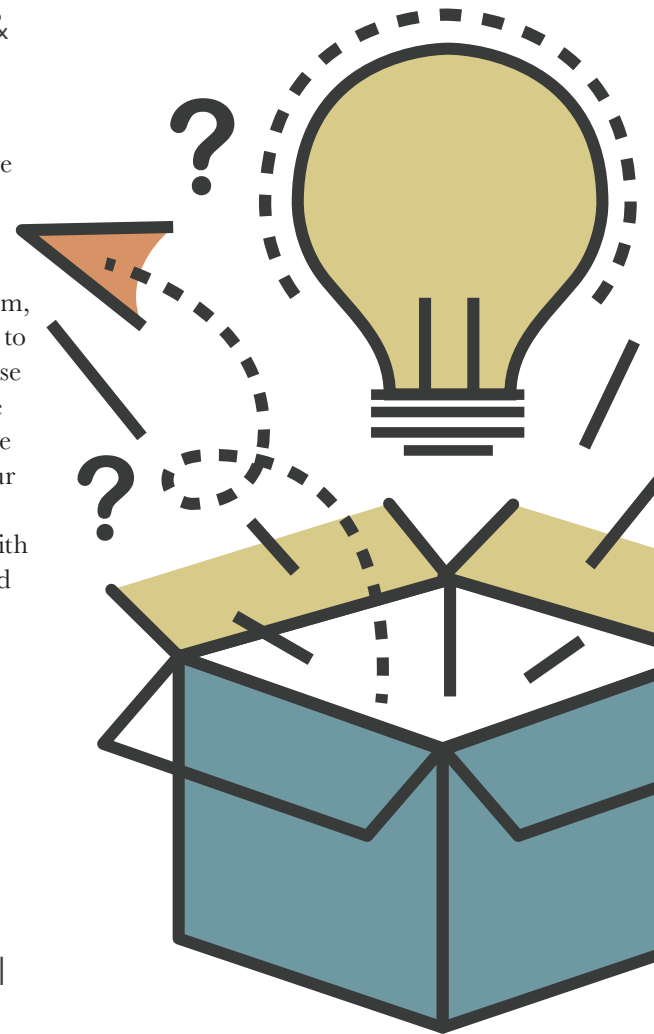
Dee Edington is one of the most recognizable names in wellness. Known for years of health promotion research at the University of Michigan, Dee has contributed invaluable to our industry. Now, he and Jennifer Pitts have an exciting new approach to creating shared organizational values to improve well-being. Learn more in this exclusive expert interview.

★ **RYAN PICARELLA** I think this is going to be an important piece and I know I have told you both before, but I wanted to share again that I really am appreciative of the work that you are doing and look forward to sharing this with our Members and continuing to partner to move the field forward. My first question is directed to Dee. You are very well-known in the field for the research that you have been doing for years at the University of Michigan. How have you taken that research and applied that to Edington & Associates?

DEE EDINGTON Thanks Ryan. That is a really critical question. I have thought a lot about that over the years, especially as I transitioned from doing capstone work for *Zero Trends* where we were taking the work of Framingham and Tecumseh and other longitudinal studies and determining how those risk factors were related to cost avoidance, healthcare cost containment, disability, absenteeism, et cetera. So that was the first part of the capstone book, and the second part was to inject that into the company in terms of the five pillars and the role of each of those five pillars on maintaining health. So after that, I began thinking about what else is there inside of you and around you that impacts your health? What else is inside your head—attitude, resilience, creativity, et cetera and what is around you—your friends, family, the workplace and the community? I became curious about the impact of those things, and that launched us into this new area. Then I met up with Jennifer Pitts, and she came with a lot of the knowledge and experiences that I did not have so we really made a good team that worked together.

★ **RP** You mentioned historically measuring impact in terms of traditional health outcomes and cost containment and how you transitioned into being interested in creativity, well-being and getting more of a holistic picture of people. What are those other variables that you and Jennifer have been researching, how are they different from the traditional factors that we have been studying, and—in follow up to

“So after that, I began thinking about what else is there inside of you and around you that impacts your health?”



that—which do you think show more promise as being important predictors of health and cost?

