

# Employee Well Being

## What is employee wellbeing?

Employee wellbeing is defined as the overall mental, physical, emotional, and economic health of your employees. It's influenced by various factors such as their relationships with co-workers, the decisions they make, and the tools and resources they have access to. Hours, pay, and workplace safety also have a significant impact on employee wellbeing.

While it will vary from person to person, employee wellbeing should average out to a level that allows for a productive and healthy workplace. Outside factors contribute to employee wellbeing too. Stress around issues such as housing, health, and family all play a role in performance at work. However, employers can acknowledge they have no control over what takes place after hours while still taking responsibility for what they can do for their employees.

According to a recent employee wellbeing study by Alight, less than half of U.S. employees have a positive perception of their overall wellbeing. Overall, there has been a major decline in employee wellbeing from early 2020 to mid-2021, even as employees return to work at the office again.

## Why does wellbeing at work matter?

It is the employers' duty to provide their workers with the necessary support and care for their physical and mental health. Despite this, many organizations still don't have a dedicated wellbeing strategy. A wellbeing strategy can help employees feel valued and supported at work. It can also improve employee engagement and motivate teams companywide to reach their goals.

One recent historical example of why it's important to improve employee wellbeing comes from the United States film and entertainment industry. The International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), which represents a wide range of technicians responsible for film and television production behind the scenes, recently considered a strike to improve employee wellbeing.

Issues such as inhumane hours, inadequate rest, and inadequate pay are affecting all areas of employee health. In fact, many are now coming forward to explain how a lack of care and action towards improved employee wellbeing is affecting them on a personal level.

Clearly, employee wellbeing is a fundamental building block of all organizations. Even if your company is smaller or in a different field, you may still find that there are plenty of meaningful ways to improve the quality of life for everyone involved. Being proactive about employee wellbeing now can improve or even save lives in the future.

## The advantages of good employee health and wellbeing

When employees feel well, they tend to perform better. This increases productivity and helps employees develop better habits. Studies show that workers are 13% more productive when happy. Habits such as healthy and consistent work/life balance policies from management are a good example of how employers can help increase joy. These habits also ensure business continuity, even during busy seasons.

Good employee health and wellbeing also leads to higher employee morale. When employees have their needs met, they feel valued and competent as a result.

As one corporate wellness program points out, “it’s also about preventing lost time due to absenteeism, stress, and illness. These issues cost many companies far more money than traditional healthcare costs”. Although great employee morale is, in itself, the biggest benefit for companies, preventing foreseeable problems like these is also important.

If you’re recruiting or plan to recruit in the next year, creating a plan to improve employee wellbeing can help you attract and retain skilled individuals. For example, 38% of Gen Z job seekers consider a healthy working environment to be their number one factor in choosing a company to work for. Benefits such as increased sick days and mental health services go a long way toward enticing top talent from this generation to apply.

Even if you’re not hiring now, an employee wellbeing program can also help you avoid losing talented candidates now.

Many companies have learned firsthand that treating employees well is the key to creating a great customer experience. Simply having a happy and satisfied staff has been shown to improve the way clients feel too.

As HR Zone points out, this is especially important in the wake of the pandemic, as many customer-facing employees have dealt with extreme emotions and demands from people experiencing prolonged stress from the pandemic. That, combined with safety measures making it difficult to engage in activities most people use to destress, makes it even more important for employers to take responsibility in this area.

## The challenges of wellness initiatives in the workplace

One of the biggest challenges of wellness initiatives in the workplace is setting and measuring goals. Getting a clear idea of what your current employee wellbeing looks like can be tricky. Not only is it subjective, but some employees may not feel comfortable responding truthfully in case their complaints come back to haunt them. For that reason, even anonymous surveys may not give the whole picture.

Many traditional incentive programs rely on metrics such as blood pressure and body mass index, but these are often inaccurate too. As a result, many companies are now asking their workers to provide their health information in exchange for insurance plans that are higher-cost. This practice could put older workers and part-time employees at financial risk if they are unable to make up the difference in the cost at their current wage.

Another issue is execution. Some companies may not be able to provide the programs that they promised to offer. Or if they do take action, the resources and policies they endorse may not be widely used. Having a constant eye on employee reactions to the program and obtaining feedback can help solve this problem.

## How to create an effective employee wellbeing program

Truthfully, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to designing an employee wellbeing strategy. That's because it should be based on the unique needs and characteristics of your organization.

However, if you create a more robust framework to promote mental health, you'll not only improve the culture surrounding employee wellbeing, but you'll also improve the lives of everyone involved. That's where an employee wellbeing program comes in.

An effective employee wellbeing program begins with strong communication. To have strong communication, you'll need to introduce formal project management software for implementing your program.

Doing so will show senior leaders and employees that everyone understands the seriousness of workplace health and wellbeing. It's also a great way to test out, measure, and get feedback on initiatives.