

# HOW CAN I GAIN CONTROL TO IMPROVE MY WELLBEING?

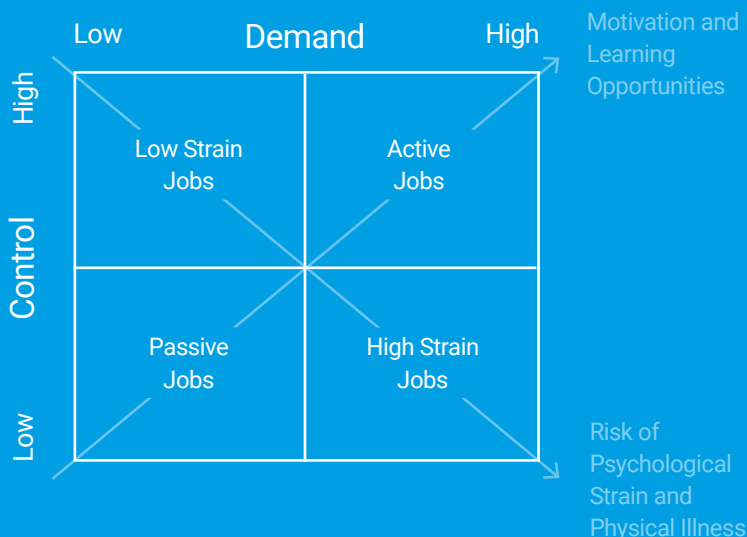
With more of us working from home due to the Covid 19 pandemic our usual habits, routines and interactions with colleagues changed. We may now be able to put the washing on during the day or have the flexibility to wake up later as the commute to our computer downstairs isn't as long as the normal commute into the office.

Many organisations have embraced these changes and adopted a hybrid or virtual way of working and while some people have embraced working from home, others have enjoyed it less. Why could that be? An initial line of enquiry could be to use the age-old introvert vs extrovert explanation. Introverts may be satisfied by working from home as they are surrounded by fewer people, allowing them more time for the quiet reflection that they like. Extroverts on the other hand could struggle with the solitary reality of working from home, reducing the opportunity to be sociable and energetic.

However, we think this is an incomplete explanation of why some thrived in the new way of working, whereas others struggled. For a more complete explanation we need to look at what some people will have gained and some will have lost. The Job Demand Control (JDC) model, first developed by Robert Karasek 1979 may have an answer.



## The Job Demand Control Model, Robert Karasek, 1979



This model explains how autonomy over your work often increases wellbeing and happiness. The model looks at two dimensions of work. The first aspect is around Control – the extent to which we have high autonomy over the work - and more freedom to make decisions, take action and influence. The second aspect is around Demand – the extent to which we feel that the expectations of us are stretching but achievable – and that we are able to achieve deadlines and challenges...

The optimum balance for work is a high level of control, and high (but manageable) level of demand. This leads to fulfilment and a sense of challenge but without it being overwhelming. Too little control can be highly stressful. Too much demand is hard to sustain for a long period of time without burnout. A low level of control may be comfortable, but there is an increasing risk that boredom will set in. Ideally, we have some measure of control over the level of demand that we take on.

Leaders have some ability to influence and adjust the level of autonomy that your people have at work. Policies, procedures or workload can help or hinder someone's control and demand within their job, impacting on their wellbeing. If we're in a leadership position we have a duty of care towards our team, and it's our job to create the conditions in which they can thrive as much as possible. So we need to be mindful that there could be things that we can have an impact on which could improve someone control and demand within their job. Saying that, the ideal impact we can have is to empower them to change their own control and demand themselves. This links nicely with the fundamentals of coaching where leaders use a coaching style to empower their people to make changes that fit authentically in with themselves, their values, beliefs and capabilities – this is where true honest sustainable commitment and change happens.



If you don't manage a team and you want to think about how to improve your work environment, the JDC framework is a good basis for thinking about the improvements that will make the most difference. Working with a coach can be an excellent way of working out what we can influence and how to bring our influence to bear. Working with a coach allows people to recognise where they have control and agency over their work environment – often in ways that they would not have considered before. Coaching can also help you think about the demands the job places on you, or develop new strategies to meet these demands.

And coaching for leaders helps them think about the demands and levels of control that their people have, so that there's the optimum level of demand and as much control as the job will allow.

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If you'd like to find out how you can support your people's or your own wellbeing with the power of a coaching conversation please get in touch with Graham Clark, MD OCM Enable, [graham.clark@theocm.co.uk](mailto:graham.clark@theocm.co.uk)