Corporate Wellness
Insights and Perspectives
About the Journal

The National HRD Network publishes a semi-academic quarterly journal where in each issue is dedicated to a theme.

The Journal publishes primarily three categories of articles:

- Conceptual and research based.
- Contributions from thought leaders including a limited number of reprints with due permission.
- Organisational experiences in HR interventions / mechanisms.

About this issue
The theme of the current Issue is “Corporate Wellness”.

Editorial Board Members
Dr Pallab Bandyopadhyay, Managing Editor, is a Leadership Architect, Career Coach, Change and Transition Specialist with thirty years of successful professional experience in managing entire gamut of Human Resources Management with proven expertise in managing multicultural globally distributed knowledge professionals. He has rich experience in companies like Citrix, Dell Perot, Cambridge Solutions, Sasken and ALIT. He is a doctoral fellow in HRD from XLRI, a product of NTL, USA and provides HR consulting with many large Indian and MNCs and start-ups in the area of Leadership coaching, Organisation development, Long-term capability building, Strategic change and Organisation alignment.

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NHRD firmly believes in and respects IPR and we appeal to the contributors and readers to strictly honour the same.

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Editorial Note</td>
<td>Dr Pallab Bandyopadhyay</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>About The Guest Editor</td>
<td>Prof. Manish Singhal</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Leader Speak: Fostering Employee Wellness at Colgate Palmolive</td>
<td>Ajay MK</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Leader Speak: In Conversation with Mr Suresh Dutt Tripathi, VP-HR, Tata Steel</td>
<td>Manish Singhal and Bhavya Sharma</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Interview with Mr Barttanu Kumar Das</td>
<td>Akshay Bageshwar and Nikhil Iyer</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Expert Speak: In Conversation with Dr Tata L Raghu Ram and Dr Madhukar Shulka</td>
<td>Arya Roy Chowdhury and Bhavya Sharma</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Employee Wellness Programs in the Context of an Emerging Epidemic of Lifestyle</td>
<td>Dr Nayanjeet Chaudhury and Suruchi Modi</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diseases: What Works and What Doesn’t?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Wellbeing: Route to Building Thriving Employees and Organizations</td>
<td>Paritosh Shukla</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Employee Wellness: A Way of Life at Novartis</td>
<td>Anantha Dinavahi and Aruna Subramanyam</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mayank Jauhari</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Corporate Wellness: The American Express Way</td>
<td>Shikha Sharma and Dr. Bhavesh Shah</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radha Raman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Corporate and Employee Wellness: Health Initiatives at SAP Labs India</td>
<td>Divya Rajagopal and Vlasta Dusil</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Wellness through Live Well - Work Smart &amp; Live Smarter: The Health and Wellness</td>
<td>Samik Basu and Bhaskar Bhattacharya</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initiative at HINDALCO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. No.</td>
<td>Title of Article</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Page No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Corporate Wellness@Siemens India</td>
<td>Prashant Khandelwal</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Employee and Corporate Wellbeing: Evidence from the Indian Corporate Sector</td>
<td>Parul Varghese</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radha Raman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preethi Sukumaran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Corporate Wellness Programs: A Global Perspective</td>
<td>Neeta Nagar</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bhavya Sharma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>Joyshree Munshi</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change is the only Constant - Heraclitus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Readers

In our endeavour to bring out contemporary issues in HR, we have decided to bring out this issue on Corporate - Wellness. Plato, the great Greek philosopher once said “The part can never be well unless the whole is well.” Nothing can be more apt than this if we look at the driving philosophy behind corporate - wellness programmes. While on one hand we see more and more people becoming health conscious we also often hear from them complaining about the increasing stress they are facing while pursuing their organizational career goals. It is in this context I have often heard from people how health takes a backseat while getting engaged in office work physically and emotionally in a 24X7 manner. We often forget the fact that when employees are healthy and happy at work, they are also more productive. Keeping this fact in mind more and more organizations today have started offering corporate wellness programs to their employees and also their families to ensure their wellbeing.

Though corporate wellness began in the western countries, it has slowly made great headway in Indian corporates as well in recent times. These wellness programs are bringing in lots of positive changes in employees today beginning at their work place. Research studies have proven that about 30% employees have been saved from lifestyle disorders due to these wellness programs. Looking at purely cost-benefit perspective it is estimated that organization can save anywhere between $3 to $15 per for every 1$ spent on well managed corporate wellness programmes. According to another study by RAND Corporation, an American non-profit global policy think tank which covered 6,000 employees from seven organizations, companies screening employees for health risks see a $1.50 return on investment (ROI) for every dollar they put into the program. They also found that the wellness programs effectively address chronic health issues, such as management of diabetes or high blood pressure, as well as lifestyle management – including smoking, poor diet and lack of exercise. The RAND study found the ROI for disease management is $3.80 while the ROI for lifestyle management is 50 cents. Another study released in June 2015 by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that 70% of U.S. organizations offered some kind of employee wellness program, up from 58 % in 2008.

With a holistic approach in mind I have heard from HR professionals that how they have even prevented young employees from going into depression through appropriate and timely interventions like counselling and regular yoga/mediation sessions conducted by experts at their work premises. I have also heard how employees with existing lifestyle diseases benefitted immensely by controlling high blood pressure and diabetes through regular blood tests and medical care at their workplace offered through mandatory corporate-wellness programmes.

According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a comprehensive corporate-wellness programme should have five elements. These are

1) Integration of the worksite program into an organization’s structure.
2) Linkage to related programs like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and programs to help employees balance work and family.
3) Worksite screening programmes ideally linked to medical care to ensure follow-up and appropriate treatment as necessary.

4) Support for individual behaviour change with follow-up interventions.

5) Evaluation and improvement processes to help enhance the program’s effectiveness and efficiency.

Interestingly enough the World Health Organization (WHO) defines the wellness as a dynamic process of learning new life skills and becoming aware of and making conscious choices toward a more balanced and healthy lifestyle across seven dimensions: Social, Physical, Emotional, Career, Intellectual, Environmental and Spiritual.

After having read through, you might be wondering as an individual where are you going to start? Is it so complicated to understand the perspective of being healthy by adhering to corporate-wellness programme? Certainly not, if you follow Robert Hutchison, a well-known Scottish physician and paediatrician, who once said, “The scientific truth may be put quite briefly; eat moderately, having an ordinary mixed diet, and don’t worry.” I thought of bringing this perspective, since like any HR intervention in organization, Corporate-wellness is a joint responsibility of the organization as well as employees. It is becoming more evident that organizations are integrating their wellness strategies to create an engaging work experience and also incentivise employee’s participation and awareness in corporate wellness programmes.

Before I end I would like to mention about another future trend in corporate-wellness programmes. Organizations are now incorporating “mental well-being” into their corporate health programs to make it more inclusive. As aptly put across by Dr Rajiv Kumar, CEO of Virgin Pulse, and part of Sir Richard Branson’s Virgin Group, which designs technology that cultivates good lifestyle habits for employees, “Organizations will in 2016 increasingly add or expand programs that nurture the emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of wellbeing.”

It is also expected that to encourage employee participation in corporate-wellness initiatives, gamification and social networking will be employed more and more in future by organizations, especially those who have higher percentage of young and computer literate employees. As part of this transition, we are likely to witness the more of carrot approach than sticks for encouraging enhanced employee participation in corporate wellness programmes.

Finally a word of caution for HR professionals who are going to lead and direct corporate wellness initiatives at their respective organizations. As G. K. Chesterton, an English writer, poet and philosopher, said “The trouble with always trying to preserve the health of the body is that it is so difficult to do without destroying the health of the mind.”

Your wellness program doesn’t have to cause extra stress – that would actually defeat the purpose and counteract your focus on health improvement intervention of your employees. Some employees have a misplaced apprehension that wellness initiatives are only aimed at incentivizing employees who are already healthy, and eventually will end-up in punishing those who still have a ways to go. The fact is, as research evidences continues to support that an effective corporate-wellness programme is always incredibly inclusive and act to improve wellness of both body and mind of your employees.

I would like to congratulate on behalf of my editorial team, Prof Manish Singhal and his team at XLRI, Jamshedpur who took upon the responsibilities of finding contributors both from corporate and academic world to share their experiences, reflect on their thoughts and addressing the conflicts and asking the right questions that guided their journey in corporate-wellness paths. I am sure our readers will greatly benefit from this well-crafted issue. As always, HR professionals, academicians and line managers will also gain interesting insights on corporate-wellness programmes that have been employed in contemporary Indian organization.

I am happy to inform you that the January, 2017 issue will be dedicated to the theme of “Stakeholders Management-The Role of HR” guest edited by HN Shrinivas, a TATA veteran.
Since the journal has become online now, you need to make sure that your email id is correct. In case you or your fellow professionals and members have any problem in receiving the journal online do write to Pranay (pranay.ranjan@nationalhrd.org) at national secretariat.

As you also noticed all our issues are theme based and we do not publish any article in a particular issue that is not related to the theme. So my request to future contributors will be to plan their contributions based on the future themes only and send me your contribution at me@nationalhrd.org. Please also note that final decision to include your article will be based on the decision of the guest editor and the editorial team. We would also like to know about the themes that you want to focus us in our future issues. Please send your suggestions and feedback to (me@nationalhrd.org) after reading this issue.

Dr Pallab Bandyopadhyay
Managing Editor
An eclectic profile with qualifications in mechanical engineering, finance and general management, sociology and organizational behavior, and experience in the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, journalism and yoga as sadhana and therapy.

Work experience in chemical plant maintenance (J K Synthetics, Jhalawar), event management, administration, teaching and providing training in holistic personality development and various management functions and skills. In particular, six years of full-time experience as a selfless missionary dedicated to ‘Man-making & Nation-building’ has provided the breadth of experience to be able to relate to various human challenges and encourage the move towards actualizing one’s potential.

Manish Singhal is author of Spirituality at Work: A Study of Indian Non-profit Organizations (Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2010) and on the faculty at XLRI-Jamshedpur, India’s premier HR-focused B-School, since April 2006. He also served as a Visiting Faculty at ISB Hyderabad. Previously, Manish pursued his PhD in Behavioral Sciences at IIM Calcutta. In between his MBA and PhD, Manish spent six years as a dedicated non-salaried missionary at Vivekananda Kendra, (H. Qr.: Kanyakumari), a spiritually-oriented service mission. There, he delved into the true import of the Indian cultural heritage to bring out what is relevant and valuable for himself and for today’s society.

At XLRI Jamshedpur, he focuses on O.B. area courses in Individual Behavior, Group Behavior & Leadership, Negotiations, and the individual group and organization level issues that underlie Leadership effectiveness.

Manish has guided PhD students at XLRI on their theses on Leadership emergence, Moral & Spiritual Leadership, Mentoring processes, and The Role of Spousal Network Overlap in Networks in Organizations.

In line with his previous experience at Vivekananda Kendra and the thesis on Workplace Spirituality, Manish has acquired Certifications in Foundations of Positive Psychology [Course conducted by Tal Ben-Shahar, University of Pennsylvania] and The Appreciative Inquiry Certificate in Positive Business and Society Change [certification by David L. Cooperrider & Ronald E. Fry, Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University].

In addition to the teaching and research experience detailed above, Manish has designed and directed successful Executive Development Programs on a range of themes including “Integrated (multi-modular) Leadership Development”; “Empowering Women Leadership”; “Interpersonal Effectiveness through Communication Skills”; “Managerial Effectiveness through Self Awareness”; “BEYOND COPING: Thriving under Stress in the Workplace”; “Emotional Intelligence & Interpersonal Skills”, “Communication & Presentation Skills”; and “Leading Teams to Synergy” for over 50 organizations.
Corporate Wellness is an idea whose time seems to have come. Over the last several decades, the prevalence of “lifestyle diseases” has reached alarming proportions. A healthy lifestyle characterized by adequate attention to the various facets of one’s life—Physical, Mental, Intellectual, Emotional, Social, and Spiritual—seems to have become a distant dream for the harried corporate executive today. Given that a major part of the day for an executive is spent at work, many organizations have made Corporate Wellness a priority in their organizational initiatives.

Thus it was that Pallab-da approached me with the proposal of guest editing this issue of the NHRDN Journal I jumped at the opportunity. I thought it was a unique opening to approach the topic in all its variegated forms and explore the breadth and depth of the important topic. The overriding concern was that through the articles in this issue we ought to consider not only the typically-focused-upon physical well-being but also incorporate the other equally crucial aspects of one’s health.

To that end, we looked at the copious literature—academic and practitioner-focused—available on the theme of Corporate and Employee Wellness. We also went into the Great Places to Work rankings of companies in India over the last three years to identify the firms we shall seek contributions from to populate this issue of the NHRDN Journal. An indicative Interview protocol was prepared to ensure that the contributions covered the salient aspects captured from our literature review. We realized early on that we would need an adequate representation from not only the MNCs that are commonly known in this arena, but also the home-grown Indian organizations to share their own experiences and insights on the topic. Given that the national cultures too play out within organizations, we sought input from one who, beyond acquiring a full-time PhD, has had significant experience working across different geographies and living one’s life in diverse cultures. To broaden the discussion, not only did we reach out to the typical corporate organizations we also thought it worthwhile to collect the experiences from the social entrepreneurship sector to explore their practices with respect to Corporate Wellness. Two academicians were also interviewed to collect their inputs on the challenges organizations face as they seek to focus on the theme of wellness in the context of the Triple bottom-line: Profit, People and the Planet!

Without further ado, let me now share the rich fare that we have managed to put together for your exploration, reflection and possible replication.

Ajay MK initiates the Leader Speak section with sharing the philosophy, practices and programs aimed at Employee Wellness at Colgate Palmolive. Cautioning the corporates against focusing solely on the physical aspects, the crucial aspects of Leadership, Relationships at work, Purpose and Programs are highlighted. It is hoped that the reader shall benefit from learning about the levers used to work on these aspects from this contribution.

Suresh Dutt Tripathi draws from his 33 years of rich professional experience to share the wellness journey at TATA STEEL in the next article in the Leader Speak section. Over and above the rich heritage of the organization, rich insights may be drawn from the broad-based employer-sponsored Wellness@Workplace initiative. Much can be learnt from the wellness initiatives catering to the diversity and integration of organization’s operations in terms of geographies, cultures and industries.

Barttanu Kumar Das shares the practices aimed at the various forms of Wellness in BLUE DART, a people-friendly company that inspires fierce commitment and loyalty amongst its employee base. It is heartening to see the comprehensive efforts that Blue Dart makes to not only support the employee but also aid the family in progressing to their cherished goals.
Profs. Raghuram Tata and Madhukar Shukla from XLRI alert the organizations that they ought to take into account the wider sustainability concerns while designing and implementing Corporate and Employee Wellness initiatives. Their call for adopting a multi-pronged approach to embed and institutionalize a sustainability culture within the organization would serve the corporates well, it is hoped.

Dr Nayanjeet Chaudhury and Suruchi Modi bring our attention back to the emerging epidemic of lifestyle diseases we alluded to at the start of this Editorial. They argue for rigorously-designed research to assess the impact of the Employee Wellness Programs, a call we hope shall be well-received by the HR fraternity.

Paritosh Shukla places forward Wellness as the route to build thriving employees and flourishing organizations. He seeks to add the facets of Mental and Spiritual Wellbeing to the famous GALLUP framework. It is expected that the tips for boosting the various facets of wellbeing would be appreciated by the employees and employers alike.

“Physical, Heal Thyself!” is often used as an admonition! It is heartening to find that Novartis, a healthcare company, has sought to buck the trend. Anantha, Aruna and Mayank relate the comprehensive efforts that are being made at Novartis under the aegis of BE HEALTHY initiative to prevent the consequences associated with rising corporate demands. The elaborate details shared under the “Be Healthy” Celebration Week may provide a replicable model for other corporations. I must record with gratitude the key role played by Svetlana Pinto, Head, Corporate Communications and CSR, Novartis India in coordinating this article.

American Express’s continued presence in the Great Places to Work listing year after year made it an obvious candidate for inclusion in this issue. Radha Raman interviewed Dr. Bhavesh Shah and Shikha Sharma to bring out the multiple initiatives that make the health and wellness programs rated as the most valued benefit at American Express.

Moving Health and Wellness from being a mere feel-good factor and take a more holistic perspective is emphasized by Divya Rajagopal and Vlasta Dusil as they share the practices and programs at SAP Labs India, yet another organization that’s been featured in the Great Places to Work list over the years. I believe that their examples of embedding technology in their wellness initiatives may serve other organizations well as they march forward into the future. Our alumna Shipra Choudhury deserves our sincere gratitude for coordinating the effort of putting this article together.

The next two articles share the efforts being made to further health and wellness in the Aditya Birla group. Padma Rajeshwari Tata shares the overarching framework of the Wellness of Body, Mind and Soul to create a culture of Holistic Wellness. The same is then expected to lead the way towards Healthy-Happy employees and families as also a positive, energized and productive work environment. Her focus on designing the rewards appropriately may strike a chord with the HR practitioners.

Samik Basu and Bhaskar Bhattacharya share the nuts and bolts of their LiveWell-Work Smart & Live Smarter journey at HINDALCO. Overcoming the challenges associated with leading such a program across the widespread locations may offer insightful lessons to all organizations. While the first phase detailed in this article focused solely upon Physical Wellness, it is heartening to note that the second phase of the intervention plans to cover ‘Mental and Emotional Wellbeing’. It would be interesting to compare notes on the reception of the second phase, following from the enthusiastic momentum garnered by the first phase.

In a short article thereafter Prashant Khandelwal shares the relevant details from the Employee Health and Safety (EHS) component of Siemens’ corporate strategy. Siemens’ experience of a dedicated Health Management organization may well serve the organizations looking forward to leap-frog on the Wellness journey.

Parul Varghese and Radha Raman through an empirical research share the heartening data on the widespread awareness and prevalence of employee wellness practices in Indian corporates. Their call for a balance between the inducement and contribution from both the employers and employees, it is believed, would further strengthen the Wellness movement in India.
In a very different article, Preethi Sukumaran and Srinivas Krishnaswamy look back at their social entrepreneurial journey with KRYA, a wellness-brand firm focused on 100% plant-based solutions for home cleaning and personal care categories in the MSME sector. The coherence between what the organization professes and what it does shines clearly in this transparent autobiographical contribution. It is hoped that their experiences shall contribute to expanding the horizons for the entrenched corporate organizations.

Neeta Nagar draws upon her substantial cross-cultural professional work experience to share the concerns on the impact of national culture on employee attitudes and belief structures. I found it heartening that Neeta chose to focus upon Mindfulness in our technology-dependent lives today. Further, her call for embedding Wellness into the performance metrics of senior executives and HR executives may well pave the way for results-focused efforts in our organizations.

In the last article of the issue, Bhavya Sharma and Nikhil Iyer highlight the issues related to employee wellness programs so as to make them reach their potential. Remaining alert to the critical role played by Support of Senior management, Alignment with organizational goals and aspirations, Accessibility, Designing appropriate carrots and sticks policies, Quality of such initiatives, and Measuring the Return on Investment may help the organizations from acting reactively to these unforeseen challenges.

The last section reviews two landmark titles that may help the readers go deeper into the theme of this issue. Joyshree Munshi reviews the widely-acclaimed Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study, a unique landmark study of the Harvard graduates over a remarkable period of 75 years! The Harvard Grant Study, which started off with 64 students eventually covered 268 men and tracked them over their professional and personal lives. The contribution of the series of titles which documented this Adult Development project is bound to help HR practitioners and academicians craft their Health and Wellness projects. In particular, the focus on considering the long-term impact may serve us well, buffeted as we are with calls for show-casing the beneficial outcomes of our initiatives primarily in the short term.

Flourishing-in the domain of positive psychology-is living "within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience". Kshamta Sharma chooses to turn her attention to the title from one who is credited with launching the Positive Psychology movement. In Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being, Dr Martin Seligman writes about his experiences of leading organizational initiatives using insights from the positive psychology. HR executives and academicians may ponder over designing and leading Health and Wellness programs that help employees build strengths, develop positive emotions and build grit.

The one aim that I had had in putting together this issue was to make our conversation on Wellness more broad-based and look beyond the Physical Wellness to take into account the other equally crucial aspects that make our lives worth living. While the organizations we work for do contribute the most to our identity, I still believe that restricting the scope of such initiatives to the time we spend within our organizations shall short-change the rest of our lives. I do believe that it is imperative that we situate the organizational wellness initiatives within the broader context of the ONE LIFE that we lead. It is thus that I find it imperative that we move beyond the focus upon the Profit aspect of the Employee Wellness Programs (in terms of the RoI considerations). We do need to incorporate the People part of the equation (in terms of the more fulfilling family and social lives that our employees lead thereby). Eventually, we may need to consider if our efforts are leaving behind a better Planet for the forthcoming generations from whom we have borrowed our Earth.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not put on record my deepest gratitude to all our contributors for having spared their invaluable time for this issue. Their commitment to the theme, revealed in the painstaking efforts, add tremendous value to our offering. The authors’ passion for organizational and employee well-being shines through in the pieces that they contributed. Fulki Communications too deserves all the accolades for the beautiful design and layout of this issue.
A special round of applause is reserved for the XLRI’s MBA students’ team–Radha Raman, Nikhil Iyer and Bhavya Sharma – who have been together in this journey right from the start and provided immense help and support to make this happen. They were later joined in by Arya Roy chowdhury and Akshay Bageshwar, again our MBA (HR) students, who too contributed their lot in making this issue a reality. But for them, this issue would never have seen the light of the day!

How can I end without thanking the one without whom I would have never come on board: Dr Pallab Bandopadhyay! Thank you, Pallab-da. I hope the final product does do justice to the legacy of the NHRDN Journal.

Manish Singhal
Chairperson, Organizational Behavior
XLRI Jamshedpur – Xavier School of Management
(Guest Editor for this Issue)
Leader Speak: Fostering Employee Wellness at Colgate Palmolive

About the Author

Ajay MK

Ajay is a member of the Management Committee at Colgate Palmolive India Limited, and leads the Human Resources and Enterprise Risk Management functions for the South Asia region. He was previously the global HR head for Colgate’s IT & Business Services division based in New York for three years, and the HR Director for Malaysia & Singapore based in Kuala Lumpur for more than six years. He has conceptualized and implemented complex organizational change projects in the US, Mexico, Europe, Southeast Asia and India in his 17 years as a HR professional. Prior to Colgate, Ajay worked for Asian Paints.

