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Wellness Trend Report: The Importance of Employee Wellness Interest Surveys

Prepared by the Lawley Corporate Wellness Team

Employee Wellbeing and Engagement

Employees are at the heart of every successful organization. The health and wellbeing of a company's workforce can directly influence employee work behavior, work attendance and on-the-job performance. Employee wellbeing is complex, involving everything from physical health to financial wellness, mental health, career wellbeing, social wellbeing and community wellbeing. It may seem daunting to implement a wellness program or initiative that effectively adheres to each employee's individual wellbeing goals, but the importance of doing so has never been more important.

According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2021 Report¹, employee engagement globally remains low at 20%. Gallup estimates that low engagement costs the global economy US \$8.1 trillion. Engagement reflects what happens at work, whereas wellbeing includes work and all other experiences. As mentioned in the Gallup report, *"As this past year showed us so clearly, experiences outside work greatly affect work itself. And wellbeing is not just a COVID-19-related issue. All daily negative emotions reported among employees have been rising since 2009."*¹

Furthermore, 57% of employees in the United States and Canada report the highest levels of daily stress in the world. Daily stress in the United States and Canada was also the highest before the pandemic. Employed women in the U.S. and Canada experience higher-than-average levels of stress, with 62% saying they experienced a lot of stress in the past day. Mental health, emotional strain, social isolation, financial shocks and caregiving responsibilities all influence work performance over the long term and over time, the negative side of these experiences can lead to burnout.

Gallup identifies five elements that make up overall wellbeing: Career Wellbeing, Community Wellbeing, Social Wellbeing, Physical Wellbeing, and Financial Wellbeing. *"When people are thriving in all five areas, they have better health outcomes than when thriving in just physical wellbeing. Compared with those who score high on physical wellbeing alone, those who score high on all five elements report 41% fewer unhealthy days."*¹

Employers can foster wellbeing in several ways, but before they consider implementing different initiatives, programs, policies, education and services, it is important for them to identify the unique, individual employee needs and interests. Often times, many companies think they know what their employees want in a health promotion program, but unfortunately, they may be surprised at how wrong they are. Obtaining information about the personal wellness interests and needs of employees will allow the company to strategically align their wellbeing initiatives with the needs and interests of their employees, and also, the overall business objectives.

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– Gallup, State of the Global Workplace 2021 Report

Employee Wellness Interest Surveys

What are Wellness Interest Surveys?

Employee wellness interest surveys are a set of questions primarily asked to gauge and understand how much importance employees give to their wellness and wellbeing at the workplace. They are useful tools for employer groups to use because surveying employees directly helps assess the current climate as to how a program or initiative might be received and what information employees are willing to share.

Frequency

Typically, wellness interest surveys are conducted when an employer group is in the assessment phase of implementing a wellness program at work. Obtaining information about employee needs and interests is a critical step in developing a wellness program. The interest survey is a great way to kick-off a new wellness program.

Once an initial wellness interest survey is conducted, it is recommended that an employer group conducts another one every two to three years. In addition to administering the survey every few years, evaluating the wellness program and its success on an annual basis is recommended to ensure that the initiatives and different programs are successful in their intentions.

To evaluate wellness program success, you could survey employees, consider wellness program participation numbers across the various initiatives offered, look at cost avoidance, and health outcomes through looking at the annual health plan performance, including the conditions driving expense and the preventive care engagement.

There is an exception to conducting the survey every few years. If a company experiences a high turnover rate, or massive growth as an organization within a year after sending out the initial survey, it may be best to facilitate a survey again the next year, or at least, survey all new employees.

Types of Questions

The wellness interest survey includes questions on employees' individual needs, interests and other pertinent information to be used in deciding what programs to offer, and when to offer them. Through the responses, employers are able to determine the likelihood of employee participation in various initiatives, the types of programs employees are most interested in (mental health, physical health, financial, ergonomics etc.), and the best ways to offer a program (online portal, class or seminar, self-paced, team-based).

Sometimes, employers will want to get as specific as they can with employees and ask them to explain what motivates them to participate in wellness programs, the types of incentives they would like to see for participating, and also, whether or not they would be interested in participating on a wellness committee at work.

