



The Next Generation of Worksite Wellness: The Next Great Profit Opportunity

Cutting edge wellness programs provide more than healthcare cost savings. In fact, programs focused only on this one potential benefit greatly limit what worksite wellness can do for individual and organizational well-being, as well as for organizational growth and increase in profit margins. More and more companies are recognizing the importance of providing workplace wellness as a sound business strategy. This is especially true for businesses striving to not only attract and retain top talent, but also those wanting to cultivate an environment that fosters engagement, innovation, and camaraderie. And here's the best, what companies need to succeed in this dynamic business environment is intricately tied to what employees need for well-being.

Fostering employee engagement, improving morale, and providing purpose & meaning, impact both individual and organizational well-being. In order to create thriving organizations and individuals, components that address these key issues must be a goal of the next generation of worksite wellness programs. Un-engaged and unsatisfied employees not only utilize more health care dollars, but also are absent more often, injured more frequently, suffer more lost workdays to recover from injuries or illnesses, and are generally less productive.



Most worksite wellness programs emphasize physical health alone, focusing on disease risk factors, and disease management. Yet, health is a complex biological AND psychosocial state. As such, complete health and health promoting behaviors depend on many factors. Complete health – or the term we use, complete well-being - is more than the absence of disease or having a ‘good’ cholesterol level, or for that matter, running a marathon! Instead, complete well-being is a homeostatic balance of many factors with physical health being one factor, and not THE factor. Think about this and answer these six questions:

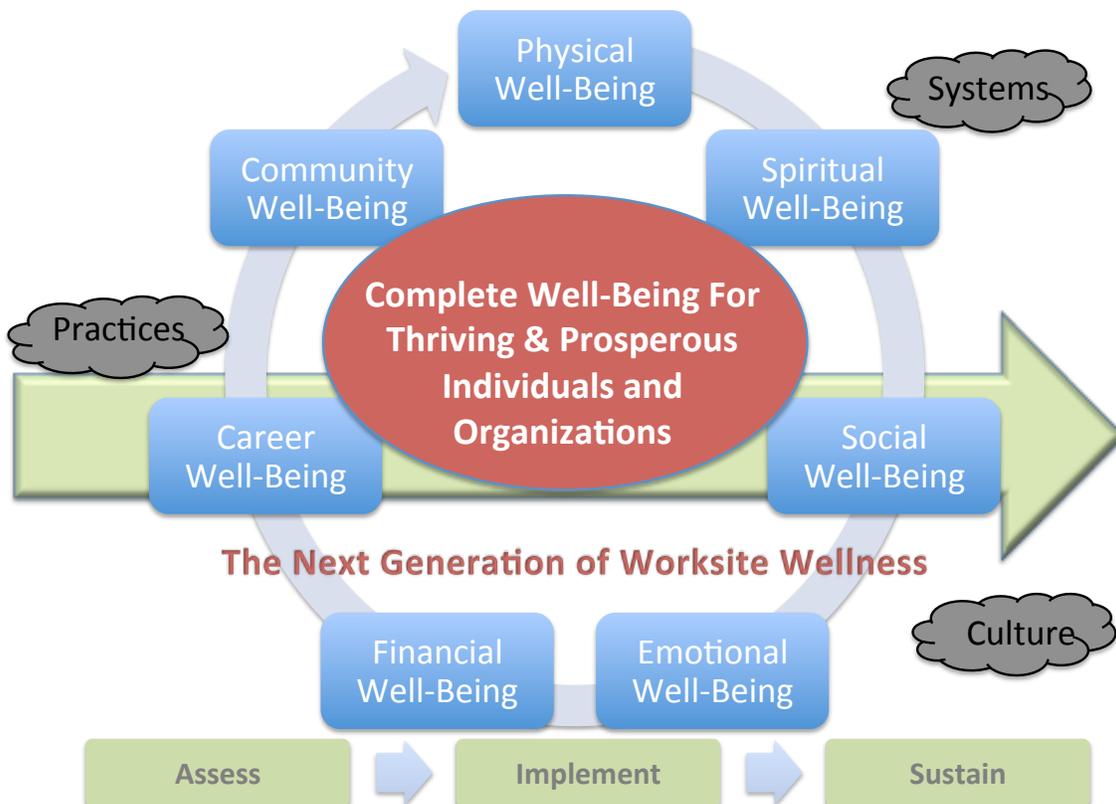
- 1) What is important to your complete well-being?
- 2) What about to your employees, for their complete well-being?
- 3) How would you build thriving and prosperous individuals working within a thriving and prosperous organization?
- 4) Who would you rather hire? An individual with ‘good’ cholesterol or one who has energy, vitality, joy, positivity....?