Ajay holds a Bachelor’s degree in Commerce, a Master’s degree in Psychology and a PGDPM & IR from XLRI Jamshedpur. He is also an award-winning writer who has published three collections of poetry.
Leader Speak: Fostering Employee Wellness at Colgate Palmolive

Wellness in the workplace is achieved only when the individual employee experiences subjective well-being in all the core dimensions of wellness. Wellness is a much broader concept than physical wellness which is usually the focus of most ‘health & wellness’ initiatives in many corporates.

The National Wellness Institute (www.nationalwellness.org) lists six dimensions for Wellness:

1) Occupational
2) Intellectual
3) Emotional
4) Physical
5) Social
6) Spiritual

Physical well-being is but one dimension of wellness in the above definition. Care must be taken not to equate development of corporate wellness with implementation of policies & practices that solely focus on promoting the health and physical well-being of employees. Such an approach is narrow in scope, and is not likely to be sustainable. It creates a false sense of achievement among management and HR teams who relentlessly drive physical wellness programs to the exclusion of other dimensions of wellness.

The subjective well-being that employees experience, or in other words, their wellness, as understood in the holistic sense—arguably determines their belongingness to the organization, their engagement at the workplace and the pride they feel while working for a particular brand / organization. Wellness therefore potentially has linkages to people related metrics that all businesses and business leaders care about, especially employee engagement scores, attrition levels, longevity of tenures and quality of succession plans, and employee productivity. Ultimately, consistent high performance in these people metrics would translate into long term net sales and profit growth for the organization.

Colgate Palmolive India has enjoyed sustained success in each of these people related metrics. Our attrition percentage of management staff in India, for example, has been below double digits for the past more than a decade. We have managed to fill all key leadership roles across departments—the Management Committee and managers one level below reporting to the Mancom—through internal candidates and have had only one leader at these levels who was hired into the organization from an external source. We have had several cases of ex-employees who wanted to come back to Colgate because of "the Colgate culture". Some of them have even been rehired at senior levels and are today serving the company with renewed commitment. All of these facts seem to point that the workplace and culture at Colgate is one that is conducive, and devoid of toxicity. The notion of toxicity in organizational culture is a key determinant of wellness experienced by employees.

For more than a decade, Colgate Palmolive India has been enjoying a healthy and consistent organic growth rate in both net sales and profit, outstanding stock performance, increase of market share in toothpaste (from the low 40% in 2000 to the last reported market share reading of close to 55%) and gaining of undisputed market leadership in toothbrushes within India from our nearest competitor. During the last 5 years, Colgate has also been the Most Trusted Brand in India across all industries.

While the high correlation between healthy business results and excellent performance on the key people related metrics during the past decade does not necessarily prove a cause and effect relationship, there is no denying that the performance on the people related metrics would have contributed substantially to the business results. Wellness – the subjective well-being—that employees experience while working for Colgate is one of the reasons that the organization does so well in winning the trust, loyalty and commitment of its employees, not unlike the trust it has inspired in its consumers for decades.
Wellness as a management priority in Colgate predates the 'corporate wellness movement' that has become fashionable in the recent decade or so in India. Wellness, even when that term was not in use, has been entrenched in the Colgate DNA. I will try to explain how we have been enhancing employee well-being at Colgate and consistently placing this as a focus area over several years now.

The key levers for us to enhance wellness at the workplace have been:

1) Leadership: the kind of leaders who manage teams and who are responsible for nurturing the organizational culture
2) Relationships at work: the quality of relationships in the organization and the collaboration between people across levels, geographies and departments
3) Purpose: the meaning and purpose people experience at work, and the connection they feel to the company’s values and strategy
4) Programs: the formal policies and practices that have an impact on all aspects of an employee’s overall well-being.

Most organizations tend to focus primarily or solely on the formal policies and practices that impact well-being, and even within that, usually focus on the dimension of physical well-being instead of paying attention to all the six dimensions of wellness.

Let us see how we have used each of the four levers of wellness at Colgate to create an attractive culture and employee well-being.

Leadership:

The values demonstrated by leaders in the company and the example they set through their actions have a disproportionately huge impact on the well-being experienced by employees. Colgate has three values: Caring, Global Teamwork and Continuous Improvement. Employees at Colgate know that the company is serious about these three values. Employees feel proud that we have a unique culture in which they are truly cared for. There is a genuine conviction that the leaders believe in the company’s values and make a sincere effort to live those values in their daily work. We are also obsessive about ensuring that our behavior is consistent with the highest standards of ethics and that managers and leaders manage each other, and their people, with respect. ‘Managing with Respect’ is not only a mantra but also a fact of everyday life in Colgate, and has become part of our corporate DNA. It is therefore very rare for an employee to come across a nasty or toxic boss in the workplace at Colgate. While this may be a basic attribute of a workplace, no propaganda or employer branding can beat this conviction felt by employees, and it is immensely valuable when you have to create a culture of well-being or wellness. Nothing erodes the emotional and social well-being felt by employees as quickly as toxic leadership.

Colgate’s philosophy of leadership is inclined towards inclusion and caring for its employees. Caring for Colgate people and their families is one of the five pillars in our Global People Strategy, and a feature that sets us apart from most competitors. We have had a history of nurturing and rewarding leaders who are firstly great listeners, who are sensitive to the impact of business decisions on people, who do not compromise on ethics and who have a bias for fostering alignment across stakeholders. This leadership style allows employees to voice their views without being inhibited by the hierarchy and to contribute their unique perspectives to decision making.

There is increasing evidence from research literature accessible to HR practitioners that a leader’s support and expression of consideration to her followers is one of the important predictors of employee well-being (Kuoppala et al., 2008; Skakon et al., 2010). Such leaders also tend to generate overall higher well-being in the teams that they lead (Rhoades & Heisenberg, 2002). Abusive leaders, on the other hand, reduce employee well-being (Tepper, 2000).
In our hurry and enthusiasm to fix wellness at the workplace through a calendar of ‘Health & Wellness’ events, it is all too easy to forget the significant role played by a supportive, caring leadership style in inducing employee well-being and nurture a culture of wellness at the workplace. Colgate’s value of Caring encourages and rewards such a supportive and considerate inclusive leadership style. This leadership style has also helped to build a culture in the company, which is attractive and difficult to replicate by competition, thus directly contributing to the stellar business results enjoyed by Colgate Palmolive India.

**Relationships at work:**

Trust between levels in an organization and between teams is the backbone of a great workplace. In Colgate, we are proud of the fact that we have managed to create a climate of mutual respect between departments. For example, the conflicts that one typically sees between Sales and Marketing, or between Supply Chain and Sales/Marketing is remarkably absent in Colgate. For the most part, managers and senior leaders in the company enjoy each other’s company and like each other as individuals. This is an accurate assertion and would appear to be a tall claim if one is not an employee of Colgate. This is also perhaps one reason why employees find the Colgate culture so sticky, why they feel safe while working for the company and why several of them speak so fondly about the culture even after leaving the organization. Indeed some of them come back to work for us and enjoy a second innings. This level of intra-organizational trust has taken years of collaborative leadership and conscious role modeling, and is evidence of values in action.

Nurturing productive relationships at work, and eradicating toxic relationships, is a leadership responsibility. It is sponsored by the Managing Director himself and championed by each department director. We recognize unhealthy relationships at work is a source of stress and preventing relationship related stress can provide a significant boost to development of employee well-being – both physical and emotional. It is better to prevent stress than address its symptoms superficially through, say, a stress management training module or an aerobics class, the utility of which is anyway limited in the overall context of managing stress. We certainly do not subscribe to the theory that the method of raising employee productivity is to foster insecurity and unhealthy competition at work, and assiduously stay away from practicing a ‘divide and rule’ leadership mode, which is unfortunately the norm in several workplaces.

Research carried out by Professor Andrew Clark (Paris School of Economics, France), a member of the UN Well-Being Group has established that “the quality of interactions between individuals, and between individuals and institutions is likely a key component of well-being” (cited from the World Book of Happiness, 2010). The linkage between quality of workplace relationships and stress has been studied and confirmed by numerous studies, and is now part of every experienced manager’s and leader’s understanding of workplaces.

**Purpose:**

Intellectual, emotional, occupational and spiritual well-being depends on the meaning that employees derive from their work, the purpose behind their hard work. Employees need to know that they are not just chasing sales or profit goals. Otherwise, they experience their working selves as cogs in a vast industrial enterprise. This is perhaps the single biggest challenge in the creation of employee well-being as it is easy to forget the purpose of one’s work in the hustle and bustle of chasing targets, attending meetings and in the business of being busy.

We have been fairly successful at Colgate in providing meaning and purpose to the work of employees by staying consistent to the mission of improving oral health around the world, by nurturing a brand that commands immense trust, serving the communities we work for and demonstrating our value of caring towards people and the planet. Several employees stay on and work for the company because they believe in its mission of improving oral health and the magic of the Colgate brand. The mission of improving oral health and association with brand Colgate allows employees to rise above their self-interests, and feel a sense of community and identification with a larger cause. This sense of purpose cannot be engineered, however, and develops only over a period after an employee enjoys a sense of belonging and community within the company.
However, working for a brand that is synonymous with oral care in the country and which commands immense trust, addresses a basic human need and promotes health makes finding meaning at work beyond their pay cheque possible for many Colgate employees.

The Energy Project, a consulting firm that specializes in workplace satisfaction, surveyed more than 12000 employees and found that employees who experienced meaning at work experience greater fulfillment and intent to stay with their employers - more than any other variable measured in their study, including learning & development, work-life balance, compensation etc. The link between purpose and meaning at work, and overall employee happiness (a close substitute for well-being) has been documented in a book titled ‘Purpose and Meaning in the Workplace’ (edited by Bryan J.Dik et al.). Purpose in life is also associated with greater longevity, life satisfaction and fewer health problems (Kashdan & McKnight, 2009).

In Colgate, we recognize that managing and interpreting the brand purpose and the mission of the company is a key leadership responsibility that cannot be delegated. Along with the financial stability of the company, fostering meaning at work, is a priority that is driven from the top and reinforced at all small and large employee group for a as a systematic internal communication practice. Innovative OD interventions that promote listening by senior management in Colgate Palmolive India such as ‘Bindaas Bol’ are also used to convey the meaning experienced by leaders while they work in Colgate, and to convey what the brand Colgate stands for and its larger purpose.

Programs:

Every people related process or policy, right from the fairness of the performance management process to the adequacy of an employee benefit impacts well-being.

Of course, policies and practices within the basket of ‘Health & Wellness’ are designed to directly enhance employee well-being. This is particularly applicable to the physical dimension of wellness. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that every HR process has a wellness dimension, and contributes to one of the dimensions of wellness, either directly or indirectly.

At Colgate Palmolive India, we have been implementing Corporate Wellness programs under the banner of ‘Live Better’ globally. The initiatives focus on all aspects of health, both physical and mental (especially stress reduction). The basic premise of the ‘Live Better’ program is that when employees are guided by a supportive leadership style embedded in Colgate’s value of Caring, experience trustful relationships with their peers and team members, and enjoy a sense of belongingness and purpose beyond their self-interest, then their participation in a formal corporate wellness initiative that focuses on physical well-being can lead to an overall enhancement in their wellness. However, the leadership at Colgate Palmolive India are also realistic about how little formal corporate wellness initiatives can contribute towards enhancing employee well-being in the absence of the three other key contributors to employee well-being, viz., the quality of leadership, relationships at work and subjectively experienced purpose & meaning at work.

It is this realization that wellness of employees is determined by an interplay of leadership style, quality of workplace relationships, purpose of work and formal corporate wellness programs that have guided and informed the wellness culture at Colgate. It has been a multi-year effort but the results speak louder than words, and the results are well appreciated and understood by the most important stakeholder for any servant leader, namely, the employees of the organization.
Leader Speak: In Conversation with Mr Suresh Dutt Tripathi, VP-HR, Tata Steel

Suresh Dutt Tripathi, Vice President (HRM) – Tata Steel Limited is an HR professional with a rich experience of 33 years. He started his career as a Management Trainee with Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) in 1983 and moved to the private sector in 1998 by joining HCL Perot Systems as Head, HR. He worked with Mascon Global Ltd. briefly to set up a Bio informatics Centre before moving to SRF Ltd., a multi business Corporate House in 2002. As President Gr HR for SRF, he also handled the role of CEO, Shri Educare Ltd., a venture in the field of education. He joined Tata Steel in October 2012.

His Masters in Physics from University of Delhi was followed by a PG Dip in Social Work from University of Calcutta. An alumnus of Ashorne Hill Management College, UK, he is trained in a number of fields in HRM. He has also handled integration of many acquired companies in South Africa, Thailand & India. He has handled the whole gamut of Human Resource Management from shop floor to the enterprise level. Core beliefs are ‘simplicity’ and ‘trust on people’.

A member of Confederation of Indian Industry’s (CII’s), National Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Higher Education; Board member of National HRD Network, Advisory Boards of a number of academic institutes and he represents Tata Steel on the Board of CEDEP (INSEAD), France. Mr Suresh Dutt Tripathi (SDT)
Leader Speak: In Conversation with Mr Suresh Dutt Tripathi, VP-HR, Tata Steel

Interviewed by

Prof. Manish Singhal

Guest editor of the issue

Bhavya Sharma

Bhavya Sharma (BS) is pursuing her post-graduation in Human Resources Management at XLRI, Jamshedpur. She interned with Boston Consulting Group during her summers, where she worked on efficiency enhancement of employees. Prior to XLRI, she pursued her graduation in Mathematics and Computing engineering from Delhi College of Engineering.

An avid reader and debater, Bhavya takes a keen interest in international affairs and has been selected as a delegate for conferences like Harvard Project for Asian & International Relations and World Business Dialogue.
About Tata Steel

Tata Steel has operations in 26 countries, commercial presence in over 50 countries and has 80,000 employees across five continents. What sets the Tata Steel Group apart is not just extent or magnitude of its operations – it is the excellence of its people, innovative approach, and overall conduct. Established in 1907 as Asia’s first integrated private sector steel company, Tata Steel Group is among the top-ten global steel companies. It is now the world’s second-most geographically-diversified steel producer. Over the years Tata Steel has enriched the glorious legacy handed over by its Founder J.N. Tata, by placing equal emphasis on stakeholder value creation and corporate citizenship. Underpinning this vision is a performance culture committed to aspiration targets, safety and social responsibility, continuous improvement, openness and transparency.

MS: What do you think about Corporate Wellness being specific to Tata Steel? What are the various aspects of Corporate Wellness which are currently being focused on?

SDT: Right from the conception of Steel Plant at Jamshedpur, Jamsetji Tata had been very particular about his vision of providing workers with a good work life balance and the wholesome experience to develop into a good citizen. In a letter to his son Dorab about his vision for the township that would eventually become Jamshedpur, Jamsetji had written:

Be sure to lay wide streets planted with shady trees, every other of a quick-growing variety. Be sure that there is plenty of space for lawns and gardens. Reserve large areas for football, hockey and parks. Earmark areas for Hindu temples, Mohammedan mosques and Christian churches.

Jamsetji visualized the township with hospitals, playgrounds, temples, mosques, churches and wide roads with big trees all around so that the workers could walk under its shade when they returned home after a hard day’s labor. The township was developed in a way where people from all communities could reside together peacefully and be the least impacted by the dust, and fuel emissions from the steel plant. This has always been the vision and philosophy behind every welfare measure that Tata Steel has chosen to implement within the organization.

Tata Steel believes that health at work and healthy work environments are among the most valuable assets of individuals, communities and countries. Health is a performance driver. Investing in health not only controls expenses, but also protects, supports, and enhances human capital. It is fundamental to a healthier bottom line.

Extending the same argument, occupational health is an important strategy not only to ensure the health of workers, but also to contribute positively to productivity, quality of products, work motivation, job satisfaction and thereby to the overall quality of life of individuals and society.

It is, therefore, not a surprise that Tata Steel was the pioneer in implementing the concept of promotion and maintenance of highest degree of physical, mental and social wellbeing of employees. As early as 1955, Occupational Health Services and Industrial Health Laboratory was created to evaluate health hazards at workplace and to provide comprehensive health care to employees. A joint committee, on occupational health comprising representatives of union and management recommends appropriate measures to be taken to ensure a healthy workforce, on the basis of health surveillance. OHSAS 18001 specifications have been adopted in the works to have systematic and uniform deployment of control measures.

Our Corporate Wellness aspect is not just limited to benefits and facilities related to the treatment of employees but also emphasizes on being proactive in terms of handling health.
BS: What are the various aspects of Corporate Wellness which are currently being focused upon?

SDT: Keeping in mind the foregoing, Wellness @ Workplace program was initiated. W@W is an organized, employer sponsored program that is designed to support employees as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, and improves quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness and benefit the organization’s bottom line. Six core areas were identified for Assuring a healthy life today...and tomorrow.

With the help of experts a HEALTH INDEX was developed to monitor the effectiveness of the program which incorporates four major health parameters: Blood Pressure level, Diabetes, Cholesterol and Body Mass Index (BMI). Every employee in the organization is tested for these 4 parameters, and assigned a score out of 4 for each parameter. The Index is in the scale of 0 to 16. The higher the index, the better is the employee’s health.

<table>
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<th>Risk Factor</th>
<th>High Risk Score = 0</th>
<th>Moderate Risk Score = 2</th>
<th>Low Risk Score = 4</th>
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<td>140 / 90</td>
<td>121-139 / 81-89</td>
<td>120 / 80 or less</td>
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<td>200 - 239 mg/dl</td>
<td>&lt;200 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>BMI &gt;30</td>
<td>MBI : 25 - 30</td>
<td>BMI &lt;25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health Index used at Tata Steel

An employee scoring 16/16 is considered healthy and fit, while anyone scoring <16 is kept under observation. If an employee scores 0 in any of these parameters, he/she is classified as a HIGH RISK case and kept under close watch. Everyone associated with the employee – right from one’s friends, family, direct managers and departmental head are notified about the same and asked to make an effort to help the employee get better. For
instance, we ask the family members whether he/she is taking medicines on time. His/her fellow union
members and peers are also asked to take care of such employees.

We have also launched Doctor at Doorstep – an initiative for regular follow up & counseling at shop floor. A
doctor specifically meets each of these people on the shop floor, and gives them the required prescription of
medicines. We do this with the intention of providing 360 degree care to the employees.

All these initiatives have resulted in an improvement in Health Index from 12.50 (baseline) to 12.82 over the last
three years. We further aim to increase this average score by 2% every year.

We also focus on Industrial Hygiene Services, Hazard Communication Program, Special health improvement
project for working women, job stress management, health awareness drives, Stepathlon etc. under this
initiative. We have a launched a program called ‘KHUSH-HALI’ which is aimed at all the employees and their
families. Families are called in groups for a day long program where they are educated about Yoga, meditation,
parenting, relationships and safety related issues. These lessons are refreshed from time to time. Regular work
team discussions are also organized on issues like staying healthy and stress free. We have yoga trainers and
meditation experts to help us out in this endeavor. We are also carrying out a Bone mineral density
measurement and awareness program on osteoporosis, where one to one counseling is done with those
falling under the yellow or the red zone.

We also promote Yoga and Pranayama through JAGRAN program to mitigate stress and lifestyle disorders. A
Job Stress Management Program also alerts the employees about the necessity to remain aware of the
multiple issues that may lead to stress-related disorders and take preventive steps.

BS: Could you share a few examples of some successful Corporate Wellness initiatives.

SDT: The premature mortality because of medical illness is an alarming situation in industries accounting for
60% of all deaths. WHO reported that 17 million people died prematurely every year from chronic diseases viz.,
heart disease, strokes, obesity, diabetes, etc. which are primarily caused by risk factors such as unhealthy diet,
physical inactivity, and tobacco use. Organizations across the world spend more money due to occupational illness than the occupational injuries.

In this context that our focal program Wellness@Workplace has been a successful initiative. We have seen an improvement in health index from 12.50 (baseline) to 12.82. We further aim to increase this average score by 2% every year.

As a part of corporate wellness initiatives, Anaemia control project for working women was taken up during FY’12. All the female employees having hemoglobin level <10.5gm/dl were treated with daily Iron and folic acid supplementation (150 mg of Ferrous Fumarate and 1.5 mg Folic acid) and de worming therapy (Albendazole - 400mg) single dose. Mean rise of Hemoglobin after supplementation was 0.76gm/dl over the mean baseline hemoglobin level of 10.01±1.0 gm.

Yet another initiative in this context would be Bone mineral density measurement & awareness on Osteoporosis in working women (employees and contractor females) that was taken up under Corporate Wellness program during FY ’16. The employee benefits by knowing her measurement. Awareness too was created to improve one’s lifestyle.

A one-week Camp was inaugurated in March 2015, followed by a session on Awareness of Osteoporosis by an Orthopedic Surgeon. The camp was repeated in August 2015 for another week. These camps were held in various departments. Based on individual assessments, one-to-one counseling was provided to all those who were in yellow or red zone. All porotic and penic employees were given Tablet Calcium & Vit D3 for at least 2 months & advised for further follow up with orthopedic department in Tata Main Hospital. Regular awareness sessions were also arranged for contractor females and others.

BS: Would you recall the first such initiative from Tata Steel?

SDT: We carried out a focused initiative to counter the rising trend of cardiovascular diseases by introducing Cardio Vascular profiler test in Tata Steel Works.

MS: How are the initiatives regarding Corporate Wellness decided upon?

SDT: We have a joint committee on Occupational Health & Industrial Hygiene comprising representatives of union and management (chaired by VP, HRM), to monitor & review the effectiveness of Corporate Wellness program and recommend corrective measures.

MS: Does Tata Steel use technology or internet in supporting its wellness initiatives? What have been the most significant enablers/deterrents in that direction?

