

ALL'S WELL

BY GREG BAMBURY



5 workplace wellness mistakes to avoid

When we think about employee health, we often focus on the physical element. That type of health is visible, and when changes occur, you can see them. But mental health and wellness are also important—and you can't just solve them with a gym membership.

When developing wellness programs, companies need to consider why their employees come to work every day, what challenges and motivates them. Employees are happiest when they know their employer cares about them and their well-being. And when you look at the companies whose employees rank them highly for wellness, a purposeful wellness approach is embedded in the corporate culture.

So how can you help employees believe in the value of wellness in your workplace? Offering healthier food at team lunches and supporting daytime walking clubs are good ideas, but you also need to create an intentional culture of wellness. Create that culture by avoiding these common mistakes.

1) Doing too much

You can bite off more than you can chew by including every wellness option available in your program. To support employee choice without making it overwhelming, consider providing a wellness credit so employees can choose the activity that works best for them. Make wellness programs accessible by sharing information through team meetings, corporate emails and your corporate intranet. You can even include a wellness goal in your staff's performance plans. A program that makes sense internally will be easier to manage and lead at the executive level.

2) Failing to customize

When you look back at the most difficult workplaces you've encountered in your career, you probably remember the negative aspects. Domineering leaders, a lack of challenging work, no room for growth...the list is different for each company. Think about the different stressors your employees experience on a daily basis and address them. Stressors in a hospital are going to be different from stressors in an IT firm, so don't get caught up in imitating what seems to work at another company.

3) Failing to integrate

While customizing the program to your workforce is important, make sure you don't end up with a fragmented initiative focusing just on


physical wellness (e.g., exercise and eating well). Since body and mind are connected, giving your employees physical wellness tools without any tools to combat stress will yield only partial results.

4) Being too rigid

While it's great to offer wellness programs with fixed options such as on-site gyms, let employees develop their own wellness journey and support them along the way. For example, allow flexibility for employees to walk at lunch, set their own hours (within reason) and work regularly from home. Supportive leaders who provide flexible wellness options will see more balanced and happier employees—which, in turn, can improve performance and employee engagement.

5) Setting the wrong example

If you introduce wellness programs but have senior leaders and managers who don't foster well-being—for example, they never take lunch, rarely leave their desks or fail to encourage a less stressful environment—employees may end up seeing your wellness communications as just lip service, and you won't be able to create a culture of wellness. But when wellness is at the heart of everything you do, it's easier to share it with employees and watch them follow your lead.

Today's employees spend so much time at work, they're looking for balance. So instead of thinking about wellness as just a program, make sure it's part of your corporate lifestyle. 

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One more MISTAKE TO AVOID

BEING HEALTHY AT WORK BUT UNHEALTHY AT HOME

When employees know their employer cares about their health and wellness, it can start a trickle-down effect. As much as we may try not to, we bring work home with us. Positive reinforcement around health and wellness at work really counts and sets the stage for wellness to continue outside of the office.