

2016 RESEARCH REPORT

INCLUDES  
GWI & EVERYDAY  
HEALTH INC.  
**EMPLOYEE  
SURVEY ON  
WELLNESS AND  
WORK**

# THE FUTURE OF WELLNESS AT WORK



**GLOBAL WELLNESS  
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# The Future of Wellness at Work

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January 2016



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## **About the Global Wellness Institute**

The Global Wellness Institute (GWI), a non-profit 501(c)(3), is considered the leading global research and educational resource for the global wellness industry and is known for introducing major industry initiatives and regional events that bring together leaders and visionaries to chart the future. GWI positively impacts global health and wellness by advocating for both public institutions and businesses that are working to help prevent disease, reduce stress, and enhance overall quality of life. Its mission is to empower wellness worldwide.

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# Executive Summary

January 2016



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# Executive Summary

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**As the human race accumulates material abundance, vast stores of knowledge, and ever increasing volumes of information, we are also facing a quagmire of socioeconomic, health, geopolitical, resource, and climatic challenges. There is a rising epidemic of an unwell workforce, which our global economy and local communities can scarcely afford. This study projects what the future of work will look like and makes the case for why wellness matters in that future. We outline a broad vision for *wellness at work* that we hope will bring you into this important global movement.**

## Why does wellness at work matter?

The world's 3.2 billion workers are increasingly unwell: they are growing old; they suffer more chronic disease; they are stressed, unhappy, and sometimes unsafe at work; and they face significant economic insecurity. The economic burden of unwell workers – in both medical expenses and lost productivity – is enormous, possibly reaching 10-15 percent of global economic output. In the United States, where the most extensive data are available, we estimate that the costs of chronic disease, work-related injuries and illnesses, stress, and employee disengagement amount to more than \$2.2 trillion each year or 12 percent of GDP. Workforce unwellness may be even costlier in the rest of the world, considering the higher rates of employee disengagement and work-related injuries and illnesses reported globally. On top of this economic burden, there is unquantifiable human suffering and an unsustainable burden on healthcare systems around the world.

## What is missing in the workplace wellness conversation today?

When we hear the term “workplace wellness,” what comes to mind is usually employer-sponsored health screenings; smoking cessation or weight loss programs; classes on fitness and stress reduction; and perks such

as free massages, gift cards, prizes, or wearable devices. Indeed, the current conversation on workplace wellness is centered on the wellness programs that originated in the United States, where employers provide the majority of healthcare coverage and are keen to reduce escalating healthcare costs. Workplace wellness now represents a sizable and growing market worth \$40.7 billion globally. Still, today's workplace wellness programs only cover less than 9 percent of the global workforce – primarily those who live in industrialized countries or work for large, multinational firms.

Among the workers who do have access to workplace wellness programs, participation has been tepid. Program impacts are not well-understood, mostly undocumented, and often met with rising skepticism and media attacks. Most programs are run by human resource departments to help employees “fix” existing problems such as poor health, unhealthy habits, and stress. Employee health and wellness has not been a priority that is integrated into the mission and operations of most organizations.

## Wellness and work are interdependent.

In a vicious cycle, we may bring our underlying poor health and personal issues to the workplace, where we become unmotivated, disengaged, and unproductive. Conversely, work can also be harmful to us – for example, when the workplace itself is unsafe or unhealthy and when the work culture is hostile, aggressive,

and stress-laden. Mental and emotional distress from work can be linked directly to chronic diseases.

On the other hand, wellness and work can create a mutually enhancing virtuous circle. When we feel healthy and balanced, we bring energy, focus, and motivation to work, and we are more productive. Work can also be a source of joy and satisfaction – for example, when we feel we are appreciated and understood, that we have accomplished something, or we are fulfilling our personal mission. Because the work environment is social, it is also an ideal place to support and motivate us to develop healthy habits.

## Wellness is paramount in the future of work.

With the rise of technology and artificial intelligence, work is becoming more fluid, adaptable, and collaborative, and it requires constant learning. As work tasks – blue, white, and gray collar – are increasingly borne by computers and machines, human beings add value by complementing and harnessing technologies and by being creative, innovative, perceptive, intuitive, empathetic, and adaptable. We need to be in a good state of physical, mental, and emotional wellness to be able to bring these qualities to work each day. In order to survive and thrive in the future, businesses and organizations will need to harness the potential of wellness by aligning work environments and cultures with workers' personal values, motivations, and wellness needs.

## What does the future of wellness at work look like?

As we gain clearer insight into how work will evolve and what wellness means, we can make a few predictions about the future:

- Companies and governments will be highly motivated to reverse the current trend of an unwell workforce.
- Wellness at work is a sustainable movement that will gain momentum across the world in the coming 5-10 years.

- Workplace wellness programs – as we know them today – will disappear.
- Individuals will take more responsibility for their own wellness in the context of work.
- Companies must adopt a culture of wellness as the default, not the exception, if they want to attract and retain good people.
- Companies will recognize that doing right by employees and the community is good business.
- Governments will become more aggressive about mandating wellness, including in the workplace.
- The healthiest workplaces will be a destination where people go to improve their own wellness.

## Wellness at work must be viewed through a wider lens.

To prepare for the future of work and to harness the potential of wellness, we propose a new vision for wellness at work:

*Wellness at work is the right to work in a manner that is healthy, motivating, and edifying. Everyone – workers, managers, and business owners – should endeavor to work in a way that improves our own wellness and the wellbeing of others.*

There are three key areas where we can take action to improve wellness at work, no matter what industry or country we work in, the size of our organizations, or the resources available.

**Physical Environment.** Every workplace and occupation has its own health hazards and risks. Employers and governments must set, apply, and enforce appropriate standards to reduce on-the-job illnesses, injuries, and deaths, and also to address growing issues such as “sick buildings” and indoor air quality. However, meeting minimum safety standards is not enough. Forward-looking companies are now infusing wellness-enhancing features into buildings and workspaces and are using workplace design and



natural elements to encourage healthy behaviors, collaboration, and creativity among workers.

**Personal.** Caring employers need to move beyond “wellness programs” to address the most pressing health and wellness needs of their employees, whether it is work-life balance, safe drinking water, a living wage, or managing personal finances. Many factors in our workplaces can be improved to ensure that the relationship between our working lives and personal lives is positive and mutually reinforcing. We need to recognize and address the huge impact that workplace culture and stress can have on our personal wellbeing and health behaviors. In addition, when we find meaning, purpose, and impact through our work, our individual wellness is enhanced and we become better employees.

**Social & Community.** Our social interactions and relationships at work – with coworkers, clients, managers, partners, and the community – have a profound impact on our own wellness and that of others. Having friendships and trust at work not only

increases our productivity as workers, but also improves our personal wellbeing. Leaders and managers have an outsized role in establishing workplace culture. Those who value and care for employees as their organization’s most important asset; who set an example for empathy, honesty, openness, and healthy behaviors; and who focus on a purpose-driven (rather than profit-driven) mission can be a major source of motivation and wellness for their employees.

We all have a role to play – as policymakers, businesses, managers, and employees – in shaping the future of wellness at work. In spite of the rapid growth of “workplace wellness programs” in recent years, the field of wellness at work is still in its very early stages. What we do know is that, given how much of our time and livelihoods are shaped by our work, infusing our working environments with wellness will be beneficial not only to companies and workers, but also to our families and communities.

## Research Scope and Methodology

The analysis and data presented in this report are based on extensive primary and secondary research conducted by the authors from January to November 2015. Research included a review of historical and recent literature, data, and reports on workplace wellness programs, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), occupational safety & health (OSH), health and wellness promotion approaches, organizational culture and leadership, management paradigms, employee engagement and motivation, and global trends that affect the future of work and the wellness of workers. The authors also benefited enormously from conversations with numerous top researchers and practitioners in the field of workplace wellness, as well as from the inputs gathered from two practitioner roundtables assembled by the Global Wellness Institute in New York City, New York on July 15, 2015, and in Miami, Florida on September 16, 2015.

The report incorporates data collected from a survey developed collaboratively by the Global Wellness Institute and Everyday Health, Inc. The survey was fielded online from July 14 to September 5, 2015 and yielded responses from 1,179 adults. Respondents were invited to participate through Everyday Health’s on-site recruiting intercepts and social media channels. Global data from other research studies and surveys are also incorporated throughout the report. While this study aims to be global in its focus, in some instances, only U.S.-based data exists and comparable global or cross-country data are not available.



The Future of Wellness at Work

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# Full Report

January 2016



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# Preface:

# Wellness is Rising

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Our world is changing at an unprecedented pace. These changes – technological, cultural, demographic, socioeconomic, geopolitical, and climatic – are forcing us to constantly redefine our place in the world in order to survive, thrive, and find meaning. As material abundance and information accumulate around the world, our challenges have become unprecedentedly complex and paradoxical. While millions of people have risen into coveted affluence and middle class lifestyles, billions continue to live in economic insecurity and poverty. Remarkable advances in medical and life sciences have not checked the rise of chronic disease, obesity, and poor health. As we continue to achieve impressive growth milestones, the threats of climate change, environmental degradation, and resource depletion are omnipresent. While urbanization and increased mobility have brought people into closer physical proximity, alienation, loneliness, and polarization are on the rise. Technologies meant to create efficiency and convenience also keep us tethered to our digital devices and leave us unable to “unplug” from work and obligations.

Throughout history, the conditions in which we live, play, and work have been inextricably linked to the prevailing economic system of the times. As our civilization evolved from the hunter-gatherer age to the agrarian and industrial ages, our dependence on nature, subsistence, and physical labor gave way to a system based on efficiency, organization, hierarchy, and machinery. The information age has once again transformed our existence, driving our world with digitization, information flows, and networks. The democratization of knowledge and information has also brought deepening awareness of the world’s problems and recognition that scientific and technological advancement alone is inadequate to solve

them. Among people and nations who have achieved a certain state of material abundance, there is a burgeoning yearning for more balance and wellness, and for an existence that is regenerative and sustainable.

Many cultures, from the ancient Egyptians to the Mayans to the Hopi, have prophesied a massive, systemic shift in human consciousness to take place during our era – a transition from a world defined by separation, power, and materialism to one based on unity, peace, and community. A belief in the dawn of the Aquarian Age, with its roots in Eastern philosophies and focus on wellbeing and enlightenment, inspired the New Age movement in the 1970s. Geologists now believe we are in an epochal shift toward the *Anthropocene*, or the “Age of Man,” an era defined by the human imprint on the planet.<sup>1</sup>

**Emerging and converging trends are pointing to the rise of the “wisdom economy.”**

The desire to unleash human creativity to solve problems and to connect with other people, our communities, and our planet has become more pronounced and urgent in recent years. In his bestseller, *Blessed Unrest*, author Paul Hawken posited that the 1 to 2 million organizations around the world working on ecological sustainability and social justice constitute a new kind of diffuse, grassroots social movement unprecedented in human history in terms of its size and scope.<sup>2</sup> In the business and academic worlds, this movement can be seen in the growing interest in topics such as conscious capitalism, emotional intelligence for business, the neuroscience of mindfulness, the psychology of

happiness, the science of altruism, the economics of abundance, and other emerging fields of study that justify doing good and the pursuit of wellbeing. These emerging and converging trends have led some futurists to label the next economic age as the “wisdom economy” or the “human economy.”<sup>3</sup>

We predict that this forthcoming economic age will bring fundamental shifts in work as we know it, as well as the relationship between wellness and work. In the future economy, people and organizations will thrive on unique human traits that cannot be replicated by machines: creativity, intuition, collaboration, self-reflection, and altruism, among others. People and

organizations will be increasingly motivated by the desire to solve global challenges and to bring greater wellbeing to people and the planet. Indeed, as work evolves alongside the emerging wisdom economy, it could become a place or activity where people go not only to make a living, but also to seek their own personal wellness.

In this study, we project what the future of work will look like, make the case for why wellness matters, and predict how wellness at work will evolve in our future economy. We also outline a vision and a framework that will help you harness wellness at work and be a part of this important global movement.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see: 1) Davidson, S. (2012, December 20). It's happening: The global shift in consciousness is underway and right on (Mayan) time [Web log post]. *Huffington Post Blog*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-davidson/its-the-end-of-the-world-\\_b\\_2338569.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-davidson/its-the-end-of-the-world-_b_2338569.html). 2) Monastersky, R. (2015, March 11). Anthropocene: The human age. *Nature*, 519, 144-147. <http://www.nature.com/news/anthropocene-the-human-age-1.17085>.

<sup>2</sup> Hawken, P. (2007). *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Social Movement in History Is Restoring Grace, Justice, and Beauty to the World*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see: 1) Stebbins, G. (n.d.). *Wisdom Economy*. Irving, Texas: Insight Institute. <http://insightu.net/content/wisdom-economy.pdf>. 2) Seidman, D. (2014, November 12). From the knowledge economy to the human economy. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2014/11/from-the-knowledge-economy-to-the-human-economy>.

# I. Wellness at Work: Why Does it Matter?

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## **The global workforce is unwell, and we cannot afford it.**

Every day, over 3.2 billion of the world's 7.3 billion people go to work.<sup>4</sup> In a lifetime, the average person will spend at least 90,000 hours working.<sup>5</sup> Many adults spend anywhere from one-third to one-half of their waking hours at work or doing work-related activities.<sup>6</sup> Work provides essential subsistence – food, clothing, shelter – as well as a meaningful purpose in life. Some of us work to live, while others live to work. For many people, work is a major driver of both happiness and stress.

Globalization has brought rapid economic growth, pulling hundreds of millions of workers into the formal economy, lifting their families out of poverty, and creating a new generation of middle class and mega cities around the world. And yet, the health and wellness of the global workforce is far from optimal. The issues vary across countries and industries – from the Asian investment banker who is perpetually exhausted from 14-hour days; to the American small business employee who receives no sick leave; to the Central American textile factory worker toiling in sweatshop conditions; to the African diamond mine digger who lives on \$1 a day and lacks electricity and running water. There is clear evidence that the overall wellbeing of the global workforce has stagnated or deteriorated with respect to economic insecurity, stress, disengagement, poor health, and even workplace injuries and death.

## **The rise of chronic disease is expensive to employers and to the global economy.**

Rapidly rising rates of chronic disease are escalating healthcare costs around the world. This issue is particularly critical for U.S. companies because they

directly bear the costs of healthcare for their employees through benefit packages; however, chronic disease is not just a rich country problem. Nearly three-quarters of all deaths related to chronic disease occur in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>7</sup> Many countries around the world do not offer universal health coverage (especially in the developing world), and many multinational firms pay for the health costs of their employees in the countries where they operate. The World Economic Forum and Harvard School of Public Health estimate that major chronic diseases and mental illness will result in a projected cumulative \$47 trillion in lost economic output globally from 2011-2030.<sup>8</sup>

Chronic disease affects *all* employers because it reduces the quantity and quality of human capital. The costs of chronic disease include not only direct healthcare expenses, but also the indirect and sometimes hidden costs of lost productivity due to absenteeism and presenteeism (i.e., when a person at work is unable to perform at full capacity due to illness, stress, or other issues). In fact, productivity losses due to poor health and presenteeism are even higher than the direct costs of actual medical treatment (averaging \$2.30 in lost productivity for every \$1 in medical costs).<sup>9</sup> In the United States alone, missed workdays due to chronic disease cost employers \$153 billion in lost productivity every year;<sup>10</sup> cost estimates that include presenteeism are even higher, ranging up to \$1.1 trillion.<sup>11</sup>

## **Poor working conditions cause illnesses, injuries, and deaths.**

Work-related accidents, occupational diseases, and other work-related health problems account for economic losses in the range of 4-6 percent of global GDP each year, according to World Health

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# The world's **3.2 billion** workers are increasingly unwell

## THEY FACE SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC INSECURITY.

**74%**

Live on less than  
\$13 per day

**45%**

Work in low-skill or  
manual occupations

**77%**

Work in part-  
time, temporary,  
“vulnerable,” or  
unpaid jobs

## THEY ARE GROWING OLDER AND LESS HEALTHY.

**18%**

Of labor force over  
55 by 2030

**52%**

Of adults  
overweight or obese

**9%**

Of adults  
with diabetes

**76%**

Are “struggling” or  
“suffering”  
in their physical  
wellbeing

## THEY ARE STRESSED, UNHAPPY, AND EVEN UNSAFE AT WORK.

**38%**

Suffer from  
excessive pressure  
on the job

**24%**

Are actively  
disengaged at work

**2.3M**

Annual work-related  
deaths

**313M**

Annual  
work-related  
accidents

Source: ILO; WHO; Gallup; Gallup-Healthways; Towers-Watson; Tampere University of Technology/Workplace Safety & Health Institute Singapore/VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland



Organization<sup>12</sup> and International Labor Organization<sup>13</sup> estimates. In the U.S. alone, employers pay more than \$1 billion every week to compensate workers for the most disabling workplace injuries and illnesses.<sup>14</sup> People who are injured or sick as a result of their job bear enormous costs in direct medical expenses and wage loss (earning 15 percent less in wages over 10 years according to one study<sup>15</sup>).

**The costs of employee disengagement, stress, and burnout are no longer hidden.**

Various research studies have estimated the costs of work-related stress around the world: \$650 billion in Europe, \$3.9 billion in Australia, \$2-8 billion Canada, and \$300 billion in the United States.<sup>16</sup> The consequences of employee disengagement are particularly damaging. Studies have found that disengaged employees are less productive, more likely to steal from their company, negatively influence their coworkers, miss more workdays, and drive customers away. In the United States alone, actively disengaged employees cost an estimated \$450-550 billion per year in lost productivity.<sup>17</sup>

**Workforce unwellness could be costing the global economy 10-15 percent of annual economic output.**

The cumulative economic burden of unwellness at work is enormous for both businesses and the entire global economy, especially when productivity losses are added to direct medical expenses. In the United States (where the most extensive data are available), chronic disease, work-related injuries and illnesses, work-related stress, and employee disengagement are estimated to cost the economy more than \$2.2 trillion every year, or 12 percent of GDP. Since global studies have found that employees in many other countries are even more disengaged and experience more work-related injuries and illnesses than U.S. workers, the global cost burden could well be even higher.<sup>18</sup>

**Unwellness at work is incredibly costly!**



**\$1,100b**

Costs of chronic disease



**\$250b**

Costs of work-related injuries & illnesses



**\$300b**

Costs of work-related stress



**\$550b**

Costs of disengagement at work

**\$2.2 trillion annual loss in the United States (12% of GDP)**

Source: Milken Institute, UC-Davis, EU-OSHA, Gallup

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<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization (2015). *World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2015 – Supporting Data Sets* [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2015/lang--en/index.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Pryce-Jones, J. (2010). *Happiness at Work: Maximizing Your Psychological Capital for Success*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

<sup>6</sup> Rutledge, T. (2005). *Getting Engaged: The New Workplace Loyalty*. Ontario, Canada: Mattanie Press. p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Mendis, S., et al (2014). *Global Status Report on Noncommunicable Diseases 2014*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization Press. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/148114/1/9789241564854\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/148114/1/9789241564854_eng.pdf?ua=1).