- 5) Where is your company's wellness program on the continuum of complete well-being?
- 6) Is your wellness program non-existent, focused on disease management, or positioned as a business strategy? And why?

Regardless of how you answered questions 5 & 6., consider your answers to questions 1 – 4 and reflect on the possibilities. Each worksite wellness program will look different in order to create a thriving organization and thriving, energized employees. Just take a snapshot of where your program is currently and picture where it can be. Then take small steps forward. It is the process that matters, not the end goal or outcome.

A successful and sustainable wellness program focuses on all the determining factors of individual well-being such as psychosocial well-being; meaning and purpose in life and work; self awareness and emotional IQ; career & financial well-being; social well-being and relationships; community wellness; and vitality, joy & energy. And it focuses on multiple levels, not just individual behavior. This means including organizational factors that influence well-being, health practices, and in fact, physical health.

The main categories of these determining factors have been defined for decades and although others have revised the model, the categories remain.



Each category includes practices, systems, and cultural approaches for employees, managers and leadership. The results of such an approach are transformative – for individual employees as well as the organization. Focusing only on one aspect or one level greatly limits what can be achieved. The next generation of wellness is for companies wanting to increase profits, attract talent, and retain employees who are energized and flourishing. Centering on insurance costs savings alone limits the possibilities and leaves money on the table.

Our research found that the company culture matters. In fact, it is the most important and essential piece of a successful and sustainable wellness program. Organizational social and physical environments exert considerable influence over the choices individuals make, the resources available to make those choices, and the factors that influence health status. Our study results indicated that perceptions of well-being and practicing healthy behaviors were enhanced by perceptions of work interactions that were trusting, collaborative, open, positive, and social, as well as when participants felt valued and respected.

The study also found that work interactions could detract from perceptions of wellness and well-being. These detracting types of interactions lacked the aforementioned characteristics, and also included interactions that were perceived to be lacking justice and empathy. The enhancing and detracting interactions generated physical symptoms, as well as influenced sleep and eating patterns, socializing, physical activity, emotional well-being, personal relations, career decisions, and energy levels. The tables below summarize the characteristics that emerged from the data.

Table 1: Summary of Characteristics that Enhance or Detract from Well-Being

Characteristics That Enhanced Well-Being	Characteristics That Detracted from Well-Being
Collaboration/Teamwork	Lack of Collaboration/ Teamwork
Mutual Respect	Disrespect/Condescending
Trust	Lack of Integrity/Distrust
Open, Clear Communication	Lack of Open Communication
Valued/Recognition	Lack of Value/Recognition
Socializing/Personal Connection	Difficult Interactions
	Injustice/Lack of Fairness
	Lack of Empathy

Table 2: Summary of Influence on Well-being and Health Behaviors

**Categories of Well-Being &
Health Behaviors Influenced**

Physical Symptoms

Sleep

Eating

Exercise

Energy Level

Emotional Health

Social Impact

Personal Relationships

Career Impact

The study results have been published and are available at,
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21642850.2014.933343#sthash.fvDaVkVN.dpuf>

Well employees working within a healthy culture are essential for business success. It's time for a change and to once again realize the potential for true worksite wellness based on principles that foster complete well-being, vitality, and engagement. Whether just starting your wellness endeavor, wanting to revamp your current program, or making improvement adjustments, are you ready to take wellness to this next generation by aligning your program as a business strategy?



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