Lawley

Wellness Trend Report:
Preventive Care and The Built Environment

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Wellness Programs

Worksite wellness has seen massive growth as an industry in the past decade. As with any industry, new trends are emerging, and the ways in which companies can leverage these wellness trends are widespread. New wellness trends can be incorporated for the commonly circulated benefits of improved employee productivity, improved morale and reduced absenteeism, but also more recently, recruitment potential and retention. It is important for employer groups to stay up to date with the trends, as now more than ever, the upcoming and current generations, millennials and Gen Z, are looking to companies for answers and reasons to stay. The more in tune companies are with their employee needs, health, well-being and culture, the better.

Wellness programming can take on many forms from feel-good, simple interventions, to results-driven, yearlong programs where employees are required to complete specified criteria to earn an incentive. Regardless of what wellness programming you currently offer, something is always better than nothing, but the question is what type of programming is best? How can you guarantee employee health and productivity will improve?

The most simple answer is that wellness is not a one-size-fits all approach and it must be meticulously designed and customized to fit a company's demographic. However, the industry, particularly in the United States is seeing a shift from results-driven biometric screening programs to results-driven preventive care programs that encourage employees to have relationships with their Primary Care Physicians, and one-on-one conversations about their individual health. Additionally, the resources and opportunities in which companies choose to offer their employees can play a massive role in long-term behavior change and motivation to change. It is not to say that regular wellness challenges and educational campaigns are not working, they are absolutely useful in supplementing interventions, but that being said, there are things employers can do to truly enhance their employees' health and well-being, and it may not be the approach you typically have thought.

> "Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers."
>
> – Stephen R. Covey

The Shift to Preventive Care

Blood work is an important component of preventive care, but how useful is it to an employee if they do not have the resources to act on the results they are given? Onsite or offsite biometric screenings and their relationship to wellness program incentives can sometimes create issues both for the employer, and the employee. Often times, employer groups have incentives such as premium shifts, health savings account contributions, fringe benefits and so on to reward employees for their participation in the wellness program, and sometimes, rewarding employees for achieving specified health metrics.

On the other hand, penalties are also a method some employers use if employees do not achieve specified health metrics, or complete their blood work on time. These penalties are typically not a recommended approach by most wellness professionals for sustainable growth and change in employees overall health and well-being.

The questions that come into play with wellness program incentives designed specifically related to biometric results are, does this truly create a positive behavior change for my employees? Are we as an employer really helping to facilitate behavior change by simply offering biometric screenings? How is an employee supposed to act on 'negative' results if they do not have the resources or knowledge to do so?

You can pay people to show up, but that does not mean that they will walk more, eat healthier, or be mindful of the choices they make for their health each and every day. Wellness is much more than a program, and people tend to revert back to what they are used to unless it is built into the culture. It is imperative that companies begin to leverage their built environment, benefits, policies, and wellness efforts to create a culture where employees' can thrive physically and mentally.

The Case for Preventive Care Programs

Preventive care programs can assist employees' in building a relationship with their primary care physician, dentist, optometrist, and also ensure that they are personally aware of their health. Employees' may also experience a 'safe' feeling with programs such as this because communications about their health are not through a third-party vendor, but rather through their doctor's specifically.

People are at the heart of any successful organization, especially in tough economic times [3]. Organizations can build competitive advantage by improving the health status and well-being of their employees.

Time and time again statistics have shown that employee health status directly influences their work behavior, absenteeism, presenteeism, and on-the-job efficiency [3]. Through leadership buy-in, making health and well-being a part of the culture, investing in wellness excellence and effective communication strategies throughout the entire organizational chain, companies' can implement preventive care measures and programs that assist both their immunity and the employees' immunity to future pandemics, workplace stressors, and challenges.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), six in ten adults in the United States have a chronic disease, and four in ten adults have two or more [1]. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. They are also leading drivers of the nation's 3.5 trillion in annual health care costs [1]. Statistics like these signal a need for greater national emphasis on proven preventive approaches to health care.