<sup>8</sup> Bloom, D.E., et al (2011, September). *The Global Economic Burden of Non-communicable Diseases*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Harvard\\_HE\\_GlobalEconomicBurdenNonCommunicableDiseases\\_2011.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Harvard_HE_GlobalEconomicBurdenNonCommunicableDiseases_2011.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Loepke, R., et al (2009, April). Health and Productivity as a Business Strategy: A Multiemployer Study. *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 51(4), 411-428. [https://www.acoem.org/uploadedFiles/Healthy\\_Workplaces\\_Now/HPM%20As%20a%20Business%20Strategy.pdf](https://www.acoem.org/uploadedFiles/Healthy_Workplaces_Now/HPM%20As%20a%20Business%20Strategy.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Witters, D. and Agrawal, S. (2011, October 17). *Unhealthy U.S. Workers' Absenteeism Costs \$153 Billion*. [http://www.gallup.com/poll/150026/Unhealthy-Workers-Absenteeism-Costs-153-Billion.aspx?utm\\_source=tagrss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=syndication](http://www.gallup.com/poll/150026/Unhealthy-Workers-Absenteeism-Costs-153-Billion.aspx?utm_source=tagrss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=syndication).

<sup>11</sup> DeVol, R., Bedroussian, A., et al (2007, October 1). *An Unhealthy America: The Economic Burden of Chronic Disease -- Charting a New Course to Save Lives and Increase Productivity and Economic Growth*. Santa Monica, CA: Milken Institute. <http://www.milkeninstitute.org/publications/view/321>.

<sup>12</sup> World Health Organization (2014, April). Protecting workers' health. *WHO Fact Sheet No. 389*. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs389/en/>.

<sup>13</sup> International Labour Organization (2014, August). *Safety and Health at Work: A Vision for Sustainable Prevention. 20th World Congress on Safety and Health at Work 2014: Global Forum for Prevention, 24-27 August 2014, Frankfurt, Germany*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms\\_301214.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms_301214.pdf). See also: Takala, J., et al (2014, May). Global Estimates of the Burden of Injury and Illness at Work in 2012. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene*, 11(5), 326-337. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4003859/>.

<sup>14</sup> Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety (2014). *2014 Liberty Mutual Workplace Safety Index*. [http://www.libertymutualgroup.com/omapps/ContentServer?c=cms\\_document&pagename=LMGRResearchInstitute/cms\\_document/ShowDoc&cid=1138365240689](http://www.libertymutualgroup.com/omapps/ContentServer?c=cms_document&pagename=LMGRResearchInstitute/cms_document/ShowDoc&cid=1138365240689).

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety & Health Administration, (2015, June). *Adding Inequality to Injury: The Costs of Failing to Protect Workers on the Job*. <http://www.dol.gov/oshareport/20150304-inequality.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Hassard, J., et al (2014). *Calculating the cost of work-related stress and psychosocial risks – A Literature Review*. Bilbao, Spain: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. [https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/literature\\_reviews/calculating-the-cost-of-work-related-stress-and-psychosocial-risks](https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/literature_reviews/calculating-the-cost-of-work-related-stress-and-psychosocial-risks).

<sup>17</sup> Sorenson, S. and Garman, K. (2013, June 11). How to tackle U.S. employees' stagnating engagement. *Gallup Business Journal*. <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/162953/tackle-employees-stagnating-engagement.aspx>.

<sup>18</sup> For example, Gallup's data shows that 87% of employees globally are "not engaged" or "actively disengaged" at work, as compared to 70% of employees in the United States. The factors behind these high levels of disengagement vary across countries and regions and include issues such as economic crisis and high unemployment (e.g., people feel that they are stuck in jobs they do not like); management styles (e.g., top-down, "command-and-control" styles, putting "process before people"); poor workplace cultures (e.g., high stress, or people gaining advancement at work through personal relationships rather than good performance); and education levels (e.g., Gallup found that higher education levels are often associated with higher engagement levels at work). See: 1) Gallup (2013). *State of the Global Workplace*. <http://www.gallup.com/services/178517/state-global-workplace.aspx>. 2) Gallup (2013). *State of the American Workplace*. <http://www.gallup.com/services/178514/state-american-workplace.aspx>.

# II. The Evolution and Challenges of “Workplace Wellness”

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## Workplace wellness – where did it come from?

Unwellness at work is not a new phenomenon, although the challenges have changed over time alongside economic transformations and the evolving nature of work. Historically, the health, safety, and wellbeing of workers have been shaped by the labor-capital relationship – the extent to which labor is an essential and valued factor of production, the costs and risks faced by employers, and the “voice” of employees to argue for more rights. Many of today’s laws, policies, and programs that support workplace wellness originate from labor movements that sought to protect worker safety and health amidst the difficult working conditions that arose during the Industrial Revolution. For example, the first occupational safety and health legislation enacted in the mid-19th century in the United States and the United Kingdom mainly had railroad, mine, and mill workers in mind.

Early workplace wellness programs, focusing on fitness for executives, were introduced in the United States in the 1940s and proliferated and broadened their focus in the 1970s alongside the growth of the modern wellness movement.<sup>19</sup> Concern for workers’ health also extended to their emotional and mental health. The first Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) were launched in the United States in the 1940s to combat widespread alcoholism. By the 1970s, these programs expanded to include mental health, addiction, and family issues, and they were more widely adopted by companies. Early company pioneers in these areas include Johnson & Johnson, Boeing, Caterpillar,

Cornell University, DuPont, Xerox, Kodak, and others.

The proliferation of workplace wellness programs and EAPs has accompanied globalization and industrialization. While a small number of countries, such as South Africa, were early adopters in the 1980s, it was not until the 1990s that these practices really spread to emerging markets – from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, to China and Malaysia. European employers have been slower to adopt formalized workplace wellness programs and EAPs, as such services have traditionally been provided by government sources. However, Western Europe has significantly advanced the concept of protecting and promoting worker health over the past two decades, with the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO) spearheading a more multidisciplinary and holistic approach to wellness at work known as *workplace health promotion*.<sup>20</sup> The WHO has become an important global advocate for workers’ health and wellness, designing a healthy workplaces model and calling for a comprehensive approach to promoting worker health based upon four principles (health promotion, occupational health and safety, human resource management, and sustainable development), and it has launched training and advocacy programs around the world through its regional offices.<sup>21</sup>

**“Goods seem to have become more important, and are treated better, than people. What would a world look like if that emphasis were reversed?”**  
- Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest*<sup>22</sup>

# Workplace wellness – where is it now?

## The current conversation is centered on workplace wellness programs.

A 2010 *Harvard Business Review* study defined workplace wellness as: “an organized, employer-sponsored program that is designed to support employees (and, sometimes, their families) as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness, and benefit the organization’s bottom line.”<sup>23</sup> Typical elements include biometric screenings, health risk assessments, on-site immunizations, health fairs, on-site fitness facilities, group or individual health challenges (e.g., fitness, weight-loss, smoking cessation), wellness coaching, healthy foods in cafeterias/vending machines, and more. The broader ecosystem of wellness programs and policies may also encompass employee assistance programs (EAPs), occupational safety and health (OSH), workers’ compensation, and more recently, workplace health promotion approaches.

Today, most mid- to large-sized companies and multinationals have some kind of program in place to promote good health among their employees. Because workplace wellness originated in the United States, where medical care is primarily paid for by employer-provided insurance, wellness programs typically focus on employees’ physical health, while employee assistance programs (EAPs) address mental health and other behavioral/lifestyle issues. Most of these programs are aimed at reducing companies’ overall healthcare spending and costs related to illness and disability. The U.S. Affordable Care Act (2010), which encourages adoption of employer-sponsored wellness programs and regulates the use of incentives,<sup>24</sup> is bringing heightened attention to these initiatives and is boosting implementation of wellness programs among American companies. As a result, most of the research and discourse on the topic continues to be U.S.-centric and dominated by the goal of health cost

reduction. Meanwhile, as workplace wellness initiatives have spread globally, forward-thinking companies are starting to expand the objectives of employee wellness offerings to recruitment and retention, engagement, and productivity, as well as the company mission and brand image.

## Workplace wellness represents a sizable and growing market.

Worldwide, employer attention and spending on employee wellness have risen consistently over the last 5-10 years, generating many related business opportunities. The Global Wellness Institute estimates that workplace wellness is now a \$40.7 billion industry worldwide.<sup>25</sup> This industry includes a proliferating number of third-party providers that supply services, products, and platforms (e.g., screening assessments, diagnostic tests, incentive programs, wearable devices, counseling services, and much more) to serve a wide range of employee wellness needs (e.g., exercise, healthy eating, sleep, obesity, smoking, depression, stress, and so on). There are now dozens of associations, organizations, and conferences, as well as hundreds of studies and surveys, devoted specifically to this sector each year. In 2011, the World Economic Forum and Boston Consulting Group identified at least 120 organizations worldwide focusing on workplace wellness;<sup>26</sup> the number has undoubtedly swelled since then.

## Impacts of workplace wellness programs are mostly intangible.

Even as their spending on workplace wellness activities grows, many employers do not collect data on their effectiveness (partly because that can increase program costs). A global survey found that only 52 percent of companies have measured specific outcomes from their health promotion programs.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, a U.S.-based survey found that 61 percent of U.S. companies believe their wellness program reduces health care costs, and 78-80 percent believe it reduces absenteeism and increases productivity, even though only 44 percent regularly evaluate their wellness program and only 2 percent could report actual estimates of cost

savings.<sup>28</sup> Companies seem to believe intuitively in the importance of employee wellness investments, even if their impacts cannot be measured.

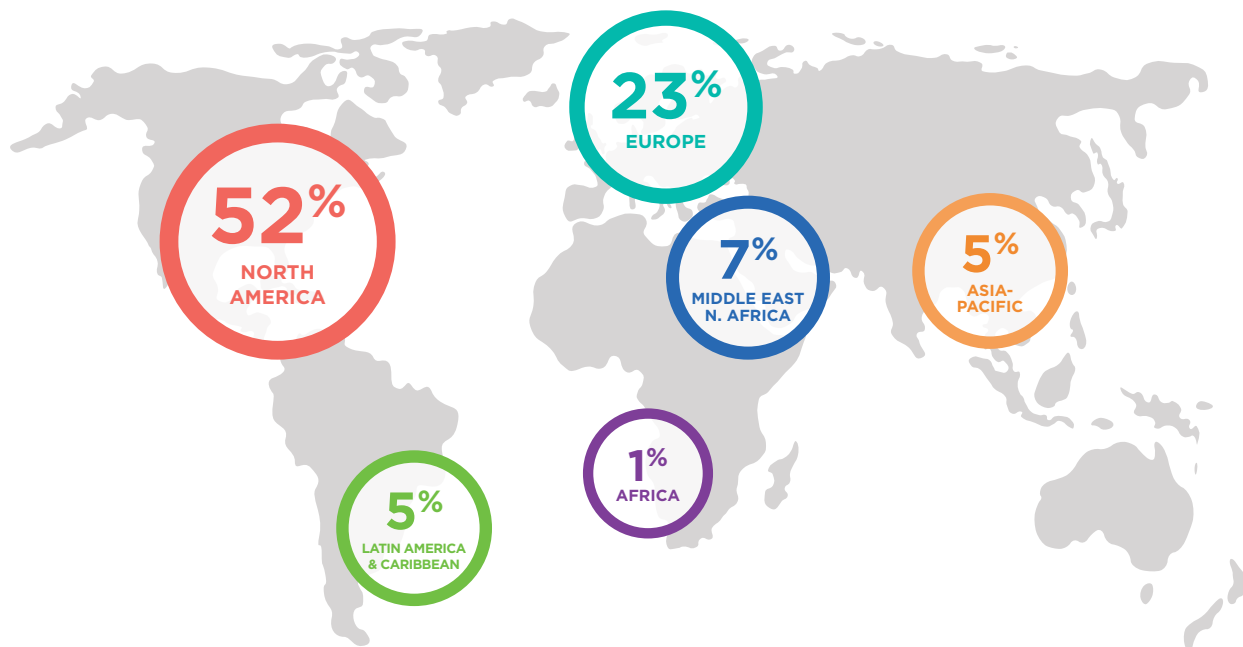
**More than 90 percent of the global workforce are not covered by wellness programs, and most workers face much larger problems than those addressed by typical employer-sponsored workplace wellness programs.**

**Current workplace wellness programs only address a sliver of the global workforce.**

Around the world, employees are becoming more unwell, more stressed, and more disengaged at work.

The rates of work-related fatalities, injuries, and diseases are stagnating or rising in many countries.<sup>29</sup> Billions of workers do not have access to basic health care services and essential medications, do not make a living wage, and work in fundamentally dangerous or unhealthy conditions. Globally, only one in four workers are in full-time positions with a permanent contract and job security.<sup>30</sup> The Global Wellness Institute estimates that less than 9 percent of the world's 3.2 billion workers potentially have access to any kind of workplace wellness program or services (*see map below*). Therefore, the current conversation about workplace wellness captures only a narrow slice of the world's workforce – primarily a slice working for employers that are large, global, have a lot of resources, and/or are advanced in their thinking on employee wellness or corporate social responsibility.

## Very few people have access to workplace wellness programs (9% globally)



**% of employed workers who have access to workplace wellness programs/services**

Estimates by Global Wellness Institute



## What is wrong with the state of workplace wellness today?

As interests and investments in workplace wellness rise, it has come under increasing scrutiny. Headlines such as, “Benefits of workplace wellness programs questioned,”<sup>31</sup> “Three Surprising Hazards Of Worksite Wellness Programs,”<sup>32</sup> “Beware: ‘Wellness’ May Be Hazardous To Your Health”<sup>33</sup> have become common among popular media outlets in the United States. Meanwhile, books such as *The Wellness Syndrome*<sup>34</sup> and *Surviving Workplace Wellness...: With Your Dignity, Finances and (Major) Organs Intact*<sup>35</sup> have skewered workplace wellness programs and even the intentions behind them.

The range of grievances expressed is wide and varied, but mostly amounts to the following concerns:

- Lack of proof that workplace wellness programs are cost-effective and contribute to company performance.
- Coercive and punitive approaches creating resentment and lower employee morale.
- Over-screening that may be unnecessary and harmful.
- Intrusion of privacy and inadequate protection of personal biometric information.
- The robotic adoption of off-the-shelf programs so employers can pay lip service to wellness.
- The suspicion that “wellness” is simply a diversion to employees, so that employers need not address fundamental issues related to compensation and benefits, workplace culture, poor management, or exploitative labor practices.

Indeed, these stories are giving a voice to the growing discontent with workplace wellness approaches today, which is arising from the flawed design and implementation of many current wellness initiatives, the poor understanding of the relationship between wellness and work, and the lack of genuine employer concern for the wellbeing of workers.

### Current workplace wellness programs are mostly compartmentalized and reactive.

Most employers offer a cross-section of separate programs, services, and benefits that address different aspects of employee health and wellness (including workplace wellness programs, EAPs, OSH programs, workers’ compensation and accident insurance, medical benefits, child care benefits, etc.). These programs usually operate in silos; they are not coordinated with each other or connected with employer-sponsored health/medical services.

Most of these programs are reactive (primarily designed to address problems that workers bring into the workplace), rather than preventing health and wellness issues proactively, much less truly enhancing employee wellbeing. They typically fall under the domain of human resources, as a necessary component of employee benefits packages, and they are not central to company operations, management style, or mission.

### Employee interest in workplace wellness programs is tepid.

In a recent survey conducted by the Global Wellness Institute in collaboration with Everyday Health,<sup>36</sup> 49 percent of U.S. workers stated that their employer offers a workplace wellness program, but only 31 percent actually participated in it. Other studies have shown participation rates ranging from 5 to 46 percent for specific wellness program components,<sup>37, 38</sup> and very limited employee use of EAPs (5 percent) to help cope with stress,<sup>39</sup> substance abuse, and the like. Perhaps employees are skeptical about the value of these programs and even their employers’ motivations for offering them. In the GWI-EDH survey, only 13 percent of employees said they have access to a wellness program, participate in it, *and* think that it actually helps their health and wellness. When asked why these programs are offered, 56 percent thought that their employers are just trying to control health care costs. Only 27 percent of respondents believed that their employer offers workplace wellness services because it actually cares about their personal wellness.

## The focus on program ROI has been misdirected.

Because many employers' wellness programs were originally adopted as an approach to control escalating employee healthcare costs, there has been an excessive and perhaps misdirected focus on return on investment (ROI). Some companies with longstanding wellness programs, such as Johnson & Johnson<sup>40</sup> and PepsiCo<sup>41</sup>, have documented positive results and cost savings in longitudinal studies, as have other meta-analyses, systematic reviews, and model simulations conducted and published by Harvard University,<sup>42</sup> the World Economic Forum,<sup>43</sup> the *American Journal of Health Promotion*,<sup>44</sup> and the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.<sup>45</sup> However, these studies are often guarded in their positive findings, and they highlight the significant methodological challenges when trying to measure ROI. In short, these studies show that some programs are well designed and effectively implemented, while some are not; some program components yield stronger ROI measurements than others; and some programs have strong impacts, while others are utter failures.

A better question, however, is whether ROI is the appropriate measure for workplace wellness programs at all, given that the value of these programs is often intangible and given the inherent limitations of a "programmatically" approach to employee wellness. There seems to be an expectation that workplace wellness programs should generate returns that are far higher than those of other types of corporate investments.<sup>46</sup> The reality is that wellness programs and investing in employee wellness more broadly are frequently linked with qualitative outcomes such as improved employee morale, improved engagement, improved job satisfaction, reduced presenteeism, reduced stress, etc. New approaches are looking at how to capture these important intangible impacts using a "value on investment" approach. Researchers are also seeking to understand the differentiating characteristics of the wellness programs that work well, such as strong leadership support, using wellness "champions," offering a comprehensive/holistic program, developing a culture of wellness, leveraging incentives effectively, and so on.

Wellness initiatives offered in isolation from a company's core culture or operating environment are merely a "Band-Aid" solution.

