



Wellbeing - the crucial engagement factor

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Do not underestimate the power of wellbeing when it comes to engagement and business performance, explains Ian Jameson.

According to Best Companies' survey of over 250,000 employees, almost 90% of employees who felt strongly negative towards the wellbeing aspects of their workplace said they would leave tomorrow if they had another job. Not a great prospect for their line manager or HR department. In comparison, 95% of those who were very happy with their wellbeing said they wouldn't leave.

In terms of the health impact that negative wellbeing at work can create, 79% of employees who strongly agreed that they were under too much pressure at work, also agreed that their health was suffering as a result. Also, large amounts of overtime are directly related to the percentage of employees reporting stress-related symptoms. Once employees hit more than 10 hours a week overtime the statistics reveal that one in three will have stress-related symptoms of some sort. Half of employees report that most days they feel exhausted when they come home from work – and this is even without taking overtime into account. If overtime is a factor then this rises to a staggering 80% of employees.

Wellbeing is one of the eight critical factors Best Companies measures to gauge levels of employee engagement, so what's the connection between the two? Forty six per cent of employees who are not engaged agree that their health is suffering because of their work, compared to only 14% of engaged employees. Or if we look at it from the other side, 75% of engaged staff agree that they are happy with the balance between their work and home life compared to only 44% of employees who are not engaged.

Organisations that get wellbeing wrong literally pay the price for doing so in terms of sickness absence and lack of productivity. However, what we have seen in those companies that top the Best Companies lists is that, to really have an impact, employee wellbeing has to be rooted deep in the values and the principles of the organisation. It can't be a bolt-on or merely a 'nice-to-have'. Organisations that are getting it right recognise the critical role employees play and take steps to ensure that staff wellbeing is a central part of business strategy. Ultimately it's not about setting up an expensive gym or investing a lot of money. It's about doing the small things that do matter. Impact International, a company named 'Best for Wellbeing' among 'Best Small Companies to Work For', allows its staff to get away from their desks to take part in brainstorming sessions to develop new products.

Others help test out projects which could be anything from building objects with Lego to creating a structure out of spaghetti and marshmallows. Impact also runs a one-day healthy mind and body session, and staff are also given tips on how to generate and channel positive energy. With its head office located in the heart of the Lake District, most people have a short and pleasant commute and staff in the London office can start out of rush-hour times. Does it work? According to survey results, employees don't feel under too much pressure to perform well, they consider deadlines to be realistic and claim their health is not suffering because of work.

Freeing up time for the family and making sure employees enjoy a healthy lifestyle are good business strategies, according to the winner of the wellbeing strategy among mid companies Think Money Group.

A life coach is available for one-to-one sessions while excessive hours are monitored, and staff survey results show that work pressures do not affect concentration and employees have not suffered from stress in the past 12 months. A free concierge service makes their life easier by taking care of tasks such as dry-cleaning, car MoTs, film developing and postal services. Family events include a Halloween and a

pre-school Christmas party, as well as the local Christmas pantomime, while older children get a trip to the indoor ski centre in Manchester.

So what strategy would work best for your company? A good place to start is looking at some best practice. Best Companies has recently opened the Art of Engagement, an interactive learning experience that shares over a decade of best practice data to help leaders and managers from companies of all sizes and across all sectors to get a deeper understanding of workplace engagement and develop a strategy that would work for their company. Obviously there's no one-size-fit-all answer. But when deciding on the approach you should make sure your strategy provides a culture where people are encouraged and have ample opportunity to discuss issues with their direct manager, there is consideration of the impact of decisions on individuals, offers opportunities in flexible working and discourages a long-hours culture and has a proactive approach to addressing potential health issues.