

Three steps to increase employee wellbeing using Human Capital Management technology

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Employee health and wellbeing has become a top concern for many companies. This is partially due to rising costs of employer health care in the United States. But equally, if not more important is the challenge of sustaining employee performance in an “always on” world of constant distractions, changes, and other sources of stress.

Health reflects absence of illness or injury. Wellbeing reflects an active, energetic, enjoyable and thriving life. These two things influence each other, but are not the same. Many things that directly impact our health are unrelated to our work (e.g. genetics). In contrast, our work has a major impact on our wellbeing. In turn, our wellbeing influences our health and how we respond to health problems along with the quality of our work. For example, people’s whose work schedules prevent them from getting adequate sleep are more prone to health issues like hypertension, take longer to recover from illnesses, and make more mistakes on the job (cite Sherwood, 2017). Improving employee wellbeing simultaneously increases workforce engagement and productivity while decreasing costs related to health care and absenteeism.

Wellbeing is influenced by many things including sleep, diet, exercise, stress management, mindfulness, and balancing work and non-work responsibilities. Thanks to [years of research by occupational health professionals](#), we have a wealth of knowledge on how to improve these things. The challenge is getting employees to utilize this knowledge. The fundamental challenge of employee wellbeing is that we know what people should do, but we struggle to get people to do it! It is easy (and expensive) to tell employees they should walk 10,000 steps a day and send them Apple watches and Fitbits to track their activity. It is hard to get employees out to the track or gym to put in the miles.

Three things must happen to improve employee wellbeing across an entire workforce.

- **Accessible.** Employees need easy access to health and wellbeing resources if we want employees to use them. These resources should educate employees on how to improve their wellbeing and provide them with tools and information to do it.
- **Enjoyable.** Engaging in wellbeing activities must be enjoyable if they are going to be sustained over time. Many wellbeing activities require trading short term rewards for long-term health benefits. Employees are unlikely to do these things on a continued basis if they are boring, overly complex, or unpleasant.
- **Cultural.** We must create organizational cultures that reward and support healthy work behaviors. It is unrealistic to expect employees to change their work routines to enable a healthier lifestyle if their leaders neither support nor encourage them to do so. This includes having leaders who actively role model healthy work-life choices.

Employee wellbeing resources need to be accessible, enjoyable and cultural to be effective. This requires having more effective health & wellbeing solutions than what we have now. However, a major frustration voiced health & wellbeing professionals is the difficulty of getting companies to spend money on current wellbeing programs to avoid future health care costs that may not surface until years later. Rather than asking companies to spend more money on new solutions, we are likely to be more successful if we leverage existing solutions in new ways.

A company's existing human capital management (HCM) technology platform could be a powerful resource for increasing employee wellbeing. HCM technology is used by employees on a regular basis often in a mobile environment. This makes it ideal to address issues of accessibility. Many HCM technology vendors have invested considerable resources into making their systems easy and intuitive to use. Wellbeing solutions delivered through these platforms are likely to be simpler and more enjoyable. HCM technology also directly influences decision and actions related to staffing, development and talent management that have a major impact on organizational culture. This technology can be used to support and reward leaders, managers and employees whose behaviors illustrate a strong commitment to workforce health and wellbeing.

Many of the HCM technology systems currently in place in organizations have the potential to create more healthy and thriving workforces. It is simply a matter of using this existing technology in a way that realizes its full potential.