SDT: Technology is deeply embedded into all our Wellness initiatives. We use Occupational Health Management System software (OHSMS) across all locations of Tata Steel India for the monitoring and analysis of health status of employees. Awareness sessions like Doctor Online, Celebration of Health days are web casted to all. Intranet portal is also utilized for Health bulletins, posters, etc.

While the above has become routine, I would wish to talk about a tech-enabled initiative we became a part of. Tata Steel has joined the 100 day race Stepathlon, the virtual race designed to create a global health revolution among corporate professionals as an initiative for Lifestyle management. It is a pedometer-based, mass participation event for organizations of all sizes across all industries and countries, which provides access to a fun, engaging and interactive online race. Employees form teams of 5, and have access to the Stepathlon course website for 5 months. They enter their daily step count into the website, which are then converted into kilometres, as teams race around a ‘virtual world’. It also allows participants to access relevant information regarding nutrition, health and well-being through expert resources.

It has been a delight to associate with Stepathlon with its very positive impact on the organization. We strongly believe that if an employee does anything for 100 days, he/she will develop it as a habit, and walking if
developed as a regular habit will surely go a long way in promoting wellness. It is also a great way to engage with employees on a personal level. This does not only create a competitive environment but also motivates employees to take interest in their health. We expect to promote health as a necessity and not a privilege, with a goal and team oriented environment through Stepathlon. It encourages every team member to contribute as nobody wants to let their team down. More than 5,000 teams have participated in Stepathlon. Employees have to pay a token amount of Rs. 500 to register while the company pays Rs.1750 on their behalf. We also run an awareness program called ‘DOCTOR ONLINE’, where a panel of doctors sit together in one area and have a webcast. People can log in from their desks and access it. Remote consultations are also available through video conferencing for people located in mining locations like Jharia. We use Occupational Health Management System software across all locations of Tata Steel India for the monitoring & analysis of health status of employees.

A major enabler for using technology has been the influx of young people in the organization. Getting people from small cities and metros together for an initiative like Stepathlon proved to be a challenge in the beginning.

**MS:** Are all these programmes meant for everyone in the organizations? Do you also have any specific programmes tailored to the requirements of a section of people?

**SDT:** An annual health index checkup is mandatory for all employees within Tata Steel. However, we also run some specific programmes for ladies, crane operators, shop floor workers etc. For instance, every year we take up one serious issue like anemia, osteoporosis, etc. which affects the ladies and run a free checkup camp for all our women employees(including the contract workers). Similarly, we conduct lung testing at a higher frequency for employees who are highly exposed to dust emissions. For employees exposed to metals like chrome, manganese we have skin testing at regular intervals.

We also have a program called **UMANG** within Tata Steel to help people facing any kind of social and psychological issues. People who face any issues related to their job, spouse, boss, children or any other matter can call up the Helpline number. There is a panel of psychologists and psychiatrist who will offer help to the caller. Based on the degree of the problem faced by the person (as perceived by the psychiatrist or psychologist), a face-to-face interaction is organized. There is also a website where they provide reading material and tips to deal with such issues. I am happy to report that till date we have had 18 cases where the caller was saved from committing suicide.

We also look at ergonomics in a serious way. Last year, we established a committee which thoroughly analyzed the kind of chairs that would be suitable for employees in different regions of the factory and offices. We spent almost a crore in replacing the different varieties of chairs with ergonomically designed and customized chairs befitting the specific work environment.

**BS:** Can you also elaborate on the safety initiatives undertaken by Tata Steel?

**SDT:** Right now, we are working on wearable gadgets which are being developed in-house, in collaboration with Tata Interactive Systems. There can be situations where crane operators can lose their lives due to the lack of timely attention. So, we are developing bands for the crane operators which track their temperature, Blood Pressure, Heart Rate, etc., and the readings can be monitored by the employees on ground. In case there is any deviation from normal, somebody from the ground can immediately rush to that particular operator and save his life. This is just one of the initiatives. We are working on many more wearable gadgets like these.

As I mentioned before, our underlying philosophy is being **PROACTIVE**. We are trying to think of situations where something untoward can happen to our employees, and then take up initiatives to avoid such situations. We try to take suggestions regarding these initiatives from all our employees and then work upon them.

To encourage wider participation, we have competitions like poster making on safety issues and so on.

We also have the concept of **Safety Line walk** which aims to increase leadership engagement at the shop floor.
level. MD and other senior leaders visit the shop floor at different places, and try to see if there are any unsafe practices from our perspective. If there is anything even remotely unsafe, we click a picture and speak to the people concerned and also the workers, be it the regular workers or the contract workers. We also speak to the workers about their safety trainings and if they have experienced any safety hazard so far. We come back and log in our inputs with the agencies which address these issues immediately.

MS: Most of the initiatives seem to be peculiar to the manufacturing sector. Is there any learning which you have taken from across different cultures, geographies as Tata Steel works all over the country?

SDT: Tata Steel, if you see, is a multi-industry organization. We have our manufacturing facility in Jamshedpur. We also have mining in Orissa. In fact, as we handle more than 100 million tons of steel we are the second largest in terms of logistics. We have our own helicopters and chartered aircraft and hence, also have a team of pilots, maintenance engineers, traffic controllers, and crew members. We have hospitals, dispensaries, clinics across all our site locations. We are in touch with the hospitality industry as well by virtue of operating guest houses all across our locations, and we make sure that our chefs are trained at the Taj. Our ITS department is global in nature, and people working there are in touch with the IT industry. So, there are multiple industries existing within Tata Steel and we keep getting inputs from all these places. Most of our initiatives are not specific to the suggestions by any one of these industries but are more of an amalgamation of the ideas from all of them.

BS: How do you ensure that the middle management and the junior level employees share this vision of corporate wellness?

SDT: We make sure that there is regular communication of the senior level management with the middle management and the junior employees. We also organize tournaments like cricket for 45+ where they can pick two youngsters of their choice in their respective teams. We also have an Adventure Foundation which organizes adventure program for employees and their families, which is open for employees at all levels. Such initiatives help in breaking the ice.

It is also about Role Modeling and inclusive policies. The benefits percolate down to every level in the organization, and hence when these juniors reach the senior ranks, they want to keep doing similar things for the organization. We also encourage equal representation in committees existing within the organization. For instance, in the Occupational Health and Industrial Hygiene Committee, we have representation from both the management as well as Trade Unions. We also ensure membership from all departments. There are champions of this committee at all levels in the organization who facilitate regular communication with all the other employees.

MS: What have been the major challenges that you have faced while implementing these initiatives?

SDT: Willingness of people has been the most difficult challenge we have encountered so far. We have a lot of diversity within Tata Steel as we work across different industries, geographies and cultures, and hence getting people on the same page is difficult. For instance, if we see the case of Stepathlon, an early morning walk for people residing in Jamshedpur is an easy task whereas it is not so easy for somebody who is residing in Mumbai and has to face heavy traffic or catch an early local train to reach the office on time. This seemed as a major challenge in the initial stages but now we have participants from all metro cities like Mumbai and Calcutta who have registered and have successfully completed the challenge.

Another challenge faced initially was the lack of awareness amongst people as they were not sure about the purpose of data collection regarding their health. There was a fear amongst the workers that the high risk
workers might be asked to leave the organization. It took us a lot of effort to convince them that we are doing this for their own health without an ulterior motive. Getting families involved was also a challenge in terms of the logistical issues. Certain challenges have also given us ideas for new initiatives. For instance, DOCTOR AT DOORSTEP was conceptualized when we found that people were not taking regular treatment or medicines on time.

Controlling obesity requires time, sustained efforts and motivation. Therefore, sustaining employee engagement with such initiatives so as to inculcate a culture of healthy lifestyle amongst the employees would take its time.

MS: Where do you see the future of these corporate wellness initiatives? Are there any specific areas you would like to focus on?

SDT: There is no full stop in this area. There is always something more that we can do, and this creates a lot of pressure on us to keep thinking of new initiatives. With the changing technology and upcoming practices, there is also a constant need to evolve. We have a wide age mix, where we have people from all age groups working within the organization. We need to make sure that the practices are suited to their multifarious needs. We also need to evolve with the changing lifestyles of people. The youngsters lead a very different life as compared to what our parents had.

In the future, there is a need to pay more emphasis on the increasing stress levels of people, and create programs focused on emotional well-being as well. Also, there is a need to lay more emphasis on Industrial Hygiene. The Occupational Health and Industrial Hygiene Committee is currently working towards this.

BS: What would you say to a fellow C-suite executive interested in wellness programs, but not too sure about the return on investment?

SDT: We go by the philosophy of Jamsetji Tata that if the employees are healthy, they will be productive and hence, their returns to the company and the society will itself be much higher. As it is, in case of Tata Steel, we provide free medical facilities to all our employees. Thus, investing proactively in health awareness automatically reduces the expenditure on medical facilities. The increased productivity of employees is an icing on the cake.

MS: From your perspective, how can the wellness initiatives become more sustainable in organizations?

SDT: To achieve sustainability, organizations must carry out two things differently. Firstly, managers need to design work in a manner, which allows employees to exercise choice and control. Secondly, the culture of the organization should truly values employees' well-being, and view it as a key enabler of high performance. This is how sustainable organizations can achieve a triple win: employees' well-being, enhanced performance and positive customer experiences.

The overall well-being of employees needs to become a strong link in the value chain of any organization, as it highly influences the development of organization’s future capabilities. Mental health, physical health, work and personal life integration, work satisfaction and motivation are the main components of employees’ well-being. We should have our employees optimally healthy, safe, resilient, fulfilled and engaged at work.

Employee wellness promotion initiatives can provide a springboard to organization sustainability. Employers who promote employee wellness and safety reap cost and productivity advantages, as well as a healthier workforce. Further gains can be achieved by building a comprehensive approach to health promotion, integrating wellness goals into corporate strategy, and cultivating a healthy culture.
Barttanu Kumar Das is the Sr. Vice President & Head – Human Resources at Blue Dart Express Limited, the leading express and Distribution Company of India, part of DPDHL Group. Barttanu has an overall experience of more than 25 years in diverse sectors spanning Power, Infrastructure, and Logistics/distribution. His earlier stint was with NTPC, Navi Mumbai SEZ Pvt. Ltd., a Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) Group Company, Blue Dart Express and Shalimar Paints. Barttanu has written articles and presented papers in National & International conferences in the area of Talent Development, Succession Planning, Vision and Values, Mentoring and Leadership Development based on practice and implementation of HR interventions.

Under his HR leadership, the organization has won several recognitions for HR excellence. Some of the coveted ones are – ‘13” Best Employer Brand Award’ by Employer Brand Institute in 2010, ‘Best Motivational Work Place Award under services category’ by AIMA-IOCL in 2010, Innovative HR practices Award and ‘One of the top 50 Great Places to Work For in India’ consecutively for last 6 years and one Top Best Employers in India in 2014-15 and in 2015-16 recognized by Aon Hewitt Best Employers study.

Akshay Bageshwar (AB) is currently pursuing his post-graduation in Human Resources Management at XLRI. He has interned with Wipro Technologies during his summers, where he has worked on the new performance management system. He has completed his graduation in Electrical Engineering from the College of Engineering, Pune. He is passionate about dramatics and also has a keen interest in social work. He is an active member of Samarthya – a social interest group at XLRI that counsels and mentors school children in and around Jamshedpur.

Nikhil Iyer (NI) is a student of Human Resources Management at XLRI, Jamshedpur. He was selected for Glaxo Smith Kline Consumer Healthcare’s Future Leaders Program, where he worked on Total Rewards Communication during his summer internship. He also holds an undergraduate degree in Biomedical Engineering from VIT, Vellore. A national-level debater and a Toastmaster, he is an accomplished mentor and trainer in public speaking.

He also worked as an English teacher for Make a Difference (MAD) during 2012-14.
Interview with Mr Barttanu Kumar Das

A: What do you think about Corporate Wellness being specific to your organization? What are the various aspects of Corporate Wellness which are currently being focused upon?

BD: We strongly believe in creating and sustaining a people friendly culture in the organisation through various people friendly programmes and initiatives. This leads to their emotional and psychological well-being enabling them to have long happy careers with Blue Dart. We have always focused on developing a sense of ownership in every Blue Darter and this has been achieved through an environment that encourages fairness & transparency. Blue Dart is South Asia’s premier courier, and integrated express package distribution company. Blue Dart’s core competence lies in the business of superior express delivery services and maintaining reliability levels of 99.96%. This has been possible only because of the passion & commitment of all Blue Darters. Being a people-first company with over 10,595+ people force, Blue Dart continues to deliver value to its stakeholders through its people philosophy and corporate governance, based on distinctive customer service, business ethics, accountability and profitability.

The engagement programmes allow every Blue Darter an opportunity to not only excel in their respective work areas but also enable them develop their knowledge regarding other functions in the organisation. This helps to break the monotony at work and upsurge their scope to learn. Being the leader in the logistics industry, people form the core strength of Blue Dart. Thus, corporate wellness is a core Blue Dart culture and we shall continue to put in efforts to sustain and delight not only our customers but our employees as well.

NI: Could you share a few examples of the successful Corporate Wellness initiatives in your organization?

BD: We have a people’s initiative called as “Initiators” which is voluntarily managed. They organize programs for the extended Blue Dart family’s health and wellness. This also helps improve engagement. The Initiators often share interesting facts on newsletters on Yoga, Meditation, Diet, Exercise, etc. and also conduct regular health & fitness programmes. During the festive season, they organize sports, games, talent show etc. for the extended Blue Dart family.

Step:

A unique initiative called STEP (Subsidized Tuition and Education Plan) enables an individual to acquire higher qualification and other skills to enhance one’s career prospects and personal development.

Upstairs:

This is another initiative through which meritorious children of Blue Darters are awarded scholarships to pursue higher education.

Responsible business practice is the foundation of our long-term success at Blue Dart. We take our responsibility not just towards our employees but also to our society, to the communities we operate and to the environment, through our Living Responsibility programmes of GoTeach, GoHelp&GoGreen.

For emotional well-being, we foster a spirit of family – “The Blue Dart family”. The bonds we encourage make us a part of a larger community. An atmosphere of friendly competition keeps people motivated and they rise to challenges and work together. The result of this atmosphere can be testified during the recent e-tailing Big Billion sale, when people took responsibility for delivery of shipments beyond the call of duty and as part of our Blue Way programme. All Blue Darters proudly took up the responsibility of delivering shipments. We believe that such spirit and collaboration contribute to creation of a unique culture and leads to Blue Dart’s success.
To recognize our people’s efforts, we have a section in our “Daily Newsletter” where we publish photographs, to publicly recognize the passion and hard work of Blue Darters. We also have awards such as the ‘Bravo Blue Darter Award’ and the ‘Super Darter Award’ for people who go the extra mile. We also have an ‘Appreciation Fortnight Programme’ for which the Senior Management Team travels to each location to thank the team.

Blue Bubbles Champions:

For the wellness of women in the Blue Dart family, we have created a forum for their long term success, growth and empowerment, the “Blue Bubbles Champions”. Through our work life balance initiatives, we have tried to connect with Blue Darter’s children by supporting them in their education and emotional well-being. We allow special leave for our employees whose children are appearing for class-X and XII Board examinations and these special leaves are over and above normal leaves.

AB: Have there been any other notable Corporate Wellness initiatives that you came across in your career so far?

BD: I have admired various programmes during my tenure at NTPC. Some of the initiatives targeted towards the children included Quiz programme by Derek O’Brien. Through this, we intend to promote a quiz culture within our people and amongst the extended family. NTPC used to organize these competitions in each plant. The best entries from the plants would then get filtered at the regional level followed by the central level. Another notable initiative by NTPC was the cultural programme swhich were conducted on their anniversary. Additionally, once in every two or three years, they used to organize NTPC Sports Meets. These initiatives aimed at corporate wellness were rather unique compared to the traditional ones.

NI: How are the initiatives regarding Corporate Wellness decided upon? Could you take us through one such initiative that got institutionalized at Blue Dart?

BD: It takes a thorough research and understanding about the people and their needs in order to finalize any people-centric initiative. At Blue Dart, we are always on the lookout to find better initiatives to improve corporate well-being. Our Talent Management team and Human Capital team continuously study and benchmark the existing and prospect initiatives. We have a robust feedback mechanism to understand people’s emotional and psychological needs. Once we get a broad idea to formulate a initiative, we conceptualize a framework and develop a plan for the same. The plan is then shared with our Management Team for their feedback. This is critical as it helps us eliminate doubts and discrepancies. After incorporating the feedback from all the Blue Darters, we roll out the initiatives. Last year, we launched Appreciation Program, Idea Management Scheme, Work-life Balance Programme and Blue Bubbles, etc. which have been received positively by the Blue Darters. We have also been participating in the ‘Best Employers’ and ‘Best place to work’ studies to understand our ranking. I feel happy to share that Blue Dart was ranked as one of India’s Best Companies to Work for in 2016 by Great Place to Work Institute, India.

AB: What have been some of the illustrative challenges that you have faced while implementing such initiatives?

BD: Challenges are bound to arise when the intended design objectives and the end user’s perceptions of the design objectives do not match. This is likely to happen with larger initiatives. Hence, I personally feel that any initiative taken up by the organization should be simple. For larger initiatives it is always better to divide them into phases. This helps people and management to apprehend the message and intention gradually. It is also essential to simplify the communication to avoid unnecessary jargons and preconceptions. It is also imperative to involve the critical stakeholders from design phase itself. Despite these measures, some initiatives are successful and some fail while some require alterations to put forth a better programme. Therefore, it is important to sync people’s objective with those of the organization. Regardless of several challenges, we continuously strive to implement the initiatives by taking feedback and bring improvement. Eventually, if any initiative is unable to add value to the people and to the organization, we revoke it.
NI: What would you say has helped you tackle these challenges?

BD: We have special change management trainings designed especially for our line managers. They are trained to tackle and communicate the change effectively. We believe in transparency and hence the changes and developments are communicated to all the Blue Darters at various levels to understand their feedback. I personally get involved and check with my fellow colleagues across the country on several issues. We also communicate regularly with all Blue Darters to keep them posted on further updates.

AB: What have been some of the outcomes that you have achieved through these initiatives?

BD: We have been receiving extremely positive feedback for all our initiatives and this can be gauged through the proactive participation of all Blue Darters and increase in the ESS (Employee Engagement Score). We also have a feedback measurement mechanism that evaluates the outcome of these initiatives through various channels such as the effectiveness survey, one-to-one feedback sessions, e-mails, etc. The employee retention rate is also one of the most positive outcomes that we have achieved because of the work life balance and healthy atmosphere in the organization.

NI: What metrics does your organization use to track the impact of its corporate wellness initiatives?

BD: We measure the impact on the basis of three critical parameters, namely: the active leadership score, the ESS and people participation. We also try to incorporate the retention rate along with our score in the ‘Best Employer’ and ‘Best place to work’ studies to measure where we stand in corporate wellness and organizational health. Another metric that we use is feedback. For example, we often conduct a survey and feedback session to note whether the feedback score is improving. These are a few metrics through which effectiveness can be understood and assessed.

AB: Would you like to share some success stories regarding major wellness initiatives in your organization?

BD: We have quite a few noteworthy initiatives and ‘I Love My Blue Dart’ campaign is one of the most significant initiatives. The next best programme according to me would be the ‘Appreciation Week’ initiative. Both these initiatives have gone down very well. We also have another initiative for Blue Darter’s children who are appearing for 10th and 12th board exams. This has also received a great response. We sanction 7 days of special leave during the examination period. We also assist children to choose a suitable career by coaching classes through our UPSTAIRS programme.

NI: What can be the role of internal and external partners in improving the quality of corporate wellness strategies and initiatives?

BD: External agents are expedient to benchmark and understand what people are really doing. This is a very effective way of recognising and learning about the best practices followed by other organizations. There are experts and consultants who also aid in enriching initiatives. Our presence in Blue Dart country, with 700+ offices and 10500+ employees, it is not possible to reach out to the last man in the system without the involvement of the key managers and the line managers. The line managers’ participation and involvement also is very important. We have been successful because of the alignment of the line managers who have been champions of the initiatives. Without them, the corporate wellness programs would never have been successful.

AB: From your perspective, how can the wellness initiatives become more sustainable in organizations?

BD: To make wellness initiatives sustainable, two things need to be focused upon from the people's perspective. Firstly, it should be accepted by everyone. It should benefit them. People should see value in
these programs. They should be able to see that these programs are helping them grow, work better and contribute more so that they feel emotionally and psychologically satisfied. Secondly, with any program that is initiated, it is critical to ensure whether the organization will be able to sustain the programme. Additionally, it is best to initiate the program and then expand it. At the same time, commitment from the top management, Human Capital team and the line managers is critical for making any initiative sustainable.

NI: Where do you think the future of corporate wellness lies? What can we expect from organizations in the near future?

BD: A new report from Transparency Market Research, titled ‘Corporate Wellness Market – Global Industry Analysis, Size, Share, Growth, Trends and Forecast 2015-2023,’ states that the global corporate wellness market is expected to expand at a rapid pace during the period between 2015 and 2023 owing to factors such as the introduction of new discounted wellness programs and the many benefits of offering corporate wellness programs to people. The sedentary lifestyle of corporate personnel has led to growth in the number of people suffering from depression, obesity, hypertension, and other cardiovascular diseases. Corporate wellness programs aim to maintain and improve the health of employees. These programs are beneficial for corporations in many ways, as they help in minimizing the attrition rate and in turn maximizing productivity. The company’s profits are affected heavily by reduced productivity due to absenteeism. However, this can be avoided through effective wellness programs.

Also, numerous factors are changing rapidly. Millennials are entering the workforce and are becoming a major part of it. They desire flexibility. Hence, HR policies and programs have to be customised to meet the requirements of this changing demographic at the workplace. Any corporate wellness program needs to consider the importance of reaching out to them rapidly and persuasively. This can be done through various methods such as utilising web programs, mobile applications on smartphones, etc.
Arya Roychowdhury (AR) is pursuing his post-graduation in Human Resources Management at XLRI. During his summer internship with Flipkart, he worked on enhancing employee experience. Prior to XLRI, he pursued his post-graduation in Computer Application from SICS, Pune.

