



THE IMPORTANCE OF WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

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Wellness can have a huge impact on employee performance, productivity, and effectiveness. Employee wellness also boosts your bottom line. It can even improve society.

The amount of evidence supporting this is extensive, so we will highlight some of the key findings here.

MORE SATISFIED EMPLOYEES ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE

A large body of research shows the importance of employees feeling a sense of satisfaction on the job. It's been well established that more satisfied employees are more productive.¹ Specifically, employees who feel good about the work itself, their coworkers, their company, and their manager are more likely to be effective on the job. Unfortunately, employees sometimes struggle to feel satisfied at work when their wellness needs aren't met.² Even if employees have their dream jobs and are a great fit for all their role responsibilities, they may not always end up healthy and happy in the long run.

When employees are working unsustainable hours or they are working in a toxic work environment (or both), burnout can occur. Burnout can quickly derail employees in any type of job (dream jobs included!).³ So even employees who started out happy on the job may become disgruntled over time. Boosting wellness decreases burnout, which impacts employees' ability to perform on the job.⁴ Ensuring that employees are not overworked, overwhelmed, or exhausted helps employees and organizations alike.

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS BOOSTS ENGAGEMENT

Research also shows that boosting employee wellness usually leads to increased employee engagement.⁵ Employees who are engaged can enter a state of "flow."⁶ Flow occurs when employees feel energized and motivated to continue working hard at their jobs. When employees are in flow, their hard work doesn't translate into burnout. Instead, they become more energized and motivated. In contrast, employees who are experiencing burnout are likely to disengage from their work and their organizations.⁷ Employees whose energy is depleted lose focus more easily and are more sluggish on the job and even if the task is normally enjoyable, it's hard for employees who lack basic energy to find their flow. Although leaders understand the importance of engagement, they often overlook the powerful solution of supporting employee wellness. The research in this area is quite clear—focusing on employee wellness boosts employee engagement. Leaders cannot ignore the wellness part of this equation if they want to see employee engagement improve.

WELLNESS IMPROVES EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

Employee wellness is also related to improved employee commitment.⁸ When employees are committed to their leaders in particular, they want to show up and put more time and effort into their work.⁹ As with engagement, employees who put in extra time and effort because they want to and because they have the energy to do so have a lower risk of burnout.

Employees in companies that struggle to support their wellness are less likely to feel committed at work. As you may expect, when employees feel less committed to their work, they tend to perform worse and are more likely to want to leave their jobs.¹⁰ They are also more likely to engage in what is now known as quiet quitting. They display what researchers call *withdrawal behaviors*, decreasing their investment and psychological connection to their work, even though they are still present on the job.¹¹

The bottom line is that employees do their best work when they care enough to put in the time and energy. From an employee perspective, caring about your work can feel a lot better than the opposite. Supporting employee wellness is a key way to cultivate caring in employees.

Ensuring that employees are not overworked, overwhelmed, or exhausted helps employees and organizations alike.

WELLNESS BOOSTS THE BOTTOM LINE

As you may anticipate based on the benefits described above, organizations that support employee wellness typically are higher performing.¹² When employees are happy and healthy, they perform better. If you extrapolate this out to the organization level, the bottom line improves when there are many happy and healthy employees and productive teams.¹³

The opposite is true too. When employees experience burnout and struggle with their wellness, the organization's financial bottom line suffers.¹⁴ Employees who aren't well disengage, quiet quit, produce less, use more sick days, and eventually leave.¹⁵ All of these counterproductive work behaviors can cost companies huge amounts of money. Gallup estimates that something as common as disengagement costs the world \$8.8 trillion in lost productivity.¹⁶ Turnover is estimated to cost from half to two times an employee's annual salary.¹⁷ These two examples alone show the staggering financial impact of employee struggles with wellness.

Organizations that ensure employees are happier and healthier can attract and retain the best and the brightest employees.¹⁸ Everyone wants to work for an employer that cares about them. Prospective employees look for employment opportunities where they anticipate they'll be happy and able to achieve work-life balance. If an organization has a reputation as a great place to work, candidates will gravitate toward it. And, once there, employees will be less likely to leave. It's hard to leave a workplace where you are treated well and able to thrive. Focusing on employee wellness can support organizational profitability and revenue growth.

SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

We want to conclude by acknowledging the broader societal implications of improving workplace wellness.

Burnout and work-related stress doesn't stay at work. Burned-out, tired, and frustrated employees bring that negative energy home to their friends and family.¹⁹ When we have asked our clients and students about the first thing they do after a bad day at work, the number one answer is always that they talk about it with family or friends. (Drinking alcohol is also a common answer.)²⁰ Unfortunately, emotions—especially negative ones—are contagious, and the misery can spread to those outside of the organization. Not only will employees be less satisfied with their personal lives based on their bad experiences at work, but so will those closest to them. This type of stress and burnout can stifle positive relationships and home environments.

Senior leaders do care about more than the bottom line. In fact, when we ask senior leaders to contemplate their impact on the world, we tell them about the impact that negative workplace experiences can have on employees and those they love. We have witnessed many lightbulb moments where executives begin to realize that their impact on the world starts with their employees but spills over to folks outside as well. Most leaders don't want to hurt their employees, their employees' significant others, children, or friends. Indeed, they often openly share their goals to support employees' health and well-being. Yet if they don't take employee wellness seriously, their fears of putting more harm into the world than good may be realized, even inadvertently.

In contrast, when employees have a positive and fulfilling work life, the people around them will also have happier and healthier lives. They will be able to enjoy each other's company in higher quality ways and for longer. In fact, decreased work stress is related to longevity.²¹ Asher, a leader at a tech startup who was diagnosed with late-stage cancer, shared that having a wellness-focused leader truly had life-or-death consequences. He said: "I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. And this company, because of the practices they have engaged in, I feel is a huge part of why I'm going to be okay. I attribute a lot of the reason that I'm recovering [to] them." Wouldn't it be great if instead of harming employees and their communities, your company contributed to the thriving and longevity of those who contribute to the company's well-being? Returning to our earlier discussion of wellness-focused leadership decreasing the likelihood of turnover, Asher also shared that his leader's care and grace while he was going through cancer treatment made him a loyal employee for life. He stated: "I've told [my boss], 'Another company could offer me double my salary and I'd turn it down in a heartbeat without a second thought.'" That's the power of leading for wellness.

Organizations that support employee wellness can have a broader reach to create more caring communities and, it is hoped, a more caring world.

In addition, when employees are less depleted and more energized, they are more likely to give back to their communities.²² When employees feel taken care of as human beings, they take action to improve humanity. That action may be through volunteerism to help improve the lives of others around them or by taking time to help a family member, neighbor, or friend. In other words, taking good care of employees has ripple effects. Organizations that support employee wellness can have a broader reach to create more caring communities and, it is hoped, a more caring world.

We believe organizations need to take the impact that they have on the world seriously. Some organizations focus on corporate social responsibility and the sustainability of our physical environment. But what about the sustainability of the employees—the people who do the work to make companies succeed? **If all organizations tried to take steps to improve their employees' wellness, think about how much more energy and positivity would be infused in our neighborhoods, communities, and nations.** 🌱

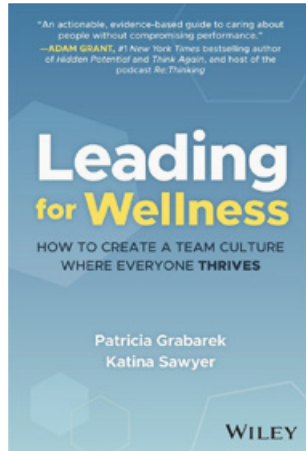


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