DE Well, that is another interesting question Ryan. First of all, those traditional factors should never go away. They are all the risk factors for diabetes, heart disease and so forth—that is still very important in America. So we do not want to substitute anything for those; we want to enhance those. As I looked at in *Zero Trends*, individual risk factors and culture are both necessary but not sufficient to impact the lagging indicators. We need to account for all of the things that we think are necessary to move further towards achieving the full human potential and the full organizational potential. We also borrowed a lot from positive psychology research (Martin Seligman & Chris Peterson) and positive organizations research at Michigan (Kim Cameron, Jane Dutton, and Bob Quinn). So all of those are interesting to us, and then how do they relate to the inner and intra human relationships? I think that is where we are headed. What is the impact of relationships on health?

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JENNIFER PITTS To add to that, we started with the idea that health is much broader than we once thought even with many more domains and also more depth and breadth in each domain. So in addition to physical health and mental health, which has been the more traditional focus of our efforts in the wellness and well-being field, we brought social health, occupational and intellectual health, environmental health and the relationships and dynamics among those into our thinking. We really brought the significance of that into the development of our further work, looking at what those influence and what those can be influenced by. So that whole broader, bigger dynamic picture of what health really is guided our work tremendously.

★ **RP** I know one of the things that you all have been looking at as a potential predictive factor is how meaningful an employee finds his or her work. How do you first measure whether or not they feel their work is meaningful and how important is that to overall health?

JP I think it starts with conversations on a really organic level in organizations. Before you can measure meaning, you need to help people understand and grow



their sense of meaning in their work or the instrumental value work has in their ability to provide for their families. Having those conversations is so crucial to not only show employees that the organization cares (which we will come to later), but also being able to tangibly measure meaning. You can do that with traditional surveys or you can do that in more qualitative ways, but there are a number of different ways to get at what really matters to an individual in terms of the meaning they find in their work.

DE We feel that meaningful work is a key value for all employees, and that goes from the frontline staff all the way up to the CEO. If you do not have that feeling about meaningful work, it is hard to get yourself up in the morning and get to work. Employees have to feel that they really are making a very important contribution to the product or service and the quality and quantity of the product. Somehow they need to know where they fit in the organization and what the meaning of their work is. Think about a custodian at a coffee shop. What would it be like if he did not do a good job? You would have a dirty place and customers will not continue to show up there. But if he does it really well, people notice—his work directly contributes the value of the organization. And it is important that you let that employee know that their work is meaningful.

★ **RP** This question is for Jennifer. Are there any other important environmental or cultural factors that you guys have identified through your research—either presently or in the past—that you think are big predictors of employee health?

JP Absolutely. I think that trust, respect and acknowledgment wraps into finding meaning and feeling valued for the work you do along with relationships with coworkers and your supervisor. Dee is fond of saying that *everything that happens in your organization influences your health*. That is not a specific thing, but I think it is more of a systemic level way of thinking about all of the various things that coalesce to influence employee health. Very specifically, things like alignment of policies—are your values really in alignment with your actions in your company, and do people really live those values? Another is the built environment. What is the architecture like in the company? All of those things have influences on the culture, the climate and ultimately individuals' health. We are learning so much more from so many fields like environmental and evolutionary psychology, and there is no one key thing. We get asked all the time *well, what is the one thing you would do if you could only do one thing*, and I just do not think there is a magic bullet. It really is having that bigger, broader mindset about the combination of things that really come together to influence health.

★ **RP** All of us collectively have been advocates for change, and I think our field is in a unique place right now as we are broadening our paradigm. Is there something that we have not been measuring or addressing that would help us start thinking more broadly?

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J P Something that we have been talking about a lot in this I think—and not just the wellness and well-being industry and population health but in other areas of industry that are interested in helping evolve culture—is the value of caring. What is that really? We used to focus on risk factors, and Dee helped to bring the field forward with understanding clusters and how those in a relationship influenced health and well-being. But are there caring clusters? What does it mean to be a truly caring organization? The idea of bringing heart back into our organization is finding its way in through so many avenues and industries, and the wellness industry has that idea in our DNA. So bringing that back to the forefront as an important indicator and outcome variable, and as we talk about in the book and Dee talked about often in his talks, moving from return on investment to value on investment to the value of caring I think is really coming on strong.

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D E Right. The value of caring needs to go both ways. The individuals have to care about the organization, and the organization has to care about the people. In my experience, when I ask management in organizations if they believe that their employees care about the organization, I find not many have even thought about that question. Any kind of relationship, whether it be couples or communities have to provide equitable value. A second point is that all the dimensions of health that we talked about—or anyone talks about—overlap. If you are working on spirituality, you may also be working on mental health. Or you may be working on physical health.