According to the America's Health Rankings, United Health Foundation 2016 Spotlight Study on Prevention [2], "Prevention is one of the core pillars of public health and is key to healthier lives and improved quality of life. Clinical preventive services and interventions have been instrumental in everything from lowering rates of illness and disease to helping reduce the overall burden on the health care system."

Chronic Diseases and Their Risk Factors

Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention, or limit activities of daily living, or both [1]. Employers spend billions of dollars each year on employee health problems [3]. Many of these problems are chronic diseases that are caused by key risk behaviors including the following: tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, poor nutrition (diets low in fruits and vegetables and high in sodium and saturated fats), lack of physical activity, excessive alcohol use and other modifiable risk factors. By making healthy choices, an individual can reduce their likelihood of getting a chronic disease, and improve their quality of life.

Healthy Choices to Prevent or Manage Chronic Diseases

•**Quit Smoking:** stopping smoking, or never starting, lowers the risk of serious health problems, such as heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes, and lung disease, as well as premature death- even for long-time smokers.

•**Eat healthy:** eating healthy helps prevent, delay, and manage heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic diseases. A balanced diet is important at any age.

•**Get regular physical activity:** regular physical activity can help you prevent, delay, or manage chronic diseases. Aim for moderate physical activity for at least 150 minutes a week.

•**Avoid drinking too much alcohol:** over time, excessive drinking can lead to high blood pressure, various cancers, heart disease, stroke, and liver disease.

•**Get screened**: to prevent chronic diseases, or catch them early, visit your doctor regularly for preventive services.

•**Get enough sleep:** insufficient sleep has been linked to the development and poor management of diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression. Adults should strive for 7-9 hours of sleep daily.

•**Know your family history:** if you have a family history of a chronic disease, like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, or osteoporosis, you may be more likely to develop that disease yourself. Share your family health history with your doctor, who can take steps to prevent these conditions or catch them early.

•**Make healthy choices in school, work and in the community:** by making healthy behaviors part of your daily life, you can prevent conditions such as high blood pressure or obesity, which raise your risk of developing the most common and serious chronic diseases.

Source: CDC Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

Culture and Supportive Environments

Organizational cultures work at both conscious and unconscious levels [3] from concrete procedures to the day-to-day operations. All factors of an organization have the ability to influence the effectiveness, or ineffectiveness of a culture. Lasting value, when it comes to health status improvements for employees can be achieved with a supportive environment. Worksites are beginning to establish health-related policies and programs, and transforming work environments into evolving, dynamic systems to influence employees' health [3]. The concept of the work environment is continually being expanded and only will continue to expand as workplaces move forward striving toward employee retention and acquisition strategies.

Contemporary thinking suggests that looking beyond the individual to the social milieu and environment can enhance the chances for motivating individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles [3]. Human health and behavior is governed by a number of factors, and a person's lifestyle, behavior, and health statuses are closely intertwined. Creating a culture of health and well-being takes passionate, persistent, and inclusive leadership at all levels. It is not a short-term endeavor to transform a worksite setting, but rather a long-term process. Environmental modifications can stimulate change and should be a part of normal business practices to be positively implemented.

Preliminary evidence suggests that flexible working arrangements such as flextime and telecommuting are likely to have positive effects on health and well-being [3]. In addition, transforming portions of a worksite's physical environment can also influence employee health behavior.

StairWELL to Better Health Study [4]
The CDC's division of nutrition and physical activity conducted a study beginning in 1998 to see if making physical changes to a stairwell in the Atlanta based Koger Center Rhodes Building, combined with music and motivational signs would motivate employees to use the stairs. A four-stage passive intervention was implemented over 3.5 years that included painting and carpeting, framed artwork, motivational signs, and music. Infrared beams were used to track the number of stair users.

StairWELL to Better Health was a low-cost intervention (less than $16k), and the data suggests that physical improvements, motivational signs, and music can increase stairwell use among building occupants. The CDC has great information on their website about how to improve your stairwells.

