

# The Business Case for Making Well-Being a Strategic Priority in 2023

Why proactively supporting  
employee wellness creates a  
more productive workplace.



## Workplace wellness isn't a buzzword - it's a company priority.

The last few years have seen a massive reassessment of the way work fits into our lives. A shift to remote or hybrid work coupled with widespread mental health crises have led to cultural conversations about the level of responsibility employers have for their employees' well-being.

While these discussions have led to progress in the form of workplace wellness programs and other HR-led initiatives, research suggests that the time for more strategic action has arrived.

### In this eBook, you'll learn:

- » The tangible impact of chronic employee stress on your bottom line.
- » Why the most successful companies will reframe employee wellness as a strategic priority.
- » The organizational factors that contribute most to poor well-being and mental health.
- » Actionable strategies for supporting your employees' wellness both inside and outside the workplace.



## The True Cost of Workplace Stress

Corporate mental health and wellness efforts gained attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. A sudden shift to working from home, alongside collective trauma and uncertainty, drove unprecedented levels of employee stress. To stay productive, employers scrambled to develop new solutions for ensuring their teams felt connected and supported.

**But employee stress is currently at an all-time high** – even higher than it was at the peak of the pandemic. And it's becoming clearer every day that these high stress levels have a sobering impact on your business:

- » Employees experiencing poor mental health or well-being are **2x more likely to be less engaged at work**, and **4x more likely to leave their organization**.
- » Nearly **3 in 5 employees experience decreased performance** and productivity due to work-related stress.
- » Individuals with poor or fair mental health **miss nearly 5x as many days of work** as individuals with good mental health.

These factors result in high turnover rates and a massive loss of productivity, adding up to tangible costs for your business's finances and talent.



## Who is Responsible for Workplace Wellness?

Going forward, companies will need to **prioritize employee well-being** if they want to retain talent and stay productive.

**But managing employee stress doesn't fit neatly into any one departmental description.**

Generally, workplace wellness initiatives have been considered HR's jurisdiction. HR leaders often work one-on-one with stressed employees – and this work often occurs after the company has felt the effects of that employee's stress.

**But this crisis response mode isn't enough anymore.**



## Employee stress is more widespread than ever.

**Nearly 60% of employees** have experienced at least one mental health challenge in their lives. When over half the workforce is struggling with mental health, **it doesn't make strategic sense to treat it on an individual basis.**

**But it's not just that more people are unwell at work - it's that work is making people unwell.**

- » 71% of U.S. employees report feeling tense or stressed during the workday.
- » 3 in 10 U.S. employees report being burned out at work “very often” or “always.”
- » 4 in 10 U.S. employees report that their job has a negative impact on their mental health.

When work-related mental health problems are so widespread, company leaders have a responsibility to actively prevent them from developing.

**And if they don't, their competitors will.**



## Proactive & Strategic Wellness Measures Will Save Your Workforce

Employees who experience work-related mental health challenges aren't leaving the workforce - **they're seeking better options**. Employees who report feeling stressed during the workday are more than three times as likely to seek employment elsewhere.

To retain your talented employees in a volatile market, you'll need to make sure that your workplace is taking proactive and strategic measures to keep people well.

**It's no longer sufficient to passively provide mental health resources** or make sweeping claims about your organization's commitment to wellness.

