

JOURNEY TO OPTIMAL HEALTH

A BETTER YOU, A BETTER LIFE

5 Ways to Create a Culture of Wellness

According to employee engagement expert, Leigh Branham, 80-90% of employees leave companies for reasons other than money. For most employees, culture is more important than salary and wellness is a huge part of culture. Today's employees expect wellness programs to be a part of their benefit package.



And it's not just healthcare savings for the company. Higher levels of employee wellness lead to increased productivity, better work engagement, fewer sick days, and better morale. Don't pay people to be engaged, just show them you care. When you treat your employees well they'll treat your customers well. This is a win-win for your company.

In Tom Rath's book, *Are You Fully Charged*, he references a survey his company did of more than 10,000 people. The results were shocking. Only 11% of those surveyed reported having a great deal of energy yesterday. This strongly implies that most employees are working well below their fully capacity.

Leading employers recognize the impact of supporting healthy lifestyles and the value of creating a culture where all employees can thrive and be their best.

Below are 5 ways to create a culture of wellbeing that will amp up the energy of your team leading to increased productivity, engagement, and satisfaction.

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1. Leadership Involvement

One of the biggest factors in creating a culture of wellness is participation and support from leadership. Leadership must support an environment and policies that reinforce the company's commitment to living a healthy lifestyle. If a CEO makes time for exercise, employees feel less self-conscious to do the same.

Start with questions like, "What will it take to help my team make this business succeed?", "How can we inspire passion and increase engagement?"

Make wellbeing a strategic initiative and part of your corporate values. Make "feeling great" a part of your company culture and incorporate this into your brand. Have leadership communicate the benefits of wellness programs for employees and how the program supports the overall vision of the company.

Leadership can show concern for the well-being of employees by participating in workplace wellness events, emphasizing the importance of a healthy lifestyle, and communicating the importance of well-being and employees taking care of themselves on an ongoing basis.

2. Empower Employees

One of the keys to a successful wellness program is employee buy-in and feedback. Rather than telling employees how to act, create a wellness program that engages employees and supports them in making healthy behavior changes.

It's not a company's job to keep employees healthy, it's the company's job to provide the tools and resources employees need to keep themselves healthy. Help your employees understand their options and make access to online resources such as company benefits, health plans, and virtual training easily accessible.

Select wellness ambassadors from all levels to work with leadership to design and implement wellness programs. This ensures a broad range of wellness needs are met in all levels of the organization. Wellness ambassadors play a vital role in on the ground encouragement, and organizing and promoting health and wellness throughout your company.

3. Create a Wellness Pantry

Most offices I go into are stocked up with chips, candy, cookies, and microwave noodles and macaroni. Most employees will eat what is most convenient, especially when they find themselves short on time. Eliminate the guess work and offer your employees healthier options. This includes providing healthy options when ordering lunches for company meetings.

Your company can purchase healthy options in bulk and fully subsidize or charge employees wholesale prices. So rather than paying \$1.50 for a soda, employees can purchase a bottle of water for \$.25. Healthier snack options include KIND Bars, granola, nuts, fresh fruit, dried fruit, organic dark chocolate,

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and protein bars with no added sugar. These healthy options can be offered for about the same price as a candy bar or bag of chips in a vending machine.

4. Encourage Vacation Time

Stress is a major driver of poor health leading to increased health care claims. A well rested, stress free employee is more productive than a stress out, exhausted employee. According to [the U.S. Travel Association's Project Time Off](#), 55% of American workers don't take all their paid vacation. This amounts to 658 million unused vacation days. What's worse is that Americans lost 222 million of these vacation days because they could not roll them over or pay them out.

Eighty percent of employees said they would take more time off if they felt supported or encouraged by their boss. So it's up to bosses and managers to encourage their employees to take time off to recharge their batteries. Time off is one of the best ways for employees to relax and de-stress, and this goes a long way toward employee wellness and is a sure way to build loyalty. Employees that plan and take time off have better relationships at home, are more successful in their careers, and have greater physical health and well-being.

5. Encourage Good Sleep

The science is in and getting at least eight hours of sleep is key for productivity, achievement, learning, and other vital functions. Too many corporate cultures espouse burning the midnight oil and getting by on as little sleep as possible. More than 30% of workers sleep less than six hours a night. In addition to lost productivity and lower quality work, inadequate sleep is a leading cause of job burnout.

The benefits of getting at least 8 hours of sleep is gaining popularity thanks to some CEOs like Jeff Bezos. Bezos makes it a priority to get eight hours of sleep a night and believes it is the best counter to stress and to feel energized and excited. Last I checked, Amazon was doing pretty well.

Your company may not be ready to add a nap room or sleep pods just yet. Start with leadership making eight hours of sleep their priority and communicating the benefit and value to employees. Discourage getting by on minimal sleep being a badge of honor. Better sleep means better productivity and happier employees.

Other steps that companies are taking include shutting off email for all non-management employees from 6pm to 7am, setting up teams to hand off work across time-zones, discouraging red-eye flights, and providing incentives for consistently achieving sleep thresholds of 8 hours a night.

Nathan Walz is founder of [Journey to Optimal Health](#) where he provides Corporate Wellness expertise and teaches employees how to have more energy, less stress, better sleep, and improved mental performance.

[SCHEDULE a time to speak with Nathan](#)

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