## Current approaches fail to recognize the interdependence between work and wellness.

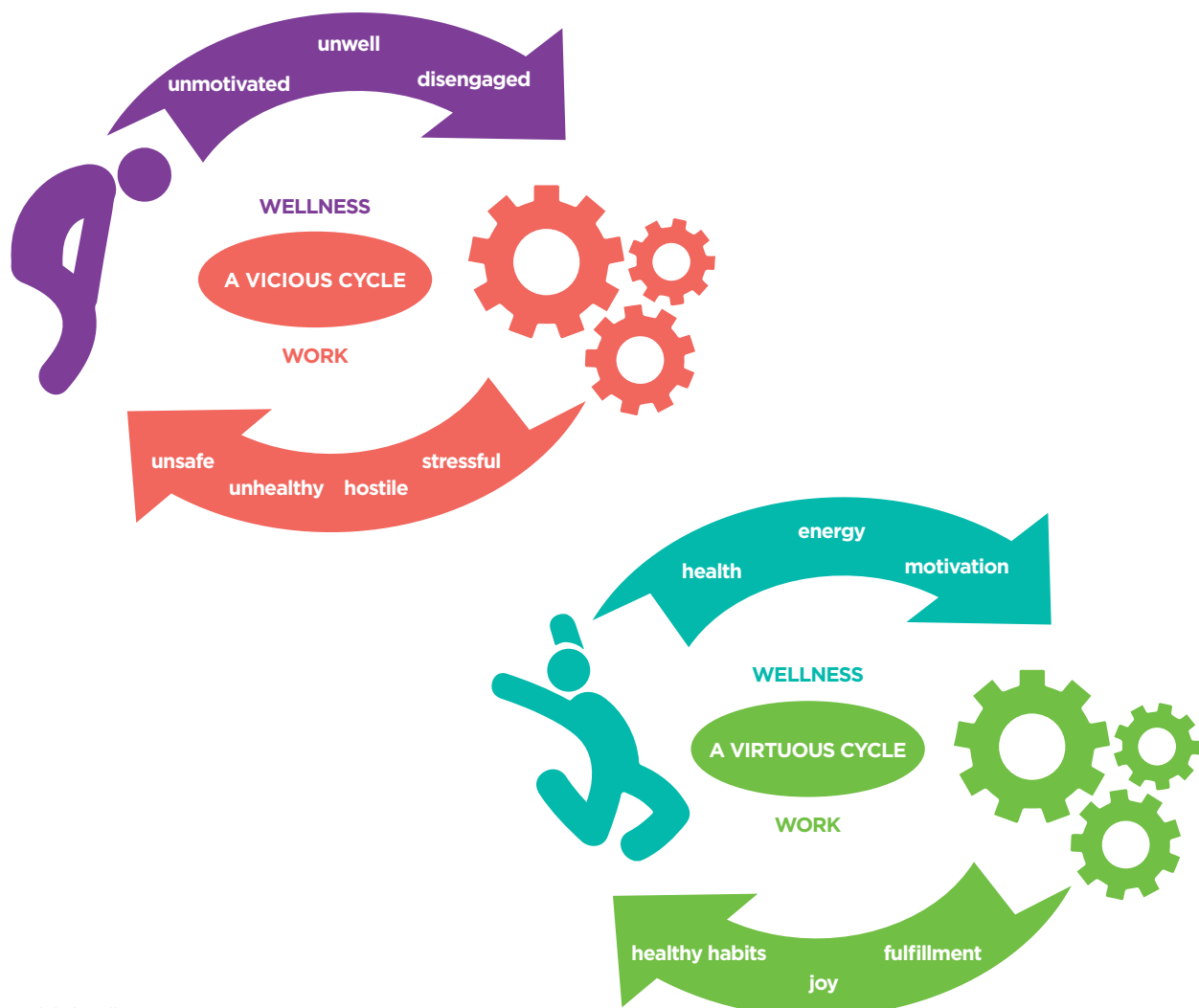
Wellness and work are interdependent. The majority of workplace wellness programs focus on the health problems that employees bring *into* the workplace. These problems can and do have a direct negative impact on our work. When we are sick, when we have family-related stress, or when we have negative attitudes or are not motivated, we are less productive at work. In the GWI-EDH survey, U.S. workers reported that when they feel physically or mentally unwell, it affects many aspects of their work performance, including their ability to get work done (62 percent), their engagement in work (63 percent), and their motivation to do the job well (62 percent).

On the other hand, work also has an enormous impact on our personal health and wellness, and that impact is often negative. Hazardous and unhealthy working conditions are rampant in many industries, especially in developing countries. Globally, there are 2.3 million deaths and 313 million accidents or illnesses related to work each year,<sup>47</sup> and 70 percent of workers do not have insurance to compensate them for these injuries and illnesses.<sup>48</sup> In addition to physical risks, work can also create mental and emotional distress – whether from the financial challenges of low wages, long working hours and the inability to unplug, work-life balance issues, or difficult relationships with bosses and coworkers – and these stressors can also lead to physical illness. In the GWI-EDH survey, respondents reported that when their job or workplace environment causes them to feel unwell, many other aspects of their lives are also affected, including mental/emotional health (69 percent), physical health (50 percent), family life (36 percent), relationships (35 percent), and overall happiness (66 percent).

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents to the GWI-EDH survey (71 percent) said they have a “somewhat or very high” level of stress at their jobs. Many of today’s workplace wellness programs acknowledge stress as an important factor affecting employee health and performance, typically offering biometric screenings, classes, and/or counseling to help people cope with stress and its health impacts. However, these programs do little, if anything, to address the work

culture and organizational issues that are very often the cause of workers’ stress. When wellness is not a strategic focus or a core value of most organizations, wellness initiatives are conducted in isolation from the day-to-day operating environment of work; they are merely a “Band-Aid solution” and do not address the root of the problems.

## Wellness and work: A two-way relationship



Source: Global Wellness Institute



**Work has a lot to offer that can improve our wellness – a sense of purpose, a creative outlet, friendship, and a supportive environment to develop healthy habits.**

Conversely, wellness and work can and should be mutually enhancing in a virtuous circle. When we are healthy, well-rested, and motivated, we bring a high level of energy to our work. Our minds are sharp, we are positive, we make better decisions, and we are more effective and productive at our jobs. Work can also improve our wellness in many ways. Since many of us spend up to half of our waking hours at work, the workplace is an ideal and critical environment to help us develop healthy habits. Work can provide a healthy social setting and give us a sense of purpose or accomplishment, such as when we feel appreciated by our customers, when we have camaraderie with people we like and respect, or when our work has made a positive impact in the world. These positive feelings can improve our emotional and mental wellness as well as our physical health.

## **Toward broader thinking on employee wellness**

Some companies are starting to recognize the interdependency between wellness and work – and, more broadly, between employee wellness and the company’s ability to compete and innovate – and they are taking action. In particular, many industry innovators and disruptors are explicitly recognizing that recruiting, energizing, motivating, and taking care of their employees is their competitive edge and wellspring of innovation. Some are taking the concept of employee wellness to a whole different level, addressing multiple aspects of individual wellness – from physical and mental health and work-life balance, to fair pay, the organization of work itself, and the alignment of work with employees’ intrinsic motivations. Major insurance companies such as Aetna<sup>52</sup> and Nationwide<sup>53</sup> announced this year that they will raise wages for their lowest paid workers by more than 40 percent, sending a powerful message to their shareholders that employees are an asset rather than a liability. Companies such as General Electric, Grant Thornton, Netflix, and Virgin now provide

## **Virtuous Circle of Wellness at Work – Some Evidence**

Research has shown that working in positive, supportive environments does improve employee wellness. Research by Gallup in the United States found that people who are engaged at work report better health and lower rates of chronic disease than disengaged workers,<sup>49</sup> and they also eat healthier, exercise more frequently, and eat more fruits and vegetables.<sup>50</sup> Another U.S. study by Towers Watson and the National Business Group on Health found that in companies with highly-effective strategies for employee health, engagement, and productivity, employees have 25 percent lower obesity rates, 25 percent lower hypertension rates, 50 percent lower diabetes/high blood sugar rates, and lower use of tobacco products.<sup>51</sup>

unlimited vacation days to their salaried staff.<sup>54</sup> Earlier this year, Zappos famously launched the “holacracy” model of self-management, empowering employees to define their own roles within the company so that they can align work with their personal values, goals, and skills.<sup>55</sup>

**Employers that  
do not view human capital  
as their most valuable  
resource may not  
stay in business in the future  
economy.**

While the companies embracing these new philosophies and approaches are still the exception, not the norm, these burgeoning movements reflect a larger trend: a collective, growing awareness that a purely profit-maximizing business model that does not take into account the human aspect is not viable, sustainable, or conscionable – for consumers, for workers, for shareholders, or other stakeholders. Iconic

global brands such as Apple and Nike are quick to mitigate worker exploitation in developing countries because they believe customers do not like to associate their purchases with human misery. Companies that infuse wellness into their corporate cultures actually demonstrate improved bottom-line performance (see box on page 26). A recent study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* showed that companies recognized by the C. Everett Koop National Health Awards for nurturing a culture of health, by specifically focusing on the wellbeing and safety of their workers, have outperformed the stock market by a factor of 3:1 from 2000-2014.<sup>56</sup> Still, many businesses today are so focused on their short-term bottom lines and survival in a hyper-competitive economy that they pay no heed to employee wellness at all – or they simply pay lip service to the concept by offering a “wellness program.” This approach has to change, and will change, because employers who do not take care of their most important resources may find that they will no longer stay in business as the future of work unfolds.

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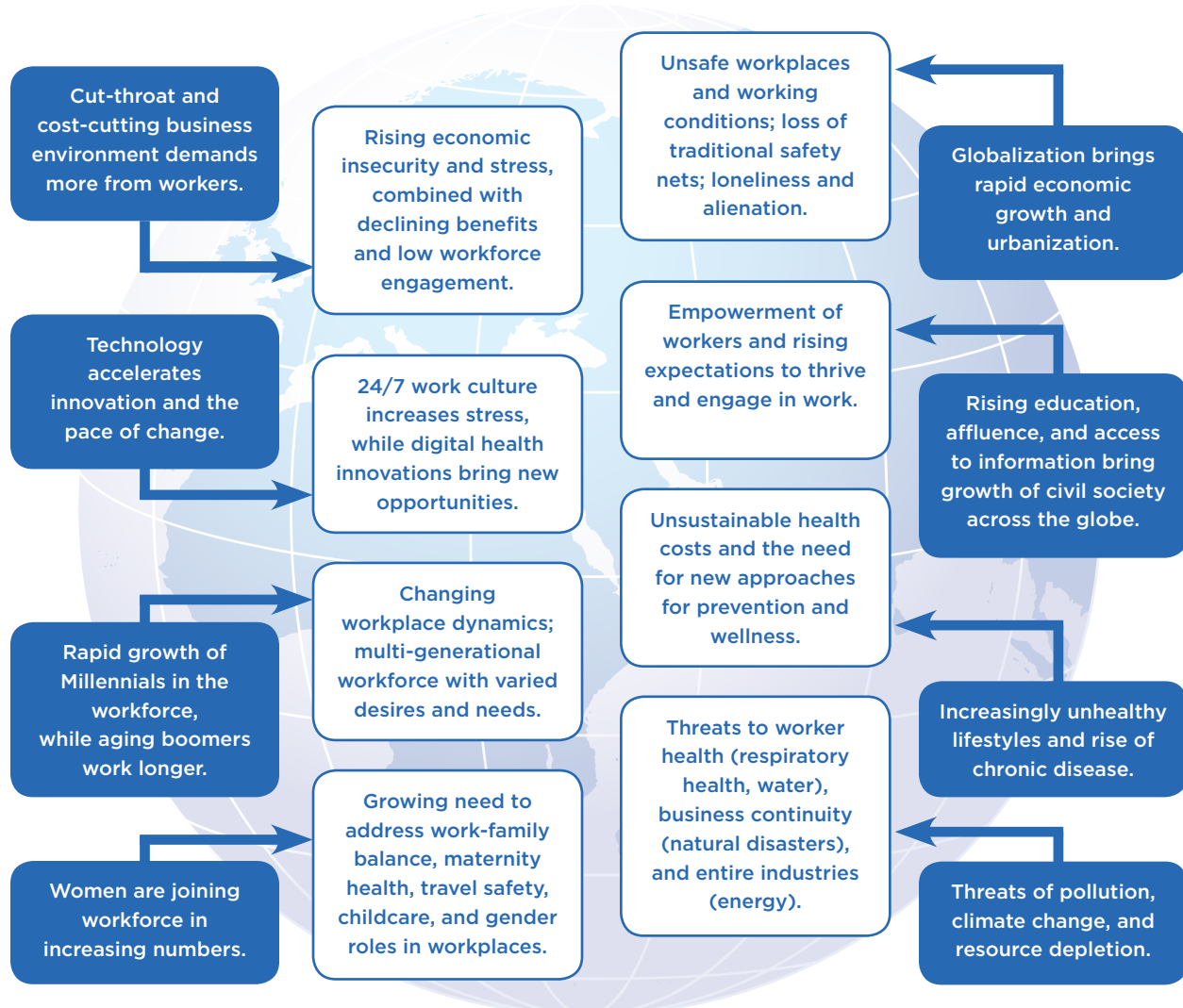
# III. The Future of Work

## The future of work brings opportunities and risks.

A confluence of global forces has been changing the relationship between work and our personal wellness. Some of these trends are positive, including increasing numbers of women in the workplace, rising levels of

education and access to information, digital health innovations, and growing worker empowerment. However, many of these same trends are pointing us toward an ever-increasing level of economic insecurity, stress, and healthcare costs in the future.

## Global Trends Affecting Wellness at Work



Source: Global Wellness Institute

Work and our relationship with work will continue to change with the times. In the midst of the global changes described above, several major transformations are taking place that will have profound future implications – both positive and negative – on how we work, how work affects our wellness, and how our wellness impacts our work.

### **Intense global competition threatens job security and benefits.**

In our fast-paced, hypercompetitive, globalized business environment, company lifecycles have become shorter, as has employees' tenure with specific employers, bringing insecurity and uncertainty to many workers. The Great Recession of 2008 led to widespread downsizing and a reduction in real wages, benefits, and retirement security in many developed countries. In Western Europe, where workers' benefits and overall quality of life lead the world, practices such as the Spanish siesta and the 35-hour French workweek are under threat. In some emerging economies, modernization has been accompanied by the erosion of the traditional safety nets provided under formerly socialist regimes or family/village systems (such as healthcare, education, and retirement). Globalization has also brought jobs that come with wages, benefits, working conditions, and safety standards that are far below those in industrialized nations. Meanwhile, contingent, part-time, irregular, and informal work arrangements are rising around the world, especially in developed countries, while only one-quarter of all workers are employed on a permanent/formal contract.<sup>57</sup>

**The way we work and the current state of workforce unwellness are not sustainable.**

### **Workforce disengagement and disenfranchisement are widespread.**

As economic insecurity and stress increase, workers are increasingly disengaged and discontented at work. Many work at their jobs only because of the paycheck. Employee dissatisfaction represents an enormous hidden cost for employers – affecting productivity, turnover, absenteeism, and much more. In a recent global study by Deloitte, “culture and engagement” was rated at the number one challenge affecting businesses around the world.<sup>58</sup> A 2014 Gallup poll found that less than one-third of the U.S. workforce is engaged in their jobs – that is, involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work.<sup>59</sup> Other studies suggest that many countries fare worse than the United States,<sup>60</sup> and Gallup's global study of more than 140 countries indicated that only 13 percent of workers worldwide are engaged at work.<sup>61</sup> Key factors driving the varying rates of engagement around the world include economic crisis and high unemployment (e.g., people feel that they are stuck in jobs they do not like); management styles (e.g., top-down or “command-and-control” management); poor workplace cultures (e.g., high stress or people gaining advancement at work through personal relationships rather than good performance); and education levels (e.g., Gallup found that higher education levels are often associated with higher engagement levels at work). While Millennials are often the least engaged generation,<sup>62</sup> the challenge of worker discontent and disengagement spans generations, industries, education levels, and countries.

### **Employers must contend with multigenerational workforce and “free agents.”**

As lifetime employment becomes a relic, young workers today not only expect to have multiple employers, but also multiple careers in a lifetime. While professionals in the past may have aspired to climb the corporate ladder, today's workers are increasingly viewing themselves as “free agents,” moving between jobs and



assignments as opportunity and necessity arise. Some employers have expressed concerns about their ability to retain top talent, especially among the Millennial Generation.

Out of necessity, more people are working multiple jobs for lower pay and will need to work later into their lives, beyond the traditional retirement age of 55, 60, or even 65. As workers take retirement later and later, employers also have to contend with a multi-generational workforce. It is estimated that, by 2020, workers from their teens to their seventies or beyond may be working side-by-side, dramatically altering the social fabric of the workplace.<sup>63</sup>

### **Technology that increases flexibility also elevates stress.**

Technology enables people to do their work anytime, anywhere, and from a variety of devices; this creates a sense of freedom, autonomy, and flexibility for many workers. Technology also allows work to intrude on our lives constantly, removing the boundary between work and life. Because technology increases our availability and the expectation of instantaneous response to customers, colleagues, and bosses, many of us find it difficult to truly take time to recharge “after work” or during vacations. Collaboration among global teams also means that more people are working across different time zones and calendars, creating more intrusions on evenings, weekends, and holidays. While the true costs and physical/mental impacts of this 24/7 work culture have not been fully grasped by experts, employers, and workers, most people would agree that the inability to unplug has become a fact and is a major source of stress in modern working life.<sup>64</sup>

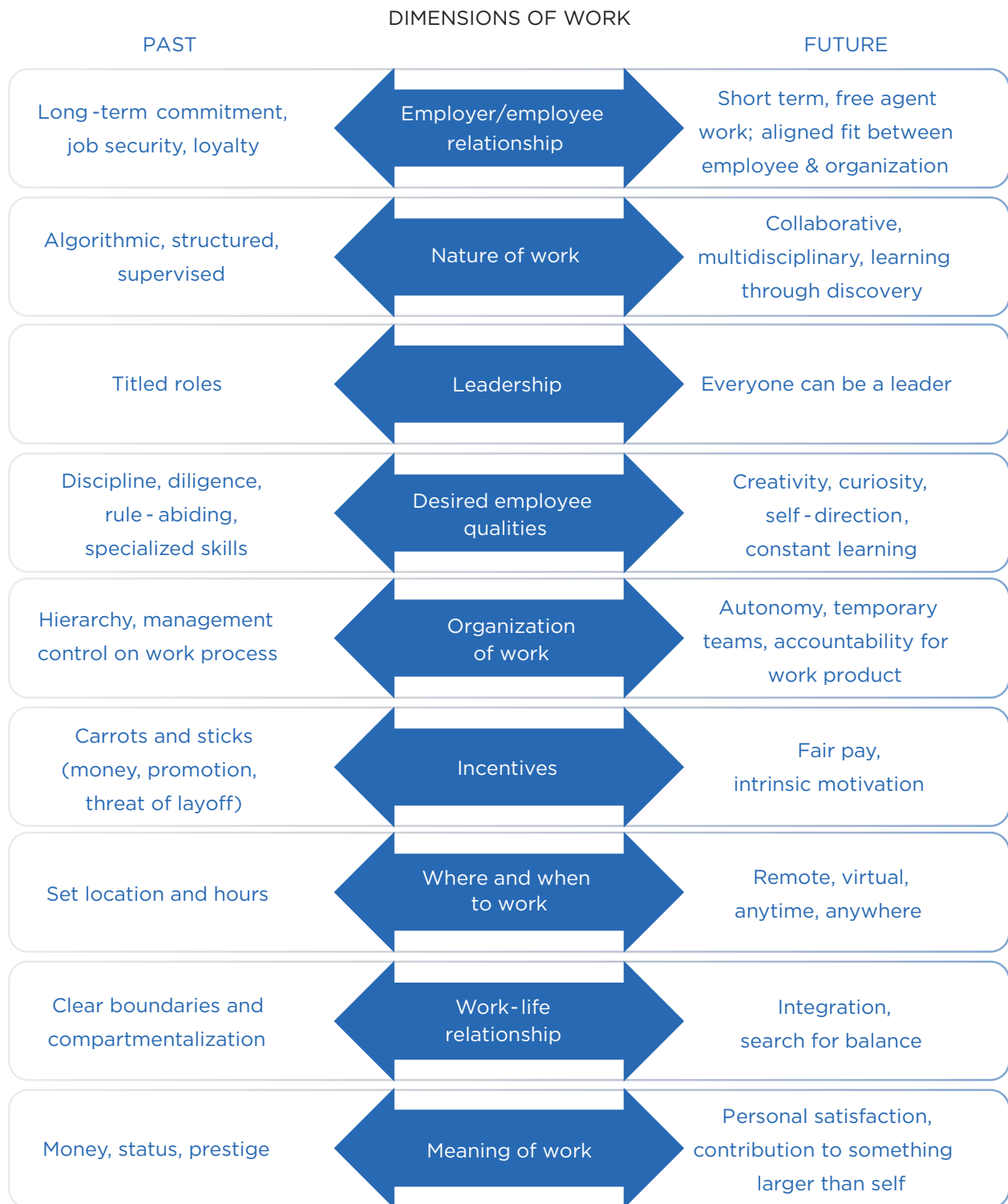
**Being a cog in a wheel  
will no longer suffice in the  
future of work.**

### **People need to “up” their game as their jobs are replaced by computers and machines.**

A wide-ranging impact of technology on work is the gradual replacement of humans by robots and computers for routine, computational, and repetitive tasks. Like the secretaries who were replaced by voicemail, salespeople and customer service representatives are gradually being edged out by websites and machines. As computing power rises exponentially and artificial intelligence becomes more sophisticated, we are embarking on an era of drones and driverless cars, where even jobs in high-skilled professions such as medicine, law, and consulting are being threatened. The wide-ranging effects of technology on the future of work, society, and human existence have struck a chord with the public through best-selling books such as *The Second Machine Age*<sup>65</sup> and *Rise of the Robots*,<sup>66</sup> which present optimistic but cautious views into a future defined by digital technologies, smart machines, and robots, and predict a fundamental shift in the drivers of productivity and the relationship between workers and machines.