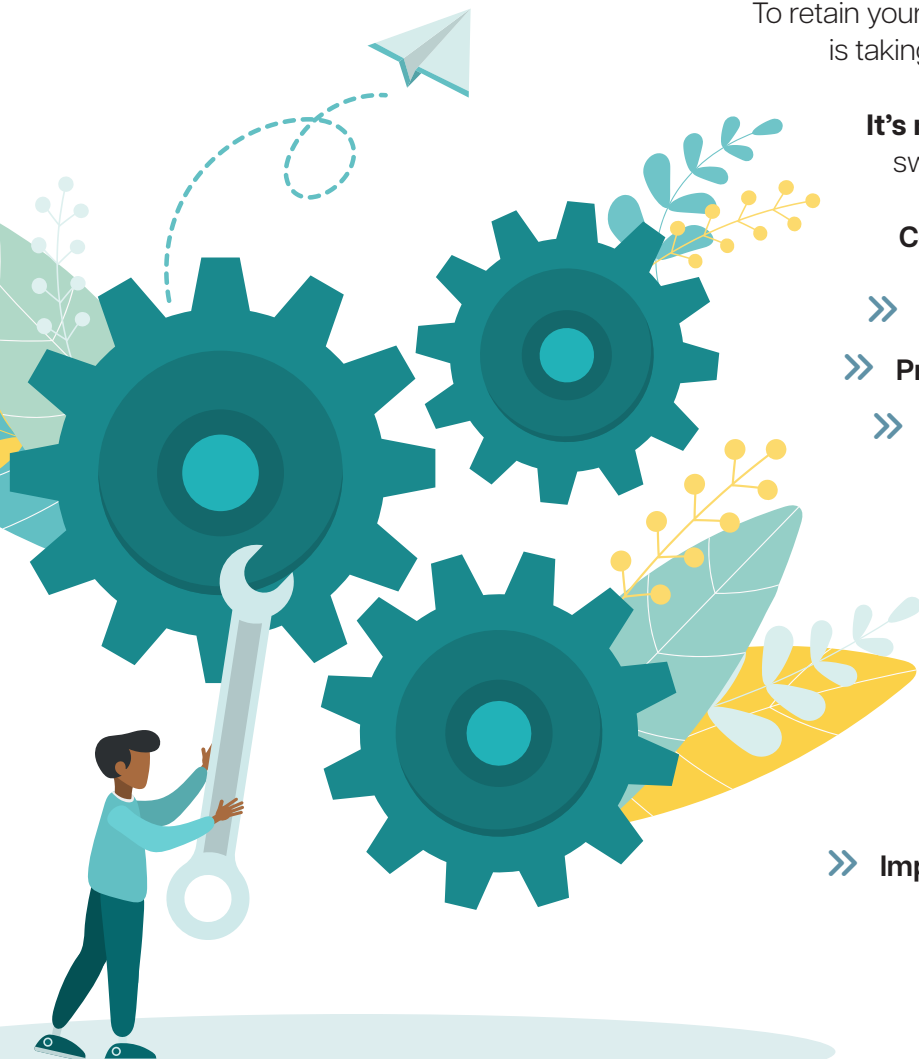
**Consider the following findings on corporate mental health interventions:**

- » **Reactive** measures delivered a 3:1 ROI.
- » **Proactive** measures delivered a 5:1 ROI.
- » **Organization-wide or cultural** measures delivered a 6:1 ROI.

**The data is clear:** The wellness initiatives that will make the most positive impact on your employees' well-being - and on your bottom line - are **structural changes that come from the top down**.

**Actively embedding workplace wellness into your strategy and culture will:**

- » **Reduce** employee turnover and attrition.
- » **Attract** new talent to your workplace.
- » **Improve** your employees' performance, productivity, and overall job satisfaction.





## What's Stressing Out Your Employees?

To combat mental health challenges in the workplace, you need to know what you're up against. Below are the organizational factors that contribute the most to your employees' stress.



### Toxic Workplace Behavior

The term “toxic workplace” can cover a variety of problems and behaviors that make employees regularly feel helpless, unsafe, or unsupported at work. Common traits of toxic workplaces include:

- ☛ Hostile coworker interactions
- ☛ Health and safety concerns
- ☛ Unsustainable workloads
- ☛ Unclear or unrealistic expectations
- ☛ Lack of communication
- ☛ Dissolved work-life boundaries

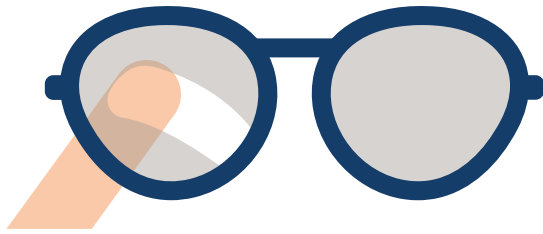


### Financial Stress and Insecurity

In an unstable economy marked by the looming threat of a recession and highly publicized layoffs, fear of financial insecurity can contribute to employee burnout. Reductions in force often increase employees' workload without increasing their pay. Other employees may work longer hours or pick up additional shifts in an effort to earn more money or avoid being laid off.

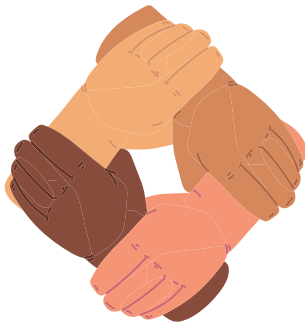


## What's Stressing Out Your Employees?



### Lack of Transparency

In difficult times, many company leaders instinctually project confidence in an effort to stay the course and remain productive. But if this confidence isn't supported by actual workplace or economic conditions, it can backfire. When your employees aren't sure where the company stands, they'll question their job security, leading to near-constant anxiety that decimates productivity.