In our book *Shared Values*, we describe what the employee can do and then what the employer can do to create shared responsibility of both groups. That is something I think sometimes is missing in organizations. Our whole field is made up of people who really care; the people and organizations who are Members of WELCOA, Ryan, are a great example. These are really caring people, and we just need to get that across to our organizations so people see it and appreciate that caring goes both ways.

★ **R P** I could not agree more. Let’s dive a little bit deeper into your book. You mentioned shared values a couple of times, caring being one of those. I would love to hear from you guys a little bit more about the framework that you have developed as part of your book. What are the primary components of the framework presented in *Shared Values*?

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J P Yeah. It is interesting. First of all, we really focused on putting together a framework because there is so much information coming at us, and we crave to organize it and make sense of it all. To quote something I heard Malcolm Gladwell say, “People are information rich and theory poor.” So if you can give them a way of organizing their experiences and that information that is coming at them, you can overcome a lot of things and help people really move forward and implement—especially in this field. The framework has three main components and also incorporates the pillars from *Zero Trends* as well. So it starts with awakening. Awaken to the need for moving forward; awaken that desire to make a difference in our organizations. That is the first part of our book and also it leads into our framework.

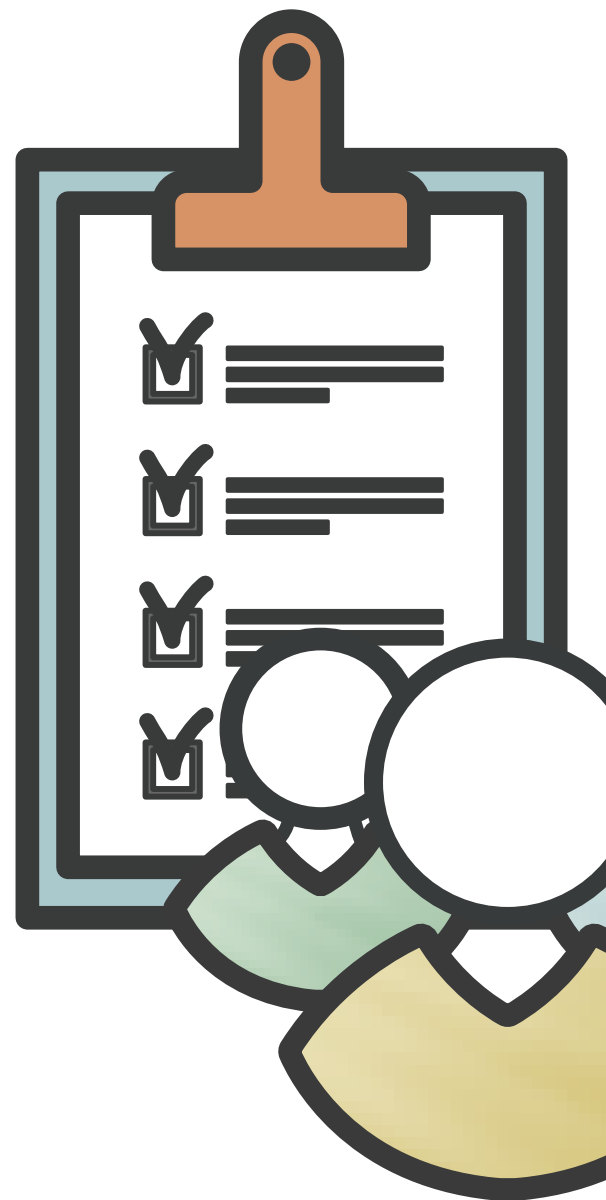
Then shared values-shared results is the first big theme in the book. That really entails not just sharing values that the leaders come up with, but sharing the whole process of creating values that really resonate throughout the organization. Ideally, this is an inclusive and collaborative process that defines values that both contribute to the health of employees and health of the company. In terms of shared results, these are what people care about, what a meaningful result looks like from both the organization and the people in the organization as well. So that is really the shared values-shared results theme. The second theme is positive organizational health. Positive organizational health is about evolving a positive environment, positive culture and climate. Finally, measuring and communicating what matters to everyone in the organization. How do you measure that along the way? How do you use that to evolve and improve what you are doing in the organization so that it will have a positive result? The result is shared.

