

A Zen garden featuring a smooth, grey, oval-shaped stone resting on a bed of light-colored sand. The sand is meticulously raked into concentric, circular patterns that radiate from the stone, creating a sense of calm and balance. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white, which makes the garden the central focus of the image.

Organisational Health & Wellness

Planning Kit

Making wellness a key metric every day

Organisational Health & Wellness - Overview

1. Introduction

For generations, the health and wellness industries have grown exponentially every year. With the rise of technology, and the ready access to information globally, these industries continue to expand rapidly.

Despite this, people around the world are more unhealthy than ever before, and they're facing more serious diseases and health crises than previously seen.

***'I'm so stressed'* has become a common phrase that is used by almost everyone
– often multiple times a day.**

Stress is on the rise, and in direct correlation so is exhaustion. The combination of these two factors saw the World Health Organisation include 'burnout' in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD – 11) and formally define it as an occupational phenomenon.

This move by the World Health Organisation seems to place the responsibility of reducing stress, exhaustion and burnout onto the shoulders of the organisation.

Whilst it is a positive move for an individual who ends up suffering from burnout, it leaves a grey area for organisations. Ultimately, it does NOTHING to address the significant increase in the occurrence of stress and burnout, nor does it do anything to reduce the US\$1 trillion dollar cost that these conditions are causing globally on an annual basis.

The most alarming part of these figures is that they are believed to only be the tip of the iceberg, with over 50% of stress and burnout occurrence never being reported. Therefore, the true cost is actually unknown.

Almost every workplace is suffering under the burden that stress and burnout cause. Research is continuously being conducted globally – some internationally focused, some with a scope that reduces the focus to a specific country. No matter the breadth of the focus, the results are generally the same:

- More than 40% of workers believe that poor leadership at their workplace is the most stressful part of their job and will seek to change their employment at the start of each new year;
- More than 40% of all workers believe that they feel a lot of 'negative energy' in the workplace and will seek to change their employment at the start of each new year;
- Over half of all workers believe that the increasing rate of change and complexity at work is correlated with job dissatisfaction and more frequent high levels of stress at work;
- Almost 60% of employed adults do not believe they are working productively most of the time;
- Almost 30% of workers report feeling a high amount of stress often or always at work, with another 40% reporting they feel a high amount of stress sometimes;
- Full time workers are more stressed than their part-time and self-employed counterparts;
- Managers who have direct reports are more stressed than those without any direct reports.

These statistics are reflective of the global epidemic we are now experiencing, and unless organisations take a direct role in creating a holistic and individualised health and wellbeing plan to assist their employees, these statistics will continue to worsen.

2. What is workplace wellness?

Workplace wellness has been defined by Wikipedia as:

“ ... any workplace health promotion activity or organisational policy designed to support healthy behaviour in the workplace and to improve health outcomes.”

It's a very general definition, because it needs to be. Workplace wellness is uniquely individual because workplaces are made up of unique individuals.

What is 'healthy' to one person is 'un-healthy' or 'not-required' to another person. What creates stress in one person's life may be completely irrelevant in another's. Therefore, it is up to each individual workplace to determine it's own needs and requirements for the health and wellbeing of its people.

3. Why do you want a well workplace?

Most people spend more time in their workplace than in any other environment in their day-to-day life. This remains true whether they are physically working on site, remotely or in a hybrid model. Globally, the average number of hours per day spent in the workplace is 9 hours.

You can see from the statistics listed above that your employees are feeling the strain of life every day. **NOW** is the time to stop and understand the impact that having almost 60% of your workforce not being productive is having on your bottom line.

Research conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) shows that for every dollar you spend on increasing the health and wellbeing of your workforce – particularly when you focus on their mental health and wellbeing – you can receive (on average) a positive return on your investment of \$2.30.

The same research by PWC shows that where focus, attention and resources are given to health and wellbeing, organisations saw a reduction in:

- people presenting at work when they aren't engaged or feeling well (presenteeism) which provided an increase in productivity at work;
- absenteeism from the workplace; and
- compensation claims.

The correlation between these things seems to prove that investing in the health and wellbeing of your workplace has a solid economic basis that goes way beyond the act of caring for the individuals who work for you.

4. How to build a successful workplace wellness program

Currently, organisations are doing their best to combat the health issues of their people, but with a market that seemingly provides blanket and template style solutions based on age-old ways of doing things, they're struggling to find solutions for their people that are relevant, effective and efficient.

The only meaningful way forward is for organisations to create bespoke wellness plans that are as unique as the people they have working for them. This immediately creates barriers of cost and expertise for most organisations.

So, how do you create a health and wellness program for your organisation – without it breaking the bank and being a distraction from the everyday purpose that is your existence?

A health and wellbeing program must be tailored to suit your organisation and it must provide individualistic training that not only engages the people in your workforce but provides them with ways to take control of, AND responsibility for, their individual needs. And this then needs to be done in a way that allows the collective to work towards achieving the organisations goals and objectives in an empowered way.