Source: Kerr, N. A., Yore, M. M., Ham, S. A., & Dietz, W. H. (2004). Increasing Stair Use in a Worksite through Environmental Changes. American Journal of Health Promotion, 18(4), 312–315. https://doi.org/10.4278/0890-1171-18.4.312

Leveraging The Built Environment

When you think of the built environment, often time's when the indoor environment is considered, topics such as air quality, water quality, electromagnetic radiation, radiofrequency radiation, noise, light, and temperature come to mind. On the other hand, when considering the outdoor environment, topics that come to mind typically include transportation, opportunities for physical activity, energy and heating, power transmission lines, pollution, and recreational environments [6].The intricacies of the built environment, both internally and externally go far beyond what has been listed here, but the important question to consider when looking at this from a wellness perspective is, "How does the built environment impact employee health and well-being, and what can company's do to improve their built environment?"

Well-designed wellness programs can help employers create a culture of health in the workplace [4]. An environment that encourages employees to perform at their best while enabling healthy choices throughout the work day is an ideal scenario. According to Optum's Seventh Annual Wellness in the Workplace Study [6], 60 percent of large employers say it is very important to achieve a culture of health at work; however, only 20 percent have actually done so.

Research suggests that the workplace environment exerts strong unconscious influences on decision-making [4]. Our best intentions compete with environmental cues that nudge us in the wrong direction (i.e.. desk-based jobs, comfort foods in the cafeteria, unappealing stairwells). There is a real opportunity to leverage the onsite health environment as a change agent [6]. Onsite strategies can greatly enable healthy intentions. Employers could add attractive lighting to encourage stairwell use, offer healthy food choices in vending machines and the cafeteria, provide outdoor walking paths, and sit-to-stand workstations. Only 8% of health and wellness budgets on average are allocated to changing the workplace environment [4], but the benefits of allocating an investment to the built environment can not only make the workplace more appealing, but also create environmental cues that influence us in the right direction when it comes to healthier decision-making. The presence of health professionals who are qualified to motivate, educate, and engage employees in healthy behaviors needs to be a highly visual component of the onsite health environment.

A culture of health is about transforming the attitudes and beliefs of your employee population, helping them to adopt and sustain healthy lifestyles. Organizations should be constantly reassessing their strategies, execution models, goals, and employees' needs to ensure that transformation can occur.

The Built Environment Trend

We tend to over-rely on goal setting, motivation, discipline, and willpower to create change in our lives. We need more measurable goals and inspiration to get the job done when it comes to changing our habits. One often overlooked method is changing out physical spaces. The environments in which we live and work have an enormous impact on our behaviors and choices, yet we tend not to notice how much influence they have on us [7].

The built environment has the ability to influence individuals psychologically. Franki Hall, Founder of Embrace Change in the United Kingdom, recently posted an article on Work Mind titled, "Creating an Engaging Built Environment for Generation Z." She emphasizes in this article that we must now provide working environments that inspire, motivate and accommodate the various needs of the multi-generational workforce. Preferences of the upcoming generations range from working privately, to working from home, or embracing a sharing culture. Hall says, "To genuinely meet the needs of our multi-generational workforce we need to provide a flexible working area with various zones and the sufficient facilities, resources, space, lighting and equipment that your employees need to perform their natural best." [8].

Mental Health and Wellbeing

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness [9]. Mental health and wellbeing support continue to be valued highly by upcoming generations, and they want their employer to promote their mental wellbeing. Leaders should look to implement strategies attending to the wellbeing needs of their employees and implement strategic initiatives to create healthy environments.

Things to Consider When Building a Culture of Health and Well-being:

Before implementing new strategies, it is important to assemble your health and work behavior team. Strive for this team to cultivate multi-level leadership to achieve transformation. Input and engagement must be solicited at all levels of the company to successfully drive an employee-wellness-centric cultural transformation [3]. Building a healthy organizational culture involves both the physical work structure and the employees' perception of that work environment. Organizational cultures can be transformed into dynamic, health-promoting venues through policies that enhance employee health and productivity. Once you've established your team ranging from c-suite executives, human resource managers, employees, worker's compensation members, and wellness professionals, you can begin strategizing the ways in which you can leverage the built environment to encourage healthy behaviors amongst employees. These small changes should be built into normal business practices, and not separate from them.

