5 Science-backed Ways to Support Employee Wellbeing Through COVID-19

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN FROM THIS ARTICLE

1. The wellbeing business case
2. Why physical and mental health both matter
3. How to support wellbeing at an organizational level

INTRODUCTION

A strong correlation exists between stress and crisis (Mucci) – which can lead to physical and mental health challenges. If well-being is compromised, everything else comes to a standstill so employers need to be conscious of supporting their employees' physical and mental health.

WHY DOES WELLBEING MATTER?

Most employers care about their employees' physical and mental health, but there is a good business case beyond simple empathy for taking care of your employees' wellbeing.
Wellbeing is tied to job performance on both an individual (Warr & Nielsen) and team (Garcia-Buades et al.) level. When basic wellbeing needs are not met, employees will be physically and mentally are unable to focus on their work. By supporting employee health, you are enabling your workforce to meet the complex needs of their roles and tasks.

An organization's first step must be to train its leaders on the benefits of work-life balance to the health, well-being and productivity of their teams, as well as the organization as a whole. The next step is to lead by example and support employees along the way.

5 SCIENCE BACKED WAYS TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEE WELLBEING

1. Provide adequate resources and monitor workloads

As discussed in our recent insight paper on supporting employees lack of tools or resources is a surprisingly common complaint, according to Cardus. Inadequate resources and heavy workloads lead to low morale and possible burnout.

2. Encourage physical activity

Exercise is good for physical health, but it is also closely tied to mental health (Stubbs et al.) As an organization you might hold walking meetings, subsidize gym memberships, host weekly yoga, or find another way to promote physical activity and exercise in your workforce.

3. Support employees giving back

Studies show that giving back to your community can help boost feelings of happiness and wellbeing. Guo et al. demonstrate that civic engagement enhances people's perception of happiness and that this, in turn, is conducive to greater mental and physical health. Offering time off to volunteer, organizing fundraising efforts, or partnering with community organizations are all great ways to encourage your employees to give back – and to get something out of it for themselves.

4. Train managers to be active and engaged

Passive leadership is harmful to wellbeing. Che et al. show that both self-reported and co-worker-reported passive leadership was positively related to employee burnout and physical symptoms, as well as workload and work–family conflict. And positive manager relationship behavior in the form of support and development of trust, promotes employee wellbeing at work amongst workers (Baptiste). Train managers to be actively involved and engaged in their teams' wellbeing to see positive workforce-wide results.

5. Encourage employee mindfulness

According to research from Lomas et al., mindfulness could mitigate negative outcomes including burnout, anxiety, depression and stress, as well as influencing more positive wellbeing measures (e.g., life satisfaction). How can you encourage mindfulness in your workforce? Consider introducing mindfulness training into your organization, or host weekly meditation sessions.

CONCLUSION

From offerings such as yoga and meditation, to better manager support and training, there are many ways to support employee wellbeing. By investing in your workforce's physical and mental health you will build a more resilient, more productive workforce that can handle any challenges that come their way.

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