As machines replace and outperform us in algorithmic tasks, productive work in the future will increasingly require creativity and learning through discovery (i.e., heuristic skills), as described by author Daniel Pink in *Drive*.<sup>67</sup> A McKinsey Study estimated that 70 percent of the U.S. jobs created since 1997 involve complex decisions and require deep knowledge, experience, instinct, and judgment.<sup>68</sup> In the future age of machines and robots, workers will add value by being creative, innovative, perceptive, intuitive, and adaptable. Importantly, these human qualities most strongly manifest when an individual is intrinsically motivated, rather than lured by external rewards. Not surprisingly, such intrinsic motivations are strongly tied to an individual’s sense of wellness.<sup>69</sup> What this means for business and organizations is that, in order to survive and compete in the future, they will need to create a work environment and culture that is closely aligned with workers’ personal values, motivations, and wellness.

# The Future of Work



Source: Global Wellness Institute



## A growing awareness is driving a new quest for work that brings meaning and purpose.

When the GWI-EDH survey asked U.S. consumers to name the top three reasons why work is important, 44 percent chose, “I am using my skills;” 33 percent said, “It makes me feel useful;” and 26 percent chose, “I am contributing to the world.”

**We need to be in a heightened state of wellness in order to bring our essential human qualities to work.**

In *Thrive*, Arianna Huffington describes a new imperative to find a “third metric” – other than money and power – for defining and measuring success.<sup>70</sup> This growing awareness and shift in priorities is multi-generational. The Baby Boomers were the first generation to see work as a defining part of their self-worth and to prioritize work over life. However, as this generation works into and beyond retirement age, they are increasingly seeking occupations that provide meaning and purpose to life. On the other end of the generational spectrum are the Millennials, the first generation to come of age in

the information era, who are facing stagnating wages and record levels of unemployment across the world. Millennials’ expectations about their work experiences and their prioritization of work-life balance are driving change in management and leadership paradigms in today’s workplaces.

## Wellness is essential to the future of work.

In the future, work will be more fluid, adaptable, and collaborative and will require constant learning. Traditional modes of work and management hierarchies that date back almost a century will be replaced by new paradigms and organizational innovations.

The future of work requires us to bring high levels of motivation, energy, and creativity in order to create value. We must be in a good state of physical, mental, and emotional wellness to be able to bring these qualities to work each day. Therefore, workplace wellness will be even more tightly woven with individual and organizational performance. For business and organizations to survive and thrive, it is essential that they nourish and cultivate this human energy and support the wellness of their employees in all dimensions.

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<sup>57</sup> International Labour Organization (2015). *World Employment and Social Outlook: The Changing Nature of Jobs 2015*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office. [http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2015/WCMS\\_337069/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/weso/2015/WCMS_337069/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>58</sup> Deloitte (2015). *Global Human Capital Trends 2015: Leading in the new world of work*. Westlake, TX: Deloitte University Press. [http://d2mtr37y39tpbu.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/DUP\\_GlobalHumanCapitalTrends2015.pdf](http://d2mtr37y39tpbu.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/DUP_GlobalHumanCapitalTrends2015.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Adkins, A. (2014, January 28). *Majority of U.S. Employees Not Engaged Despite Gains in 2014*. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/181289/majority-employees-not-engaged-despite-gains-2014.aspx>.

<sup>60</sup> Lam, B. (2015, June 26). Which country’s workers care about their jobs the most? *The Atlantic Monthly*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/06/employee-engagement-global/396851/>

<sup>61</sup> Gallup (2013). *State of the Global Workplace*. <http://www.gallup.com/services/178517/state-global-workplace.aspx>.

<sup>62</sup> Adkins, A. (2014, January 28). *Majority of U.S. Employees Not Engaged Despite Gains in 2014*. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/181289/majority-employees-not-engaged-despite-gains-2014.aspx>.

<sup>63</sup> Shah, R. (2015, February 23). Working beyond five generations in the workplace. *Forbes*. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/rawnshah/2015/02/23/working-beyond-five-generations-in-the-workplace/>.

<sup>64</sup> Global Wellness Institute (2015, July 15). *2015 Roundtable Report, Redefining Workplace Wellness*. New York, NY: Global Wellness Institute. <http://www.globalwellnessinstitute.org/re-defining-workplace-wellness-roundtable/>.

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<sup>65</sup> Brynjolfsson, E. and McAfee, A. (2014). *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

<sup>66</sup> Ford, M. (2015). *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

<sup>67</sup> Pink, D. (2009). *Drive, The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, B.C., Manyika, J.M., and Yee, L.A. (2005, November). The next revolution in interactions. *McKinsey Quarterly*. [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the\\_next\\_revolution\\_in\\_interactions](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/the_next_revolution_in_interactions).

<sup>69</sup> Pink, D. (2009). *Drive, The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. New York: Riverhead Books.

<sup>70</sup> Huffington, A. (2014). *Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Life of Well-Being, Wisdom, and Wonder*. New York, NY: Harmony Books.

# IV. Wellness at Work – A Few Predictions

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## **The next economic era demands new ways of working that harness human potential.**

As our world transitions from the knowledge economy to the next era – sometimes labeled the “wisdom economy” or the “human economy” – work will look very different. As technology continues to advance, workers will need to bring skills that complement, instead of compete with, machines. In the future, employers will seek out workers with broad abilities, collaborative skills, self-direction, and creative energy – qualities aligned with an elevated state of wellness. Employers and employees will both realize that people bring their highest value to work when they are physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy; have autonomy over how they work; and can align their work with their intrinsic motivations and personal values. Employers will better understand the bottom-line benefits of a well workforce.

Around the world, there is mounting backlash against unfettered economic growth at the expense of the wellbeing of people and the planet – a sentiment that is gaining ground from thousands of grassroots movements, to civic organizations, multilateral aid agencies, and even global business leaders and governments. In the upcoming “wisdom economy,” there will be an increasing drive to use the information and technologies available to us – filtered through human wisdom, insights, and creativity – to solve the world’s problems. Competitiveness and success in the future economy will require the harnessing of human talent and energy, by supporting all of us to be healthy, resilient, motivated, and engaged in our work.

As we gain clearer insight into the future of work and what wellness means, we can make a few predictions about the future trends for wellness at work.

## **Companies and governments will be highly motivated to reverse the current trend of an unwell workforce.**

An unwell workforce is extremely costly to businesses and the economy, in addition to the workers and their families who are suffering. GWT’s research shows that worker unwellness accounts for an annual loss of \$2.2 trillion in the United States, equivalent to 12 percent of the national GDP. Multiplied across the world, this cost is immense, as more and more countries grapple with worsening health conditions, population aging, rising stress levels, and the consequences of widespread worker disengagement. These economic losses are simply too high and are rising too quickly for business and governments to ignore.

In fact, the rapidly rising costs due to chronic disease alone are already becoming unsustainable. In countries like the United States, where employers pay the majority of healthcare costs, these rising costs can put firms out of business. In other countries, where the government provides healthcare, they create an untenable tax burden. The World Economic Forum and Harvard School of Public Health project that major chronic diseases and mental illness will result in an economic output loss of 4-5 percent of annual world GDP from 2011-2030.<sup>71</sup>

**“The numbers indicate that non-communicable diseases have the potential to not only bankrupt health systems but to also put a brake on the global economy. Tackling this issue calls for joint action by all actors of the public and private sectors.”**

- Olivier Raynaud, Senior Director of Health, World Economic Forum<sup>72</sup>

## **Wellness at work is a movement that will gain momentum across the world in the coming 5-10 years.**

Improving workforce wellness will become a movement at all levels of society, among workers and their families, employers and businesses, and governments. To survive, compete, and innovate in the future economy, individuals need to be at the top of their game; in other words, at their optimal state of wellness in all its dimensions. Managers, businesses, and governments who care about their own success and survival in the future economy will need to care for the wellbeing of their workforce in order to unleash people's potential. Wellness at work will become not just a luxury for professional workers in wealthy countries, but an imperative for future economic growth in all countries around the world. At the same time, people will recognize that the workplace represents an extended social network where we spend much of our time; as such, it is an ideal place to promote healthy habits and choices and to strike a balance between self-responsibility and a supporting environment.

## **Workplace wellness programs - as we know them today - will disappear.**

The way that most employers approach workplace wellness today – that is, through compartmentalized workplace wellness programs – is not working well, and both employers and employees know it. Furthermore, employers will increasingly come to acknowledge that the organization of work, together with the culture and atmosphere of the workplace, have a profound impact on employees' wellness and job performance, and they will begin to address these issues through new organizational models and work paradigms.

In the future, more employers will treat wellness as a top strategic concern at the highest levels of leadership. Businesses will focus on creating a **culture of wellness** – an environment in which employees are valued, all their different dimensions of wellness are recognized, and they are supported to develop healthy habits and lifestyles. In

fact, more organizations – whether for-profit or mission-driven – will link their business objectives explicitly to human capital and creating a culture of wellness.

## **Individuals will take more responsibility for their own wellness in the context of work.**

Now that we are able to access infinite information and networks through the Internet and social media, a sense of awareness and empowerment about the human condition is growing around the world, across every demographic group and income strata. People are increasingly aware of their burnout, lack of balance, lack of autonomy, lack of respect, and dissatisfaction at work, and they are speaking up against it. We realize that when we are not well (physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, etc.), we cannot do our work, take care of our families, or simply enjoy our lives. Our collective consciousness is evolving; we are no longer content to be cogs in a machine. We want to do work that is aligned with our interests and motivations, and we want to be paid and treated fairly. We want work to be a balanced part of our lives, and we need to be healthy in order to work. Therefore, people will increasingly look for areas where they can take charge of their wellness in relation to work and be part of the solutions, instead of passively waiting for employers and governments to take action to solve problems.

## **Companies must adopt a culture of wellness as the default, not the exception, if they want to attract and retain good people.**

As workers become more aware of the linkages between wellness and work, companies that fail to embed wellness into their work cultures and environments will not be able to attract and retain good employees. People are increasingly looking for meaning and purpose in their work. They are less loyal to a single employer; will hold many jobs in their lifetimes; and will seek out work environments and cultures that are supportive, collegial, and aligned with their intrinsic values and motivations. Millennials are motivated by giving back, a civic mindset, and social

engagement, and they prioritize work-life balance.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, Baby Boomers are staying in the workforce longer and are seeking “encore jobs” that bring them purpose and personal satisfaction, either by volunteering or working for lower pay.<sup>74</sup> The more skilled and desirable a worker is, the more choices he or she will have in where and how to work. Employers will find that the degree to which they can offer wellness-enhancing environments to their employees will be key in competing for and retaining talent. There will be significant opportunities for innovations in this area, both for companies to find new ways to create and sustain cultures of wellness and also for new businesses to support them in this endeavor.

### **Companies will recognize that doing right by employees and the community is good business.**

In the future, more and more companies will recognize the business case for bringing wellness to customers, employees, and community stakeholders within the context of whatever goods or services they may sell (*see box on following page*). Around the world, consumption patterns have been shifting toward an emphasis on experiential value. Customers are becoming more interested in the story and meaning behind a product or brand, and this trend will only increase with the purchasing power of the Millennials. Consumers will increasingly shy away from products that are associated with worker exploitation and degradation of the environment and local communities – not as a way to feel good, but as a matter of trust. How can we trust products and services from companies who treat their workers or communities badly, who convey no sense of decency, and who are only driven by profit and greed? Many leading businesses have already begun to reframe their corporate missions to include more than just profit and growth, incorporating societal benefits such as health, environment, worker wellbeing, and social development into their success metrics. We predict that companies that are able to incorporate and project wellness as part of their operations and brand story will continue to gain ground in the market.

### **Governments will become more aggressive about mandating wellness, including in the workplace.**

Governments and policymakers are increasingly alarmed by the rise of chronic disease, population aging, and the ever-escalating costs associated with these trends. There is now a nearly universal recognition that worsening worker health is related to our increasingly sedentary style of work and life, rising stress, lack of work-life balance, and poor eating habits, as well as environmental factors such as air quality. Traditionally, most governments’ focus in the workplace has been on ensuring humane working conditions and preventing work-related accidents, injuries, illnesses, and deaths. We predict that governments around the world will step further into this space, encouraging and even mandating wellness at work through tax incentives, tighter regulations, and higher standards and expectations for acceptable working conditions.

**“Only two solutions are possible to deal with the rising cost of chronic disease: 1) a sudden increase in productivity triggered by technology, and 2) legislating preventive wellness. The first is uncertain, so the second is a near certainty.”**

-Thierry Malleret,  
*The Monthly Barometer*

### **The healthiest workplaces will be a destination where people go to improve their own wellness.**

The conventional way of thinking about work and wellness is from the perspective of mitigation – that is, “fixing” employees’ health problems and preventing

## Treating Employees Well Improves the Bottom Line

Given the enormous costs to employers of their employees' ill health, compounded by workplace injuries, stress, and disengagement, consider the counterfactual: What would be the upside impact on employers' bottom lines if their employees came to work every day feeling healthy and happy, and left at the end of the day feeling even more well?

There is a compelling business case that companies who care for and respect their employees are more competitive and successful. A recent study published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* showed that companies recognized by the C. Everett Koop National Health Awards for nurturing a culture of health, by specifically focusing on the wellbeing and safety of their workers, have outperformed the stock market by a factor of 3:1 from 2000-2014.<sup>75</sup> Companies that rate highly for their employee-focused cultures show similar results. For example, the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute, which recognizes the 100 top companies in the United States for workplace culture, found that "great workplaces" have 65 percent lower employee turnover and stock market returns that were two times higher than industry peers from 1997-2014.<sup>76</sup> Companies appearing on Glassdoor.com's "best places to work" list (based on ratings derived directly from employee feedback) outperformed the S&P 500 by 115.6 percent from 2009-2015; conversely, companies with the lowest employee ratings on Glassdoor.com significantly underperformed the market.<sup>77</sup>

There is a wealth of research showing that employee engagement also has a strong positive impact on companies' bottom lines. Gallup, which has studied this topic for over 40 years, has conducted several large-scale, global meta-analyses that demonstrate a strong correlation between employee attitudes (satisfaction and engagement) and overall business outcomes. Comparing business units scoring in the top quartile for employee engagement to those in the bottom quartile, the top scorers have: 37 percent lower absenteeism, 25-65 percent lower employee turnover, 41 percent fewer quality incidents/defects, 48 percent fewer safety incidents, 10 percent higher customer satisfaction, 21 percent higher productivity, and 22 percent higher profitability.<sup>78</sup> Gallup's research also found that companies with engaged workforces have higher earnings per share (outperforming their peers by 147 percent) and seem to have recovered from the recession at a faster rate.<sup>79</sup>



stress or other ill impacts of work on our physical and mental health. However, in a virtuous circle, work can also be a source of joy, a place for friendship and purpose, and a social environment where we can learn and support each other in adopting healthy behaviors, thereby increasing our overall mental and physical resilience. The previous chapter described a future of work in which we will need to sustain a greater state of

wellness in order to bring our unique human qualities to work and perform our jobs well. As more and more businesses and organizations incorporate wellness into their core culture and operations, and as work evolves with the wisdom economy, we can imagine a future where people work not only for financial compensation, but also to seek and enhance their own wellness.

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<sup>71</sup> Bloom, D.E., et al (2011, September). *The Global Economic Burden of Non-communicable Diseases*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum. [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Harvard\\_HE\\_GlobalEconomicBurdenNonCommunicableDiseases\\_2011.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Harvard_HE_GlobalEconomicBurdenNonCommunicableDiseases_2011.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Mohindra, D./World Economic Forum (2011, September 18). Non-communicable diseases to cost \$47 trillion by 2030, new study released today [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.weforum.org/news/non-communicable-diseases-cost-47-trillion-2030-new-study-released-today>.

<sup>73</sup> For the first and largest global analysis of the Millennial generation, see: 1) Universum (n.d.). *Millennials: A six-part series – Understanding a misunderstood generation*. <http://universumglobal.com/millennials/>. 2) Bresman, H. (2015, February 23). What Millennials want from work, charted across the world. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2015/02/what-millennials-want-from-work-charted-across-the-world>.

<sup>74</sup> Draper, M. (2012, September 7). When Baby Boomers change jobs, many seek “meaning.” *Nonprofit Quarterly*. <http://nonprofitquarterly.org/2012/09/11/when-baby-boomers-change-jobs-many-seek-meaning/>.

<sup>75</sup> Goetzel, R., et al (2016). The Stock Performance of C. Everett Koop Award Winners Compared With the Standard & Poor’s 500 Index. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 58(1), 9-15.

<sup>76</sup> Great Place to Work® Institute (n.d.). *What are the benefits? The ROI on workplace culture*. <http://www.greatplacetowork.com/our-approach/what-are-the-benefits-great-workplaces>. See also: Edmans, A. (2011). Does the stock market fully value intangibles? Employee satisfaction and equity prices. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 101, 621-640. <http://faculty.london.edu/aedmans/Rowe.pdf>.

<sup>77</sup> Chamberlain, A. (2015, March). *Does Company Culture Pay Off? Analyzing Stock Performance of “Best Places to Work” Companies*. Mill Valley, CA: Glassdoor.com. [https://research-content.glassdoor.com/app/uploads/sites/2/2015/05/GD\\_Report\\_1.pdf](https://research-content.glassdoor.com/app/uploads/sites/2/2015/05/GD_Report_1.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> This analysis captured 263 research studies across 192 organizations (49,928 separate business/work units) and 1.4 million employees, in 49 industries and 34 countries. Harter, J.K., et al (2013, February). *The Relationship Between Engagement at Work and Organizational Outcomes: 2012 Q12® Meta-Analysis*. Washington, DC: Gallup. <http://www.gallup.com/services/177047/q12-meta-analysis.aspx>.