### Lack of Diversity & Inclusivity

Whether due to unconscious bias or outright prejudice, discrimination in the workplace is a major source of stress for employees from diverse backgrounds. Recent research shows a significant pushback against DEI efforts, which may contribute further to creating stressful or hostile work environments for women and minority employees.



### Inability to Disengage

While the shift to remote and hybrid work gave many employees increased flexibility, it also resulted in unclear expectations and a blurring of work-life boundaries. Over a third of employees report feeling unable to disengage from their jobs outside normal working hours – and these employees are much more likely to suffer work-related stress or burnout.



## The Wellness Strategies That Work



If you want to retain top talent and avoid loss of productivity, you'll need to implement robust changes at every level of your corporate structure.

With the seven strategies below, you can transform your business from one of many that says it supports its employees' well-being to one that actually does.



### Gather and implement feedback.

Survey your employees to find out where they need more support and what programs and resources would help them most. Personal conversations can be even more valuable than anonymous surveys.

Note that it may take time for your employees to feel comfortable being honest in their responses. If you can demonstrate that you're taking their concerns seriously by consistently acting on their feedback, you'll foster trust and build the type of transparent culture conducive to employee wellness.



### Train managers to support employee well-being.

Nearly two-thirds of supervisors feel inadequately prepared to provide useful support to their direct reports. You'll need to develop new training protocols on how managers can be a resource for their team members' mental health and well-being – while still maintaining healthy professional boundaries.

Workplace conflict training where managers learn to navigate difficult conversations with compassion and sensitivity can be a great place to start.



## The Wellness Strategies That Work



### **Encourage proactive – not reactive – rest.**

To fight employee burnout, encourage your team members to get the rest they need before they reach the point of exhaustion. You might implement mandatory PTO before high-demand work periods to ensure your employees can deliver their best work when it matters most.

Similarly, scheduling a few company-wide wellness days throughout the year can promote a healthy culture. You can even weave healthy rest into regular working hours by having dedicated “no meeting days.”



### **Demonstrate active interest in your employees' lives at work.**

Help your employees feel more active in their roles with ongoing professional development and education. Managers should check in regularly with employees to ensure they're enjoying their work within your organization.

During these times, consider whether there are opportunities for mobility. If an employee is performing well, could you develop a path to promotion? If they're not fulfilled in their role, is there another position that might better suit their skills and interests?



## The Wellness Strategies That Work



### **Inquire about well-being.**

Most people won't self-report mental health challenges, particularly if they're afraid of putting their employment at risk. Leaders need to be proactive and ask their employees about their well-being - and build a reputation for responding in a supportive, non-retaliatory manner.

If an employee is experiencing personal stressors and there is anything you, as their employer, can do to help ease that stress, consider doing it. You'll build loyalty and trust, and increase productivity and engagement.



### **Redefine your workplace's expectations and standards.**

Flexible work increases employee happiness and productivity, but the rapid pivot to remote work left some confused about expectations. Clearly redefine your organization's standards of professionalism in a post-pandemic world.

More importantly, clarify standard working hours, and limit communications outside those hours. If employees see leadership modeling healthy work-life boundaries, they'll feel more comfortable doing it themselves, decreasing stress and burnout.



### **Continue investing in your employees.**

Regular salary increases – based on both performance and cost of living – are imperative for retaining talent. Nearly half of employees cite financial stress as the main factor impacting their mental health, and low compensation is the top reason stressed employees leave their jobs.

Other benefits like robust health care and PTO are invaluable to your team's well-being. With monetary evidence that their employers continue to invest in their talents, employees will be more productive and less likely to leave.



## Staffing Agencies Support Workplace Wellness

If you're ready to build effective workplace wellness initiatives into your strategy, here are a few ways a staffing partner can help:



Put time back in your team's day. The strategies outlined in this eBook will take time to develop. A staffing firm can take ownership of many time-consuming tasks such as hiring, payroll, and more, allowing HR and management to focus on rolling out wellness initiatives.



Generate cost-savings to reinvest in well-being. Supplementing your workforce with temporary employees can cut costs, freeing up more of your budget to support the well-being of your direct staff.



Prevent burnout with temporary staff. Temporary staffing can help your organization get through high-demand seasons and encourage your employees to take the time off they need.



Shorten time to hire. Employees feel the strain when their companies are understaffed. A staffing agency helps you hire faster and prevents extended unsustainable workloads.



Hire the right people. When an employee's skills and personality match their organization well, they're less likely to experience work-related mental health challenges. A staffing partner can help you attract and retain the candidates who are the best fit.



The well-being of your employees is critical to the success of your organization. By leveraging the support of a staffing partner, you can develop and implement the strategies that will allow your team to thrive.

**Reach out today to learn more.**

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