Organizations are recognizing that people are their greatest asset and that the buildings, both new and existing, and as diverse as offices, schools, multifamily homes, healthcare and government-owned buildings, can and must be designed and operated to support the wellbeing of the people inside. In the race to attract and retain the best talent, and to ensure people's health and safety in the face of crisis, companies increasingly understand how design, construction and operation decisions, complemented by policies, programs and protocols, can positively contribute to their employees' health, happiness, satisfaction and productivity [10].

Workstation Type

The built environment trend will continue to emerge going forward. In a 2018 study conducted by researchers Lindberg, Srinivasan and Gilligan at the University of Arizona titled, "The Effects of office workstation type on physical activity and stress," found that employees with open bench-style seating were 32% more physically active throughout the workday than their counterparts in private offices and 20% more active than those walled off in cubicles [11]. These employees were not only more physically active, but also reported significantly lower perceived stress outside of the office, suggesting that workstation setup is an important factor in avoiding long-term health risks [11]. Office workstation type is related to physical activity and reduced physiological and perceived stress [11]. Effective office design, driven by workstation type, therefore could be a health-promoting factor [11].

Creative with Color

Companies will begin looking at ways that they can impact their employees' health and wellbeing through the built environment. Therapeutic landscapes will become a new norm because they can induce calm feelings amongst employees. Enhancing the interior environment through proper lighting, creating more green spaces and morale-boosting modifications will

emerge as organization's look to improve employee wellbeing. The actual color of office spaces currently built, or being built will also be taken into effect, especially with the impact of COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, we are becoming more mindful of our own physical and emotional health now more than ever before. Designers will likely come out of this pandemic with a new perspective on how they look at their designs in order to evoke wellness, using color.

Color has the ability to be calming and reassuring, and businesses will have the opportunity to start being creative about how they use it [22]. Buildings are the backdrops of people's lives, and we know that human beings respond well to nature, we are instinctively drawn to it and we find it calming [22]. Therefore, opportunity is presented to change interior landscapes to being more soothing through the use of softer greens, blues, and certain shades of pink [22]. Moving forward, when organizations are looking to enhance their interior landscapes, color will likely be a topic of discussion.

Overall, employers have an opportunity to positively influence their employees' health and wellbeing through the built environment. As the shift toward more preventive care continues moving forward, employers will benefit from leveraging their built environment toward healthy habit 'nudges' for their employees. Small adjustments can have a major impact, and to begin enhancing the built environment, a team-effort dedicated to the movement should be established from top management to lower level employees. Creating an environment that enhances the ability for employees' to make healthy choices for their mind and body at work will not only increase your organizations productivity, but provide employees with the resources to focus on their individual health and wellbeing, wherever they may be in their personal journey.

Changing Our Physical Spaces

In the article, *"Change your environment, change your habits: Why designing your physical spaces is critical to creating sustainable habit change,"* by Andrew Sykes, contributing author for the Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) and CEO of Habits at Work and Founder of BRATLAB, Sykes emphasizes that changing our physical spaces is one of the fastest, easiest ways to change our habits.

Furthermore, Sykes mentions the amount of research in support of the powerful nudges and environmental design to positively impact our behaviors. Designing a high-performance office is intentionally designing office space to generate performance and make it easy for teams to practice positive habits, including movement and exercise, healthy eating, collaboration, learning and mindfulness.

The Changes Sykes Implemented at BRATLAB

•**Playful Entry Zone**: Serves as a reminder to team and visitors that a playful mindset is the key to unlocking creativity. Having a global view expands our thinking, and including people from all corners of the world, of all colors, is the way to build a company that flourishes and shines with the brightness of primary colors.

•**Adaptable Workshop Space**: Training and yoga studio doubles as a customizable space that is often used for group learning, workshops and events.

•**Clean slate creativity room**: Intentionally created a blank slate creativity room filled with whiteboard walls to facilitate conversation and collaboration.

•**Trust + Reflection Space:** Looking into someone's eyes for 20 seconds releases oxytocin, the trust hormone. We have a room full of faces staring back at you and use this room to have informal conversations and meetings to build trust. It doubles as a quiet space for relaxation and reflection.