<sup>79</sup> Gallup (2013). *State of the Global Workplace*. <http://www.gallup.com/services/178517/state-global-workplace.aspx>. An older, but frequently-cited global study conducted by Towers Perrin-ISR in 2006 found similar results to Gallup, with significantly higher financial performance (including operating margins and net profit margins) for companies with highly engaged employees. See: Towers Perrin-ISR (2006). *The ISR Employee Engagement Report*.





# V. A New Vision and a New Paradigm

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**Wellness at work** has never been so important. Simply put, healthy, motivated and creative people are critical to the viability and survival of businesses, organizations, communities and the planet, while meaningful work in a healthy environment improves the wellbeing of individuals and society. To prepare for the future of work and to harness the potential of wellness, we need to look at wellness at work with a new lens.

## The Vision

*Wellness at work is the right to work in a manner that is healthy, motivating, and edifying. Everyone – workers, managers, and business owners – should endeavor to work in a way that improves our own wellness and the wellbeing of others.*

This vision embodies several core principles:

- Wellness at work is a **right** of all people who work, no matter their occupation, skill level, industry, size of business, or country.
- It is a **shared responsibility**. It is not about employers “fixing” their employees’ health problems. We – as individuals, managers, business owners, and governments – all have a role in improving and advocating for wellness at work.
- It is **holistic**, encompassing all the dimensions of wellness – physical, mental, emotional, social, environmental, and spiritual.
- It is part of how we do work, embedded in the work **culture and environment**, and not an HR program or benefit.
- It is **proactive and preventative**, not only mitigating disease and other health issues but also extending to all the facets of work that can impact wellness.

While the comprehensiveness of this vision may seem intimidating, it should be viewed as a guide or a process for improvement. An important first step is to shift the current focus from “wellness program offerings” to a wider lens through which we can see possibilities for many actions and improvements, no matter what industry or country we work in, the size of our organizations, or the resources we may have available.

On the following page, we outline a framework that can help us translate this vision into our day-to-day working lives. We segment wellness at work into three key aspects where we can assess our current situation and infuse more wellness: the **physical environment**, **personal**, and **social & community** aspects.

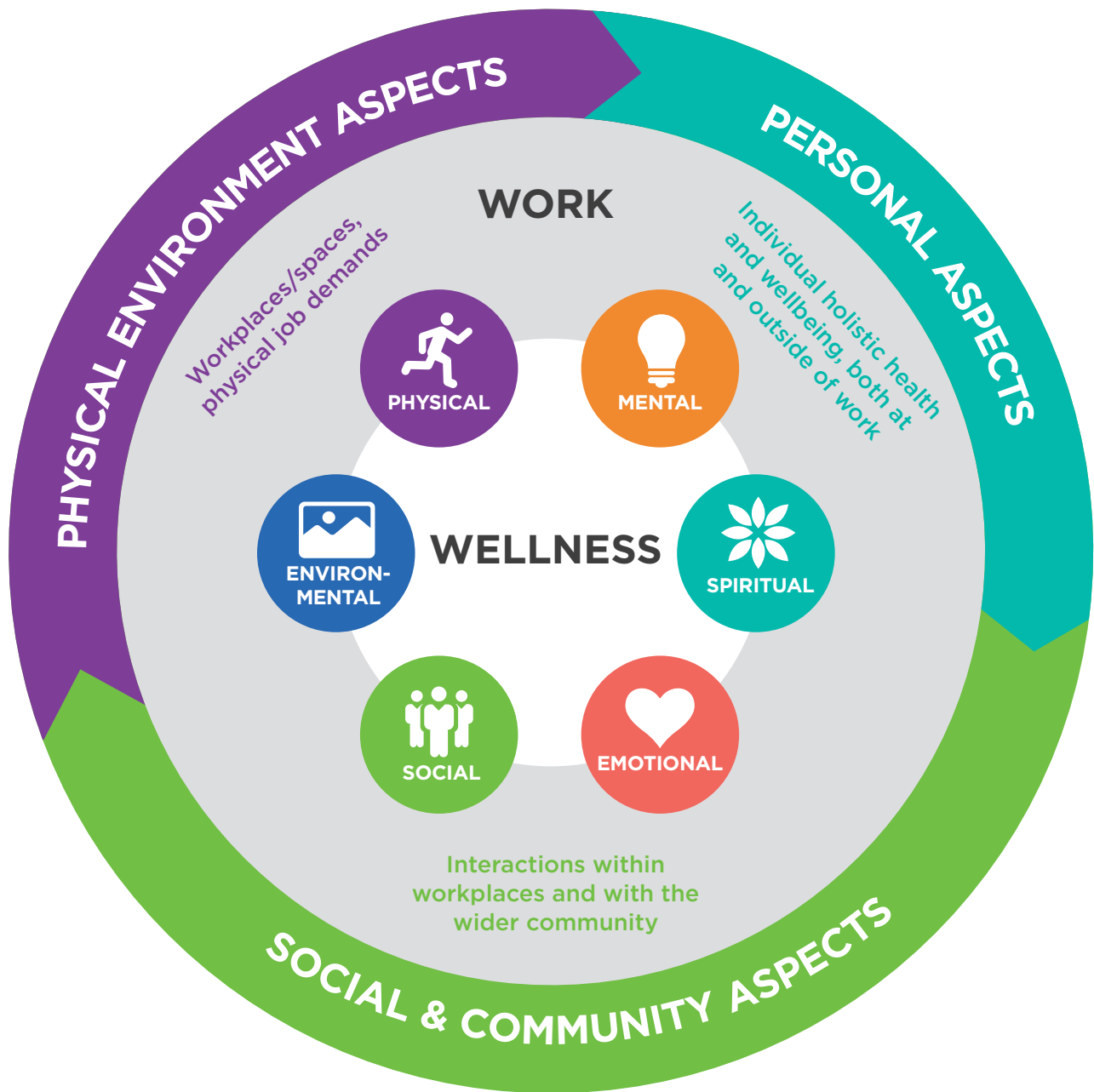
## Physical Environment Aspects

**How do our physical workplaces/spaces and the physical demands of our jobs affect our health and wellness?**

Everyone works within a specific physical environment or space. Our workplaces may be indoors, outdoors, on the road (in an airplane or vehicle), at home, in spaces provided by our employers or clients, or in a combination of sites. Our jobs also place many physical demands on us – whether we sit at a desk all day or stand on our feet, whether we lift patients or heavy boxes, or whether we operate heavy equipment or handle dangerous chemicals. The physical environment and the physical demands of our work greatly affect our health and wellbeing.

Regardless of where we work, every worker has a basic human right to a safe and healthy working environment.<sup>80</sup> Adherence to existing standards and regulations and application of safe and healthy

## Three Aspects of Wellness at Work



Source: Global Wellness Institute

practices should be the norm for every employer. However, basic physical health and safety are not enough to meet the demands of the next economic era. Forward-looking companies and leaders are now proactively infusing health and wellness-enhancing features into physical work environments in order to encourage motivated, happy, and productive workers.

**First, do no harm. Better yet, create a healthy and energizing setting for workers.**

**Prioritize safety in the work environment.**

Unfortunately, work can be unhealthy and unsafe for too many people, despite the proliferation of government regulations on occupational safety and health around the world.<sup>81</sup> Every year, millions of workers suffer from illnesses and injuries on the job, most of which are preventable. Every day 6,300 people die around the world from occupational accidents and work-related diseases.<sup>82</sup> Industrial, factory, and mining accidents continue to make headlines – from the 2014 Soma mine explosion in Turkey that killed 300, to the 2013 collapse of a garment factory in Bangladesh that killed over 1,000 people, to the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan. As a lowest common denominator, employers must take basic safety standards seriously – including fire and prevention and safety measures, means of egress, adequate ventilation and temperature control, lead and asbestos levels, and more. Workplace safety must be treated as a corporate priority and communicated to all managers and line workers. Workers need to feel safe to speak up when they face a risky or unsafe work situation, even if it means missing production targets.

**Mitigate “sick building syndrome.”**

New construction techniques and products are exposing us to potentially harmful substances in our workplaces, such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and phthalates, flame retardants, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), antimicrobials, bisphenol A (BPA),

and nanomaterials, among many others. Indoor air quality and “sick building syndrome” were identified as major concerns by the World Health Organization over 30 years ago, and yet these issues continue to threaten the health of workers in offices and other buildings around the world.<sup>83</sup> Ongoing and expanded research is needed in both the public and private sectors to understand and ameliorate these impacts, while policymakers need to keep up with the latest research and clinical studies in order to update building standards.

**Minimize occupational hazards.**

Every job or occupation brings with it different types of physical health hazards and risks – for example, nurses risking back injuries from lifting heavy patients; office workers with carpal tunnel syndrome; truck drivers facing road accidents; professional athletes suffering concussions; and factory workers dealing with hazardous chemicals, heavy equipment, or loud noises. Industry associations and labor unions can play an important advocacy role in informing policies that protect the health and safety of workers, especially as changing technologies and new modes of work in each occupation bring different risks and potential hazards. Employers have a responsibility to adhere to government standards (and even exceed them); to proactively prevent health and safety incidents; and to monitor and address issues that arise for their employees. Meanwhile, individual workers need to be aware of the risks they face in their jobs and, wherever feasible, advocate for improvements.

**Infuse wellness into the physical work environment.**

Developments in architecture, management science, organizational psychology, and environmental science are providing new insights into how workspace design can increase our productivity and happiness at work. For example, a UK study showed that the “high performance” office buildings can improve productivity by 12.5 percent, while the worst buildings can reduce productivity by 17.5 percent.”

The environmental and sustainability movements have advanced design and construction techniques that enhance the wellness of both the planet and individuals such as: access to fresh air (windows that open or access to outdoor spaces); access to daylight and other natural elements indoors (windows with views or greenery and plants inside); thermal control and good air quality; and use of environmentally friendly, natural, healthy, and “toxin-free” materials. As a new extension of the green building movement, the International Well Building Institute has introduced a “well building standard” and certification that encourages the physical health of people in the same way that green buildings and LEED certification support the health of the planet.<sup>85</sup> Clearly, not every company has the resources of Google or Apple to build new people- and planet-friendly campuses, but many of these improvements can be made incrementally and over time with more modest investments.

### **Promote healthy and social behaviors through workspace design.**

Many companies are making incremental changes in workplaces and workspaces to promote employee wellness and encourage healthy behaviors such as ergonomic workstations and equipment, standing and treadmill desks, private spaces for personal needs (e.g., nap/meditation rooms, lactation rooms), cafeterias with healthy food options, on-site fitness facilities, bike sharing/parking, outdoor walking paths, accessible and attractive stairways, and other features. The technology and creative industries have launched trends such as open floor plans, unassigned desks, flexible and collaborative spaces, and campus-like environments with amenities such as games, play equipment, cafes and bars, etc. Whether these are just cost-cutting measures or the latest fads to attract Millennials, the desire to use workspace design as a means to stimulate collaboration and creativity is here to stay. Employers must be careful, however, to ensure that redesigned workspaces are not just superficial changes, but rather an intentional component of a company’s culture and employees’ needs and work styles.

## **Personal Aspects**

### **How are our individual health and sense of wellbeing affected by our work, and vice versa?**

Like it or not, our work and our wellness are locked in an interdependent relationship. We all bring our underlying state of wellness to work with us – our physical and mental health, family life and relationships, personal motivations, values, and experiences – and these factors affect our job performance. At the same time, what we do at work and how we work have a profound impact on our personal wellness, from our financial stability and social status, to our physical health and stress, and even our self-esteem and sense of purpose. Our personal wellness is optimized when both our working lives and personal lives are positive and mutually reinforcing. Many factors in our workplaces, from organizational culture to management styles to compensation and benefits, go far beyond the scope of traditional “wellness programs” and can be improved to ensure that the relationship between work and personal wellness is a positive one.

**A good workplace  
can help people become  
healthier and happier.**

### **Address diverse employee needs.**

While it is admirable when employers provide gym memberships, cafeterias, free health screenings, or yoga classes, these benefits are less meaningful if the most basic employee wellness issues are ignored. Employees’ needs vary widely across locations, demographics, industries, and socioeconomic environments. In some developing countries, the most pressing health priority for workers could be clean air or safe drinking water in their communities, and perhaps not massage tables or Fitbits. It could be transportation and safety for female employees working night shifts, or it could be a matter of earning a living wage or improving work-life balance. Some of these issues may require creative solutions within the workplace, while others may require working with governments or local authorities.

Efforts to address the issues most important and appropriate for employees communicate a real sense of caring that slickly packaged wellness programs will not. For companies operating across different regions and countries, it is also important to incorporate cultural sensitivities (such as to mental illness) and local wellness traditions (e.g., Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, etc.) in order to engage employees in any corporate-wide wellness efforts in a meaningful way.<sup>86</sup>

### **Recognize workplace stress as a top wellness deterrent.**

Stress and work-life balance are universal concerns of workers and employers around the world. Global surveys conducted by Regus found that 53 percent of workers are experiencing rising levels of stress,<sup>87</sup> and 59 percent say their jobs are a cause of stress.<sup>88</sup> Towers Watson found that stress was the number one workforce risk faced by employers across 15 countries.<sup>89</sup> Work-related stress was also named by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control as the leading workplace health problem in the United States, ranking above physical inactivity and obesity.<sup>90</sup> To address stress, employers typically offer classes (e.g., yoga, meditation/mindfulness, time management, stress management, etc.), counseling, or perks and on-site amenities (e.g., nap pods, quiet rooms, free massages, games/activities). To promote work-life balance, some may offer the option of part-time, flextime, and off-site work, as well as family leave, assistance/subsidies for childcare, and other services. But what is the use of lunchtime yoga or a free massage if you have no time to take advantage of it? Can you take paternity leave if your boss or colleagues frown upon it? How does flextime help if you reply to emails late into the night? Perhaps it is time for employers to recognize that they may be making more demands than their employees can handle, that the 24/7 nature of work communications does not allow for rest and rejuvenation, and that work can relentlessly intrude on our lives in an unhealthy way. Many of us who are professionals or managers are part of the problem, addicted to our devices and perpetuating a culture of faux urgency and the expectation of instantaneous

responses. Executives, managers/supervisors, and individual workers can all play a role in balancing expectations, reshaping organizational cultures, and reorganizing work tasks and hierarchies in a way that allows for downtime and proactively prevents stress and burnout.

### **Align work with personal values and intrinsic motivations.**

Work is always going to be experienced and filtered through our individual values and motivations. Are my tasks interesting or boring? Does my job advance or thwart my ambitions? Do I feel valued or exploited? Am I growing as person? Am I contributing something to the world? Do I like the people with whom I spend my days? Does my employer respect and support my life outside of work? Honest answers to these questions determine whether we are filled with a sense of joy or loaded with misery after a day of work.

For most employers, aligning work with employees' intrinsic motivations may not be a foremost concern. And yet, if a worker is unmotivated, he/she will most likely become disengaged and unproductive. Indeed, businesses are taking heed, as *leadership*, *culture*, and *employee engagement* have become management buzzwords in recent years. Some organizations have deliberately abandoned the traditional, hierarchical management structure and are empowering employees to seek their passions, define their roles, elect their own leaders, perform their work with more autonomy and purpose, and even set their own compensation.<sup>91</sup> While many of these practices are still emerging, most organizations – whether they are for-profit or mission-driven – can do better in explicitly linking their objectives with employees' motivations and sense of purpose, such as articulating how customers' lives are made better or the impact of their work on the community.

### **Support and encourage healthy habits at work.**

Health researchers have identified five major determinants of people's health – genetics, behavior, social circumstances, environmental and physical influences,



and medical care – and recent research has placed heavy emphasis on the influences of our social and physical environment (that is, the conditions in which we are born, live, work, and age).<sup>92</sup> Many of us spend up to half our waking hours at work, and most of us work in social environments. Therefore, working environments can have a profound influence on our lifestyles and health behaviors. As individuals, we are responsible for making good choices about how to live and take care of ourselves; however, our workplaces play an important role in supporting us – or hindering us – in this personal endeavor. In fact, that is the framework and mindset behind the majority of workplace wellness initiatives and programs that exist today.

Both research and anecdotal evidence suggest that the most effective employee wellness initiatives have several key characteristics. First, these initiatives originate top-down from executive management and are often led by a wellness evangelist who is passionate about wellness and leads by example.<sup>93</sup> Second, they provide options and allow employees to choose what they need most and what works for their individual, unique needs. Third, they take a holistic and multidimensional approach, addressing physical, mental and emotional health, work-life balance, and even financial wellness. Finally, these initiatives are the most effective when implemented within the context of a broader organizational culture of wellness that treats employees as key assets and proactively addresses all aspects of wellness.

## Social & Community Aspects

**How do our interactions with coworkers, managers, clients, and the wider community affect our health and wellness?**

With a few exceptions, most of us work with people – customers, colleagues, managers, subordinates, and sometimes even our families. The quality of these interactions and relationships has a profound impact on our own wellness and that of the people around us. Advances in neuroscience and imaging technology and the rise of interdisciplinary studies in biological,

social, behavioral, and management sciences have led to major breakthroughs in our understanding of the connections among human interactions, our emotions, our motor and cognitive abilities, and our physical health and mental resilience. Interactions that are characterized by kindness, respect, collegiality, openness, teamwork, and a shared purpose increase our sense of wellbeing. Beyond the “company walls,” businesses and organizations also interact with other stakeholders such as business partners, clients/customers, suppliers, and the broader community. The knowledge that our work can positively influence our customers, our communities, and the world can be personally motivating and rewarding and can enhance the wellbeing of all involved.

### Cultivate and encourage friendships at work.

Over many years of survey research on organizational performance and personal wellbeing, Gallup has identified having “a best friend at work” as one of the key traits for productive work groups and high employee retention. We all need healthy relationships in our lives to be mentally and emotionally well. Because friendship is based on trust, its impact in a work setting is manifold. Research has shown that friendships within a workplace can increase collaboration, communication, and honest feedback; drive a sense of loyalty (i.e., the need to have your friend’s back and a commitment to shared success); reduce misunderstanding and friction; and help to increase retention.<sup>96</sup> Clearly, friendships at work can increase productivity and benefit employers, but the main beneficiaries are the people who get to work with others they can trust and respect and who care about their wellbeing. For example, Gallup observed that employees who reported having a best friend at work were 43 percent more likely to report having received praise or recognition for their work in the last seven days, and were 37 percent more likely to report that someone at work encourages their development.<sup>97</sup>

## Integrate wellbeing into leadership.

Leaders have an outsized role in establishing the workplace culture, which in turn shapes social interactions at work. If the message from the top is that profit must be sustained and increased every quarter at all costs, human and even ethical considerations may be pushed aside. If a leader believes that human capital is the organization's most important asset, and demonstrates this commitment through his/her leadership and actions, the message will filter down to all levels of the organization, influencing its culture and its employees' relationships with one another. In fact, people yearn for positive role models and leadership at work. When the GWI-EDH survey asked U.S. workers which factors would have the most positive influence on them if their employers made improvements, the highest percentage of respondents (51 percent) chose "managers and leaders modeling positive behavior." The percentage of Millennial respondents who said they desire positive role models was even higher, at 54 percent.