This begins with creating a strategic health and wellness plan that is tailored specifically to the needs of your organisation. Your plan should include things like:

- Your organisation's definition of health and wellness;
- Your organisation's strategic aims of implementing a health and wellness plan;
- Current situation within your organisation;
- How, when and by whom the program will be introduced and implemented;
- Specific goals and how they will be measured;
- Engagement strategies for encouraging individuals to participate;
- The communication strategy for the program
- Realistic budget for the program

All of this (and more) is covered in this program.

5. Employee engagement in wellness programs

Your workforce is struggling under the strain of every day life, so whatever program you introduce must be beneficial to them for them to be engaged. Times have changed, and you need to do more than introduce a gym membership scheme or a team challenge. Your employees need so much more than this for them to be able to effectively and efficiently turn their lives around.

Employee engagement and participation in the program you put in place is essential to its success and to reducing the stress, exhaustion and burnout that is straining the wellbeing of your organisation. Therefore, any program you put in place **MUST** address the specific needs of the individuals within your workforce, or at least give them tools and resources that help them to create individual processes that enable them to do so.

The first – and most critical – shift that needs to occur is for the organisation to adopt and fully support health and wellbeing. This needs to be led, and actively role modeled from the very top of the organisation.

One of the openly stated, and strongly supported, values of the organisation needs to be health and wellness focused. It must be embedded in the very fabric of every decision that is being made before your workforce will buy into it and adopt it as a part of their lifestyle.

6. Investing in your wellness program

The PWC research mentioned above clearly shows that a true commitment to a health and wellbeing program has a proven economic return, and allocation of resources – both dollars and human – will be required.

Every organisation needs to determine the level of investment they want to, and are able to, make.

This does not mean that every activity undertaken has to cost a lot of time and/or money. There are several low cost activities that your organisation can engage in that don't require a lot of organisation or money, but can promote health and wellbeing and enable engagement from your workforce.

For example:

- Quiet rooms or de-stress zones
 - Providing access to quiet spaces where individuals can have some time on their own or at least in a quiet place – even for short periods of time can allow people to recharge their energy quickly and efficiently for a very low cost. They can even be working while they're doing it!
- Engage expert wellness providers to provide wellness services onsite
 - Things like massage, meditation, yoga, Qi Gong or similar classes could be made available before or after work or during lunch time.
- Provide quality drinking water
 - Encourage your workforce to remain hydrated throughout the day.
 - Quality drinking water enhances the oxygen flow in the body but also assists in eliminating and toxin build up within the human body.
 - Quality drinking water is essential for a healthy body AND a healthy mind.
- Flexible work schedules
 - Helping your employees to find a better work-life blend through flexible work schedules can be a no-cost solution to reducing stress.
- Provide free, healthy snacks
 - What, when and how you eat is a very individual thing – what's right for one individual won't work for another.

- Generally, individuals can benefit from the nutrients and minerals that are found in wholefoods so encouraging your workforce to eat some fruit or nuts can assist in the nourishment of the body and the mind.
- Put plants in your office
 - The human body runs on the distribution of oxygen within the blood. When oxygen is low, our bodies slow down and we become sleepy so we can preserve energy. Plants provide more oxygen so you can change the amount of oxygen your employees are receiving simply by adding a few plants to your office space. You can reduce the impact of stuffy, recycled air by adding high oxygen plants to your office.
- Create a library
 - Continuously build a library of different materials that can be accessed by your workforce.
 - Include health and wellbeing, spiritual development, brain teasers, cutting edge thinking processes and more so that you are challenging your workforce to expand their body, mind and soul.
- Wellness workshops
 - Invite wellness experts to your office on a regular basis to provide more indepth training for your employees. Consider making them lunch & learn type workshops that give your employees access to a host of different information that can help them think differently and take action around their health in a different way.
- Charity challenges
 - Find a charitable challenge for your workforce to get behind that encourages all the workforce to get involved. It may be that some of the workforce actively participate in the fitness part of the challenge while others step into support and fundraising roles.
- Volunteer days
 - Multiple research studies have shown that donating to charitable work can cause individuals significant stress. Feeling like you can't keep up with the donations of others and/or spending too much time trying to juggle the day job and giving time to a charity or not-for-profit organisation can cause feelings of depression and exhaustion. When a workplace steps in and supports a cause that it's workforce can get behind it can reduce the stress of individuals because they feel like they're getting involved at a higher level.

- Pets at work
 - Stress is a significant factor in most workplaces and pets have been shown to reduce stress dramatically. Holding a 'bring a pet to work day' allows can give your employees access to an easy and free way to reduce stress.

- Essential oils
 - Essential oils are renowned for their therapeutic effect and you can simply and easily create mood changes and inspiration in your workplace by including some in each work space.

Ultimately, you have to genuinely believe that a health and wellness program is right for your organisation. Doing anything in a half-hearted and/or half-committed way will be noticed immediately and can create discontent and discord amongst your employees.