An avid Arsenal fan, Arya loves to play football and has represented XLRI in various tournaments. He loves to play the guitar and listen to the Blues.

Bhavya Sharma (BS) is pursuing her post-graduation in Human Resources Management at XLRI, Jamshedpur. She interned with Boston Consulting Group during her summers, where she worked on efficiency enhancement of employees. Prior to XLRI, she pursued her graduation in Mathematics and Computing engineering from Delhi College of Engineering.

An avid reader and debater, Bhavya takes a keen interest in international affairs and has been selected as a delegate for conferences like Harvard Project for Asian & International Relations and World Business Dialogue.
Expert Speak:
In Conversation with Dr Tata L Raghu Ram and Dr Madhukar Shulka from XLRI

Dr Tata L. Raghu Ram (RR) is an Associate Professor in Strategic Management Area, XLRI Jamshedpur. By qualification, he has a Masters in Limnology; and Ph.D. in Biodiversity Impact Assessment. He is a Fulbright Environmental Leadership Fellow, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He has also been the National Project Coordinator, World Bank aided Environmental Economics Research Committee, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai.

Dr Raghu Ram has a work experience of 25 years. His work explores the interface of Sustainable development and Economic development. His consulting assignments include MoEF & CC, GOI, the World Bank, Power Finance Corporation, Coal India Limited, Government of Jharkhand etc. He has edited two books and published over 30 research papers in international and national journals.

Dr Madhukar Shukla (MS) is Chairperson, Fr Arrupe Centre for Ecology & Sustainability and Professor (Strategic Management & OB) at XLRI Jamshedpur (India), with interest in the development sector and social entrepreneurship.

Madhukar has been serving as an assessor for the Echoing Green Fellowship Competition, a global competition to identify social entrepreneurs, and is on jury for the oikos Case Competition on Social Entrepreneurship. He has been the Conference Coordinator for the National Conference on Social Entrepreneurship since 2009, and is also a Member, Livelihood India Advisory Group. He has authored more than 30 papers to professional journals and has published three books. He holds a Masters degree in Psychology from Lucknow University and is a PhD from IIT, Kanpur. Prior to Joining XLRI in 1990, he has worked with National Productivity Council and Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad. He was also a visiting faculty to ESADE, Barcelona during 1993-94.

AR: Today corporate responsibility aims to complement economic performance of the company with high levels of social and environmental performance. Do you feel that this paradigm shift is an indicator of the fact that sustainability has an impact on corporate wellness, and organizations are implicitly, if not explicitly, ratifying this?

RR: It is true that the present day sustainability responses are aimed at pulling together profit seeking, social wellbeing and environmental wellbeing under the broader concept of “Triple Bottom Line” approach. This requires companies to achieve resource efficiencies and reduce waste generation. In operational terms this translates into achieving “resource decoupling” and “impact decoupling. By reducing environmental pollution and improving resource efficiencies, more and more Corporates are now able to find a viable business case in terms of cost reductions, risk avoidance, revenue generation and brand value creation. However, this business case is oriented towards sending signals to a set of stakeholders like customers, governments, judiciary, financial institutions, social activist groups and shareholders. If we look at these stakeholder groups carefully they are all the external stakeholders.

However, the other dimension of sustainability that could create value is when we concentrate on the internal stakeholders like employees, managers, executives etc. In other words by also focusing on the internal stakeholders what we can achieve is the organizational well-being in all its dimensions viz. physical well-being, emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being.

MS: The senior level professionals in organization are concerned about the social and environmental performance of the company, but the vision never gets translated to the grass root level and is never
implemented effectively. For instance, the KPIs of a salesperson never incorporate social or environmental initiatives. The vision of sustainability should be embedded at all levels, and people must be made accountable for social and environmental performance. Also, most of these impacts are not immediate in nature and very complex to measure.

BS: Various studies show that CEOs are beginning to realize that sustainability is important for the long term success of the organization. On the other hand, studies have also shown that employee well-being is dependent on the organizational culture as well. Could you suggest some ways to embed sustainability into the organizational culture?

RR: Employee well-being is interlinked with the wider organizational sustainability culture. Though more and more CEOs and C-suite executives acknowledge that sustainability is important, the challenge they face is on how to permeate and create a sustainability culture across all hierarchical levels in an organization. Embedding sustainability culture into an organization requires that HR managers play a more proactive role in translating CEO/organizational vision into reality. This could be achieved through a multi pronged approach. A good starting point could be to embed sustainability criterion into employee life cycle management, followed by awareness creation, showcasing “low hanging fruit” gains to garner wider buy-in for sustainability, crowd sourcing sustainability ideas and creating sustainability champions etc.

AR: Many modern organizations include sustainability as a key section of their report, of which employee safety is a major indicator. Do you think employee wellness should also be included as a sustainability indicator?

RR: The number of Corporates publishing sustainability reports under the Global Reporting Initiative is ever increasing. Some aspects of employee well-being like the physical well-being aspect, like number of accidents, are routinely reported under various us mandates. But going beyond and reporting on the other dimensions of employee well-being like emotional, social or psychological well-being requires that first we need to develop a measure or a scale of measurement. Then reporting becomes easy. Wellness is not a boardroom priority in most organizations. However, this attitude is beginning to change as employee wellness is being given more importance. However, the problem lies in the fact that there is no uniform system for measuring wellness. While we may look at certain key indicators for reference, the inherent subjectivity is a hindrance.

Another way of demonstrating the commitment of the top leadership to employee well-being is either through the adoption of a certification program like the OSHAS or adopting a voluntary guideline like the ISO 26000 which also includes the internal stakeholders' well-being as one of the key issues. I am sure in the near future the sustainability-employee well-being inter-linkages will gain a lot more importance and it will also get captured and reported routinely.

BS: We came across certain practices like ‘Food Sourcing’ followed in organizations, where companies grow most of the ingredients used in their meals within their premises. The idea is to be environmentally friendly along with promoting wellness for their employees. Can you suggest any more such practices which lie at the intersection of sustainability and corporate wellness, and can be implemented in the Indian context?

RR: Going beyond the hygiene initiatives like food sourcing, there are bigger opportunities that Corporates can tap to create employee well being opportunities. For example, creating sustainable office spaces (e.g. LEED platinum rated green buildings) has been found to have positive influence on emotional and psychological
well-being of employees. Other than reducing energy, water & waste management bills, green buildings have been found to also increase employee productivity by 10 to 15%. In certified green hospital buildings, patient recovery periods are found to be lower. In India’s medical tourism context, this translates into higher patient turnover rates which augurs well with CFOs as well, and also could act as a brand differentiator.

AR: Illness is a major reason for loss of productive hours in organizations. Can a sustainability-driven approach be used to combat this problem? Could this be extended beyond the organization to bring about change in the community as well?

RR: The causes for illness could be many and some of the illnesses are directly due to the environmental pollution like air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, exposure to hazardous chemicals etc. Now dose-response functions for many of the pollutants are established by medical science, WHO etc. From a business perspective, producing lower levels of pollution will have positive or reduced health consequences on the external stake holders leading to wider social acceptance. The same principles will also apply to the internal stakeholders. As the ambient pollution levels go down the health related consequences will also go down which indirectly help the organizational health itself. For example, noise pollution is found to have negative psychological consequences. Maintaining noise below certain decibels will negate this problem and contributes to organizational well-being.

BS: What is the role of innovation in driving sustainability initiatives in organizations? Does this also affect corporate wellness?

RR: Sustainability is the mother source of innovations now-a-days. As the post industrial revolution economic order transforms and moves towards a sustainable economy through disruptive technologies a lot of churning will happen. Old order Corporates will have to adapt and transform or concede market dominance to emerging Corporates. This process of churning could create new pressure points for organizational well-being in terms of emotional and psychological stress and top executive burnouts, if not handled carefully.

MS: There is a definitely a role of innovation, but then there is also a cost. We can have laptops and devices, which consume much less electricity but the organizations have already invested in them, and replacing them would definitely lead to increased costs. It impacts the sustainability of your organization, but it has a detrimental impact somewhere else. E-waste recycling is not very developed in India. It also has an impact on the health of the people involved in the disposal of such waste. Currently, organizations feel more of a ‘feel-good’ link between innovation and sustainability innovations. There is a need for organizations to develop a comprehensive understanding of the impact such initiatives can have not only within their own organizations but also beyond it. Corporate wellness shall face a trickle-down effect of the overall impact.

AR: The human resources department in most organizations is now becoming environmentally conscious, and is incorporating various practices like promoting environmental practices as corporate culture, incentivizing people for their contribution to environment etc. Do you think encouraging employees with a proactive environmental posture; can also boost their consciousness towards their own health and well-being?

RR: Many companies have already or increasingly embedding sustainability into employee life cycle management process. Beyond incentives, rewards, linking pay to sustainability KPIs, many companies are aiming to create a workforce that is unconsciously proactive towards sustainability. This is happening through encouraging life style changes (car pooling, organic foods, and nicotine de-addiction advisory) to higher order initiatives like company paid involvement in community service, incentives to purchase electric/hybrid cars, etc. All these will not only have positive bearing on organizational sustainability outcomes but will also translate into better well-being of individuals.
BS: Job satisfaction for the new generation workforce encompasses a plethora of eclectic factors ranging from compensation to the impact their work has on society. By incorporating sustainability initiatives, do you feel that organizations can cater to the emotional well-being of the employees?

RR: Attracting and retaining talent is a major HRM challenge. Companies that are ahead on the sustainability maturity curve are found to be attracting and retaining better talent. On the other hand, it has also been found that employee satisfaction levels are lower in companies that are sustainability laggards. In other words employee well-being in all its denominations will be higher in companies that consciously embed sustainability into its organizational culture.

Sustainability initiatives can also bring together people to collaborate better and instill a culture of teamwork. This is a result of the fact that employees have a sense of pride in their company. By communicating to the employees the results of various sustainability initiatives, an organization can boost the morale of the employees.

References


Employee Wellness Programs in the Context of an Emerging Epidemic of Lifestyle Diseases: What Works and What Doesn’t?

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Employee Wellness Programs in the Context of an Emerging Epidemic of Lifestyle Diseases: What Works and What Doesn’t?

Introduction

Nobel laureate Dr Amartya Sen once commented in an interview that India is the only country in the world which is trying to become a global economic power with an uneducated and unhealthy labour force. While he may have made a generalized comment about entire India’s labour force, it may not be far from truth when it comes to the health of the organized industry’s workforce in the country, although education may not be a major problem in this section of the society. While India sustains its fight to emerge as a stronger economic power in the South East Asia region, a potential problem that looms large is the emergence of a large proportion of productive workforce becoming unhealthy and therefore affecting economic productivity. With 69.1 million people estimated to be suffering from diabetes, India loses over 1 lakh adults every year due to this disease alone. It may be surprising to note that a Lancet study published in 2014 quoted nearly 4% of Indian men and women as obese, only to place India after USA and China in the list of countries with maximum obesity. Interestingly younger adults in India are increasingly falling prey to diabetes and cardiovascular morbidity and premature mortality. Among the working population, particularly in the corporate and the industry, increasingly sedentary lifestyle, poor food habits and sub-optimal work-life balance and a host of other factors seem to be linked with chronic health conditions. Sporadic studies have documented high prevalence of musculo skeletal symptoms, high blood pressure, diabetes, abnormal lipids, obesity as well as depression, anxiety and insomnia, in the IT and BPO sector. While scanty literature is available about studies in other sectors, a recent study in South India suggested over half of the employees in a banking sector organization had tested suspicious for diabetes with women far exceeding men. An ASSOCHAM’s corporate employees’ survey 2015 reports that among the 1,250 corporate employees from 150 companies across 18 broad sectors like media, telecom and knowledge process outsourcing that were surveyed, 42.5% had depression or general anxiety and 23% had obesity. Diabetes and High blood pressure were prevalent among 9% and 8% employees respectively and 4% suffered from heart disease. The survey reported that nearly half of the survey population felt fatigue regularly and 80% did either no exercise at all or less than 1 hour per week. Interestingly over 80% of the survey population belonged to an age group of less than 40 years. Thus, it suggests alarming signals for workplace health and wellness under current circumstances than reported ever before in India.

Evolution of employee wellness programs

The history of workplace wellness can be traced back to the time of the Italian physician Bernardino Ramazzini (1633-1714) who first wrote about the effects of work related exposure on the health of workers. He recommended physicians while examining their patients to ask, “What is your occupation?” In 1817, it was Robert Marcus Owen, known as founder of socialism in England, who proposed a slogan “Eight hours labour, eight hours recreation, eight hours rest.” A hundred years later, the eight-hour day movement or 40-hour week movement, was discussed in the International Labour Organization’s Hours of Work (Industry) Convention, 1919 and as of now, 52 countries have ratified it. The Ford Motor Company was the first to initiate the 8-hour work day policy in 1914. On the other hand, the term wellness has been through changing definitions ever since it started appearing in the 19th century American intellectual and religious movements. In 1970s the term wellness acquired a new definition in the USA – active health promotion through lifestyle change, while the definition still continues to mutate. However, in Europe, it became associated with spas and non-medical therapies. Today, it has expanded to include marketing of products of all sorts, even remotely associated with health and well-being.
In the modern day world, workplace safety and personal health or workers are distinctly separated, the former being restricted to basic safety training on the use of protective gear, work organization, and safety-enhancing modifications while health promotion at worksite encompasses health risk assessments to initiatives that are aimed at workers’ personal health. However, evidence from studies show that workers’ improved personal health and functional status have a bearing on worker productivity and lowered total costs. These studies have shown that workers’ health is of significant value to business and industry and to the health of the nation's economy at large.

**Effectiveness of employee wellness programs**

In the era of economic volatility, many conscious organizations associate poor health of their employees with absenteeism, reduced performance, poor safety standards and a diminished employee morale along with high employee turnover. Yet the question remains, whether well-conceived employee wellness programs can reduce absenteeism, reduce risks of undue health problems and healthcare costs. Also, the question remains largely unanswered about which level of preventive programs works the best. Usually, primary prevention programs include exercise and fitness, healthy eating, weight management, stress management, moderate alcohol consumption etc, targeted at generally healthy people so that they can prevent chronic health risks in future. Secondary prevention programs, sometimes termed as lifestyle management programs are aimed at reducing known risk factors such as smoking, sedentary lifestyle, poor nutrition, excessive alcohol intake, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood glucose, overweight etc. On the other hand, tertiary prevention programs, synonymous with disease management programs, are directed at patients with existing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, various cancers, joint problems, and depression. While primary prevention programs are rarely cited, secondary and tertiary prevention programs do exist in many pragmatic organizations globally as well as in India. Contemplation about which approach gives higher ROI to the organization always perplexes the management.

A well-known study by Rand conducted among 6 lakh employees from 150 companies across various sectors in the USA showed that while most employees (around 87%) participated in the lifestyle management programs, yet the bulk of health care cost savings (around 87%) came from the disease management programs, although participation rates in the two sets of programs were exactly the reverse. Essentially the Rand study revealed that ROI from secondary prevention programs is low despite a participation rate from the employees whereas, disease management programs fair significantly better in overall cost savings but they need to be designed well enough to ensure high participation rate. Similarly, a study on Pepsi-co wellness program showed that in seven years of continuous participation in one or both components was associated with an average reduction of $30 in health care cost per member per month. When each component was looked at individually, it was found that the disease management component was associated with lower costs in comparison to the lifestyle management component. The disease management component reduced health care costs by $136 per member per month, driven by a 29 percent reduction in hospital admissions.

Thus it is possible that well designed workplace wellness programs may reduce health risks, delay or avoid the onset of chronic diseases, and lower health care costs for employees with manifest chronic disease. It was evident that the lifestyle management programs do not necessarily reduce health care costs or even lead to net savings unless an evidence-based lifestyle management program is in place. While methodological issues around the study designs cannot be ruled out, given the challenges of such studies, yet the associations strongly indicate that targeting employees who already have chronic diseases through structured disease management programs can lead to higher ROIs for the employers.

**EWPs in the context of India**

The objective behind running wellness program is to improve performance and productivity or to reduce indirect cost related to absenteeism and presenteeism (on-the-job effectiveness). A study in India by Price water house Coopers that interviewed various employers indicates that improved productivity and reduction of
indirect cost remain the primary reasons for investment in wellness programs. Well designed and executed EWPs cut the employee healthcare costs. Such programs make organizations an attractive place to work with and remain an effective intervention to improve corporate image.

As Indian population ages during the next 25 years, the total number of deaths of employees still in their prime will increase. This increase can largely be associated with chronic diseases. Projections by WHO suggest that chronic deaths will account for slightly less than three quarter of all deaths in India by 2030. It also indicates that more than 20 % of Indian population will suffer from at least one chronic disease and more than 10 % will suffer from more than one. People younger than 45 years will be most affected. This age bracket could be a huge cause of concern for employers. Typically, a higher socio-economic status can be expected to lead to adoption of healthy behaviors. On the contrary, in India the same is resulting in reduction in physical activity and increasing rates of obesity and diabetes. Uptake of unhealthy behaviors is the emerging pattern in the current phase of Indian socio-economic development. A baseline survey of 20,000 randomly-selected employees and their family members in 10 different industries in India (age group 10-69 years) revealed half of men and women in the study population were overweight while a third had central obesity. Biochemical tests suggested that diabetes and hypertension were present in 10% and 27% of the participants. A follow up case study reported by the WHO showed that using cognitive behavior techniques and theory of health belief model, this program largely focused on changing the unhealthy behaviors and promoting healthy behavior related to cardiovascular health in the target community. In addition, it aimed to provide evidence based care for CVD and Diabetes.

Catchy and simple messages in regional languages were disseminated to the target population through different communication strategies such as regular and focused health education classes, film shows, seminars, group discussion, Q&A session etc. at each site. All high risk individuals were identified and referred to a health care facility with follow ups. Individual and group counseling on diet, tobacco use and physical activity were conducted for those established for high risk. An evaluation at the end of five years found significant reduction in diastolic blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol levels among the intervention population against the control group. Apart from clinical parameters, the knowledge and understanding levels showed a significant improvement in intervention group.

Several Indian employers do recognize chronic diseases as a growing threat to their workers and therefore institutionalize various employee wellness programs although it has not become as widespread yet. For instance, Infosys technologies runs a Health Assessment Lifestyle Enrichment (HALE) programme that addresses employee health issues and the impact of stress on employees and their families in four broad components including health, safety, leisure and emotional well-being. A HALE hotline service is available 24X7 for all employees in need of professional counselling. Similarly, various other modalities such as the Healthy You (a desktop widget) and the HALE tool (an online assessment tool for physical and mental health) come in handy for employees’ overall well-being. Similarly, Wipro provides an employee assistance program named Mitr for employees in need of emotional counseling and health monitoring initiative called Fit for Life. In Larson and Tubro’s Sustainability Report 2015, the company claims that 10% of its employees improved their health index (a composite measure that the company uses) through its multi-disciplinary interventions through counselling, awareness sessions, diagnostic camps and workshops across locations. The program targeted cancer, diabetes, cardiac disease, obesity, ergonomic issues and stress.

Not only private corporations are engaging in innovative employee programs. The Coal India Limited, a Maha Ratna Public sector company of India, introduced a health score card for its employees in Kolkata, CIL’s headquarter, in 2015, in order to help its employees track their own health records and take necessary remedial steps as needed. Within one year of the initiative, a third of the employees showed higher scores following preventive and promotive measures.

Conclusion

As already mentioned, there are many corporations in both public and private sector that have initiated pragmatic steps to provide comprehensive, preventive and curative health services to their employees. However, evaluation of such services is almost non-existent in India. Well-designed research studies are a
need of the hour to document the best practices while making recommendations both at policy level and for individual organizations to imbibe a culture of establishing effective employee wellness programs.

From an economic perspective, employee friendly organizations must prioritize the interventions that are most cost effective and feasible to implement in their own context. At the same time, Wellness should not be viewed as solely an HR initiative but as a core part of company for its sustainability and long term success. The following recommendations may be a starting point for interested corporations interested in employee health and improved productivity.

1. Employees must feel that they have ownership in wellness programs. This ownership will come when they will feel it is helping them in improving their personal health and functional status. A mechanism in which employees can track their own health records and take necessary remedial steps needs to designed. A health score card based appraisal system seems promising, keeping the employee at the centre.

2. Considering the emerging epidemic of metabolic and lifestyle disorders in India, it would be wise of companies to focus on diagnosing the potential employees at high risk of developing chronic diseases as well as those who already have manifest diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions etc, through structured disease diagnosis and management programs. Available evidence suggests that it can lead to higher ROIs for the employers.

3. Wellness programs seem to be more effective when cognitive behaviour change techniques are part of them. They must focus on influencing the shift from the unhealthy behaviours to healthier ones within the given occupational context. In order to do this, structural and operational changes at cafeterias, beverage outlets along with making work spaces friendlier towards higher and rewarding physical activities can be considered.

4. As India’s younger adults are increasingly falling prey to diabetes and cardiovascular morbidity and premature mortality, programs must look at age specific interventions in diagnosis, prevention and control. Extending employee wellness programs to cover family members and in centivizing participation are worth attempting.

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Wellbeing: Route to Building Thriving Employees and Organizations

About the Author

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Wellbeing: A Primer

Each one of us wants to improve some area of our life; for some it is health, others finances, few want to have a better career and some better relationships. Few people want to contribute to the society and others just want peace of mind, learn yoga and meditation. But most of the people fail to realize that all these areas are interconnected and dependent on each other. Well-being is about how all the above factors interact; it is as much an individual responsibility as it is an organization’s. The terms well-being and wellness are used interchangeably and refer to the overall measures being taken to impact the whole being.

Workplace wellness is defined as “an organized, employer-sponsored programme that is designed to support employees and, sometimes, their families as they adopt and sustain behaviors that reduce health risks, improve quality of life, enhance personal effectiveness and benefit the organization’s bottom line” (Berry et al. 2010).

