# HR Insights

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## Building a Workplace Culture of Well-being

According to a recent poll from management consulting company Gallup, less than 25% of U.S. employees feel strongly that their employer cares about their well-being—the lowest percentage in nearly a decade. Even though employers are increasingly focusing on workplace wellness, there are ways to ensure that employees actually feel as though their overall well-being is being supported and cared for.

To start, employers are shifting away from only offering initiatives that encourage physical health and wellness improvements. Instead, there's been a shift among companies to integrate total wellness, which is often referred to as well-being, into their culture. A company's culture is the personality of an organization and the environment in which its employees work. It's the unifying element that holds everyone in an organization together. Moreover, it has been proven that employees who identify with and feel a sense of belonging to a company's culture are more productive and satisfied on the job, thus motivating them to work for the organization longer.

By building well-being into its company's culture, an organization can encourage employees to better identify with the concept. An increased focus on well-being may also result in improved employee health and wellness, which leads to a happier and healthier workforce. These employees can then contribute to lower health care costs, increased engagement and improved recruitment and retention.

This article explores employee well-being, its impact on the workplace and ways employers can foster a culture of well-being.

### Well-being Overview

Well-being is a complex combination of an employee's physical, mental, emotional, financial and social health factors. At its core, well-being refers to feeling good and living both safely and healthily; it pertains to wellness in all aspects of life. Well-being is typically measured with self-reports since it's subjective.

The concept of well-being can affect an employee's overall quality of life, health and happiness. As it relates to the workplace, an employee's well-being is directly connected to the quality of their work, as well as their engagement, performance and productivity.

### The Impact of Well-being on the Workplace

Employee well-being can impact employers in various ways. According to the aforementioned Gallup poll, employees who strongly agree that their employer cares about their overall well-being, compared to others, are:

- 69% less likely to actively search for a new job

- 71% less likely to report experiencing a lot of burnout

- Five times more likely to strongly advocate for their company as a place to work

- Three times more likely to be engaged at work

- 36% more likely to be thriving in their overall lives

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Gallup's research also found that workplaces where employees feel the organization cares about their well-being generally experience higher customer engagement, bolstered employee productivity, reduced turnover, increased profitability and fewer safety incidents.

### Employer Considerations

It's critical for employers to promote a company culture that prioritizes employee well-being. In doing so, employers will be able to show their employees that they value them beyond their work contributions and are invested in their overall health and happiness. Employers may consider the following strategies for building a workplace culture that supports employee well-being:

- **Assess employees' needs.** Before planning anything, employers must first understand their current workplace culture. Determining how the culture supports or discourages optimal employee well-being is important. Employers may conduct surveys, focus groups or other discussions to understand what employees need and want to support their well-being.

- **Evaluate benefits offerings.** Employers have complete control over their benefits offerings and can adjust them to best support the workplace. Some offerings that can positively impact employee well-being include employee assistance programs, coverage of mental health services in group health plans or access to financial advisors.

- **Evaluate programs and policies.** Employers' workplace guidelines should also address well-being components. For example, employers could offer paid time off policies that include mental health or volunteer days. They could also implement policies regarding workplace bullying or flexible scheduling. Establishing wellness programs may not be enough if employees aren't given time to focus on well-being due to unpredictable schedules and no time away from work.

- **Train managers and supervisors.** Those who work directly with employees are key to implementing and sustaining policies and procedures that address well-being and creating a supportive culture. As such, managers and supervisors can help reduce any associated stigmas related to poor physical and mental health in the workplace. They can also be trained to handle potentially difficult conversations with employees surrounding their well-being.

- **Provide tools to help employees make healthy choices.** Creating a culture that supports employees' physical well-being goes beyond offering gym discounts and implementing weight-loss, smoking cessation or walking programs at an organization. It's all about giving employees the tools they need to manage costly chronic conditions and make healthy choices at work.

- **Recognize and celebrate well-being successes.** It's important for managers and other organizational leaders to publicly support healthy behavior changes among employees. This can establish a positive overall workplace culture and morale.

A company's culture is reinforced by leadership styles, procedures and perceptions of what's valued, rewarded and punished. A supportive workplace culture will also help an organization lead by example, highlighting the importance of maintaining work-life balance and establishing a more open dialogue surrounding mental health topics.

### Summary

By understanding how employee well-being impacts key business objectives and consciously keeping workers happy and healthy, employers can promote total wellness and maintain successful operations. To be effective, employee well-being must become a core value that inspires all organizational procedures, policies and leadership behaviors.

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