•**Mental Break Wall:** People are most effective at work when they take a short, physical and mental break every 45 minutes. And, the human brain is attuned to focus on things in the environment that are surprising, disgusting, sexy or novel. This wall is intended to pull your attention away from work using images that represent exactly those things.

•**Habits at Work - Office Structure:** We believe that work can be a source of wellbeing, fulfillment and safety if we intentionally design it to help us thrive as human beings, which is why it was critical for us to create a physical workspace that reflected our beliefs.

> "Create healthy habits, not restrictions."

Wood Buildings and Interiors

In Graham Lowe's, Ph.D. recently published report titled, *"Wood, Well-being and Performance: The Human and Organizational Benefits of Wood Buildings,"* on April 2nd, 2020 prepared for Forestry Innovation Investment, he notes that wood buildings and wood interiors are seeing a major increase of employers focusing on improving employee wellbeing to provide opportunities to view the physical workspace as health-promoting. An expanding body of research documents the health and productivity benefits of green buildings, particularly those using wood construction or finishing. Corporate sustainability strategies are more closely linking environmental and human resource goals.

When it comes to sustainability, Lowe emphasizes that wood is a triple win: it is the ideal renewable material for building construction, it demonstrates a tangible commitment to sustainability by building designers, contractors, owners and occupants, and in buildings, it contributes to occupants' well-being. Architects' attitudes and experience are shifting in favor of wood use in buildings.

In the study, it is noted that considerations for workplace design have advanced far beyond occupant comfort and now embrace the more comprehensive goal of creating an environment in which people can thrive at work. There are documented positive experiences of these environments from physiological to psychological and social levels. Workers flourishing at work are more creative, collaborative, present and productive, equating to employers reaping the benefits.

Lowe emphasizes that the strongest evidence for wood's human and organizational benefits is based on wood's biophilic properties. Biophilia refers to humans' innate need for connections to nature. When individuals have contact with nature, their neurological, physiological, and psychological responses result in less stress, lower blood pressure, more relaxation and positive moods, and increased concentration. Biophilic architecture is an emerging approach to design that provides humans with health-promoting psychological and physical connections to nature in their built environments. This architecture includes the use of wood as a structural and interior design material.

Wood Buildings and Interiors

Health Benefits of Biophilic Building Design from Lowe's Report:

•Wood surfaces in an office lower the body's sympathetic nervous system (decreasing blood pressure and heart rate) and reduce stress.

•European research compared occupant's responses to wood and plaster indoor settings. Wood elicits more positive emotions.

•Cumulative evidence from studies examining psychophysiological effects on occupants of wood indoor environments shows that wood can contribute to stress reduction or recovery from stress.

•Improved worker well-being, performance, creativity and health.

•Reduced carbon emissions, increased building life cycle sustainability, improved occupant well-being, increased organizational benefits by having happier, healthier and more productive employees.

In Summary

This is a growing area of research with practical implications for the future use of wood in buildings, mentions Lowe. Building greener internal communities also enhance a company's brand as being environmentally responsible.

How employees experience the landscape of their workspace on a daily basis has a big impact on their level of job engagement, which in turn drives organizational success. This perspective on culture encourages a shift in thinking away from viewing commercial real estate as sunk costs to seeing it as an investment that yields compound interest for occupants and the organization.

Overall, in the study, Lowe concludes that more can be done to improve metrics of evaluating the human and organizational benefits of wood buildings and interiors, and the result will be higher-quality evidence that can inform decision-making throughout the planning, design, construction, and occupancy phases of wood buildings and also what companies can do to improve their biophilic design with their current building. The conclusion is that wood can create healthy and productive buildings. Research in a wide range of disciplines points to the same evidence-based conclusion that wood is good for the environment, for people, and for organizations.

Resources to Offer Employees

In addition to leveraging the built environment and preventive care programs to better promote and impact employee health and well-being, employers can look to offer a variety of resources to their employees that directly influence their wellbeing. These resources can meet employees where they are personally at in their wellness journey, rather than being generalized to what would best suit the entire population of employees in a company. Resources and incentives that resonate with an individual are most beneficial and more likely to create an impact. There is an endless variety of resources companies can look to offer and if this is implemented, employees will have the autonomy to pick an option that best suits them. Below are some ideas to get you thinking about what types of resources you could offer to your employees.