Based on a webinar by John Barlow, well-being primarily has two key facets, namely, feeling good and functioning well. Feeling good is a feeling of happiness, contentment, engagement, curiosity and so on; functioning well is a result of experiencing positive relationships, having a sense of purpose and feeling a sense of control over one’s life (Barlow, 2010).

Why Wellbeing/Wellness

In the article “Why you hate work,” published by the New York Times, Sunday Review (Schwartz & Porath, 2014), one of the key findings cited as per a Harvard Business Review survey covering 12,000 employees is that the employees feel more productive and satisfied when four of their core needs are met: emotional, physical, mental and spiritual.

In 2009, a workplace wellness alliance was founded with the aim of improving employee health and wellbeing across geographies, sectors and industries (World Economic Forum, 2013). 50% of the employees today spend majority of their time at work, and only 8% of the employees agree that they experience overall wellbeing because of their work (Gallup 2013).

Today, this alliance has over 150 members with 5 million direct employees across nine industry sectors. The alliance aims at educating and promoting wellness and healthier behaviors, which has a multiplier effect on employee’s family and communities.

The Various Facets of Wellbeing

Tom Rath, leader of Gallup’s workplace research and leadership consulting practice, and Jim Harter, Gallup’s chief scientist for workplace management and wellbeing, with a group of researchers conducted a study to find what wellbeing is and what contributes toward an individual’s wellbeing (in an organization). They surveyed people from over 150 countries and worked with professionals such as economists, psychologists and sociologists for this research. This group has been working for about 50 years to find answer to this question; as a result of that, they listed five elements which are essential for the employees, irrespective of which culture or country they belong to, making them universal (Jennifer Robinson, 2010).

The book “Five essentials of wellbeing,” which is the outcome of the research, elaborates about different aspects of human wellbeing and their impact on an individual. These aspects are (explained in detail, later in the section) as follows:

- **Career wellbeing** – To have something to occupy your time and like what you do.
- **Social wellbeing** – To have strong relationships and love in your life.
• **Physical wellbeing** – To maintain a good health so that your body supports you and gives you energy to lead a normal life.

• **Financial wellbeing** – To ensure that you are secure about your finances and manage them well.

• **Community wellbeing** – To contribute in making the communities you live in better, whether it is your organization, school, university or town.

Rath and Harter carried out a research and found that these elements are universal and interconnected; when these factors are fully realized, people thrive and so does the businesses they work with (Robinson, 2010).

One of the most successful programs at Google running since 2007 is “Search Inside Yourself.” This is a holistic program which runs over seven weeks and covers areas such as mindfulness, yoga and nutrition and helps employees manage their holistic wellbeing.

Keeping all the above in mind, in this article two more facets are added as follows:

• **Mental wellbeing**: A positive state of mind, which helps the individual to function in the society and meet the demands of life.

• **Spiritual wellbeing**: Having a higher purpose and meaning in life and the ability to connect with self, others, nature, art, literature and a power greater than ourselves.

Although 66% of the employees thrive in at least one of these areas, less than 7% thrive on the top five. The purpose of this article is to acquaint CEOs, HR leaders, practitioners and employees with the concept of wellbeing and what they can do to build thriving lives and organizations.

1. **Career wellbeing**

Employees spend more waking hours at work than anywhere else, yet when asked do you like what you do, only 20% of the respondents have a strong yes as an answer (Gallup Panel Study), and hence career wellbeing is critical. It refers to our job giving us a chance to use our strengths, and undoubtedly it should be our area of interest and should provide us a sense of purpose. In the book “Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us,” the author Daniel Pink cites meaning as one of the most important drivers of motivation for employees.

Career wellbeing has a huge impact on all other areas of life; people with high career wellbeing are twice as likely to be thriving in their lives overall (Gallup Panel Study). Unemployment is the only major life event from which people do not fully recover within five years (Clark et al. 2008). But the good thing is that for a great career wellbeing, pay-cheque is not a necessary condition; what you need is to find out what you enjoy doing and has a chance of doing it every day.

A very strong lever of career wellbeing is using your strengths; employees who are able to use their strengths are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs and have three times better quality of life. If we can increase the career wellbeing, it can reduce the risk of anxiety and depression for employees (Agrawal & Harter, 2009).

Another factor which has a huge impact on career wellbeing is the relationship with the manager; in a research study covering 300 workers in Sweden, it was found that those who considered their managers as the least competent had 24% higher risk of serious heart problems. Hence, it is imperative for both the employees and the organization to focus on enhancing career wellbeing.

The following are the tips for the employees to boost their career wellbeing:

• Know your strengths and use them
• Find people who share similar passion and encourage your growth
• Find ways of spending more time with people and teams which share similar passion
• Find a part of the job which excites you
• Know that career wellbeing has little to do with the paycheque
The following are the tips for the organizations to boost the career wellbeing of their employees:

- Know the strengths of your employees and find the right roles for them
- Coaching and leadership training for people managers
- Help employees find meaning in the work they do and connect them to a higher purpose
- Build robust talent management and career pathing practices
- Support employees completely when outplacing them or putting them on a PIP

2. Social wellbeing

There is a beautiful saying that we are the sum total of the five people who we spend the most time with. A 30 year longitudinal study of 12,000 people by Harvard found that your chances of being happy increase by 15% if someone who is in your direct connection is happy. Nicholas Christakis in his work has said that the health and wellbeing of one person has an impact on the health and wellbeing of others (Rath & Harter, 2010, Gallup Press).

The people we spend time with have a direct impact on our weight. If a close friend gains too much weight, it increases your chances of gaining weight by 57%. In his book “Vital friends: The people you cannot afford to live without,” Tom Rath shares that people with very few social ties have twice the risk of dying from heart diseases and twice as likely to catch common cold. He also found out that people who have a best friend with a very healthy diet are twice as likely to have a similar diet (Rath, T., 2006, Gallup Press).

Gallup in its 12-engagement survey question asks “Do you have best friend at work?” Our relationships at work have a huge impact on our emotional and physical wellbeing. But only 30% of the people surveyed have a best friend at work. These set of employees are seven times as likely to be engaged in their jobs, have better performance, work with customers better and have less accidents at work. While those without a best friend at work have only 1 in 12 chances of being engaged (Rath & Harter, 2010, Gallup Press).

Social wellbeing starts with having at least one close friendship and the quality of that relationship also plays an important role. Every additional close friendship adds more to a person’s wellbeing and quality of life. Social wellbeing has a cascading effect on other facets of wellbeing.

One of the big challenges that organizations are facing today is early attrition and the main reason attributed is the isolation of new employees. A lot of organizations use referral programs to hire; there is a significant difference in the retention, performance and engagement of these employees.

The tips for the employees to boost their social wellbeing are listed as follows:

- Develop and invest in two to three close friendships
- Budget time for social interactions with family and friends
- Have a buddy to partner on your health, financial and career goals
- Connect with like minded people and teams at work
- Cultivate a hobby/passion which encourages social interactions

The tips for the organizations to boost the social wellbeing of their employees are listed as follows:

- Have a robust engagement calendar with fun work, celebrations and social interactions as important components
- Have a strong internal social media tool
- Have regular town halls and internal communication forums
- Robust onboarding and mentoring program
- Promote internal referral as top choice of hiring
3. Physical wellbeing

The contribution of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiac health and mental health has been growing both in the developed and emerging markets; this also has a significant impact on employee productivity, performance absenteeism and cost. China would lose approximately $558 billion on account of NCDs (WHO 2005). 80% of heart diseases, stroke and type 2 diabetes and 40% of cancer can be prevented through interventions affecting the primary risk factors.

A lot of this can be attributed to the increase in obesity. More than 2.8 million people across the world die on account of being overweight; this is the fifth leading cause of mortality worldwide. 44% of diabetes, 23% of cardiac issues and 7%-41% of cancer issues can be attributed to being overweight (World Economic Forum, 2013).

These issues can be tackled by promoting lifestyle changes, increased physical activity and healthy eating habits. Good physical wellbeing is thus about having a healthy body, exercising regularly, getting optimum sleep and making good dietary choices. All these lead to parameters such as sugar, blood pressure, body mass index (BMI) and waist-to-height (WH) ratio at the optimum level and the individual having enough energy to live well.

Another important aspect of improving physical wellbeing is regular physical activity. Although most of us are aware that 30 minutes or more exercise is recommended, of the 400,000 Americans surveyed by Gallup, only 27% met this benchmark. Only 20 minutes of exercise can have a significant impact on an individual’s mood (Rath & Harter, 2010, Gallup Press). Exercise has also been called the best anti-depressant.

The tips for the employees to boost their physical wellbeing are as follows:

- Take responsibility for your health
- Know your current critical health parameters and have an action plan for a healthier you
- Make healthier choices when ordering food and buying groceries
- Sleep well, that is, 7–8 hours
- Have a fitness goal and action plan – make time for exercise, stroll every 45 minutes and take stairs

The tips for the organizations to boost the physical wellbeing of their employees are as follows:

- Build awareness and culture around healthy lifestyles
- Training sessions, initiatives and contests around health, nutrition and physical activities
- Incentivize and gamify health initiatives
- Use insurance provider for online resources on promoting physical wellbeing
- Annual medical review and health advise

4. Financial wellbeing

In a survey carried out by Standard & Poor covering 150,000 adults in 148 countries, two of the three adults were found to be financially illiterate, hence the imperative to build awareness on financial wellbeing. Financial wellbeing is often confused with the amount of money we have, rather it is more about how secure we are about our finances. It is about the ability to do what you love with the finances you have. Financial security has three times the impact of your income on a person’s wellbeing, whereas too much focus on money can reduce a person’s wellbeing (Rath & Harter, 2010, Gallup Press).

Gallup and its research has found a direct correlation between the overall wellbeing and the per capita GDP in a survey covering 132 countries (Deaton, 2008). A Harvard research showed that people spending on others had a higher wellbeing than those spending on themselves. In another research, instead of the actual amount of money, the way it was spent had a higher correlation to wellbeing (Rath & Harter, 2010, Gallup Press).
Another key finding has been that spending on experiences has a longer impact on our wellbeing than spending on material purchases (Carter & Gilovich, 2010). Even with organizations, we increasingly see an effort toward providing their employees experiences as incentives as the memory and impact stay longer.

The two strategies that work well in having a high financial wellbeing are to save before you spend, once again linked to delaying gratification. Another one is to start investing early in your life based on your risk profile and appetite.

The tips for the employees to boost their financial wellbeing are as follows:

• Manage finances well
• Spend money wisely, avoid debt
• Spend money on experiences rather than things
• Build a healthy kitty for retirement and old age
• Invest in a comprehensive health insurance
• Save before you spend
• Give, give, give

The tips for the organizations to boost the financial wellbeing of their employees are as follows:

• Help employees with financial planning and advise – especially the young employees
• Have opportunities for long-term wealth creation for employees
• Have incentives not just in monetary terms but as experiences
• Create strong retirement plans
• Create a bucket of innovative benefits

5. Community wellbeing

Community wellbeing is perhaps the broadest of all the seven wellbeing facets. At the basic level for a lot of people in the developing countries, it is about access to clean potable water, quality of air and feeling safe. At the next level, it is about living in communities, which suit well to your family, interests, personality and so on. The three parameters that differentiate a perfect community are aesthetics, social offerings and diversity (Rath & Harter, 2010, Gallup Press).

The most important part of building community wellbeing is not the infrastructure but the ability to bring together people for a common cause and making a difference. Whether it is participation in a blood donation camp, cleaning the surroundings, reducing the carbon footprint through energy savings or tree plantation drive, all these activities lead to greater involvement and fostering community wellbeing. Great community wellbeing is about what we are able to give back to the communities we live and work in. Hence it is very difficult to have a better community wellbeing if we are not involving ourselves in social groups, thus the strong link between social and community wellbeing.

In his famous prayer, St. Francis of Assisi says that it in giving that you receive. Neuro scientists through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) brain scans have discovered that sections of the brain that are activated when we receive money glow even brighter when we give money.

In the article “Is altruism good for the altruistic giver,” there has been a strong link found between volunteering and better mental and physical wellbeing. Well-doing acts as a barrier against stress and negative emotions such as worries, fear and jealousy. It promotes more social interaction, enhanced meaning and purpose and an active lifestyle, thus enhancing overall wellbeing and keeping us away from being too focused on our own challenges.
The following are the tips for the employees to boost their community wellbeing:

• Find opportunities for volunteering and community work
• Join and get involved in social groups which do community work
• Find out for yourself on how would you want to positively impact the communities you are a part of
• Make time for activities such as blood donation and tree plantation
• Be wiser in using natural resources/energy
• If possible opt for eye/organ donation – impact lives
• Be a more responsible citizen of earth – we are safekeeping the planet for our future generations

The following are the tips for the organizations to boost the community wellbeing of their employees:

• Identify communities that your organization can support
• Build a culture of volunteering
• Have community work as a part of your engagement calendar
• Run initiatives to be a better corporate citizen
• Work on lowering the organization’s carbon footprint

6. Mental wellbeing

The world has now become a VUCA world – Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous, and this is impacting the mental wellbeing in a very big way. According to WHO, one in three persons will face a mental health challenge once in their lifetime. Hence, this is a fundamental part of WHO’s definition of health; a strong mental wellbeing helps employees realize their potential, cope with day-to-day stresses of life, work productively and contribute to their work and communities (Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020, WHO, Geneva). Today, for employees, flexibility, work–life balance and culture of the organization are becoming critical parameters for choosing their employers and all these are related to mental wellbeing.

Mental wellbeing is determined by individual attributes such as the ability to manage one’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors and interactions with others and also the external social, cultural, economic and work environment. Mental wellbeing can have a huge economic cost; globally an estimated 350 million people across ages suffer from depression and it accounts for 4.3% of the global burden of diseases and is one of the largest single causes of disability worldwide (Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020, WHO, Geneva). Low mental wellbeing is also associated with substance abuse, and hence this becomes critical for manufacturing setups and plant workers.

Some of the metrics used to measure and drive mental wellbeing initiatives are optimum stress levels, adequate stress management techniques, biometrics such as heart rate, blood pressure, reduction in reported stress, absenteeism and participation in stress management workshops (World Economic Forum, 2013).

A lot of focus now being brought by the organizations on helping employees builds their emotional quotient and a strong correlation has been drawn between high EQ and improved performance. This is not only critical for the managers but also the blue-collar, frontline sales and customer service employees, in whose case stress is hampering their optimum performance. Even today there is a lot of stigma attached to mental wellbeing issues and these are considered to be untreatable, and hence the people undergoing this are isolated and discriminated against (WHO Fact Sheet on Mental Health). Because even the employees who are undergoing this are shy and reticent in getting help, a lot of organizations have created helplines and provided access to counselors to help them discreetly and recover.

Today, mental wellbeing is the least understood area in organizations and a focus on mental wellbeing can have a cascading effect on physical, social and career wellbeing.
The tips for the employees to boost their mental wellbeing are as follows:

- Know it is OK to be stressed sometimes
- Know it is OK to fail, face difficulties and also know that we have the resources to overcome these
- Spend time on reflection and know your strengths and self-defeating patterns
- Develop a strong social support system
- Ask for help when you need it
- Support someone who you see is facing a mental challenge

The tips for the organizations to boost the mental wellbeing of their employees are as follows:

- Build awareness on mental health
- Measure and take proactive actions on reducing stress in the organization
- Through policy changes and managerial training promote work–life balance
- Provide access to employees to online help, helplines and counselors
- Have programs on resilience, stress management, emotional intelligence, self-awareness and management
- Sensitize leadership and managers on mental health and not to attach stigma to it
- Help employees who have overcome such challenges back to work with dignity

7. Spiritual wellbeing

Spiritual wellbeing is about knowing your values and beliefs and using the same to provide a purpose in our lives (Spiritual wellness, UCR). It is about living in harmony with oneself, while working with the rest of the world. In his book “Drive: the surprising truth about what motivates us,” Pink talks about autonomy, mastery and purpose as the key drivers of employee motivation (Pink, 2009). Today, across organizations providing employees with a higher purpose to connect with is becoming a critical tool to drive engagement and retention.

Google provides the opportunity to its employees to spend 25% of their time on a project that they are passionate about. They have also started a program “Search Inside Yourself” which focuses on techniques such as mindfulness, meditation and yoga to improve resilience and drive connect and performance. It has been rated as one of the most popular programs in Google.

The tips for the employees to boost their spiritual wellbeing are listed below:

- Have silent time for reflection
- Do less, take pauses, contemplate
- Know your values and beliefs
- Cultivate a spiritual practice – meditation, yoga, mindfulness
- Be more accepting of others
- Develop empathy, compassion, kindness, forgiveness

The tips for the organizations to boost the spiritual wellbeing of the employees are listed below:

- Connect employees with the organization purpose
- Build programs on self-awareness, mindfulness
- Make programs such as yoga and meditation a part of your engagement calendar
- Create time and spaces for reflection and contemplation
- Create experiential journeys for senior leadership
Impact on Organizations

Whether engaged or not, employees have high levels of wellbeing - although it is realistic to expect that engagement naturally promotes wellbeing, these workers are an organization’s best asset. In its research, Gallup has time and again seen that teams with higher engagement outperform the teams with lower engagement on customer engagement, profitability and productivity. These teams also have lesser accidents on the job, lower attrition, lesser quality defects and loss of inventory/pilferage.

Engaged employees who are thriving in career wellbeing are twice as likely as actively disengaged employees to be thriving in their lives overall. In contrast, people in disengaged workgroups are nearly twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression, have higher stress levels and are at greater risk for heart disease. And perhaps not coincidentally, engaged employees are 21% more likely than actively disengaged employees to get involved in a wellness program offered by their employers. This relationship between engagement at work and involvement in wellness programs is consistent across BMI groups (normal, overweight and obese) and people with and without disease burden. In other words, even among people who are classified as obese and those who have pre-existing disease burden, those with higher career wellbeing are more likely to become involved in wellness programs that are offered.

In a study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2003 in United States, an average sick day has a cost impact of $348 in terms of productivity loss. Even when adjusted for weekends and holidays, the cost still comes to approximately $200. When organizations invest in improving the physical and mental wellbeing of employees, there is a saving on this cost.

When this cost differential is seen between the employees who have the least wellbeing, the annual per-person cost of loss of productivity is $28,800, whereas the same cost for the employees with the highest level of wellbeing is $840 a year.

As Dr. Sean Sullivan says, “But the larger point here is that the entire argument over statistical calculations of ROI is essentially off base – even though we can make the business case for wellness against the critics who leave at least half of its economic value out of their calculations. The greater value is beyond any accounting calculations of ROI; it lies in the larger psychosocial-environmental domain of helping create and sustain a workplace culture that attracts and retains the best people in the global competition for talent, and helps them be more productive.”

Why Are We Failing?

“Man sacrifices his health in order to make money, and then spends money to recuperate his health.”
– Dalai Lama

Our short-term decisions override what is important for our long-term wellbeing; for those of who you know about the marshmallow study, delay of gratification is the cornerstone of human potential development.

Is there a solution to this? Gallup when discussing with people with the highest level of wellbeing found that we can begin the journey of change by finding short-term incentives which are in line with our long-term objectives. I am sure that as leaders and individuals you will set goals for building a thriving life in all the seven areas for yourself, your teams, your organization and eventually the communities and the world we live in. Here’s wishing you a great journey – begin today.

References


Employee Wellness: 
A Way of Life at Novartis

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Employee Wellness: A Way of Life at Novartis

A: What do you think about Corporate Wellness being specific to Novartis? What are the various aspects of Corporate Wellness which are currently being focused upon?

As a healthcare company, Novartis, with a vision of being "a trusted leader in the changing practice of medicine", employs science-based innovation to create better outcomes for patients across the world. It should therefore come as no surprise that we as an organisation focus a lot of our energies on the lives and welfare of our own employees. At Novartis, we place significant focus on prevention. This is because statistics show prevention can help address the rapid rise in non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, certain types of cancers and lung disorders. When it comes to the working population, research shows that workplace health programs can have a significant impact on reducing the incidence of these diseases which take a toll, not only on the individuals, but also on their families. In fact, estimates suggest that workplace wellness programs addressing lifestyle changes and promoting health can prevent up to 40% of non-communicable diseases! When you realize that non-communicable diseases have been established as the chief cause of death globally, it helps put things into perspective!

It is for this reason Novartis and its affiliates worldwide encourage its employees to take an active role in managing their health. Employee health features high on the leadership agenda at Novartis. And it is for this very reason, the “Be Healthy” initiative was conceptualized, designed and implemented at Novartis globally.

NI: Could you share a few examples of the successful Corporate Wellness initiatives at Novartis?

The health and well-being of associates is a top priority for Novartis and our initiatives are a natural extension of creating a caring culture. With an objective of promoting a positive work-life balance across the company, Novartis has a number of employee and family friendly policies and practices to ensure the well-being of its employees and their immediate families. One such policy is the Unlimited Sick Leave. Novartis is one of the handful of organizations that allows its employees to take unlimited sick leave. The design of this policy is based on two basic principles: employee well-being and trust. From an employee value proposition perspective, this is one of our key differentiators and is often cited as one of the best policies by our employees. Apart from that, Novartis also offers as many as 29 Annual Leaves every year – not including working days and holidays, and encourages its employees to avail this benefit. For those who do not feel the need to avail these 29 days, 10 days are carried forward every year for future use. This way, Novartis enables its associates to manage their personal priorities when the need arises.

Novartis was one of the early movers to offer six months of maternity leave to its women associates and has reduced working hours for pregnant and nursing associates. Both these policies are highly appreciated by our women employees as it gives them enough time to focus on their health as well as that of their children. As for our male employees, we provide two weeks of paternity leave, which can be taken together or in instalments. This allows our male associates to experience the joys and responsibilities of new parenthood. In addition to the above, Novartis also has Adoption Leave, Marriage Leave, Compensatory Leave, Bereavement Leave and Transition Leave. At Novartis, health refers to overall well-being (mental, physical and emotional health). In line with this philosophy we have categorized our leave options into these areas to help our associates. The objective is to ensure that they are at ease when it comes to attending to some life-changing events that may take place in their lives.