Then the pillars really start with having visible, engaged, committed thriving leadership who truly live it. They practice what they preach. That aligns very closely with the first pillar of senior leadership in *Zero Trends*. The second pillar is that positive environment, culture and climate. What is it that the people who have operational responsibility in the organization can do to evolve the culture? Ultimately, it will impact the climate which is the perceptions about what goes on in the organization and whether that is a healthy place to work. But as Dee said, that has two components: what is it that the organization can do and what is it that the individual can do. The third pillar is self-leadership and positive individual health.

So that is that broader health that we talked about earlier in the interview. It includes many domains and overlapping domains, clusters and inter-relationships between intellectual and occupational health for example and environmental health and spiritual health. Our model itself shows the flourishing individual in the middle with overlapping dimensions that are inextricably interrelated. The graphic representation shows them as more interrelated overlapping areas and all of that is nested then within the bigger context of home, family, friends, community and society.

D E Let me add just a quick summary. The primary framework is evident in just the way that we named the four parts of the book; everything is a system. We designed the whole book as a system where the individual needs to awaken to the

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human potential, and the organization needs to awaken to what is the organizational potential. Then the second part of the framework is understanding shared values, the values that individuals have, the values that the organization has, and the ones that are shared. Then we discuss positive organizational health. Then we start to put it all together.

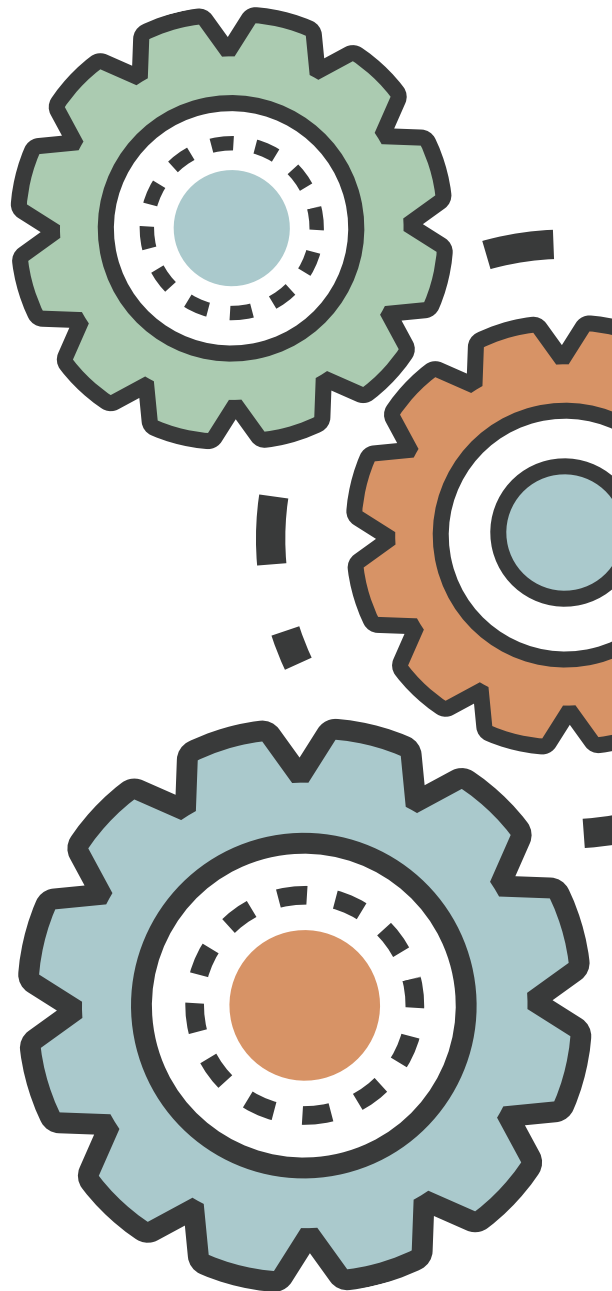
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In *Zero Trends* the pillars were put in as a structural part of the organization and they were treated as relatively independent of each other, as Jennifer said. Then when we got to this book we look at how they functionally work together. The fourth part of this is measuring and communicating what matters. That is where we go back to the shared results to figure out what really needs to be measured. There are some things that the organization might not have thought about, but it is primarily about getting at what do they want or what they think. This not only serves as a framework, but it is also a call to action.