Studies have shown that when managers are fair to their team members in an interpersonal way, team members become more committed and effective and will show more citizenship behavior.<sup>98</sup> Leading by example, managers can promote positive behaviors such as fair praise, regular and constructive feedback, empathy and understanding, honesty, and openness.<sup>99</sup> When management fosters a culture of wellness at all levels, there are greater possibilities for harnessing human energies toward new innovations, more productive collaborations, and better partnerships that benefit the organization as a whole.

**"As an emotional catalyst, wealth maximization lacks the power to fully mobilize human energies... tomorrow's management practices must focus on the achievement of socially significant and noble goals."**

- Gary Hamel, author and management expert<sup>100</sup>

## Make a positive impact through work.

While most people need to work for a living, the purpose of our work is a powerful motivator for the amount of devotion, commitment, and energy that we bring to our work. When asked in the GWI-EDH survey what creates energy and motivation at work, the highest percent of respondents chose "making a positive impact on people's lives." The yearning to make a difference has driven the rise of volunteerism around the world and is behind the decision of millions who forgo higher paying jobs for work that provides the satisfaction of meaning and purpose.

Recognizing this intrinsic motivation, many employers enable and support their employees in doing volunteer work, even on company time, and make matching contributions to charities chosen by their employees. Some business leaders have even begun to frame their business missions and visions in terms of customer, social, and community impacts, moving toward a purpose-driven mission rather than a profit-driven one.

The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been around for decades, and it broadly translates into practices that promote ethical business behavior, environmental sustainability, fair labor practices, and social impact in the community. In recent years, new business philosophies have emerged that expand and/or redirect a purely profit-seeking business model toward social good. For example, a new type of corporate entity, the "B Corp" or "For-Benefit Corporation," explicitly recognizes social benefits as a core corporate mission.<sup>101</sup> Some companies have adopted the **triple bottom line** to measure their performance using financial, social, and environmental metrics, while others have added "treating employees well" to create the **quadruple bottom line** measurement.<sup>102</sup> The concept of "positive handprints"<sup>103</sup> has also emerged, which seeks to capture the intangible value of making a positive contribution to the world, rather than only minimizing the negative impacts of business. These examples point to the many ways that business and organizational leaders can incorporate the notion of "purpose" in work as a source of motivation and wellness for their employees.

## Will You Join the Movement?

Wellness at work affects everyone. The wellness of our workforce and how we work will be critical for the future of our economy and society. We are only beginning to understand what strategies, settings, or interventions at work may encourage people to make changes that not only edify their personal health and wellness, but also enable them to be productive employees and happy and fulfilled individuals. We all have a role to play – as policymakers, businesses, managers, and employees – in shaping the future of wellness at work. In spite of the rapid growth of “workplace wellness programs” in recent years, the field of wellness at work is still in its very early stages. What we do know is that, given how much of our time and livelihoods are shaped by our work, infusing our working environments with wellness can only be beneficial.

There is a huge need for innovative thinking, creative solutions, and to take action; this can occur in all sectors of the economy and in all companies and organizations, both large and small. **Governments** need to set and enforce appropriate regulations on treating workers fairly and humanely and keeping them safe and healthy. **Companies** need to do a better job of thinking about how their culture, operations, products, and services affect the wellbeing of their employees, customers, and communities. And most importantly, as **individuals** we all need to become leaders in implementing wellness at work.

Change usually comes from the top. When wellness at work is done right, it is usually because company leadership has made the health and wellbeing of employees a top priority. But, whether we are the highest-paid CEO or in a minimum wage, entry-level position, we can all become evangelists for wellness at work by simply bringing positivity, respect, caring, and mindfulness to our tasks and interactions when we work. If we each make our workplaces and ourselves a model for wellness at work, we will inspire others to do the same.

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<sup>80</sup> See: International Labour Organization (2009). *Health and life at work: A basic human right – World Day for Safety and Health at Work, 28 April 2009*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office. [http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/28abril\\_09\\_en.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/portugue/region/eurpro/lisbon/pdf/28abril_09_en.pdf).

<sup>81</sup> For more historical background, see *Appendix A*. Every country around the world has its own body of research, data, and rules and regulations on occupational safety and health. For a broad, global overview of the field, see: 1) Alli, B.O. (2008). *Fundamental Principles of Occupational Safety and Health, 2nd edition*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_093550.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_093550.pdf). 2) International Labour Organization (n.d.). *International Labour Standards on Occupational Safety and Health*. <http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/occupational-safety-and-health/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>82</sup> International Labour Organization (n.d.). *Safety and health at work*. <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/lang-en/index.htm>.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1991, February). *Indoor Air Facts No. 4 (revised): Sick Building Syndrome*. [http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/sick\\_building\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www2.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/sick_building_factsheet.pdf). See also: World Health Organization (n.d.). *WHO guidelines for indoor air quality*. <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/environment-and-health/air-quality/policy/who-guidelines-for-indoor-air-quality>.

<sup>84</sup> Leaman, A. (2000, November). *The Productive Workplace: themes and variations*. *Building Services Journal*. Cited in: 1) Loftness, V., et al (2005). *Building Investment Decision Support (BIDS™): Cost-Benefit Tool to Promote High Performance Components, Flexible Infrastructures & Systems Integration for Sustainable Commercial Buildings and Productive Organizations*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon University, Center for Building Performance and Diagnostics. [http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/ek\\_public/documents/pdf/aia080050.pdf](http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/ek_public/documents/pdf/aia080050.pdf). 2) HEEPI, SUST, and Thirdwave Ltd. (2008, March). *High Performance Buildings: 1. The Business Case for Universities and Colleges*. [http://www.eauc.org.uk/file\\_uploads/hpb\\_business\\_case.pdf](http://www.eauc.org.uk/file_uploads/hpb_business_case.pdf). See also: 1) Leaman, A. (2005). *Productivity in Buildings: the Killer Variables Updated*. <http://www.usablebuildings.co.uk/Pages/Unprotected/KVChicagoApr05.pdf>. and 2) Leaman, A. and Bordass, B. (1998, June). Probe 15: Productivity the killer variables. *Building Services Journal*, E19-E21. <http://www.usablebuildings.co.uk/Probe/ProbePDFs/Probe15.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> The International Well Building Institute (IWBI) was launched by Delos founder Paul Scialla in 2013. IWBI offers both a Well Building Certification and a Well Accredited Professional program. See: <http://www.wellcertified.com/>.



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# Appendix A: Historical Evolution of Wellness in the Workplace

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The agrarian era was all about subsistence; people worked to stay alive. Most workers were independent craftsmen or indentured farm laborers, and they were responsible for their own health and safety. Those who were injured or too sick to work became destitute.

As we entered the industrial era, new machinery and technologies and the growth of factories made work much more dangerous. Since labor was cheap and expendable, little attention was paid to worker safety and wellness. Injury rates were high. Workdays were from sunrise to sunset, six days a week. Child labor was common. The Industrial Revolution valued capital over labor, and factories encouraged the “dehumanization” of the worker. In response, social and labor movements formed to protest harsh working conditions and low wages. In the early to mid-19th century, governments in both the United Kingdom and United States responded to these pressures by enacting the first **occupational safety and health (OSH)** legislation to protect workers from physical hazards in their workplaces (especially in mines and mills and on railroads).<sup>103</sup>

Although the concept of compensation for bodily injury dates back to ancient Samaria and Babylonia (e.g., Hammurabi’s Code), workers who were injured on the job during the industrial era were required to file suit through a very restrictive court system and rarely received compensation. The first employers’ liability and workers’ accident insurance laws were passed in Prussia in 1871 and 1884, along with pension insurance and safety nets for disabled workers. These laws were the foundation of the modern **workers’**

**compensation and social insurance** systems, and were adopted throughout Europe and the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>104</sup>

Since most work was physical during the industrial age, the focus through the early 20th century was almost exclusively on physical health – keeping workers safe from harm in their workplaces. During this time, rising costs from workers compensation laws, employer liability laws, and increasing worker wages also spurred companies themselves to start taking more responsibility for the safety of their own workers. Railroad, mining, and manufacturing companies started to develop safer machinery, look for hidden dangers at work, and require workers to wear safety gear; as a result, accident and fatality rates started to decline steadily in the United States by World War II.<sup>105</sup> However, by the early 1930s, work-related accidents were still common in the United States, resulting in an estimated 20,000 workplace-related deaths, 80,000 employees either totally or partially disabled, and more than 2 million employees losing work time due to injuries every year.<sup>106</sup>

**Workplace wellness programs** have evolved more recently, originating in the United States. After World War II, business leaders started to recognize the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, and some companies built gymnasium facilities with fitness instructors to help their top executives stay fit.<sup>107</sup> These benefits were typically restricted to upper management and had little influence on most employees. However, with the rise of the modern wellness movement in the 1970s, companies started to introduce broader

workplace wellness measures and programs, such as fitness facilities and banning smoking in the office.<sup>108</sup> For example, after U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop challenged the United States to “create a smoke-free society by 2000,” Boeing was one of the first and largest companies to take up this call and, in 1984, announced a groundbreaking plan to ban smoking in the workplace. Other early company pioneers in workplace wellness programs included Sentry Insurance, Johnson & Johnson, Kimberly Clark, DuPont, Xerox, Boeing, Rockwell, Texas Instruments, PepsiCo, General Foods, and many others.

A shift toward thinking about the mental wellness of employees did not take place until the mid- to late 20th century. The first **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)** were launched in the United States in the 1940s in response to employer concerns about widespread alcoholism among employees. During the 1960s and 1970s, EAPs began to focus more broadly on mental health and family issues, as well as addiction, and were more widely adopted by companies. The number of EAPs offered by companies in the United States grew from 500 in 1973 to 4,400 in 1980, and a major industry of third party EAP vendors developed.<sup>109</sup> Early pioneers in implementing EAPs included Caterpillar, Cornell University, DuPont, Johnson & Johnson, and Kodak. During this era, the fields of occupational health and occupational health psychology – focusing on psychosocial factors in the workplace such as stress and how working conditions affect worker health – also became established as disciplines.<sup>110</sup>

As the economy moved into the information and knowledge age in the 1990s and 2000s, the focus on workers’ mental health and stress, along with physical health, also grew – especially in response to the pressures brought by our always-connected, technology-driven society and economy. This period has also seen the global spread of workplace wellness programs and EAPs, from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico to Japan, China, and Malaysia. Globalization has facilitated this spread, with multinationals bringing their U.S.-based programs to overseas operations – although often

with little scrutiny or research on whether American models are appropriate or effective in an international context.<sup>111</sup>

Implementation of occupational health and safety, workplace wellness, and employee assistance programs has tended to track industrialization – originating in the United States and United Kingdom – and, therefore, developing countries that are more recently industrializing have also more recently adopted these measures. For example, Japan established its first workplace health measures in 1972 with its Industrial Safety and Health Law, which mandated that employers provide periodic physical checkups for all employees.<sup>112</sup> Australia adopted the EAP model in the early-1980s, and its modern occupational safety and health system was adopted around the same time.<sup>113</sup> South Africa was an early adopter in the developing world, with employee wellness initiatives launching in the 1980s.<sup>114</sup> The first formal EAP was introduced in China in 1997, and by 2012, there were more than 20 foreign and local providers of EAPs in the country.<sup>115</sup> In Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, the first formalized EAP providers also launched between 1994-1997. Many Western European countries have been slower to recognize and adopt formalized workplace wellness programs and EAP services, because such services have traditionally been provided via government-sponsored health and social services – although this is now changing<sup>116</sup> – and Europe has been on the cutting edge of advocating for alternative and more comprehensive approaches to workplace wellness.

Starting in the 1990s, a more multidisciplinary and holistic approach to wellness at work – known as **workplace health promotion** – has emerged, spearheaded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Union (EU). Recognizing that, “A healthy, motivated and well-qualified workforce is fundamental to the future social and economic wellbeing of the European Union,” that the workplace is an important sphere for advancing public health, and that traditional OSH measures are not sufficient to address the current and future workplace challenges, the European Commission

established the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) in 1996. ENWHP defined “workplace health promotion” in its 1997 Luxembourg Declaration as “the combined efforts of employers, employees and society to improve the health and wellbeing of people at work. This can be achieved through a combination of: improving the work organisation and the working environment; promoting active participation; encouraging personal development.”<sup>117</sup> ENWHP has established quality criteria to guide implementation of workplace health promotion measures in Europe, identifies and disseminates best practice examples, and encourages its 31 member countries to place workplace health on their policy agendas.

Also in 1997, the WHO’s Jakarta Declaration and International Conference on Health Promotion emphasized the workplace as one of the most important settings affecting the physical, emotional, psychosocial, and economic wellbeing of workers, and by extension, communities and society.<sup>118</sup> The WHO developed its global “healthy work approach,” calling for a more comprehensive method to promoting worker health based upon four principles: health promotion, occupational health and safety, human resource management, and sustainable development. Since the 1990s, WHO and its regional offices have launched training and advocacy programs promoting this approach in countries around the world, including China, Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Mongolia. WHO established a regional network for health promotion in the workplace in the Western Pacific in 1996, including defining regional guidelines and checklists defining healthy workplaces. China has also launched its own national efforts in this regard, forming the Committee on Health Education in the Workplace with 154 members in 1996,<sup>119</sup> and a National Project of Workplace Health Promotion was launched in 2007.<sup>120</sup>

Today, most mid- to large-sized companies and multinationals offer some kind of workplace wellness program, EAP, OSH measures, and/or another type of program to promote good health

among their employees. Recent surveys by Buck Consultants,<sup>121</sup> National Business Group on Health/Fidelity Investments,<sup>122</sup> and the Society for Human Resource Management,<sup>123</sup> among others, indicate that approximately three-quarters of U.S. companies currently offer a workplace wellness or health improvement program. While global data are sparser, Buck Consultants’ survey shows approximately 46-47 percent of companies in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Australia/New Zealand and 38 percent of companies in Africa offer workplace wellness programs or services. However, since these surveys are generally not a representative sample of all companies, they are likely skewed toward larger companies and those that have an interest in wellness and employee health. Given that only one-quarter of all workers in the world are in a permanent job with a formal contract,<sup>124</sup> the Global Wellness Institute estimates that a very small share of workers around the world (less than 9 percent) actually have access to wellness benefits at their jobs.

In addition, employee participation in wellness programs is quite low. In a recent survey conducted by the Global Wellness Institute in collaboration with Everyday Health,<sup>125</sup> 49 percent of U.S. workers stated that their employer offers a workplace wellness program, but only 31 percent actually participated in it. Other studies have shown participation rates ranging from 5 to 46 percent for specific wellness program components,<sup>126,127</sup> and very limited employee use of EAPs (5 percent) to help cope with stress,<sup>128</sup> substance abuse, and the like.

Today, these programs are typically managed by human resource departments (76 percent of programs according to the Buck Consultants survey). They tend to operate in silos, with workplace wellness programs typically focusing on employees’ physical health, EAPs addressing mental health and other behavioral/lifestyle issues, and OSH measures focusing on preventing work-related accidents and illnesses. Because workplace wellness originated in the United States, where medical care is primarily paid for by employer-provided insurance, most of these programs

are aimed at reducing companies' overall healthcare spending and costs related to employee illness and disability. The U.S. Affordable Care Act (2010), which encourages adoption of employer-sponsored wellness programs and regulates the use of incentives,<sup>129</sup> is bringing heightened attention to these initiatives and is boosting implementation of wellness programs among American companies. As a result, most of the research and discourse on the topic continues to be U.S.-centric and dominated by the goal of health cost reduction.

Meanwhile, as workplace wellness initiatives have spread globally, forward-thinking companies have started to expand the objectives of their employee wellness offerings to include recruitment and retention, engagement, and productivity, as well as the company mission and brand image. The global conversation about wellness in the workplace is slowly evolving to focus on the effects of our sedentary lifestyles, stress, disengagement, and lack of work-life balance, as the human and economic burdens of these problems become better understood.

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# Appendix B: Resources for Best Practices and Case Studies on Wellness at Work

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There are many organizations around the world that recognize companies for good practices in employee health and wellness, work-life balance, supportive company cultures, and related topics. Many of these awards programs provide case studies of their winners, with details on effective approaches and policies. Below is a sample of some of the major award programs and case study resources, where you can find more information and ideas:

American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Corporate Health Achievement Award (United States): <http://www.chaa.org/>

American Psychological Association, Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards (United States): <https://www.apaexcellence.org/awards/>

Arogya World, Healthy Workplaces Awards (India): <http://arogyaworld.org/programs/healthy-workplaces/>

Discovery, Healthy Company Index (South Africa): <http://www.healthycompanyindex.co.za/>

Excellence Canada, Canada Awards for Excellence (Canada): <https://www.excellence.ca/en/awards/>

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, EU Healthy Workplaces Good Practice Awards (Europe): <https://osha.europa.eu/en/healthy-workplaces-campaigns/awards/>

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, EU-OSHA Case Studies (Europe): [https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications?f\[0\]=field\\_publication\\_type%3A8](https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications?f[0]=field_publication_type%3A8)

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Worker participation practices: A review of EU-OSHA case studies: [https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/literature\\_reviews/worker-participation-practices-a-review-of-eu-osha-case-studies](https://osha.europa.eu/en/tools-and-publications/publications/literature_reviews/worker-participation-practices-a-review-of-eu-osha-case-studies)

Glassdoor, Best Places to Work (United States): [https://www.glassdoor.com/Best-Places-to-Work-LST\\_KQ0,19.htm](https://www.glassdoor.com/Best-Places-to-Work-LST_KQ0,19.htm)

Global Center for Healthy Workplaces, Global Healthy Workplace Awards (Global): <http://www.globalhealthyworkplace.org/>

Great Place to Work® Institute (Global): <http://www.greatplacetowork.net/>

National Business Group on Health, Best Employers for Healthy Lifestyles Awards (United States): <https://www.businessgrouphealth.org/bestemployers/>

Quantum Workplace, Best Paces to Work Awards and Employee Voice Awards (United States): <http://www.quantumworkplace.com/client-success/>

RSA, Fairplace Award (United Kingdom): <http://www.fairplaceaward.com/>

The Health Project, C. Everett Koop National Health Awards (United States): <http://thehealthproject.com/winning-programs/>

*Times Higher Education*, Best University Workplace Survey (United Kingdom): <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/best-university-workplace-survey-2015-results-and-analysis/2018272.article>

VitalityHealth/Mercer/The Sunday Telegraph, Britain's Healthiest Company (United Kingdom): <https://www.britainshealthiestcompany.co.uk/>

Wellness Council of America, Well Workplace Awards (United States): <https://www.welcoa.org/services/recognize/well-workplace-awards/>

Wellness Council of America, WELCOA Case Studies (United States): <https://www.welcoa.org/resource-category/case-studies/>

World Economic Forum, Workplace Wellness Alliance Case Studies (Global): <http://www.weforum.org/content/pages/case-studies>

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# Industry Research Sponsors

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Spafinder Wellness 365™ is proud to be a major, longtime supporter of Global Wellness Institute research initiatives. Data that sizes and responsibly analyzes the multi-sector wellness industry allows investors to make accurate decisions—and insures positive industry growth. Global Wellness Institute research also provides a foundation for today’s most pressing wellness issues, and furthers our shared goals to create a well world, whether driving the global wellness tourism movement, or, this year, reframing the workplace wellness conversation.

