

Combat the GREAT RESIGNATION

Three tips to get creative with your wellbeing strategy.

In Human Resources, people are our most important asset, and prioritizing employee wellbeing and a positive workplace culture is essential to authentically supporting employees and ensuring they can thrive and succeed at their jobs.

There can be a “living to work” tendency in the US workplace. This culture drives many Americans to work hard, take pride and seek identity from their work accomplishments. This mentality can create limitations to an employees’ ability to have a healthy work-life balance. Reports on full-time American workers find that, on average, they work the highest number of hours in the world per week, and 38% cite a lack of time for their personal lives. In fact, a new survey, “Are You Listening? What Employees Expect From Employers for Mental Health Support” of 1,166 fully employed individuals from ages 18–65, shows that 43% of respondents have felt overloaded with work during the pandemic. Additionally, workers typically only take about 54% of their allotted annual paid vacation, with a nationwide average of just two weeks. Finally, the US is the

only industrialized country without national paid parental leave.

However, the pandemic is becoming a crucial inflection point for Americans’ attitudes toward work, with the rise of the Great Resignation. With the removal of the physical office space, some suggest the pandemic may have downgraded work as the centerpiece of American identity. The Great Resignation saw a record 20 million workers quitting their jobs in almost every industry between April and August. More people are quitting their jobs to find something better, and this ‘better job’ revolution provides a real opportunity for employers to meet and exceed worker expectations or risk losing talent. 56% of “Are You Listening” survey respondents have considered leaving their careers or jobs. The following are key data findings:

- 31% of Generation Z respondents have switched jobs within the last six months due to pandemic-related stress, compared to 18% overall;
- 71% of Generation Z respondents said they’ve considered leaving their career or job to do something else, citing the following reasons:
- mental health needs (33%), family support needs (30%), wanting a different career path (29%), and not wanting to return to an office environment (15%);
- 60% of women felt overloaded with work, compared to 51% of men; and
- 53% of women felt frustrated with colleagues, managers or leadership, compared to 47% of men.

The best practices listed below outline the key first steps towards establishing a place where employees feel valued for the meaningful work they provide as well as feel acknowledged that their mental wellness is priority.

ASK DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AND TREASURE HONEST ANSWERS

The most important step in understanding worker expectations is assessing the work

environment. Building the framework for a mentally healthy culture requires collecting detailed feedback around engagement, expectations, stressors and the kinds of benefits that will make people want to work at the company. Identification of areas in need improvement is rooted in constructive feedback.

Learn more about the employee base that you are serving, then you can begin to share best practices, ideas and experiences that are meaningful to your teams. Your employees know best when it comes to what they need or expect from you as an employer. There is no one size fits all and finding your best fit will take time, persistence and a great attitude. Collecting this information takes the guesswork out of forming a strategy and increases your likelihood of success and positive employee feedback.

BUILD TRUST BY DEMONSTRATING MENTALLY HEALTHY BEHAVIOR

Another key determinant of worker satisfaction and engagement is the perception of leadership as authentic. Employees’ engagement grows and sustains when they have trust in leadership’s intentions. For example, if leaders are encouraging employees to take vacation, they need to utilize their personal and vacation days themselves. Stigma is reduced and team members will follow their example. It will steadily become a part of the culture.

A huge impact on my wellness has been not taking time away from work. Like so many leaders and employees in the US, we often feel that we can’t take PTO because it may be looked down on or we feel there is nobody to fill in and pass work to. When I eventually did take some time away from work, it changed my entire perspective. I was reminded of who I am and what’s important to me at work and at home. I’m my best self when I get the chance to recharge.

Despite the growing prevalence of mental health issues, stigma is an unfortunate reality in so many workplaces. We need to be persistent in our efforts to be a role model and encourage our employees to take care of themselves and feel safe to participate in wellbeing and mental

health initiatives. The kind of communication that works best in reducing stigma is being vulnerable. When leaders begin talking about their vulnerabilities and real experiences with mental health, it can help to normalize these conversations.

THINK OF THE TOTAL PERSON

When we talk about wellness and engagement, it’s no longer just about physical health. There are so many elements that make an employee feel well, engaged and valued by the company. When forming a wellbeing strategy for retention and engagement, there is no one size fits all. 34% of respondents said their employers do not offer mental health or wellbeing benefits, further illustrating the fact that employers should think of more than physical health benefits.

A big part of forming a wellbeing strategy is being aware that we are all so different. We come from completely different backgrounds and our understanding of mental health and what is acceptable differs. Ultimately, work should be meaningful and give every one of our employees a sense of value in a way that is meaningful to them. Every day people should come to work and feel that their contribution is valued and that they made a difference in one person’s life.

By considering what cultural backgrounds exist within your team, as well as the physical relationship with mental health, there are many opportunities to get creative with your wellbeing initiatives and strategy. Wellbeing strategy should have elements that strengthen each individual and team’s ability to connect with others, stay active, keep learning, be aware and help others... ■

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FROM THE US



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