If an employer is administering the survey after years of having a wellness program, it may be beneficial for them to ask employees what they think of the current program, where it could be improved, and what they would like to see moving forward.

At the end of the survey, an open-ended question is recommended asking for any other feedback or suggestions employees may have for the wellness program and initiatives offered at work. This question proves to be very telling for an organization, especially because employees tend to enjoy providing anonymous feedback. Survey anonymity is extremely important in order to obtain honest answers from employees.

How are The Surveys Conducted?

Wellness interest surveys can be sent out to employees in a paper-based format, or through a link taking the employee to an online survey. It is easiest to compile results from an online link, however, compiling them from the paper-based versions can also be done. Overall, the most important thing is to conduct the survey in a way that employees will respond to.

Time Given to Complete Survey

A one to two-week time frame is a great guideline to follow when sending out an employee wellness interest survey. Additionally, halfway through the timeline, a best practice would be to send a reminder email or notification to employees.

Survey Results

Employee wellness interest surveys can reveal a great deal of information about employees needs and interests that the company can use to implement a strategic worksite wellness program. That being said, it is important that the company acts on the results employees have provided. As the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) explains when discussing the management of employee surveys, *“Organization responsiveness to employee feedback leads to higher retention rates, lower absenteeism, improved productivity, better customer service and higher employee morale.”*² To read more about SHRM’s

best practices and considerations for managing employee surveys, you can check out the full article [here](#).

In addition to acting the survey results, it is important to ensure that you are able to make sense of the results. It would be helpful to partner with the company where you got your survey from, or an outside wellness consultant to assist you with compiling key takeaways into actionable steps forward.

Conclusion

Employees will appreciate the effort an employer takes in asking for their specific feedback, especially as it pertains to wellbeing programs. Wellbeing programs and initiatives are not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is important that organizations consider offering a variety of initiatives and resources throughout the year in order to cater to the unique needs of each different employee. Companies want (and need) employees who are engaged at work and thriving in their overall life. *“Business leaders have the power to greatly improve their employees’ everyday lives,”*¹ and as a company looks ahead to the future of work, creating a culture in which employees are engaged and thriving is essential to remaining resilient as an organization.

Wellness Interest Surveys are a great first step for employers to consider when they want to implement wellbeing initiatives and resources for their employee population. They are also useful tools when reinvigorating a current wellness program that is already in place. The survey results provide useful information that employers can strategically use when designing and implementing worksite wellness programs. The results will show the employer which programs and initiatives are likely to have the most success, and which ones are not. Conducting a survey will also show employees that their health and

wellbeing is important to the employer, especially if the results are acted on swiftly.

As Albert Einstein said, *“Assumptions are made and most assumptions are wrong.”* Strive to have the courage as an organization to ask employees what their interests and needs are when it comes to wellbeing. Assumptions about what employees need and want to see will not get the company very far. Take the responses employees provide and begin acting. Develop a plan that is not only aligned with the organization’s objectives, but also, inspires employees to take care of their individual health and wellbeing. Administering a wellness interest survey and acting on the results is a small step that employers can take in the right direction towards building a culture of health and wellbeing.

How can Lawley Help Your Company with Wellness Interest Surveys?

If you are a Lawley Benefits Group client, your designated Lawley Corporate Wellness Consultant can assist you with administering a wellness interest survey, and compiling the results. We have both paper-based and online templates for your company to use and will be there with you every step of the way while you are conducting the survey from establishing an appropriate timeline, to customizing the questions and implementing new initiatives based on the survey results. We will work with you to make sense of the results so that you can offer resources and initiatives to employees that are aligned with the compiled data.

Lastly, we will work with you to understand your organizations overall business objectives and ensure that they are aligned with the different initiatives and programs put in place. If you have any questions, or you want to learn more, reach out your designated Account Executive to be connected to one of our Corporate Wellness Consultants.



References

1. Gallup Inc., *State of the Global Workplace 2021 Report*, <file:///C:/Users/tmcpherson/Downloads/state-of-the-global-workplace-2021-download.pdf>. Download the full report at <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/349484/state-of-the-global-workplace.aspx>.
2. Society for Human Resource Management. *"Managing Employee Surveys."* SHRM, 16 Aug. 2019, www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/managingemployeesurveys.aspx.





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