*- John Bevan, COO, Spafinder Wellness, Inc.®*

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Over the years, Clarins has been a proud sponsor of the research presented at the annual Global Wellness Summit. In 2015, we chose to support the Global Wellness Institute’s important industry research on Workplace Wellness. For 60 years, and in keeping with our founder’s core values, we have been investing in our associates’ wellness and have benefitted from incomparable engagement, contributing to consistent growth with our company. Promoting wellness in the workplace is key to a sustainable business.

*- Prisca Courtin, Director of Spa Activities, My Blend and Retail;  
Member of the Managing Board, Clarins*

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Now well into the health and wellness revolution, companies are looking beyond return on investment – they are looking for a return on wellness and its positive effects on people’s productivity and personal success. We spend, on average, 90 percent of our time indoors. It is time that employers deliver evidence-based wellness features through the office environment to optimize not just productivity but overall human wellbeing. Delos applauds the extensive work of the Global Wellness Institute, along with other industry innovators, that illustrate the growing demand of workplace wellness throughout many integral industries.

*- Alfredo A. Carvajal, President, Delos International and Signature Programs,  
Delos Living LLC*

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With over 1,100 locations in the United States, Massage Envy is passionate about promoting the therapeutic benefits of massage therapy and skincare services to help people feel their best. We are proud to partner with the Global Wellness Institute and support its research initiatives that align with our vision for total body care. The Global Wellness Institute research reports — like this one on workplace wellness — give all of us critical insights that will support us in growing and sustaining the wellness industry.

~ *Debbie Gonzalez, Chief Brand Officer, Massage Envy*

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Wellness, which we define as strengthening of the mind, body, spirit and emotions of an individual, can be much more valuable than its current standing would imply. The quest for new wellness knowledge is crucial in efforts to improve our quality of life. The ability to fill in knowledge gaps through ongoing research and make it more assessible to stakeholders will help take wellness from a sideshow to center stage.

~ *Brenda Elliott, CEO, Universal Companies*

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A greater emphasis on wellness at work by employers is changing the way the world works for the better. The more engaged employees are with wellness, the happier and more productive they are at work. As an organization focused on providing a better way to engage employees, we are proud to sponsor this important research.

~ *Rodney Mason, Global Vice President, Marketing, Blackhawk Engagement Solutions*

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With our unique approach to wellness, The BodyHoliday in Saint Lucia is supporting the Global Wellness Institute on this important industry research about workplace wellness. The findings help us stay on the cutting edge and determine where the industry is heading. This research results in us being able to offer our guests an extremely valuable and healthy beach vacation and wellness experience.

~ *Andrew Barnard, Executive Director, The BodyHoliday*

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~ Mia Richardson, CEO and Founder, Comphy Co.

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# ESPA

As one of the founding companies in the modern spa and wellness industry, we have always strived to look forward and pioneer new concepts, treatments, and practices. By accessing and analyzing the latest spa and wellness research from across the world, we are able to examine and appraise our development plans to ensure we continue to innovate in the right areas and pave the way forward for both our business and the industry as a whole.

~ Sue Harmsworth, Chairman & Founder, ESPA International



This was our first time attending the Global Wellness Summit that took place in Mexico City this year. After finally understanding the massive amount of data and analysis that comes from the Global Wellness Institute and is presented at the Summit, I was thoroughly impressed and amazed at what we learned there. I am currently implementing some of this information into an upcoming national sales meeting and will share some of their research with our team. I look forward to next year's Summit and learning more from the Institute's findings that I now realize are so important to all of us as collective "wellness" companies.

~ Dean Langdon, Vice President of Corporate Accounts,  
Edge Systems/HydraFacial™



HydroPeptide has revolutionized skin care using the latest peer-reviewed research to create clinically-proven products coupled to luxury experiences—the perfect combination of science and wellness. To broaden our global wellness efforts, we have collaborated with charity: water to provide clean, safe water to developing nations. Our 2016 campaign goal to commission the building of a new well each month will be primarily funded through the net profits of EYE AUTHORITY—a difference-making product that now will do more than just transform your eyes!

*- Neal Kitchen, PhD, Vice President, Strategy & Development, HydroPeptide*

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As a global medical nutrition company dedicated to improving health and quality of life through innovative life science, PanTheryx is continually seeking current, reliable, and unbiased information addressing the health and wellness segment. As a first time attendee of the Global Wellness Summit and first time introduction to the Global Wellness Institute research, PanTheryx gained tremendous access to pertinent health and wellness information as well as invaluable networking opportunities. The targeted research data provided insight and learnings about key industry trends that influence our thinking and help inform and guide our decisions. PanTheryx strongly supports the commitment of both organizations to provide and spread ground-breaking industry research.

*- George Stagnitti, Executive Vice President, PanTheryx, Inc.*

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At Performance Health, we are committed to research on multiple levels. We admire the Global Wellness Institute for the investments they have made and will continue to make in research; investments that create a positive impact and shape a future that will benefit us all. And with so many of our brands utilized in workplace wellness, we also applaud them for addressing this very important topic.

*- Lynda Solien-Wolfe, Vice President, Massage & Spa, Performance Health*

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Rancho La Puerta is dedicated to ensuring that both guests and employees live long, healthy, active, and inspired lives. Over 440 employees and their families are part of our Employee Wellness Program, which provides fitness classes, complimentary medical services, and healthy living workshops. We salute the Global Wellness Institute and its research initiatives, as they deepen our understanding of workplace wellness and enhance the lives of people around the world.

- Roberto Arjona, CEO & General Manager, Rancho La Puerta

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## treatwell

Here at Treatwell we, understand the importance of wellness at work. After all, our whole business is built around helping people feel their best, everyday. We already outwardly encourage our customers to book wellness treatments to feel great, and this year, will be doing a lot more internally to encourage our employees to do the same. We know if we treat our employees the right way, and encourage them to take better care of themselves during the day and take more downtime, we will have an even more productive and happy workforce.

- Lopo Champalimaud, Founder & CEO, Treatwell

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## Special Acknowledgement

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A special thank you to **Mr. Richard P. Woltman** for his support of the Global Wellness Institute and its research projects. The grant from the **Richard P. Woltman Donor Advised Fund** at the **Rancho Santa Fe Foundation** helps us towards our mission to empower wellness organizations by facilitating collaboration, providing global research and insight, triggering innovation, and advocating for growth and sustainability.



**Rancho Santa Fe**  
**FOUNDATION**  
INSPIRED GIVING - CLOSE TO HOME AND AROUND THE WORLD



# Employee Survey on Wellness and Work

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Everyday Health Inc.



**GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™**  
EMPOWERING WELLNESS WORLDWIDE





# UNLOCKING THE POWER OF COMPANY CARING

The Path  
to Improving  
Employee  
Wellness

A SURVEY OF  
AMERICAN WORKERS

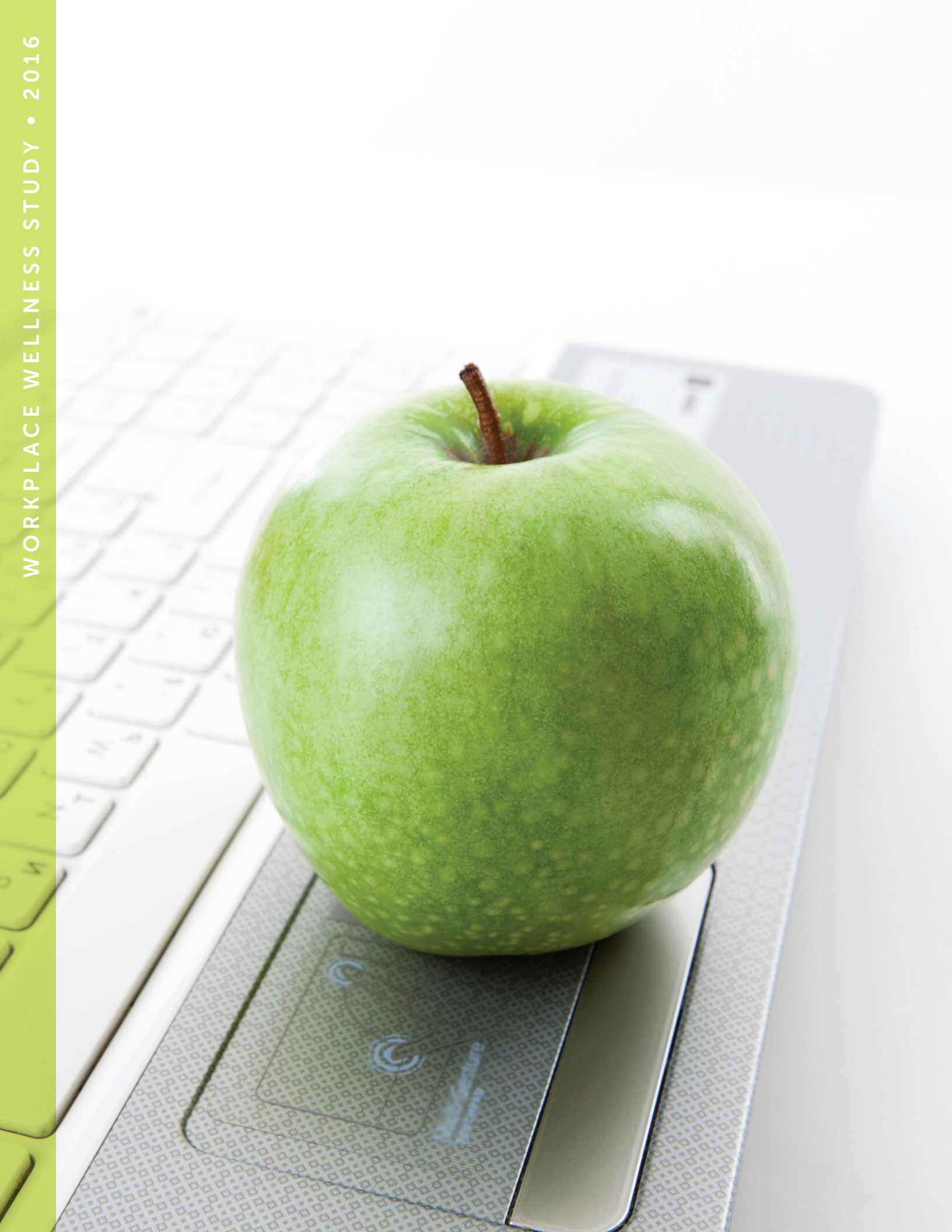
WORKPLACE WELLNESS STUDY • 2016

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GLOBAL WELLNESS  
INSTITUTE™







# INTRODUCTION

**The workplace, and the way we are made to feel within it, has a tremendous impact on how productive, happy and healthy we feel, not only at work but throughout our daily life.** Given that full-time employees in America spend 38% of each weekday at work, averaging nine hours per day, it's common sense that the "culture," physical environment and wellness initiatives (from the kinds of work relationships we have to whether our workspace is comfortable) can pretty much "make" or "break" our physical and mental wellbeing.

A recent survey of over 600 full-time workers in the U.S., conducted by Everyday Health in partnership with the Global Wellness Institute, took an in-depth look at the impact the work environment has on productivity, health and wellbeing. And the study found that increasing wellness in the workplace may be more easily within our grasp than commonly understood.

## **In this report we will:**

- Examine the components of personal wellness in order to better understand employees' wellness priorities
- Analyze how a worker's perception of how well a company cares for its employees impacts that individual's overall wellness, inside and outside of work
- Identify the tangible and intangible elements that constitute employer caring, and how what most comprises caring differs for Millennial, Gen X and Baby Boomer employees
- Offer recommendations for improving employee wellness, not only via programmatic wellness offerings, but also by leveraging the more impactful "intangibles"

### **About the survey and methodology:**

An online survey conducted among 794 U.S. adults in September 2015. The findings in this report are based on 627 respondents who stated they work full-time.

## Wellness [wel-nis]

1. The quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort.
2. An approach to healthcare that emphasizes preventing illness and prolonging life, as opposed to emphasizing treating diseases.

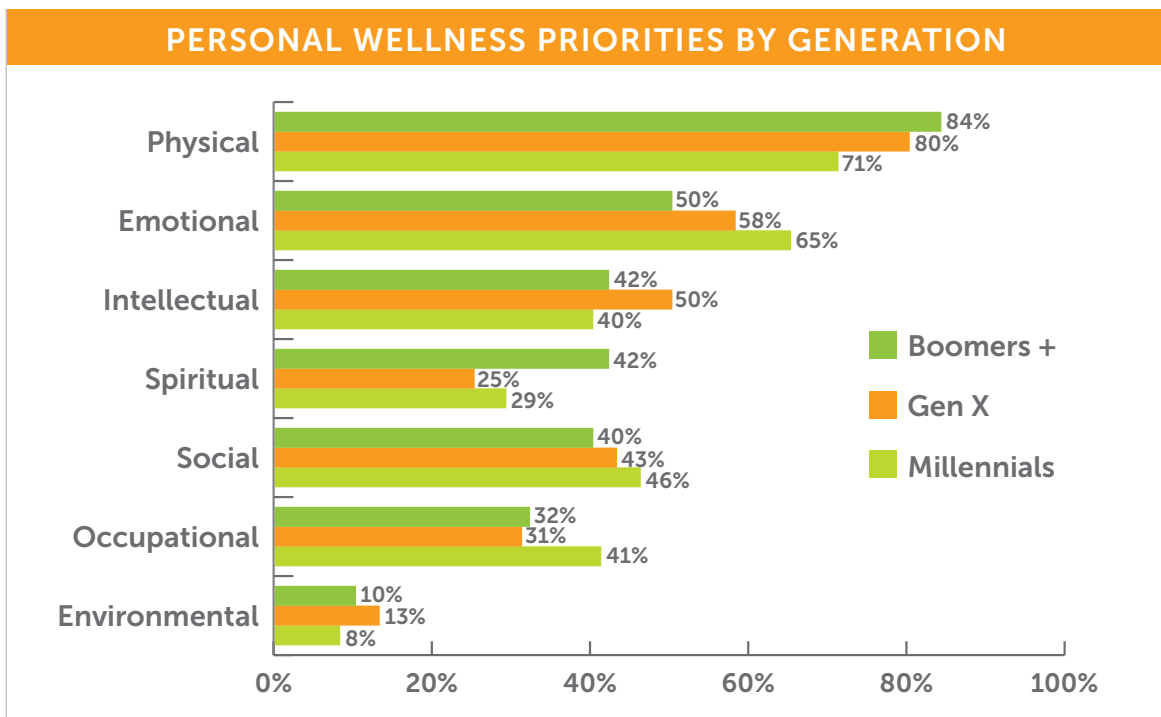


# MAKING TIME FOR WELLNESS

## What do 61% of full-time employees in the U.S. have in common?

They say they work more hours than contracted: an average of 46 hours per week. And those who say they work significantly more hours than contracted are clocking in 51.5 hours. That's almost **a day and a half** more work than the traditional 40-hour, 9-5 workweek.

Even with all this time spent working, people are finding time to take personal wellness seriously. Seventy one percent stated that they spend an hour or more per day on their personal wellness. Whether it's exercise, meditation, socializing, or family time, people recognize the importance of fitting healthy activities into their daily schedule.



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015



*This is a clear indicator that the emotional, social and intellectual sides of wellness need to be nurtured, especially in the workplace, where so many hours of the day are spent.*



Findings suggest that formal wellness programs as they exist today are missing the mark.



# STATE OF WORKPLACE WELLNESS PROGRAMS

**Half (54%) of full-time employees said that their employer offers a workplace wellness program and two-thirds take advantage of programs when offered.**

On the other hand, among wellness program users, less than half (40%) say that their participation actually helps improve their wellness or health. Nearly a third of employees with access to a program don't use it at all. And one in ten don't even know if a program is available. (For workers overall – both full- and part-time – the numbers are even more discouraging: half have access to a wellness program; only three in ten use it; and only roughly one in ten report it has any positive impact on their health.)



For Gen X and older workers, wellness programs lead to marginal improvement in self-reported health and wellness: 58% rate their wellness high when a program is offered, compared to 42% without access to a program. Millennials, however, report that the presence of a workplace wellness program makes absolutely no difference in their personal health/wellness.

NUMBER OF STARS THEY WOULD GIVE THEIR PERSONAL WELLNESS				
4-5 STARS	MILLENNIALS		GEN X / BOOMERS +	
	Wellness program offered	No wellness program offered	Wellness program offered	No wellness program offered
★★★★★	50%	50%	58%	42%

Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015

These findings suggest that formal wellness programs as they exist today (typically siloed, run by the HR dept.) are missing the mark: engagement levels are too low, and they aren't helping enough people who do engage move the needle on their health. Better design and communication of wellness offerings, and stronger communication of their benefits, is sorely needed.

## Who are workplace wellness programs benefiting? Cynicism Abounds

Only one-quarter (25%) believe their company offers a wellness program because management cares about employees' health and wellbeing. More than half (58%) believe wellness programs only exist to cut or control the company's health costs – while another 16% think they're designed to make employees work harder/be more productive. So, 75% of workers have become cynical: perceiving programs as self-serving, and only benefiting the company. If the intention was "wellness," an opposite effect has taken root.



# THE PATH TO WORKPLACE WELLNESS: GENUINE COMPANY CARING

When asked if their company “cares” about their personal wellness, only a sobering **37%** agreed.

**The survey captured insight into so many workplace issues** (from gauging how employees feel about different aspects of their work culture, to whether their company is offering dozens of workplace wellness components, and, if available, the extent to which employees engage with those components). But the data in aggregate indicated that to understand what has the biggest impact on personal and workplace wellness, you need to look beyond the traditional “wellness program.” What we found is that it comes down to a commitment to authentic caring – this is what employee wellness, satisfaction and productivity overwhelmingly pivots around.



# IMPLICATIONS

## WHEN A COMPANY DOESN'T CARE

### The research reveals that employee wellness and motivation go beyond programmatic offerings and physical work environments.

A company's demonstrated commitment to people and to their wellbeing impacts overall feelings of wellness as well as work output.

We see significant, diverse positive implications when a company is perceived to be a "caring company", i.e., a company that cares about employees' personal wellness, and very negative implications when it is perceived as a "non-caring company".

Throughout the remainder of this report we will compare the responses of people who stated that their company cares about their health and wellness (4 or 5 rating on a 5 point scale), with the responses of people who stated that their company *doesn't* care about their health and wellness (rated 1 or 2).