Physical Activity Ideas

Post prompts at key locations to encourage physical activity. Offer gentle fitness classes that combine yoga, low-impact aerobics and relaxation techniques. Develop trails near the work site and encourage employees to walk or jog during lunch time breaks (trails should be safe, visible and safeguards established). Provide selected pieces of exercise equipment in suitable locations for use during breaks and lunchtime (educate employees on guidelines and policies before use to ensure safety), and encourage employees who sit a lot to take a stretch break for better circulation and work efficiency. Where feasible, equip a designated break area with basketball hoops, table-tennis, horseshoe, boxing bags and other recreational equipment. Offer discounts or subsidies for fitness-club memberships for those who meet minimum guidelines for use and adherence. Provide showers and changing facilities for people who exercise at work. Create departmental

competitions and rewards for teams who meet exercise criteria for specified months (individual or team rewards/efforts).

Nutrition Ideas

Lunch and learn sessions (offering on paid time or extending lunch break for attendees, and record presentation for those who miss it). Offer webinars or presentations on nutrition awareness and education. Work with vending machine contractors to place color-coded labels on healthy food and beverage items. Organize a healthy potluck and recipe exchange. Gradually change vending machines to healthy foods and snacks. Offer fruit and veggie snacks instead of junk food at meetings and throughout the office. Place monthly nutrition tips on cafeteria tables. Offer coupons for conscious eateries and restaurants to employees who meet certain health-enhancement goals. Subsidize or discount the cost of heart-healthy entrée offerings in vending machines.

Information and Education Ideas

Email daily or weekly health tips to all employees. Create and maintain bulletin boards in high-density areas (self-development and health information). Use internal portal to announce wellness programs, activities, policies, health fairs, vaccines and competitions. Create a library of books, videos, and audio cassettes for employees to check out or pursue onsite. Stock a cart with health magazines, booklets, brochures and periodically move the cart to different locations around the worksite and encourage employees to take complimentary copies home and share with others.

Place racks of health magazines in bathroom stalls. Add a personal health column in the company newsletter and use your health plan newsletter. Encourage program participants to write personal testimonials and endorsement letters in company newsletter and advertise these on other platforms too.

COVID-19 Specific Ideas

The best thing employers can do is raise awareness that ergonomics matters at home as much as they do in the office. Start by sharing basic principles of ergonomics (remote trainings, helpful guides, or educational videos). You may also want to offer your employees at-home remote consultations or coaching sessions with ergonomics experts [13]. Consultants can help your employees adjust their current setup and identify the right ergonomic products to purchase. With a few well-chosen investments, you can help your employees transform their workspaces from painful to pleasant and productive. Correct issues before they are long-term problems.

The three most essential pieces of equipment you can offer to buy employees while working remotely [13]:

- *A keyboard and a mouse:* Laptops force us to hunch over a screen, therefore, purchasing a separate keyboard and mouse can help reduce shoulder tension and stress in upper bodies.

- *A monitor and/or laptop stand:* Standalone monitors or laptop stands can help raise employee's screens to eye level so they are not straining their necks looking up or down.

- *A decent chair:* Almost anything is better than sitting for 8 hours in a wooden kitchen chair. At a minimum employees should have something with back support and you can start with lumbar support cushions or extra chair cushions, but if you have additional room in the budget, there are quality chairs for $200 or less.

Additional Ideas

Accessible water fountains or coolers to encourage employees to hydrate at the worksite and distribute information to show importance of hydration. Convert a 10-by-10 foot (3 by 3 meter) area into a personal health kiosk that includes the following: automatic blood pressure cuff, weight scales, health brochures, and other interactive resources. Provide a quiet room equipped with comfortable seating and soft music for employees to use in stressful times and establish guidelines to ensure it is properly used. Designate a period of time for employees to participate in company-sponsored promotion activities (first 5 minutes of shift to stretching, or add 15 mins to lunch break for walk). Review the company's absence policy to see if traditional allowance of sick days can be reclassified to reflect positive connotation. Offer employees with excellent attendance a financial bonus or additional wellness day for each day of their absences falling below company average (work with HR to ensure policy does not discourage employees with real illnesses from seeking necessary medical care). Establish smoke-free and safety belt policies in all company vehicles and facilities.