Novartis is quite likely one of the very few organizations in the Indian pharmaceutical industry that offers its sales force an off on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month.
Another interesting policy that we have is “Return to Work” where associates recovering from an accident or a long-term illness are provided with alternate working arrangements such as work from home, part-time working, reduced working hours and a change in role.

Office Infrastructure – Open Working Spaces

In Hyderabad, Novartis’ largest site in India, we employed world-class architects and interior designers for the office facility. On each of our floors, we have ample open spaces, huddle rooms, social zones for our employees to have work-related or social conversations, and quiet zones for individuals to work in isolation when they want to. Our workstations are widely spaced so that there is ample working space for each individual. Our facilities teams also conduct period surveys to seek feedback on how user-friendly and comfortable our workstations, social and quiet zones, and meeting rooms are. Globally Novartis is moving to an open office, no cabins model. In India, we have an open office culture be it in Hyderabad where no employee, no matter how senior, has a cabin or in Mumbai where the office is old legacy but doors are kept open to encourage an open culture. These are the variety of initiatives, programs, tools and collaterals that we have rolled out to encourage and enable our employees to take care of their health.

Onsite Creche

As an organization that understands the needs of parents, we have a crèche at our largest site that can accommodate as many as 100 children. This professionally designed facility has infrastructure that supports children of different age groups – beds, cradles, high chairs, refrigerators, microwave ovens, dining tables, books, and toys. The children are taken care of by well-trained professionals who focus on both physical well-being and mental development of the children. This facility is offered to associates at a nominal monthly cost. To support the needs of new mothers, the crèche also has facilities like pumping rooms with required privacy and refrigerators to store the milk.

Child Care Support Policy

We have a Child Care Policy for sites where we do not have a crèche due to space and other constraints. The policy extends to all male and female associates for up to two children till the age of six under which they can claim expenses for nanny, crèche etc. up to a maximum of ₹2500 per child.

Flexible Work Options

Associates are provided flexibility to work in accordance with their priorities at work and home allowing them to balance their lives. Adequate systemic support is provided to associates together with flexitime. All IT systems have been integrated to enable this policy. The key premise of this option is the high level of trust and understanding that has been embedded in to the ethos of the organization to enable seamless work-life integration.

Annual Health Check-ups and Vaccinations

Novartis also offers its employees free annual health check-ups every year. Family members of our employees are also allowed to avail of this at very attractive discounts. Flu vaccination is another benefit that is offered free of cost to our employees and their dependents as defined by the policy. This is thus another way in which our organization demonstrates its commitment to the health of its employees and their families.

Global Corporate Challenge

The Global Corporate Challenge is a team-based health and well-being program that aims to positively transform associates’ relationship with exercise, nutrition, and sleep. Teams of 7 associates receive
accelerometers to record their physical activity as they set out on a 100 day “virtual journey” around the world. In addition, participants are supported for a full 12 months with nutritional advice and are invited to join additional challenges to reinforce their new healthy behaviours. This year we had 80+ teams participating.

In 2016, the GCC was rolled out on May 26th and here is a snapshot of the coverage:

In 2015, Novartis Group came second in the GCC’s “World’s Most Active Organization” ranking. Employees of Novartis walked more than 18 billion steps – equivalent to going around the world 291 times!

Healthy Lifestyle Assessment Tool

This is an online tool that helps our employees assess, maintain and improve their health. It includes a number of questions concerning one’s lifestyle. There are questions on multiple parameters like family status, habits related to eating, smoking and drinking, physical activity, stress, personal health metrics related to weight, cholesterol, blood pressure, etc. At the end of the assessment, employees receive a detailed, personalized report that helps individuals set goals for improving their health.

Health Tips and Best Practices

On our “Be Healthy” portal, employees are also given access to health tips on sleeping effectively for good health, enjoying their vacation time, and living mindfully. They are also given access to fact sheets – easy-to-read documents with research insights, statistics and useful tips on different topics including cancer, hypertension, obesity, smoking and vaccinations.

By accessing this portal, employees are also exposed to best practices followed in each of our offices across the globe under the “Be Healthy” umbrella. What is interesting to note is that the portal also includes specific insights for our field force to manage their health, despite the stressful and physically challenging conditions they work in.
Employee Assistance Program

The Employee Assistance Program was launched in Novartis to provide counselling support to our employees and their family members by a third party on an arm’s length in a completely confidential manner. Counsellors can be contacted in person or via email or telephone to seek guidance on a variety of aspects including:

- Work responsibilities – Career progression, conflict management, etc.
- Relationship milestones – marriage, buying property, etc.
- Having children – pregnancy, handling infants, dealing with adolescents, etc.
- Managing money – personal investments and savings, etc.
- Family crisis – death, illness of family members, etc.
- Personal crisis – divorce, abuse, etc.
- Illness – terminal illness, depression, etc.

To ensure high quality expertise and high levels of confidentiality, we have established tie-ups with a world leader in this space, Optum. Qualified and experienced counsellors from Optum visit our largest site for in-person counselling every quarter and employees are encouraged to use this facility.

Alliance with World Economic Forum

Novartis had also joined the “World Economic Forum Workplace Wellness Alliance” in the year 2011. This alliance responds to the growing burden of non-communicable diseases. Through this collaboration, our health promotion focus has expanded beyond just prevention – it now includes healthy living and screening activities and also support of our employees with chronic illnesses.

Novartis believes it is important to ensure active care management, including looking beyond lost time cases, evaluating minor injuries or unsafe acts, and providing support to employees so that they can return to work and perform in an environment that enables them to contribute optimally after an absence due to an illness or injury.

AB: Could you tell us some more about the first such initiative at Novartis? How was it received back then?

As an organization committed to the cause of helping employees effectively manage their health, Novartis had a number of health and wellness programs running in different parts of the globe. Some of these practices have had a significant impact on the health of employees in the sites they were rolled out and continue to be talked about and practiced. In 2011, the organization felt the need to initiate a Group-wide initiative to bring a structure and overarching philosophy to all these different practices – this led to the conceptualization, design and roll-out of the ‘Be Healthy’ initiative. By building upon the company’s long standing tradition of providing health and well-being programs for its associates, the ‘Be Healthy’ initiative helped the organization renew and expand its commitment to its employees’ health.

To put it simply, Be Healthy is a Group-wide health initiative to help associates around the world embrace healthy lifestyles. It provides voluntary opportunities for associates to take control of their personal health, both at work and in their private lives. The initiative includes activities and programs for participating Novartis entities to incorporate locally prevalent and acceptable practices to support associate lifestyle changes – focused on four pillars – Move, Choose, Know and Manage. Employees are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to stay fit and healthy, but participation is voluntary. All Novartis entities are given this broad framework to operate within – they are encouraged to roll out and own local initiatives based on the recommended level of health and well-being activities. The ultimate accountability for implementation and enhancing effectiveness rests with the location or Site Head - s/he is helped on design, implementation and communication by SHE (Safety, Health and Environment), HR and Communications teams.
This was one initiative that was in fact received with a great deal of enthusiasm by employees and continues to receive traction.

**NI: Could you give us more insight into how the ‘Be Healthy’ program is designed and delivered?**

Thanks to the untiring efforts of our leadership, SHE, Communications and HR teams, in the last three years, we have been able to roll out as many as 63 unique initiatives under all the four pillars that have had a lasting impact on our employees. Here is a snapshot of events and initiatives that were conducted/implemented in Novartis in the last three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOVE</th>
<th>CHOOSE</th>
<th>KNOW</th>
<th>MANAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contests</td>
<td>Dietary Options</td>
<td>Awareness Sessions</td>
<td>Ergonomics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Corporate Challenge ‘Lose to Win’ contest</td>
<td>Introduction of Be Healthy meal for cholesterol control</td>
<td>Smoking cessation</td>
<td>Relaxation techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle Rides</td>
<td>Introduction of Ragi Malt for cholesterol control</td>
<td>Spine care &amp; ergonomics</td>
<td>Sleep campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic Ride</td>
<td>Exclusive salad counter (make your own salad)</td>
<td>Cancer prevention</td>
<td>Parenting skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence Ride</td>
<td>Weighing machines in cafeteria (to weight your meal according to calorie chart)</td>
<td>Prevention of obesity</td>
<td>Parenting 0-3 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting Events</td>
<td>Protein food offerings</td>
<td>Prevention of hypertension</td>
<td>Working parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novartis Sports Festival</td>
<td>Buttermilk and fresh vegetable and fruit juices</td>
<td>Awareness of heart disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Indoor Sports Meet</td>
<td>Food Festivals (FF)</td>
<td>Meet the Specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Games Fun Games</td>
<td>Be Healthy FF</td>
<td>Know your BMI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walks/Runs</td>
<td>Organic FF</td>
<td>Prevention of hypertension in pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harithon Walkathon</td>
<td>Salad Festival</td>
<td>Awareness and education of Ebola / Swine Flu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Half and Full Marathon</td>
<td>World Food Day</td>
<td>Right lifestyle for a healthy life</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs &amp; Campaigns</td>
<td>Fruit Festival</td>
<td>Positive parenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runners Club “Take the Stairs” campaign</td>
<td>Healthy Dessert</td>
<td>Thalassemia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sessions</td>
<td>Interactive Sessions</td>
<td>Meet the Chef</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Meet the Nutritionist</td>
<td>Meet the Nutritionist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength / Endurance / Flexibility tests</td>
<td>Olive Oil Show</td>
<td>Olive Oil Show</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitness without equipment</td>
<td>Choosing healthy ingredients when making cakes</td>
<td>Choosing healthy ingredients when making cakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Options</td>
<td>Interactive Sessions</td>
<td>Awareness Sessions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Festivals (FF)</td>
<td>Awareness Sessions</td>
<td>Ergonomics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Be Healthy FF</td>
<td>Smoking cessation</td>
<td>Relaxation techniques</td>
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<td>Sleep campaign</td>
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<td>Salad Festival</td>
<td>Cancer prevention</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Food Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fruit Festival</td>
<td>Prevention of hypertension</td>
<td>Working parents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy Dessert</td>
<td>Awareness of heart disease</td>
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NHRD Network Journal | October 2016 | 54
Along with these numerous initiatives, we also have the ‘Be Healthy’ Celebration Week. It is an annual event across the Novartis world that takes place in September and is the centrepiece of the entire Be Healthy initiative. It coincides with the WHO’s ‘Wellness Week’ and is all about celebrating and promoting healthy living. Each day of the week focuses on each of the pillars. Here is a snapshot of how Be Healthy was celebrated at one site in India in 2016 with similar activities being conducted at other sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY September 19</th>
<th>TUESDAY September 20</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY September 21</th>
<th>THURSDAY September 22</th>
<th>FRIDAY September 23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOVE</td>
<td>MOVE</td>
<td>KNOW</td>
<td>MANAGE</td>
<td>MOVE AGAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkathon</td>
<td>Yoga Celebrity Chef</td>
<td>Yoga Know your numbers</td>
<td>Employee Assistance</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasure Hunt</td>
<td>Show</td>
<td>Dietician Consultation</td>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Swimming Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Fit</td>
<td>Master Chef Contest</td>
<td>Relaxation Techniques</td>
<td>Zumba</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Healthy Food Carnival</td>
<td>Yoga session</td>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>Cycling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>Subsidized Healthy Snack</td>
<td>Quiz competition</td>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>Walk Outdoors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zumba</td>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outdoor games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Given that we are living in a digital world; Novartis has taken the Be Healthy initiative a step further – we have a “Be Healthy” app now. This app allows not only associates across the world, but also their families to track and store health and well-being data such as weight, blood pressure, BMI, blood sugar and their cholesterol levels. The app has an additional interesting feature – an in-built pedometer, to help its users keep track of the number of steps they take every day. We also have “News Flow”, which is a quarterly newsletter that captures key “Be Healthy” updates across the world. It also offers useful insights to all employees on managing their own health.

AB: Were there some other Corporate Wellness initiatives that you have come across in your career so far?

Doctor on Chat where a doctor is available online and via email at Tech Mahindra is an interesting concept. So is the gamification of wellness by Microsoft India.

NI: What have been some of the illustrative challenges that you have faced while implementing such initiatives?

As a healthcare company it has been relatively easy for us to generate buy-in and employee ambassadorship as we recognize the importance of workplace health programs. In the cases where there has been initial scepticism e.g. meet the nutritionist or smoking cessation, seeing success among colleagues has aided conversion and helped employees overcome their initial scepticism.
AB: What have been some of the tangible outcomes that you have achieved through these initiatives?

Here is a snapshot of how our employees have rated the quality of our facilities and initiatives this year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Average Score (out of 5) at Novartis India</th>
<th>Average Score – Rest of AMEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall physical working environment</td>
<td>4.8 [Target: 4.6]</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational health</td>
<td>4.8 [Target: 4.5]</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of our facilities</td>
<td>4.8 [Target: 4.8]</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning services</td>
<td>4.8 [Target: 4.8]</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thanks to our relentless efforts towards employee health and well-being, we have managed to not only meet/exceed our targets on all services, but also do better than our counterparts in other countries in AMEA where Novartis has a presence.

At the end of each initiative, we collect qualitative feedback from participants. The feedback from these initiatives has also been very positive. Feedback in our Global Employee Survey has also been extremely encouraging. Also, 92% of our employees believe that “Novartis is doing what it can to improve access to healthcare around the world”. If our employees believe that Novartis is providing healthcare access to people across the world, it is quite likely they believe that Novartis is giving its employees’ health the same levels of focus, efforts and investments. While we understand that retention and engagement is a combination of several factors, our health and wellness initiatives and benefits have also contributed to our ability to maintain a healthy retention rate of 88-90% over the years.

We have recently been ranked third best employer in the healthcare industry by the Great Place to Work institute. In the ‘Caring’ sub-dimension in the GPTW survey, we are very close to the Top-50 benchmark on all parameters, which is a clear indicator of the effectiveness of our benefits and initiatives. In 2015 Novartis Healthcare Private Limited was conferred the Gold Award for Healthy Workplace by Arogya World and Public Health Foundation of India. This year, we were ranked among the Top Ten for 2016 by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the category ‘Employer with Best Employee Health & Wellness Initiatives’. As first time participants, this is very encouraging.

NI: What metrics does Novartis use to track the impact of its corporate wellness initiatives?

The measures that we look at, to evaluate effectiveness of existing initiatives include Customer Satisfaction scores, increase in employee participation, feedback from the leaders and feedback from the participants too. Also, employee engagement scores on questions related to wellness in our internal engagement and external employer branding surveys are used to track the effectiveness of the initiatives.

While feedback our associates share with the EAP counsellors would be a critical effectiveness measure, we do not track or even access this data as there is a lot of sensitivity involved.
AB: Would you like to share some success stories regarding the major wellness initiatives at Novartis?

Our success lies in the increased participation as can be seen by the numbers and the feedback we receive from our employees. Major success for us has been the recognition we have received from our parent company on the roll-out and the traction that Be Healthy has received at Novartis India. In 2014, one such success story of an employee who gave up smoking after being a diehard smoker for over two decades after participating in a Novartis Be Healthy initiative was featured on the global intranet and YouTube channel.

Prior to the launch of Be Healthy we used to sponsor employees for the Marathon. We started out with three employees all of who completed the 6 km run. Today we have at least a 100 who are interested and of those, the majority are for the Half Marathon. This has been largely due to our concerted efforts to raise awareness and channelize employee behaviour towards healthier lifestyles. Employees are now more aware and we see that in their changed behaviour while bringing lunch from home for example or even reducing overall weight and achieving a healthier BMI. This is another success story.

NI: From your experience, what may be the most easily replicable best practice with respect to corporate wellness programs?

We understand that policy changes and infrastructural enhancements cannot happen overnight and there is a lot of organizational context associated with them. However, programs such as the Global Corporate Challenge, the Employee Access Program, creating a health app, posters creating awareness and encouraging healthy behaviour are easy to replicate.

AB: Does Novartis use technology or internet in supporting its wellness initiatives? What have been the most significant enablers and/or deterrents in this direction?

We do use technology to support our wellness initiative e.g. the Be Healthy app, Healthy Lifestyle assessment that is done online, email counselling, pedometer linked to an app, etc. Being a part of a global organisation helps leverage global programs and this is a great enabler.

NI: What can be the role of internal and external partners in improving the quality of corporate wellness strategies and initiatives?

Wellness lies in the hands of every individual. There is no doubt though that internal partners can create an enabling environment. Leadership through commitment and sponsorship; HR through policy changes, creating buy-in, encouraging associate participation, advising leaders; Finance – by ensuring meaningful investments; SHE by helping build the right infrastructure and Communications by helping engage with employees through meaningful communications at regular intervals; Procurement by helping choose the right business partners.

AB: From your perspective, how can the wellness initiatives become more sustainable in organizations?

For sustained momentum on our health and wellness initiatives, and for them to generate meaningful outcomes for the associates and our organization, the Critical Success Factors are continued investments on health and wellness programs, effective budget allocation to enable inclusion of new strategic initiatives. Leading from the front is also important with commitment and sponsorship from the management. Also, there should be continuous support from global stakeholders and key contributors such as Finance, HR, Communications and the Diversity &Inclusion Council should collaborate. Involvement of, and advocacy/ambassadorship by employees. Moreover, robust frameworks for measuring impact and outcomes should be
designed for making the initiatives sustainable. Internally, involvement of employees and their advocacy coupled with access to external perspectives to appreciate imbibe best practices from different organizations and industries are also critical components.

In addition to all the above factors, what is really critical is that organisations operate with the philosophy that when it comes to employee health, costs would not be a deciding factor. The opportunity cost of poor employee health is way higher than the investments one would make. In fact, at Novartis we have not experienced budget cuts for any of the Be Healthy initiatives and where there have been budgetary constraints, the parent company has supported with funding. Making meaningful investments on employee health and wellness should continue to be amongst the top priorities on an organisation’s leadership agenda.

NI: What more can we expect from Novartis in the future regarding Corporate Wellness?

Mindfulness is drawing a lot of attention these days and a lot of organizations are realising the significance of it. As technology makes life at home and life at work converge, organisations will look at corporate wellness in a bigger way. At Novartis, while we will continue with the majority of initiatives that we have listed earlier, we have plans to add new programs in areas of single parenting, care for the elderly, dealing with adolescent children and dealing with family members with special needs.

Also, we have plans in place to increase participant coverage and the range of topics to be included, with emphasis on the areas of stress management, dealing with children of different age groups, identifying signs of depression, using music as a de-stressor, Yoga and mindfulness in today’s age of constant distraction. As part of a global organization, our plans would be aligned to the global Novartis roadmap for health and wellness initiatives and if there are new initiatives introduced at a Group-level, we would ensure rollout in India, with customizations as required.
Akshay Bageshwar (AB) is currently pursuing his post-graduation in Human Resources Management at XLRI. He has interned with Wipro Technologies during his summers, where he has worked on the new performance management system. He has completed his graduation in Electrical Engineering from the College of Engineering, Pune. He is passionate about dramas and also has a keen interest in social work. He is an active member of Samarthya – a social interest group at XLRI that counsels and mentors school children in and around Jamshedpur.

Nikhil Iyer (NI) is a student of Human Resources Management at XLRI, Jamshedpur. He was selected for Glaxo Smith Kline Consumer Healthcare’s Future Leaders Program, where he worked on Total Rewards Communication during his summer internship. He also holds an undergraduate degree in Biomedical Engineering from VIT, Vellore. A national-level debater and a Toastmaster, he is an accomplished mentor and trainer in public speaking. He also worked as an English teacher for Make a Difference (MAD) during 2012-14.
Corporate Wellness: The American Express Way

About the Authors

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Dr. Bhavesh Shah, Director - Strategic Occupational Health & Wellbeing, India & Asia, American Express. He is clinician turned into Occupational Health Physician. He has varied experience starting from working in hospital as Resident Medical Officer to Consultant to Chief Medical Officer in the industry. He has served as an Occupational Health Consultant to various chemical, pharma, and petrochemical units in his years of private practice. Before joining American Express, he was India Medical Leader for Procter & Gamble India for 6+ years.

Interviewed by

Radha Raman, Second Year PGDHRM Student, XLRI Jamshedpur. She is currently pursuing her specialization in Human Resource Management at XLRI. She completed her B.E in Electrical Engineering and worked as an Electrical Design Engineer at Fichtner Consulting Engineers (I) Pvt. Ltd. before joining XLRI.

Her areas of interests are Organizational Behaviour, Performance Management, Training and development and Strategy. She recently won the second prize in Titan Company Ltd.’s National Case study competition. Her interests are Carnatic Music, dance and reading. She believes in contributing towards social causes and has volunteered for teaching poor street kids.
Corporate Wellness: The American Express Way

At American Express, Corporate Wellness forms an essential component of our business strategy. We believe it is the right thing to be done for the business and for the people, and not just something which is just a ‘good to have’.

Our strategy is developed on the basis of a strong data backed analysis. We have invested in a health risk-assessment program to gather data regarding the health status of our employees. It’s a very important start to our annual health strategy. Depending on the parameters identified from the health risk assessment, we have formulated our strategy - “American Express Global Health & Wellbeing Strategy” and ensure that we have defined it clearly. It is a holistic program based on the three essential pillars of healthy living: Food, Exercise and Mental wellbeing.

Involvement of both internal and external partners is a pre-requisite for both design and execution of the corporate wellness strategy. With regards to internal partners, it is an integrated team effort, with employees across divisions and hierarchies, involved to validate the design through actual evidence based inputs and their assessment of the business situation.

The most critical factor for our success is the fact that our senior leaders are also involved in these programs. Leaders lead our health agenda from the front. They share their own stories, videos with employees, and show up at various events to encourage people and inspire them to focus on health. We believe that without this, chances of wellness programs being successful remain rather bleak.

In case of external partners, especially in India, it is probably difficult to find a vendor who can provide various services at par on a global level. What we look at is the vendor’s ability to adhere to the specifications and to bring in their own perspectives about various offerings in the wellbeing space. It is essential that they collaborate more like partners and not just as service providers.

