



Wellness and Wellbeing of Your Team



Studies have found that teams who feel that their leaders care about their overall wellbeing achieve higher customer engagement, profitability, productivity, reduced attrition, and fewer safety incidents. These are all significant advantages, but they don't demonstrate how leadership behavior can specifically improve employee performance and how to focus on the employees as individuals.

[The overall Employee Experience](#) is just now starting to get the attention it deserves, and it's not all about benefits and perks. A lot of companies mistakenly think that because they offer free soda and pizza on Fridays, or other general concessions, that they've met the *Employee Experience* standards or expectations. Often, this can be in response to office chatter or noticed lack of employee engagement. To employees, this can be perceived to be disingenuous or inconsistent.

COVID and how it has impacted a variety of people in a variety of ways, has highlighted the need for leaders to have a more focused and attentive approach to the wellbeing of their

employees. People's expectations of work have fundamentally changed after their experiences with the pandemic.

The terms "wellbeing" and "wellness" are often used interchangeably, but their meanings are quite different.

Wellness describes a healthy lifestyle, whereas *wellbeing* consists of the broader holistic aspects of a well-lived life, of which wellness is only one part.

People have innate psychological needs that affect their wellbeing and motivation. We naturally and actively seek ways to meet these needs because our brain recognizes them as a reward; if we're not able to meet them, our brain registers this as a threat.

- Feeling a sense of ownership and direction in their work.
- Providing input when deciding how work gets done.
- Expressing ideas and opinions.
- High energy and enthusiasm
- Feeling connected, understood, and valued by others.
- Being committed emotionally to the organization and their team.
- Being liked and getting along with colleagues.
- Sensing value from people at work.
- Knowing they make a difference.
- Using their strengths every day.
- Being confident in their abilities.
- Feeling a sense of accomplishment in their jobs.

The goal is not to ask people to be touchy-feely or intrusive with engagement; instead, the concept nudges people to care about others. Critical to the success of an employee wellbeing program is the demonstration of [empathy](#), which is simply the ability to understand and share

the feelings of another. This is most easily accomplished by asking quality questions that make employees feel valued, capable and in control. Not everyone welcomes an emotive approach or wants to bleed out their emotions and feelings, so it's important that the questions promote thoughtful reflection about the issue at hand.

Many people think that mental toughness is bulldozing your way through obstacles or worse, remaining silent. That might work in football, but not in life. Instead, mentally strong people understand how to manage their thoughts, emotions and behavior in ways that will set them up for success. [Emotional Intelligence](#) allows leaders to understand not only others in greater depth but themselves as well.

When developing an employee wellbeing initiative, align it with the overall needs of employees:

- Clarify how it will help people live fuller lives.
- Assure people that when they take an active role, others will listen.
- Expressing ideas and opinions.
- Take care not to offer extrinsic rewards which can undercut the intrinsic motivation that wellbeing provides people.

Often, there is a significant disparity between what leaders believe is happening and what their teams perceive to be happening. So, it takes more than a simple approval by leadership to ensure employee wellbeing programs attract the employee's attention. To get the best results, get buy-in from your employees. Consider people's lived experiences; get their opinion on what wellbeing looks like to them and their thoughts on work-life balance, leisure, job quality, social connections, and trust.

Show commitment and longevity so that people understand that wellbeing is more than a passing fad. They need to see how it will help them to solve problems both at work and at

home. Creating and fostering a culture of employee wellness and wellbeing is crucial in this new post COVID world we are living and working in.

And.... Company culture is the result of values plus behavior. It's what people in the workplace do when no one is looking.

Unlike many wellness programs, employee wellbeing initiatives don't require a lot of specialized training and everyone can contribute on some level.

All it takes is to 1) observe, 2) listen, and 3) ask meaningful and specific questions. And when leaders take the initiative to do those three things, others will follow their example in a trickle-down effect.

Here are some suggestions:

Observe. Which employees exhibit low energy? Struggle to deliver on timelines? Appear distracted or disengaged? Take a lot of sick days? Come in late? Keep to themselves?

Listen. Let people know that you've observed their behavior in a non-judgmental way. Open the topic up and then leave room to listen to their response. Listening well takes time, skill, and a readiness to slow down, to let go of expectations, judgments, and defensiveness. Before helping people, you need to show them that you understand their fears and anxieties are real. You need to listen to them and let them know you are there to help them get through these difficult times and having a seek to understand conversation can be the first step.

Ask. One of the best questions is, "How are things going for you today?" A more general question like, "How are things going?" is usually answered with an automatic response: "Fine." But when you add the phrase "for you today," it acknowledges that we all have highs and lows and that you care about how they are doing *now*. Finally, follow up with the individual to let

them know you heard them, that you sincerely care and that you follow up and/or follow through with any actions you determined or discussed to make.

The next phase of Employee Wellness and Wellbeing starts with each and every one of us. Employee engagement, fostering a trusting culture, open and welcomed communication and pulse checks on the heart of the team by asking meaningful questions with movement towards action. This is the recipe for continued success in the workplace.