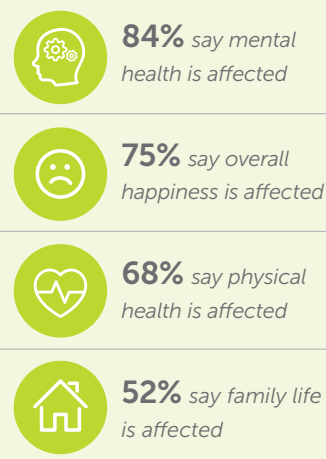
### PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL HEALTH IMPACT

Among the disturbingly low 37% of people who say that their company really cares about their wellness, we see that this caring has a wide-ranging, positive impact on everything from their overall health, to their stress levels, to their engagement at work. Fifty-seven percent of employees at caring companies rate their health/wellness high (4 or 5 stars), vs. only 39% of those at non-caring companies. Conversely, only 8% of those at caring companies report poor health, vs. 21% at non-caring companies. (Note: the presence of a workplace wellness program has almost no impact on overall health/wellness.) Only 17% of workers at caring companies report "very high" levels of stress, vs. 41% at non-caring companies. And workers at caring companies are dramatically more engaged: more than twice as likely to report that their work is satisfying (52% vs. 25%), exciting (33% vs. 16%) and interesting (66% vs. 30%). Workers at caring companies (68%) are also radically more likely to report that "they're proud to be associated with their company" than those at non-caring organizations (19%).

Additionally, people who work for non-caring companies (32%), say that when their job causes them to feel unwell, both their physical, emotional and mental health are affected and their family life is negatively impacted.

And when people feel unwell their job performance suffers. Six out of 10 respondents say that when they don't feel well, their ability to get work done, their motivation to do their job well and stay engaged, are compromised.

#### When the job causes one to feel unwell at a non-caring company:



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015



# WHAT DOES BETTER WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE LOOK LIKE?



**When it comes to driving workplace wellness, healthy/fair financial benefits go without saying.** And beyond financial rewards, other tangible factors certainly matter. But perhaps more importantly, the research shows strong evidence that the *intangible* benefits a company can offer increases the overall wellness impact as well.

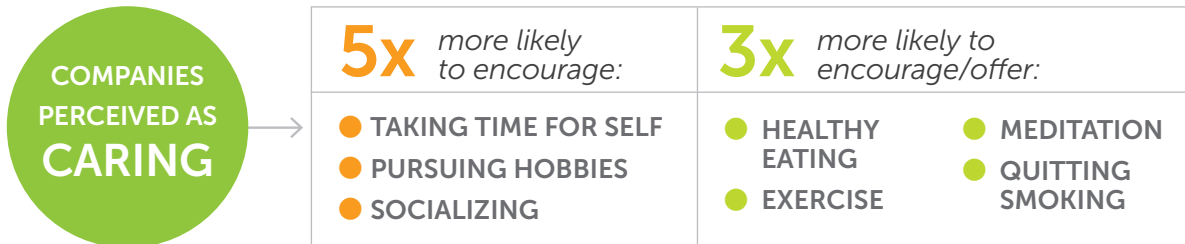
In order to better understand the implications of intangible and tangible factors, we explored company benefits, workspace/design aspects, interactions with others, and career contentment. We uncovered significant differences in perceptions and outcomes between those who work for companies seen as more caring versus those seen as non-caring.



# 1 CORPORATE BENEFITS: Tangible factors

**When it comes to tangible factors, compensation, benefits and recognition impact personal wellness the most.** In fact, those that work for companies perceived as non-caring are **11 times** more likely to say that what they are currently offered in terms of pay, benefits, and recognition, has a negative impact on their wellness. When you take into account that people who work for non-caring companies are significantly more likely to say that their purpose in working is to support their family and make money, it's not surprising that absence of good financial benefits decreases their sense of wellness.

Caring companies are more likely than the non-caring (67% vs. 41%) to provide employees with a formal wellness program, and more likely to encourage healthy behaviors overall.



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015

Most companies offer employer-sponsored health/medical services (health, life, and disability insurance). But caring companies are far more likely to go beyond the basics and offer more tangible, proactive wellness benefits, such as exercise support, flexible work arrangements, stress reduction programs and even opportunities to have fun at the office, whether with a ping pong table or fitness challenges.

Because of how they are treated, and the many meaningful ways their work lives are made easier and healthier, it's no wonder that those who believe they work for a caring company are twice as likely to say that their work environment positively affects their overall health and wellness.

CARING COMPANIES ARE OVER 2.5X MORE LIKELY TO OFFER:		
	MORE CARING	LESS CARING
Subsidized gym membership	52%	20%
Breaks during day to exercise	43%	17%
Option to telecommute	40%	14%
Stress reduction	35%	13%
Privacy space	33%	13%
On-site recreation	24%	8%

Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015



## 2 WORKSPACE FACTORS: Tangible factors

**A number of workspace factors can be serious detractors to worker wellness and productivity.** Comfortable workspaces are crucial and also impact perceptions of a company's commitment to employees. For instance, 83% of employees at caring companies (vs. 48% at uncaring) report that they are offered comfortable workspaces.

Whether it's getting down time during the day to reset and reenergize, having access to a breath of fresh air to sharpen one's mind and energy, or just a little privacy, many people simply don't get enough of it. Those who work for companies that care, however, are significantly less likely to report that these are detractors from their wellness.

Caring companies are significantly more likely to address healthy workspace elements/design than the non-caring: like providing nap/meditation spaces (33% vs. 13%) – standing treadmill desks (23% vs. 11%) – or a place for moms to breastfeed (38% vs. 18%).



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015

## 3 INTERACTIVITY: Intangible factors

**Given the current length of the workday, it's no surprise that colleagues, managers, and company leaders have the ability to decrease or increase one's personal sense of wellness.**



Interactions with coworkers and managers are six times more likely to have a negative impact on wellness for those who don't feel they work for a caring company. The lack of a company culture that supports and builds positive relationships and environments can weigh on one's health both inside and out of the workplace.

Having friendly support also improves wellness. As reported in the Global Wellness Institute's *Future of Wellness at Work* report, a Gallup study revealed that employees who reported having a best friend at work were 43% more likely to report having received praise or recognition for their work in the last seven days, and were 37% more likely to report that someone at work encourages their development.

When a company cares,  
people are:

**5x** more likely to feel employer is supportive

**6x** more likely to feel a sense of openness and honesty at their company

**7x** more likely to say leaders and managers lead by example

Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015



Those at a caring company are more likely to get energy and motivation from work friends, more likely to feel supported and respected by managers and co-workers and more likely to feel a cooperative spirit of teamwork. And a critical finding was how at caring companies, company executives/managers are far more likely to lead by example (59%) than at uncaring companies (9%). Employees at uncaring companies also reported that the top thing that could be improved at their work would be more executives leading by example (85% vs. 33% at caring companies).

## 4 CAREER CONTENTMENT: Intangible factors

Growth, motivation and job satisfaction levels are reflected in how well a person feels about their company.

**Career growth and flexibility:** Employees at caring companies are radically more likely to agree that they have opportunities for growth (64% vs. 19%), and that they have independence/autonomy on how they do their work (78% vs. 50%) and when they do their work (66% vs. 36%).

**Clear expectations:** Companies that care set clear expectations on work hours and work load. Those who work for non-caring companies are likely to work significantly more hours than they are paid for and go to work sick more often.

When it comes to vacation policy there are also clear differences. Those that work for a caring company are more than twice as likely to report that company policy encourages them to “unplug completely” while on vacation (39% versus 16%) allowing for proper recharging. Those that work for a non-caring company are discouraged from unplugging completely (40% versus 27%). Interestingly, those at a caring company are more likely to still check-in while away (36% versus 28%). *Caring companies seem to instill a deeper sense of obligation to the job and the company.*

**Work/life balance:** Employees at caring companies are more likely to agree that their work/life balance positively impacts their health and wellness (59% vs. 25%). When one feels their time is respected and balance is supported, they have a more positive outlook.

### CONCLUSION:

The combination of career advancement, flexibility and autonomy leads to healthier, more satisfied employees. In fact, those working for caring companies are two times more likely to say that they find their job satisfying (51% vs. 24%).

# FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PERCEPTIONS OF A CARING COMPANY



**These tangible and intangible factors** not only create an environment that promotes personal and professional wellness, they also influence how one feels about their company.

**To identify factors that influence whether a company is perceived as being “caring” or “uncaring,”** regression analysis was performed using workplace characteristics to predict self-reported rating of how well the respondents’ current employers care for the individual’s personal wellness. And we see some key differences about what factors most constitute caring when we compare Gen X and Boomers to Millennials.

For Gen X and Boomers, a company that cares is foremost one that offers a good work culture with strong leadership, provides authentic relationships and opportunities to foster those relationships, and promotes the ability to recharge (through vacation and time for self). Companies that “care” also offer programs beyond just basic health benefits and focus on fitness and food.

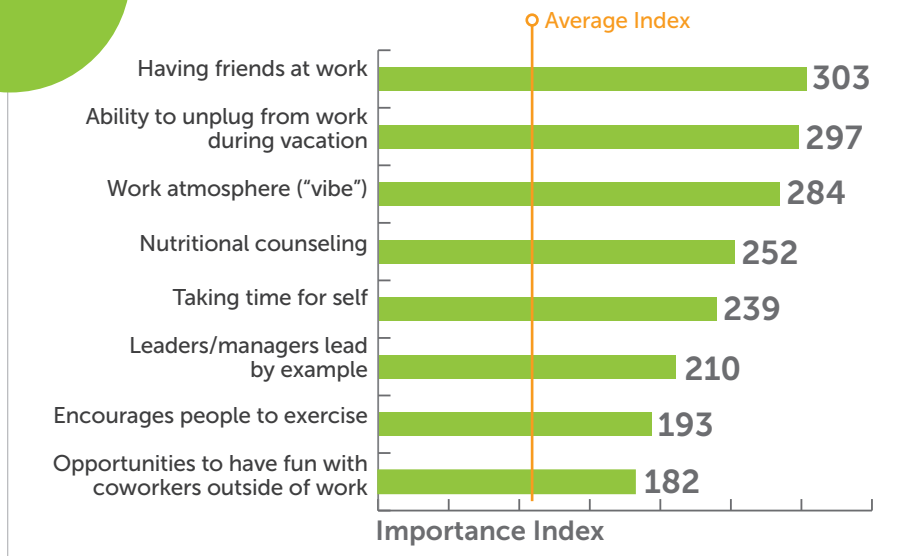
For Millennials, a company that cares is one that offers career autonomy and recognition, socialization and positive interactions, and a healthy environment that promotes fresh air, healthy eating habits and health assessments.





## Gen X+

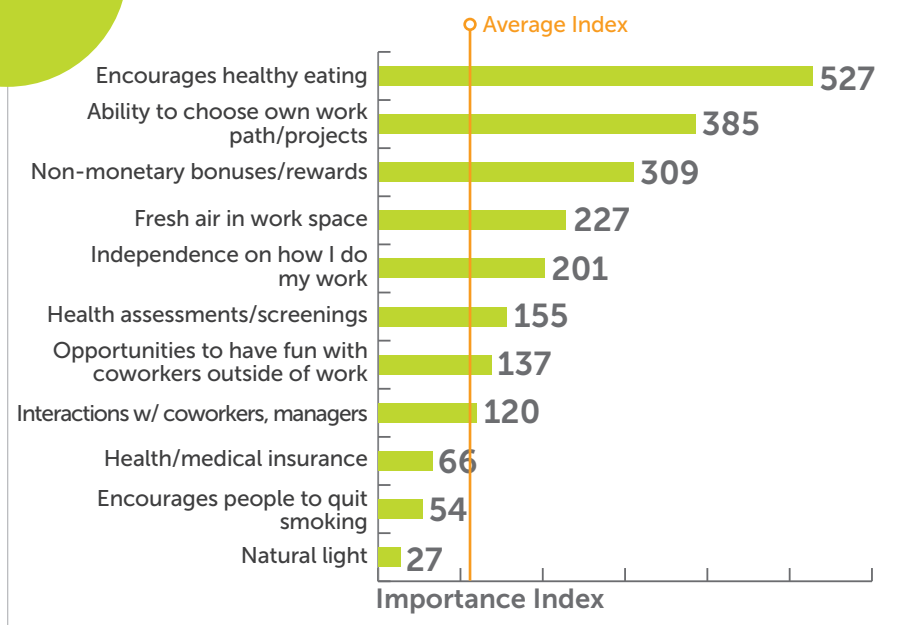
### WHAT DRIVES PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANY CARING



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015

## Millennials

### WHAT DRIVES PERCEPTIONS OF COMPANY CARING



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015



**CONCLUSION:** *When considering how to be more caring about employees' (which profoundly impacts their health and wellness), one-size offerings do not fit all. It's important to consider generational differences and create a culture that make all employees feel the company truly cares.*

# WHAT DRIVES WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE?



**How do all these tangible and intangible factors really stack up when it comes to employees' sense of their own wellness?** When it comes to self-reported, overall wellness, workplace factors that are emotionally driven are likely to have the biggest impact – especially among Millennials.

**Earlier we saw that the top three wellness priorities for full-time workers are physical, emotional and intellectual.** These findings are born out in an exploration of the individual workplace-related factors that drive the greatest health and wellness, according to employees.

**Tangible** aspects such as compensation, programmatic wellness benefits and the physical work environment are less important than **Intangibles** that speak more to the emotional and intellectual side of the wellness equation. And there are meaningful differences when comparing the important drivers of personal health and wellness across generations.

To identify the most important drivers of employee wellness, regression analysis was performed using workplace characteristics to predict self-reported ratings of overall wellness for full-time employees.

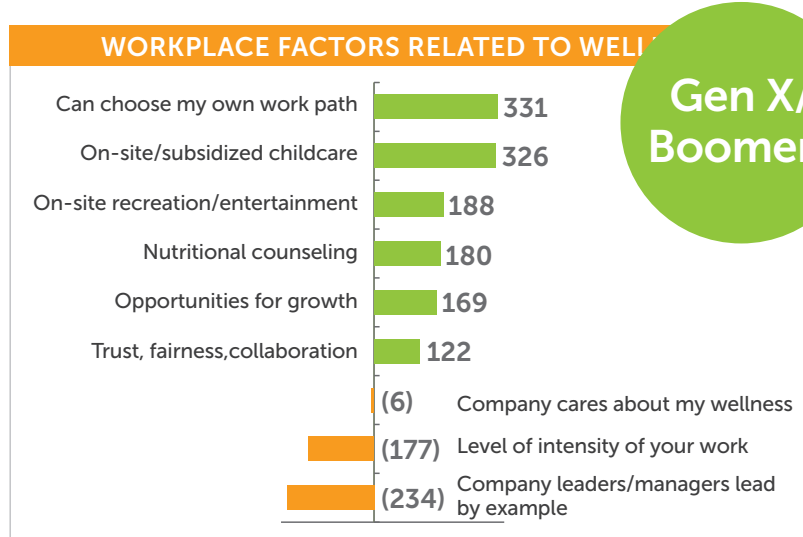




## GEN X/BOOMERS

For Gen X and older workers, an important factor related to wellness is, 'I can choose my own work path and projects', indicative of the desire to find intellectual fulfillment in one's work.

Other important factors include on-site/subsidized childcare and onsite recreation (e.g., pool or ping pong), which aid in reducing stress levels while at work. These factors far outweigh compensation and presence of a health benefit plan, when it comes to increasing one's personal wellness.



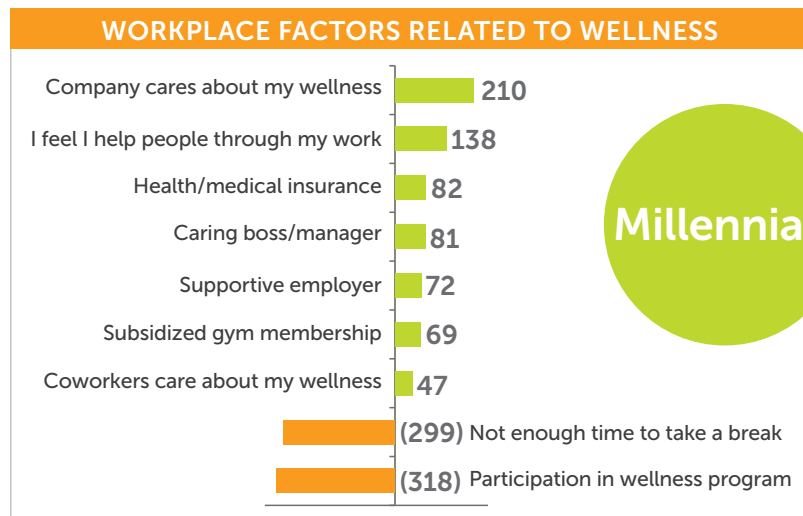
Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015

## MILLENNIALS

For Millennials, what constitutes wellness in the workplace is distinctly more intangible. Above all, Millennials want to know that their company cares. And not just the company generally, it's important that the boss/manager, and their co-workers, also care about their wellness.

The presence of health insurance plays a smaller role in driving overall wellness among Millennials and is less important than perceptions of corporate caring.

Other significant factors for the youngest workers include plenty of break time and subsidized gym memberships. And while the latter is often part of wellness initiatives, having a formal wellness "program" seems to detract from Millennials perception of overall wellness. This reinforces the idea that whatever the wellness offering, it needs to be built in line with employee needs, and not as a one size fits all, or it will be seen as an empty gesture.



Source: Everyday Health Workplace Wellness Survey, 2015

# CONCLUSION

Occupational fulfillment is a critical part of human wellness. And we've seen that when employees perceive that they're cared for, they are happier, healthier and better employees.

B

eing a company that cares is easier than management may think. And if "caring" and intangible workplace wellness components (whether encouraging friendships or honest communication at work) may seem "soft," we've seen that they have a very "hard" impact on employee health, engagement and productivity – i.e., a company's bottom-line. And much of what constitutes company "caring" has very little to do with current "add on" wellness programs, which are never a panacea for (or vaccine against) an unhealthy work culture or an unwell workforce. The relationship between companies and employees, managers and those they manage, is a human relationship, and caring human relationships, of course, involve personalized attention, empathy, respect and flexibility – and great listening and communication. Companies need to reorient their wellness strategies around what employees report best represents corporate caring to them, what has the biggest impact on their overall wellness – paying attention to how this differs across generations.

## ● Healthy benefits should be people focused first

While companies aim to reap the financial benefits (healthcare cost reductions, greater productivity) that come with successful workplace wellness programs, their design must take employee needs into consideration. And the benefits for, and investment in, employees must be well communicated and become an intrinsic part of the culture of the company.

## ● Make the intangibles priorities

Workplace intangibles, whether it's honest communication, creating a "vibe" of caring and teamwork, or ensuring workers are intellectually stimulated or free from harassment, are all important components in driving perceptions of on-the-job wellness. And companies that seize the most important intangibles will increase profitability through greater productivity, employee motivation, and less turnover.

## ● Create better bosses

People (desperately) want managers and leaders that model positive behavior. Walk the talk. Communicate openly and honestly and help employees feel valued – and if you want them to be "well" and make lifestyle changes, executives and managers need to start and lead the movement.

## ● Provide the right environment for relationship building

People want support in conflict resolution and positive communication to help perpetuate stronger workplace relationships. Social and emotional connections at work have major physical and mental health outcomes.

## ● Acknowledge the importance of respect, cooperation, trust and contribution

People feel better when teamwork and empathy is central to the work atmosphere. This translates to making workers feel valued for their contributions, giving them input on their career path, and ensuring they understand and feel part of the company's goals. And workers want to feel that their work matters and has an impact on society at large.





## WORKPLACE WELLNESS STUDY • 2016

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