★ **RP** One of the things that you guys both mentioned is to measure and communicate what matters. As researchers and evaluators, do you think you can measure everything that matters or are some things just not able to be quantified?

DE So one thing I would say first is you need to also put the outcomes into a time sequence: what are the leading indicators and what are the lagging indicators. I think what we have done, somewhat out of necessity albeit incorrectly, is relied on measuring lagging indicators. We’ve started with a wellness program and had the final goal of reducing healthcare costs, but there is a lot of time between starting and finishing. I think if we get better at sequencing the indicators and letting everyone know what the sequence is going to be and what to expect, we can measure more than we have been. I do not think we will get everything, Ryan, as you know. We should let people know that we are trying to meet their needs or wants.

JP I think that it is not just about what gets measured but *how* it is measured. Let’s measure in a way will allow us to engage people in that process as well. One example is letting people serve as organizational ethnographers in a sense. Tell us what a healthy culture looks like in your organization. Ask people to take pictures, to photo document to really give some richness to it. Also qualitative data collection through interviews and deep dive ethnographic exploration invite people into that process so that they are really looking for and understanding what it looks like to be a healthy organization. We use appreciative inquiry in our work



to help look for those areas that are really truly thriving—and thriving without any special additional support or help. Then we try to grow those in other areas of the organization to create a rich grassroots way of evolving a culture that starts with what is already right in the organization.

★ **RP** I love that. I am curious if there is something that you suggest that folks can start doing right now to begin creating shared values amongst their employees? Is there something that we should stop doing right now? You can answer either one or both if you like.

DE I think we can answer both of those. We get that question a lot—what can I do on Monday? I think that the best thing that you could do is to go back and talk with your people; ask them about their values. What do they really value about working at this organization? Do not start with how can we help you improve? We want to hear from them, and not how they answer your questions. What are your values? What is a value that works in the organization? What is going right? Then a follow up question is, what are your desired results of working here? What would you like to see? Some people say *I want more money so I can do all the other things I want to do*. Other people say *I want to develop a career*. Other people say *I want to develop a passion for this*. Another question to ask your people is *what is one of your strengths?* People love to talk about their strengths. That is a first step in engagement and inspiration. Inspiration may be more important than engagement.

JP I think from the perspective of a wellness coordinator who has the role in the company of trying to evolve a healthier culture, they can start with informal conversations with their colleagues in OD, quality and safety. Ask for help with the work that you are doing, but also help them see how your work as a wellness coordinator can help bring meaning to other folks in the organization. That will ultimately help you get a broader reach.

★ **RP** So if our readers are interested in grabbing a copy of *Shared Values* or hearing more about this framework, where would you recommend they go?

JP They could visit us at www.sharedvalues-shareresults.com and the book is also available through Amazon. The frameworks are featured on our website and provide some good context for what is in the book.

★ **RP** Any parting thoughts? What do you think the future of our industry looks like if we do not begin incorporating this broader view of individual and organizational health?

“I think that the best thing that you could do is to go back and talk with your people; ask them about their values. What do they really value about working at this organization?”



DE It is so important that we start to think this way because if we do not, I think there is going to be a gradual disappearance of health promotion, wellness and well-being fields. Because I think other fields are starting to mobilize in this area, and they are going the way of the quantifiable self and it is getting right back to medical solutions: waiting for bad things to happen to good people. But we cannot lose sight of the extra things that determine well-being like good friends, a good family, and being a part of a flexible, effective organization. One of our main themes is *the individual wins when the company wins, and the company wins when the individuals win*. I think it is so critical that we move away from just programs and think more strategically, systematic, systemic and sustainable in those four ways.

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JP I think we went into this industry with a particular business model, and it is not necessarily a cheap one to mobilize. These other industries like health and well-being architecture and conscious capitalism are providing a very different avenue into health and well-being than what we have been delivering. They come in at a higher level of consciousness with leaders as well. So we have to find our place and demonstrate our value at that level of the organization, and step up and really be the industry that we can be. It will not be an easy ship to turn, but I think it starts by getting back to who we are as individuals and where our hearts were when we came to this industry. I have never met anybody in the health promotion space who did not have a really full heart with respect to wanting to make a difference. So embrace that about ourselves and the purpose we came into this industry with and use that to improve our platforms and our business models. 🏠

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