After specifying the strategy sharply, we make sure that we get our execution right. Depending on which country an employee is located in, we have different programs with varying emphasis befitting the local context. For example, in India food is fresher, less processed and less packaged, as compared to the western countries. Thus, food is not a major issue in the Indian context. Instead, there are a lot of programs in our office focusing on physical activity, an aspect that takes the backseat for most Indians.

Let’s take an example from one health pillar: Exercise. In 2016, we are organizing a Yoga or a Zumba class every single day. We organize such events in the form of competitions or contests such as a Walkathon, Treadmill challenge, etc. Our objective is to throw a challenge, generate impulse and ensure that there is some physical activity on a daily basis. Additionally, there are tie-ups with gyms, clubs, etc. which provide discounted membership to our employees, making it very affordable for them. These initiatives form a support system for onsite physical activity and help employees do simple exercises on a regular basis.

We co-create such programs with our employees. We not only consult them about what they want, but also what timings work for them and which space is found most conducive. As an example, no activities are undertaken in our sales offices towards end of the month. Similarly, we have noticed that some employees don’t feel comfortable dancing in open spaces, so we organize such classes in closed spaces. In a similar fashion, in teams where employees don’t turn up for Yoga/Zumba classes, we carry out chair cardio sessions at their workstation.

Another example of a successful initiative we ran was an awareness campaign on cholesterol. At the beginning of that program, employees’ cholesterol levels were checked. Those who had a high risk of cholesterol were offered dedicated dietician support for a specified period of time. As a result, employees saw a significant improvement in their cholesterol levels.

We take equal responsibility for our employees’ health, as much as we expect them to take care of themselves.
The journey has had its own share of challenges. Like any other change, a shift to healthy habits has employee reluctance associated with it. Participation has been a challenge in health and wellness programs. However, incentivization has helped us attract employee participation and spread awareness on the benefits of exercise and nutrition. And ‘goodies’ – benefits in kind – have been more effective than cash incentives. Along with incentives, co-creation with employees helps develop interest and increase relevance of such programs.

We provide employees with a platform to capture the individual triumphs over health problems by encouraging them to pen their story and publishing them in the ‘Healthy Living Calendars’ placed at every employee desk. It is an attempt to make the programs more meaningful and positively influence a large number of employees.

Further, we have shared stories of employees who have benefited from our ‘Move More’ and ‘Healthy Living’ campaign by integrating more physical activity in their daily life. As a consequence, they felt more energetic and achieved significant weight reduction, with some losing weight by 15-18 kgs within a year.

Other examples which can be shared include rise in the number of employees who quit smoking after attending our anti-smoking programs and increase in number of women employees who opted for normal delivery after attending our pregnant women program.

Our employees seem extremely happy with such initiatives. They rate health and wellness programs as amongst their most valued benefit.

Not surprisingly, American Express consistently features as one of the top companies in Great Places to Work surveys. We have also become more widely known for our investments in employee health and well-being.

Tangible progress of these wellness initiatives are tracked through our Health Risk Assessment module which monitors the change in the health risk parameters of all participating employees. We also capture general participation rate and touch points we create.

More importantly, we strongly believe that intangible outcomes like good health is a key lever for an organizations sustainable return on investment. Our experience has taught us that improved health greatly enhances productivity in the long run.

As regards the lessons other organizations can learn from our experiences, replication of wellness programs would depend on a variety of factors. More than the design, it is the process which is replicable, like,

1. Co-creating programs with the employees;
2. Visible leadership sponsorship, which a critical element for any program to be successful; and
3. the process of capturing data for measuring impact through health risk assessment, which also serve as inputs for designing the programs in the subsequent years.

Community sharing would ensure sustainability of wellness initiatives. In big commercial complexes, lot of employers who co-exist could look at sharing the resources involved in creating the wellness programs. This along with technology would be helpful to check on the rising cost of healthcare.

In today’s day and age, we believe that Technology has an important role to play in the Wellness sphere. Data Analytics is already in use at American Express. As we have offices across the country, we are trying to leverage technology in the form of an App based tool to provide access to people in different locations, get their health query, connect them to experts and provide ‘on the go support’. To realize this, we would possibly look at tie-ups with vendors.

There is also the possibility of technology enabling employees to enrol in wellness programs, especially in case of need based or a virtual counselling platform. These measures would also make programs more replicable, scalable and accessible.

One of the deterrents that we are conscious about is that as we start using technology in front end, we need to ensure protection of employee’s personal information shared with us.
In future, we foresee corporates taking an integrated approach to Health and Wellness, rather than seeing it just as an engagement tool. Wellness would be a mandate for employees, just as maternity benefits and childcare have become mandatory today. The way our health and environment is deteriorating, stress levels are rising, there is an increased consciousness amongst firms that health management is a must do for them.

Employees as well as their families both will form an important element of wellness program design. People would differentiate between employers on the basis of health benefits which they and their families get. And we see more choices for the current generation through the use of technology, which is something interesting to be seen.
Corporate and Employee Wellness: Health Initiatives at SAP Labs India

About the Authors

Divya Rajagopal (HRBP, SAP Labs India) and Vlasta Dusil (Head of HR, SAP Labs India). She is an HR Business Partner with SAP Labs India, with an overall HR experience of 9+ years. She has been leading the Health&Wellness portfolio for SAP in India since the last 2 years. She is a health enthusiast at heart, and believes that an organization can provide the necessary impetus and resources, but every person owes it to themselves to “take charge” of their health.

Vlasta Dusil

is the Head of Human Resources for India. Previously she was Head of HR for SAP (Schweiz) AG and for the EMEA South Region (encompassing Southern Europe, MENA and Africa). She is located in Banglaore.

Originally from Canada, Vlasta moved to SAP Germany working as a Director of Learning and Talent Management, and then as Executive Board Assistant to the Board HR and also Switzerland. Vlasta has 17 years’ experience of progressive HR, holding roles in Diversity, Recruitment, Talent Management and Global HR Business Partner. She has also extensive Project Management experience. Vlasta holds a Masters in Business Administration (Human Resources) as well as a Bachelor of Commerce Degree.

Vlasta loves what she does everyday and sees life is an adventure to be experienced. Pushing her limits is what makes her "run". Whether it is scaling mountains on her bike or making a difference at SAP, She loves to learn and grow with new experiences.
Corporate and Employee Wellness: Health Initiatives at SAP Labs India

1. What do you think about Corporate Wellness being specific to your organization? What are the various aspects of Corporate Wellness which are currently being focused upon?

Health and Wellness is an integral part of SAP’s ecosystem and this is evident by the fact that there is a Global Health Management team based at our headquarters in Walldorf, here the primary focus is wellness offerings across areas of physical wellness, mindfulness, mental well-being, sustainability and many more.

Some of the aspects of wellness that SAP focusses on are physical fitness, usage of technology (by linking it to Internet of Things on our very own Hana Cloud platform), Employee assistance program, Mindfulness workshops, Corporate Oncology program for employee, etc.

2. Could you share a few examples of the successful Corporate Wellness initiatives in your organization?

There are 3 programs that we have in place to focus on the different aspects of Health and Wellness.

a. The Health Wearables initiative in which we encourage employees to use fitness trackers to adopt and maintain a healthy life style.

b. Employee assistance Program (EAP), a global initiative across all SAP entities to provide a common platform and resources that employee can leverage to enhance their sense of mental wellness. We also encouraged employees to share their personal stories on how EAP helped them overcome/face a situation better, in their personal or professional lives.

c. The Corporate Oncology Program for Employees (COPE), through which we offer employees free access to cancer tumor sequencing, analysis, and interpretation. The solution, called Molecular Health Guide™, runs on the SAP HANA platform, and it helps physicians interpret genetic changes and select personalized treatment options based on efficacy and safety. SAP is the first employer to ever offer COPE as part of its benefits package. At present COPE is live in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany.

3. Would there be some other Corporate Wellness initiatives that you would have learnt of in your career so far?

In most organisations, I believe that Health and Wellness is looked at as a feel-good initiative to have and is usually restricted to health camps and health talks. But I believe, that it is important to have a more holistic perspective to health and the numerous benefits that it can offer to the employees, and in turn to the organisation.

4. How are the initiatives regarding Corporate Wellness decided upon? Could you take us through one such initiative that got institutionalized at your organization?

At a global level, initiatives are conceptualised based on the overall needs of the organisation and based on their deploy ability across all countries. In India, we looked at the top health risks faced by employees in India (Sources: Health insurance reports, doctor’s data, leave data, etc.) and zeroed in on the Top 3 health risks in India to finalize the Health Charter for 2016. Then we decided that we would focus on one health risk every quarter and build focussed awareness on the same.
For example, Diabetes was the topic of focus identified for Q2, and we sent mailers, infographics, to educate employees about the various aspects of Diabetes. We also had a Diabetologist address the employees and organised a Blood sugar test within the office premises. This kind of concentrated approach has helped us focus on each health risk in a holistic manner.

We also have a dedicated mailbox called “SAP health for life” which is monitored by the Health team. All mails are sent from this ID and people can write in to this ID as well if they need any clarifications. This has helped build a brand recall value to this topic.

5. What have been some of the illustrative challenges that you have faced while implementing such initiatives?

Employees have become far more health conscious today than in the past. Hence the consumption of our health and wellness initiative has been quite encouraging. However the one challenge that we continue to face is to make sure that we conceptualise and develop wellness offerings that cater to different age groups and interest groups. In an endeavour to do this, we are starting an offering called “Healthy Workplace for all generations”.

6. What have been some of the tangible outcomes that you have achieved through these initiatives?

Globally, the health and wellness of the organisation is measured through the Business Health Culture Index, and this index is derived from a set of questions that are a part of the yearly Employee Pulse Survey.

From a local perspective, in the last 2 years, we have made it a point to link health initiatives to the needs of employees, and we do see some tangible outcomes, like:

• Increased participation in initiatives, as they see a benefit in it.
• Appreciation mails to the Health for life inbox, where employees talk about how certain initiatives have touched them.
• More number of employee sustained initiatives, where employees themselves take the responsibility of starting, running and sustaining certain health initiatives.

7. How important are the intangible outcomes from such initiatives? Could you share a few illustrations?

Wellness is one such area where intangible outcomes are more evident than tangible ones and these intangible outcomes could be in the form of increased consciousness/awareness of employees towards healthy living. It can also be gauged by the fact that we have a larger and more diversified health council in SAP India now, where employees, over and above their work, volunteer to be part of this team and actively contribute through meaningful initiatives through the year. We also see involvement from employees in a very encouraging manner where programs are run by the employees, for the employees and of the employees (e.g., Meditation sessions, twin-heart meditation classes, etc. by employees who are trained and certified in those techniques). These are some of the intangible, but crucial outcomes we are seeing.

8. Would you like to share some success stories regarding major wellness initiatives in your organization?

Last year, we had a few employees (who were trained in Guided Meditation) walk up to the Health for Life team and express their willingness to conduct a trial Guided meditation session for a pilot set of
employees. There was a bit of scepticism on how it will be received but we went ahead. It has been one year since then and it has always been running house-full. There are continuous asks for more and more sessions. This is something that we are very proud of.

In 2015, we started an offering called “Therapeutic Yoga for Managers”, as we felt that this was a high risk group that we had to target.

9. From your experience, what may be the most easily replicable best practice with respect to corporate wellness programs?

In order to make health and wellness a sustainable offering, it is important to create Health Ambassadors across the organisation, where we empower them to run initiatives for their groups, of course, after giving them an overall direction in terms the organisation’s Health Charter. This is something that has worked very well for us and we have close a strong Ambassador network of close to 60 + global health ambassadors and close 15-20 local ambassadors within India.

10. Does your organization use technology or internet in supporting its wellness initiatives? If not, is it in the pipeline? What have been the most significant enablers and/or deterrents in that direction?

We used technology and lot (Internet of Things) in a big way when we launched the recent Health wearables campaign globally. SAP tied up with a few vendors of health wearable devices and offered the same to employees. Since SAP is a technology company, we constantly look at integrating health to technology. One example, is that we when launched the Health wearable campaign, we tied up with a few vendors to ensure that employees get a fitness device at low cost. Also the data from the fitness trackers (after adhering to confidentiality and privacy laws) was hosted on our in-house SAP Hana Cloud platform. The intent was to help build a healthy sense of competition between employees and encourage them to take their fitness more seriously and also in a fun manner.

11. What can be the role of internal and external partners in improving the quality of corporate wellness strategies and initiatives?

I believe that it is important to have a strong relationship with different stakeholders (Vendors, IT, Finance, Procurement, etc.) in order to have a smooth process while executing these initiatives.

12. From your perspective, how can the wellness initiatives become more sustainable in organizations?

First of all, it is imperative to draw out a Health & Wellness Charter, which is a derivative of the health risks and health needs of the employees in the organisation. It is important to use analytics and data (E.g., Health insurance trend analysis, onsite doctor’s date, etc.) to make sure that you are focusing on the most relevant needs.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, it cannot be a sole initiative. It is important to involve employees who can be the health ambassadors and through them create a Health ambassador network which is self-sustainable. It also helps in bringing about a sense of ownership with respect to the initiatives.

Thirdly, in today’s age and time it is important to cater initiatives to suit the needs /work schedules of employees. For instance, we started something called “Desktop Yoga”, where we had a series of “on-the-floor” ergonomics exercises which employees could perform at their desks and get rejuvenated. We also started a video series for our employees who are on travel constantly, which showed them simple exercise they could do in their hotel rooms or while waiting at client locations. Hence, customisation is the key.
13. Where do you think the future of corporate wellness lies? What can we expect from organizations in the near future?

Earlier, Wellness was considered a “good-to-have” component in one’s overall People Agenda, but today the times have changed. Organisations are seeing a direct correlation between wellness measures and important factors like productivity, morale, employee engagement, satisfied workforce etc. And hence, Health and Wellness is becoming a critical aspect of the People Agenda.

In the near future, I see 2 key trends emerging:

i. An extensive usage of analytics and data driving decisions that organisations will betaking with respect to health.

ii. An inevitable marriage between technology and health, where the former will be leveraged to help organisations take informed decisions and thus pave way for predictive analytics as well.
Holistic Wellness: The Aditya Birla Group Experience

About the Author

Padma Rajeswari Tata is Group Head – Organization Effectiveness at Aditya Birla Group. She has close to two and a half decades of experience across different organizations like Dr. Reddy’s Laboratories, Infosys, Flextronics and Larsen & Toubro. Her areas of expertise include employee engagement, org culture, change management, org design, wellness, learning and leadership development, talent management and diversity. She has worked across different cultures and has rich global exposure. An electronics engineer from NIT Durgapur, she secured her MBA from the Anderson School of Management, University of California, LA. A passionate traveller, she loves to work in different cultures and is based out of Mumbai, India.
Holistic Wellness: The Aditya Birla Group experience

Aditya Birla Group is a 41 billion dollar conglomerate with 150000 people operating out of 36 countries. Right from its inception, well-being of employees and their family members has been the core focus of the Group. We believe that human beings are whole: their lives cannot be neatly divided into professional and personal domains; instead their lives are deeply inter-twined. Lack of well-being either of the employees or their family members has an effect on effectiveness of employees and their productivity at work. Our endeavour is on ‘proactive care’, much before the well-being of an individual is severely or perhaps irretrievably impacted. We approach well-being in a multi-faceted and holistic manner – physical, emotional, financial and social. We believe that it will lead to healthy-happy employees and their families, and an overall productive, positive and energized work environment. Our philosophy is depicted in Diagram 1.

While several well-being programs are at different stages of implementation either taken up locally at different Businesses and offices of the Group, outlined below are few programs that have been implemented across the Group.

1. **Physical Well-being** is about feeling healthy and energetic, not just being illness-free. It encompasses a wide range of aspects such as fitness level, nutrition, self-care, rest etc. Several manufacturing businesses of Aditya Birla Group operate in remote locations, which are far away from cities with good medical facilities. While providing good hospitals – ranging from primary health centre to 100 bedded hospital – can be considered a passé, our attempt has been to bring urban-like consultation to these remote locations. Technology in the form of telemedicine has been leveraged to achieve this. Doctors in hospitals at remote locations consult with specialists and super-specialists from cities or other hospitals within the Group. This enables them to take guidance to deliver best possible medical care to patients in remote locations.
Health tips, guidance and doctor consultation at fingertips, anytime anywhere is another endeavour. Online health portal, popularly known as ‘Vitamin H’ acts as a one-stop shop for physical health for employees and their family members, both in our remote locations as well as cities and towns. Through this portal, employees or their family members avail 24 by 7 health services from doctors whose credentials are established. Some of the services include consultation with:

- Doctors for minor ailments offering a convenient and hassle free option
- Specialists to seek inputs on diagnostic reports or take second opinion
- Gynaecologist or paediatrician by would-be mothers and new mothers, helping them alleviate their fears and worries that tend to plague them at this stage
- Dietician for individualistic and customized diet plan for different goals

The health portal also provides employees support to set up appointment with doctors for face-to-face consultation in near-by location, create and maintain their health records online, go through health risk assessments and several health related articles.

2. **Emotional well-being** is about overall psychological well-being, with an excess of positive emotions over negative emotions. Positive emotions include comfort, enthusiasm, happiness etc. whereas negative emotions include anger, frustration, sadness etc. Although emotional well-being is rarely talked openly in India, we believe that it poses equal, if not a higher risk as physical well-being. Primary reasons that contribute to lack of emotional well-being include increasing stress at workplace, tough lifestyle in cities, long travel, nuclear family structure leading to reduced family support, relationship issues at home and workplace.

Unfortunately, there is a social stigma associated with emotional well-being. As a result, people are not willing to talk about it or avail help even when it is required and services are easily accessible. To address these issues, we have a well-entrenched program called ‘Life Unlimited’. As the name suggests, it encourages employees to live life unlimited, not to be bound by ties, or worries or emotional baggage. The programs focuses on

- Generating awareness and education on emotional well-being. This has been done through several education programs, and communication depicting stress or lack of emotional well-being from day-to-day lives of employees.
- Creating an ecosystem that does not ostracize emotional well-being, a workplace where employees can seek support without fear. The HR members and managers have been educated to look for signs of stress or lack of emotional well-being in employees and gently nudge them to seek help.
- Offering confidential counselling services by trained external partners through multiple channels: online, telephonic and face-to-face, based on convenience and need of the employee or their family members.

Retirement is a critical life-stage of an employee and has the potential to create an emotional upheaval in his or her life. To address this need, we run a program called ‘Turning a new Leaf’ for managers who have 2-3 years to retire. The program is attended both by the employee and the spouse. It focuses on enabling the employee to prepare for their holistic well-being – together with their life partner – for this important life event and beyond.

3. **Financial Well-being** comprises financial worries or overall comfort with regard to finances in the short as well as long run. In a global survey done by Willis Towers Watson in 2016 on perception of financial well-being of employees, it was found that more than 50% have financial worries – either in the long-run, short-run or both. Financial well-being is also likely to have a strong correlation with emotional well-being.

Two common long-term financial worries of employees include higher education expense of children and financial well-being of their spouse and children in case of any unforeseen events. To provide an assurance and safety net to the employees, we offer two financial well-being programs.
**Nishchint** is a voluntary and co-contributory cost efficient plan that takes care of employees’ worry about financial well-being of their spouse and children in case of any unforeseen eventualities like his or her death and debilitating or serious illness that may force the employee to terminate the services. The Group size is leveraged to make the program extremely cost effective and also covers diseases which are not covered under regular policies like accident insurance and mediclaim. It also brings at fore community spirit of shared ownership.

**Pratibha scholarship** is awarded to meritorious children of long-serving employees for pursuing under graduate and post-graduate education. Since its launch in 2004, 275 scholarships have been awarded to children of Aditya Birla Group employees. These scholars have graduated from various esteemed Institutes such as Nanyang Business School, Harvard Business School, Cornell University, University of Wisconsin, Carnegie Mellon University, MIT, Georgia Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Management, Indian School of Business, Manipal University, etc.

4. **Social Well-being** encompasses the involvement of individual with larger society and giving back to the community. In a highly competitive world where each person is striving to reach his or her peak, it’s easy to get lost in oneself and lose connect with ground reality and society at large. This in the long-run may also impact the emotional well-being of an individual. Giving back to the society has been the core philosophy of Aditya Birla Group. We also encourage our employees to give back to the society at a personal level. One unique example of this is the AWOO (A World of Opportunity Foundation), a registered charitable Trust of ours that supports bright and under-privileged scholars pursing both undergraduate and post-graduate level courses. Among other donors, Aditya Birla Group employees form a significant set of contributors. The scholarships are offered to a wide range of deserving students, including children of workmen and supervisors working in different Businesses of Aditya Birla Group. Since its inception in FY’14, AWOO Foundation has given scholarships to over 375 students for pursing undergraduate and post-graduate programs in Engineering, Medicine, CA, Management, Fashion etc. in best of institutes like IITs and NITs. Beyond this, Aditya Birla Group has other conventional initiatives like good infrastructure in townships, schools, sports events etc. that focus on enhancing the quality of life of employees and their families. While some of our programs have been well-designed and implemented and several others are in progress, we believe that we still have miles to go in this journey. Our endeavour is to make holistic well-being of employees and their family members a part of their DNA; encouraging them to take ownership of their well-being, while the organization provides an enabling eco-system.
Wellness through Livewell – Work Smart & Live Smarter: The Health and Wellness initiative at HINDALCO

About the Authors

Samik Basu, CHRO, Hindalco Industries Ltd (Aditya Birla Group) was Vice President and CHRO for PepsiCo India before taking up the current role. He started his 15 year tenure in PepsiCo as HR Director for their Snacks Business in India during a crucial growth phase of the business in the early 2000’s. During his tenure with PepsiCo, he has worked as HR & Organisation Capability Director for Asia Region based out of Hong Kong and as HR Director for PepsiCo’s SEA Business based out of Thailand. His career as an HR Professional, spreads over 27 years of enriching experience in Strategic Business Partnership, Change Management, Employee Relations, Organisation Design, Diversity & Inclusion, Talent Management and Leadership Development.