Useful Things to Consider

The International Well Building Institute (IWBI):

Leading the global movement to transform our buildings and communities in ways that help people thrive. IWBI delivers the cutting-edge WELL Building Standard, which is the leading global rating system and the first to be focused exclusively on the ways that buildings, and everything in them, can improve our comfort, drive better choices, and generally enhance, not compromise our health and wellness. WELL was developed by integrating scientific and medical research and literature on environmental health, behavioral factors, health outcomes and demographic risk factors that affect health with leading practices in building design, construction and management. IWBI offers programs for companies and individuals all with the focus on showing a commitment to advancing human health and wellness in buildings and communities around the world.

Additionally, IWBI recently launched the WELL v2 pilot, which is a version of its popular WELL Building Standard, and the WELL Community Standard pilot that sets a new global benchmark for healthy communities. This new certification standard includes building design points for: mental health promotion, prevention and interventions, promotion of physical activity, active commuting, ergonomic workspaces, access to healthy food and beverage choices, and the elimination of building materials and ingredients that are hazardous to human health. For more information visit: www.wellcertified.com

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

StigmaFree Company is NAMI's partnership initiative to challenge, highlight and cultivate a company culture of caring and enhanced engagement around mental health. By being a StigmaFree Company and prioritizing mental health as a workplace and community priority, you will help increase productivity and promote a healthier work environment, decrease the impact of disability, increase retention and engagement of valued employees, and strengthen your company brand by linking to a cause that resonates with so many. For more information visit: www.nami.org

The Wellness Council of America (WELCOA) Benchmark #6, Cultivate Supportive Health Promoting Environments, Polices and Practices:

- Environment, Policies and Practices: the built environment (WELL Building Standard, FitWell, etc.).
- Worksite and workstation conditions that are designed to support more movement
- Access to healthy food
- Access to private/quiet spaces
- Create nudges through choice architecture to encourage positive health practices and discourage negative health practices.
- Supportive social atmosphere/opportunities for connectivity

The WELCOA 7 benchmarks are an important part of building a results-oriented workplace wellness program. These benchmarks can provide a credible framework which can be tailored toward organization specific values, mission, vision and goals for wellness.

Key Takeaways

Employee wellness and employer wellness programming is not a one-size-fit all approach. No one individual is the same, and no one employer group is exactly the same. Approaching wellness for your employees as an organization needs to be a holistic, employee-centric approach. There are things employers can do to enhance their employees' immunity. Leveraging the built environment and the resources you offer to your employees not only have the ability to influence positive behavior change toward healthier lifestyles, but also can enhance the mental well-being of your associates through greener interior spaces. Preventive care programs are important for employers to implement so that their employees' begin to have a relationship with their doctor and receive tangible information about how to make lifestyle changes. Employers have the ability to influence these lifestyle changes through the resources, benefits, and environments that they offer employees.

A culture of health and wellbeing is not a onetime fix, it is an ongoing process that needs to be nurtured and developed throughout an entire organization. The more your employees feel valued and heard, the more likely they are to stay. The workforce is shifting, and as an employer, you have the opportunity to stay on top of the trend through large or small enhancements. How employees experience the landscape of their workspace on a daily basis has a big impact on their level of job engagement, which in turn drives organizational success. This perspective on culture encourages a shift in thinking away from viewing commercial real estate as sunk costs to seeing it as an investment that yields compound interest for occupants and the organization.

We challenge you to think of your employees as the people they are, and the people they can become both for themselves, and for your organizations success. Wellness interventions should target not only individuals, but also interpersonal, organizational, and environmental factors that influence health behavior. Work together in collaboration to establish whether your wellness program is separate or a part of your organization, and if it is separated, begin strategizing a plan that works toward establishing a supportive culture.

> "Talent is the multiplier. The more energy and attention you invest in it, the greater the yield."
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> – Marcus Buckingham

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