A Post Graduate in Human Resources from XLRI Jamshedpur, Mr. Basu has worked with VIP Industries Limited and Hindustan Unilever Limited prior to joining PepsiCo. He is a sports enthusiast and is fond of hiking, travelling, swimming and playing cricket and badminton.

Bhaskar Bhattacharya heads Learning and Engagement at Hindalco. Prior to joining Hindalco, he has worked with a large sized cement start-up and a consumer durable major, both in Mumbai in HR Generalist Role. He started his career in management education followed by a corporate role in Grasim Industries Ltd.

Bhaskar’s education included B Com, LLB and MPM & IR and he has more than 22 years of professional work experience. During his corporate tenure, he has worked extensively in learning cum capability building, talent staffing, Business HR, Employee Engagement, HR Strategy and Execution. Being close to academics, visited various institutions for interaction. He has also published articles on HR and other related topics in HR Magazines including the NHRDN HRD Newsletter.
Wellness through Livewell – Work Smart & Live Smarter: The Health and Wellness initiative at HINDALCO

“Sakshi…………… I will not have my breakfast today,”
“What happened, Amar? Why are you skipping your breakfast? asked a concerned Sakshi.
“Oh, nothing… Don’t you bother… Just going for a preventive routine health check-up!”
“Arrei… all of a sudden what has happened to you? You seem to be alright. Moreover, you have not mentioned anything about your health to me recently!”
“Oh no… Don’t you worry! As a part of our company’s wellness initiative, we are having preventive health check-up followed by a health-cum-diet tips. All this is being done such that we employees can remain fit and fine!”
“Oh, that’s really nice. Your current company is thinking so much about you. Even outside of our home, you are in the right hands!”
“Let me tell you that it doesn’t end here. HR has organized a half-day session titled ‘Livewell’ for us, I am indeed very excited to attend the same.”

The above is a young couple’s morning conversation, where Amar had joined HINDALCO just last year.

Today, health and wellness has taken a prominent space in the portfolio of overall HR offerings. As per World Health Organization (WHO), Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. WHO has rightly quoted that the sum total of physical, mental and social well-being constitutes complete health. As medical treatment costs in the developed world balloon – with United States leading the way – more and more Westerners are finding the prospect of international travel for medical care increasingly appealing.

A few other developments are further accentuating the criticality of wellness for organizations today:

1. The prolonged economic downturn is putting additional pressure on companies to change their health-care programs to help relieve financial strain.

3. Medical tourism is a growing sector in India and expected to experience an annual growth rate of 30%, making it a $2 billion industry. An estimated 150,000 of these travel to India for low-priced healthcare procedures every year.

4. A heart care surgery which costs in the region of USD 30,000 in USA can cost low as USD 8,000 in India. This clearly states the price difference that exists in India when compared to the west.

5. Insurance companies continue to battle the high claims ratio. The premium rates are being adjusted to medical inflation, thus leading to higher cost burden on individuals as well as corporate.

In today’s industrial scenario, whether you are posted in a plant location or are working in city-/metro-based offices, the schedule almost remain same, i.e., 8 AM to 8 PM. However, for senior executives it is at least 1-2 hours more. Further, in the offices locations even if you have a five days week, you still need to remain available over mobile/mail at least on Saturday too. Though, many plant locations also have five and half days week nowadays, there too one needs to remain available over mobile / mail for the balance half day.

As we are currently doing business in the liberalized global economy, the expectation of the investors from the companies have increased manifold with their demands for quick returns. In a similar manner, the bankers also want re-payment in shorter time and once one project gets completed they insist on next project.

Unlike the past when a majority of organizations, being single unit domestic market based ones, survived very well. However, with globalization in place today, where you need to have multiple plants and multiple country operations, the operations become very dynamic and complex.
Along with the above points, the statutory and legislation requirements have also increased manifold. When doing business globally, one needs to further ensure compliances related to sustainability, as also various human factors like diversity, child labor, benefits, etc.

Earlier, when the businesses were not as big both in terms of locations and geographies, promoter groups along with friends and relatives could manage the entire show. Today, it is impossible to carry on one’s business without having professionals in all the functions. Further, bankers and investors too insist upon the companies having a team of professionals to run the organization.

Due to all the above, the expectation from the employees have also increased manifold and today, the current lot of employees are required to be mentally present for the organization almost 24*7. Due to the technology exploration, where you have mobile, mail, skype, video calling, etc., you need not to be present physically in the premise for any decision or meeting. As compared to the earlier days, when you were out on long leave / holidays, people could spend time with family and friends, vis-à-vis today, in any corner of the earth you are, you are traceable and are expected to revert to the call, message, mail, etc. your received and even attend skype / video calls.

The concept of work-life balance is slowly and slowly vanishing and in many set-ups have already thing of the past. Today, the latest quote is “work is life and life is work”.

What we have related till now is the organization story. Let’s now address the growing dynamics and complexities on the professional front. With the growing number of Gen-Y, we are having increasing numbers of professionally qualified spouses. While it is still possible to for the professionally qualified spouses to find a relevant role for oneself in larger cities, the same becomes a casualty in plant locations. Another related challenge is that of finding appropriate schools and institutions of higher learning for one’s wards. As the majority of the HINDALCO employees are in plant locations, it become really difficult for them to manage the education and career of their wards.

In such a situation, where one deals with so many complexities, challenges, and increased dynamism of the context both on the personal and the professional front, it become very important to keep oneself physically healthy. It remains extremely critical since both the organization and the family are dependent upon the employee.

As a group and organization, HINDALCO firmly believes in the health and the wellness of its employees and their family members. Overall Wellbeing is covered under “Enrich Your Life”, which is one of the Pillar of our “A World of Opportunities – Employees Value Proposition” (AWOO-EVP). At ABG we defined ‘WELLNESS’ as ‘a state of physical, emotional and mental wellbeing’.

In our Group, we are committed to enrich the life of the employees by focusing on fulfilling employees’ personal and social needs, and not just their professional development. In 2009, we unveiled the Group’s Employee Value Proposition (EVP) which offered distinctive clusters of opportunities around four major initiatives:

1. Career: Opportunities to build and fulfill career aspirations
2. Learning & Development: Opportunities to learn, develop and grow as a professional
3. Rewards & Recognition: Opportunities to get rewarded and recognized for commitment and contribution
4. Enrich Your Life: Opportunities to fulfill responsibilities and lead a healthy balanced life

Under the pillar of ‘Enrich Your Life’, ‘Overall Wellbeing’ and ‘Quality of Life’ are two pegs’, through which, we provide below facilities to our employees:

i. Vitamin H: it is an informative portal which offers all health and wellness related information with a range of possible solutions for employees and their family members

ii. Life Unlimited: it is an Employee Assistance Program which provides free and confidential counselling support to address and resolve issues that are important for employees and their families
iii. **Health Check-up**: it is provided to employees along with a doctor consultation

iv. **Telemedicine Facility**: it is provided in our remote locations for employees and family members

v. **Maternity Support Program**: it is a combination of various benefits that supports women employees during their maternity phase as well as when she comes back to work

Apart from the above, under our ‘Wellness’ portfolio, we also make available the following facilities for our employees:

i. full-fledged hospitals in large plant locations, and necessary medical facilities in other locations

ii. fully equipped gymnasia in all the locations with trainers

iii. regular sessions on preventive health, diet, yoga, naturopathy, etc.

iv. health and medical camps

As a part of our endeavor to take the employee experience to the next level, we launched an initiative titled ‘Livewell-Work Smart & Live Smarter’ during June 2015 after a year-long extensive preparation.

The idea was first triggered in our engagement survey based upon the score on EVP-Enrich your Life. It was corroborated by the feedback received from the Functional / Business Heads, Unit / Unit HR Heads. Based upon these inputs we have decided to include the same in our business level action plan.

It was decided to organize ‘Wellness’ workshop for all the 4000 management cadre employees across 22 units / locations. The objective to rollout the Wellness Drive was to create awareness among the employees about physical well-being. The purpose was to encourage a healthy lifestyle so as to converge into productivity@work and good quality life@home.

With the help of few experts, we designed, developed and prepared a 4 hours module with an aim to make the presentation interesting, innovating and motivating. It was further ensured that the session should have practical takeaways and easy to follow tips. As a part of the module, we also included few health talks by our senior management executives, who are known and well-regarded for their fitness and health.

Launched on Friday, 12th June 2015, at Mumbai with the blessings of fitness guru Mickey Mehta, the launch was kicked off with an inspiring talk and activities session aimed at increasing the awareness and need of overall wellness in our day to day lives. Our DMD Satish Pai shared the importance of fitness and how he believed that fitness and wellness is the key to success. The launch was a great success with the enthusiastic participants, driven by their feverish thirst for knowledge on how to achieve the goal of integrating wellness into our ever busy corporate lives.

In totality, over 6 months we covered approximately 80% of the target people across 22 locations through 140 sessions in 70 days. The feedback that we have gathered confirms that the employees appreciated the sessions and praised the practical inputs provided by the facilitators. A unique element of the session was distribution of healthy snacks as mentioned in the presentation. Highlight of the sessions were:

- how well do you know your body?
- sleep, food, exercise, water, etc.
- know what you eat
- exercising well (including BMI)
- lifestyle changes
- a healthy lifestyle

Few of the learnings we got from the success of the initiative were:

- Good preparation with conviction is the key to success
- Never compromise on the quality of content and the facilitator
c. Market and Brand the program such that it can attract the stakeholders
d. Ensure success of the initiative by showing the benefits to stakeholders
e. Wider coverage for the visibility and the success

Any such initiative is not without its share of challenges. A few that we encountered in the process that are listed below:

a. Remote location of the plants resulted in extensive travelling of the facilitators
b. Locating, identifying and finalizing quality facilitators within the available budget
c. Language issue, as majority of the facilitators are fluent in English while majority of our people are comfortable in Hindi
d. Limited options of healthy food and snacks in the remote location plants

To keep the momentum going and ensure the sustainability of this initiative, we have planned the following actions:

a. Re-inforce the wellness through yoga, gym, naturopathy, dance, sports, physical exercises etc.
b. Diet cum health counselling on regular basis
c. Focus on healthy food and diet in the canteens / guest houses / official events
d. Track and Monitor the employee’s health on the basis of average number of sick leaves taken and average mediclaim claimed for self
   • Online Reinforcement Activities
   • Online Health Quiz in October & November
   • Online Biggest Looser Game
   • Online ‘Health is Wealth’ Treasure Hunt Game
   • Weekly Heath Posters and exclusive newsletter on Live Well
   • Monthly Health Theme along with related activities

In the second Phase of this intervention we have planned sessions on ‘Mental cum Emotional Wellbeing’. On the lines of ‘Livewell’-I’, Phase-II will also have half-day sessions, where we will have practical tips on ‘Emotional Wellbeing’ and resume the Wellness journey. A whole lot of fun-filled activities during the session shall be followed by sustainable action plan. The intervention’s success will be measured by a dipstick study after the completion of Phase-II.

Quite evidently, the journey continues…

To keep the body in good health is a duty, otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.
- Buddha
Corporate Wellness@Siemens India

About the Author

Prashant Khandelwal

Prashant has over 7 years of professional experience out of which he has been in the Human Resources function for over 4 years.

He holds an engineering degree from NIT, Jaipur and MBA degree from XLRI, Jamshedpur.

Prashant joined Siemens as Management Trainee in 2012 from campus. He has spent considerable amount of time in HR business partner organization. Currently, he is responsible for C&B - Strategy and Policies. In addition to this he also assists the HR head, Mr S Ramesh Shankar in key projects and activities.
Employee Health and Safety (EHS) is an important part of Siemens’ corporate strategy. We have laid out EHS principles very clearly and we ensure that same is adhered to in all our actions. Wellness is one of the most crucial aspects of EHS. EHS principles with regards to wellness are pertaining to following areas: - Health work environment, Psychological well-being, Physical well being, health nutrition and medical care.

We believe the performance, motivation and creativity aid Siemens to remain competitive. To perform and be motivated, employees must be healthy. Siemens lays the foundation for sustainable promotion of health in the work environment by institutionalizing the health management. While doing so we do not restrict ourselves to legal and statutory requirements but often go beyond it. This is clearly illustrated by the various health initiatives we have taken to ensure that our employees are healthy and our workplaces have healthy & safe conditions.

The requirements adapted by Siemens globally are compatible with the ISO framework and is based on international knowledge of Health Management (HM). Through our Health Management system, we are contributing to the achievement of Strategic Corporate Goals. We are also trying to answer the challenges and characteristics of the workplaces of 21st century. Even though the guidelines are global in nature, Siemens respects cultural difference and hence provides room to adjust the contents as per each country’s contextual requirements.

Health Management Organization

Health Management organization has been setup with a clear objective of implementing the EHS principles in country while undertaking various initiatives to improve health and productivity of employees.

Roles and Responsibilities of Corporate Wellness/Health officers

The health officer is expected to implement, maintain and advance health management activities. Following are some of the responsibilities of designated officer:-

• Collecting and assessing health related data
• Implementing wellness programs and initiatives
• Representing the unit in internal and external forums
• Ensuring qualifications and training
• Promoting culture of health
• Communicating topics related to health management

Holistic Employee Wellness

Employee wellness can be categorized into 4 major categories: physical, emotional, psychological and social. Siemens has systems and processes which promote holistic wellness through all these categories.

1. **Physical Wellness** – To promote physical wellness, we have Medicare facilities in all major locations. We have doctors and paramedics on our roles that take care of employees’ health. They act in proactive manner by taking up various initiatives which are aimed at preventive wellness. For instance, there are vaccination programs, pre-diabetic programs, anti-tobacco programs etc. Company also encourages all employees to undergo periodic health checkups.

2. **Emotional Wellness** – Siemens places high importance on emotional wellness. It has training programs to equip employees with right kinds of tools to improve emotional intelligence. Siemens conduct regular information sessions to promote emotional wellness.
3. **Psychological Wellness** – This topic has assumed very crucial role in current times of stressful life. Siemens acknowledges that and has tied up with an external partner to provide confidential counseling services to our employees. This free of cost service is provided not only to employees but also to employees’ family. An employee, if undergoing any stress (personal or professional), can choose to interact with trained counselors over phone, web or face-to-face. We have also provided host of reading material on internet so that employees can read up on issues that he/she is facing.

4. **Social Wellness** – Social wellness is associated with improved trust, equity and collaboration among employees. At Siemens, we ensure equitable treatment of employees at all levels. To improve transparency, we motivate employees to open up during employee feedback sessions. We also encourage managers to go through upward feedback sessions to hear out the employees. We send our managers to training programs like ethical leaderships and Heart of effective leadership to inculcate these values. We have provided platforms to employees like Siemens Social Network (SSN) to collaborate.

**Wellness Initiatives @ Siemens India**

We undertake various wellness initiatives from time to time to encourage our employees to adopt healthy lifestyle and to help them keep their health parameters in desired range. Some of the recently undertaken programs are:

**Fit-4-life wellness@Siemens program:** This program was developed for pre-diabetic, hypertensive and obese group. This is a targeted 3-monthly wellness program for Pre-Diabetic employees aimed at lifestyle modifications of employees.

Program included Health Awareness session on by Cardiologist, Diet & nutrition expert, Clinical Psychologist and Yoga expert. Employees were made to undergo the test and based on the test results a focused wellness program was developed for them. Baseline Assessment including blood tests (HbA1c & Lipid Profile) were also conducted. Participants were encouraged to walk 10000 steps daily with the help of a mobile phone application. Participants reaped great benefits of program by good health which resulted in their Blood sugar parameters coming down with a loss of body weight which in some cases was a substantial 4-5 kgs!!! The benefits of the program also cascaded to their families leading to improved lifestyles even in their homes.

Employees were encouraged to share their experiences on whatsapp group.

**Healthy@Siemens:** This introduces the concept of targeted; need based & sustained health promotion interventions within reasonable resources. Health Committees were formed at all locations pan India. The Health Committees undertook an As Is Analysis of their location Medicare facilities. Subsequent to their recommendations, improvements were undertaken in HM facilities with paramedics being appointed and Health Management ambulance facility arranged at locations. New initiatives were launched such as the 360° Wellness@Siemens, Healthy Leadership@Siemens, Suggestion Boxes, collection of monthly morbidity data, outreach program for employees of smaller offices & project sites etc. The Final As-Is-Analysis was conducted and the results were excellent.

**Healthy Leadership@ Siemens:** This program encourages leaders to take on good health as a leadership skill and to become role models in health management. This program incorporates a session by our counseling providers on ‘Recognizing psychosocial disorders in team members’. We reached out to employees in smaller offices through health awareness sessions through teleconferencing. The responses have been quite encouraging & we hope to make it a sustainable activity. Healthy Leadership@Siemens Training program for Managers.

**Communication**

We believe that creating awareness is one of the most important steps in maintaining wellness. To do the same we have created quarterly newsletter ‘HM Varta’ that carries articles informing employees about various healthy behaviors along with encouraging them to participate in several wellness programs.
Additionally, we conduct awareness sessions on wide array of topics. We observe all health related days like cancer day, anti-tobacco day etc. Some of the sessions conducted in past are listed below:

- Prevention & Early Detection of Cancer Lifestyle
- AIDS awareness program
- Human factors and ergonomics
- Session on Art of being Happy
- Anti tobacco awareness session
- Awareness of Lifestyle diseases
- Dental hygiene session
- Health talk on addictions

Healthy, committed and creative employees are the most important resources for continuous innovation. Wellness programs play a pivotal role in maintaining the health, motivation and performance of our employee. We strive to attune the company’s health-related activities to the requirements of modern working life.

References:
Employee and Corporate Wellbeing: Evidence from the Indian Corporate Sector

About the Authors

Parul Varghese, Training leader - IT and I&L, GENPACT. She is a Certified Learning & Organization Development professional with 14+ years of experience. She is a 5th rank holder in the Diploma in Human Resource Management from XLRI in 2014-15. She is currently pursuing Diploma in Transactional Analysis from SAATA. She has worked as an independent consultant providing solutions to multiple organizations across 18 industries. She has designed & facilitated classroom session and lead OD project around visioning, performance management, teaming and culture building.

She is a vivacious, flexible, sensitive & dynamic professional. Her passion lies in learning more about organizations & drivers for people behaviours within these organizations. Her interest & expertise lie in Strategic HR/ Organizational Development & Talent Management space.

Radha Raman, Second Year PGDHRM Student, XLRI Jamshedpur. She is Radha is currently pursuing her specialization in Human Resource Management at XLRI. She completed her B.E in Electrical Engineering and worked as an Electrical Design Engineer at Fichtner Consulting Engineers (I) Pvt. Ltd. before joining XLRI.

Her areas of interests are Organizational Behaviour, Performance Management, Training and development and Strategy. She recently won the second prize in Titan Company Ltd. National Case study competition. Her interests are Carnatic Music, dance and reading. She believes in contributing towards social causes and has volunteered for teaching poor street kids.
Overall, there has been a paradigm shift in the way corporates perceive employees. While earlier firms could thrive on the physical assets as a major factor of success, it’s a different scenario today. In the modern knowledge economy, employees are the key for a firm, irrespective of the hierarchical level they may belong to. In such a case, employee-friendly policies help organizations attract and retain the right kind of talent to gain competitive advantage in the market. (Edmans, Li & Zhang, 2014). Motivating employees has also become a major challenge, as organizations who aspire innovation and creativity, expect the same from their employees, as a result it becomes difficult to quantify one’s efforts towards innovation and measure employee motivation.

Gallup’s Worldwide Engagement Survey of 2011-12 reveals that employees, irrespective of the role or level in the organization, spend a substantial part of their lives at the workplace. Hence, the quality of workplace experience has a significant impact on the employees’ quality of life. Why You Hate Work, an influential article published in the New York Times recently, talks about the increasing frequency of burnout amongst executives at all levels. In yet another research, Srinivasan S. Pillay, a psychiatrist and assistant clinical professor at Harvard Medical School, found that all the senior leaders and executives he surveyed showed signs of burnout. Such findings have commonly been attributed to the rising organizational expectations being far above the individual employee’s capacity to contribute.

It is increasingly becoming clear that with the employee’s lives at stake, organizations should focus on delivering an overall conducive work environment, rather than focusing on just one aspect. Great workplaces have a trickle-down effect on employee’s physical health, mental health and overall increase his or her lifespan. An unhealthy work environment not just costs the employee, but also the society at large. A strong focus on ‘Employee wellness’ leading to Corporate Wellness is what differentiates top companies from the rest. Employees in their search for the ‘best place to work’ are looking at how satisfied they are working at a particular organization, rather than just focusing upon salaries and perks.

Employee Wellbeing

Wellbeing is defined as “the condition of being healthy, contended, healthy or successful” (Collins English dictionary). It is the potential indicator of quality of one’s life. It has two components, one which is ‘Feeling Good’ and other ‘Functioning well’. An employee feels good about oneself when he/she experiences feelings of happiness, contentment, engagement, enjoyment and curiosity. Functioning well is achieved by experiencing positive relationships, having a sense of purpose and control over one’s life.

Employee Wellbeing Frameworks

In this section we shall survey three influential frameworks that attempt to make sense of wellbeing in its varied facets.

PERMAH Framework

After the remarkable success of his Authentic Happiness, Dr Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, presented the PERMA framework in his 2011 title Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being. He researched and concluded that wellbeing is a construct with five measurable and teachable elements (PERMA). The Wellbeing Survey later added a sixth dimension of ‘Health’. The six elements of the PERMAH framework are:
1. **Positive Emotions:** When we feel good about ourselves and have positive thoughts about self and environment. Having a positive outlook towards life is necessary for stimulating creative thinking.

2. **Engagement:** We are truly engaged when we lose track of the outer world and are fully immersed in the task that we do. In this, we most efficiently utilise our skill sets – be they intellectual, creative, artistic or psycho-motor. Being engaged is a vital key to most efficient form of functioning and personal happiness and satisfaction.

3. **Relationships:** Being connected to people around our workplace or family is important because socializing is one of the primary human instincts which serve as our support system for life.

4. **Meaning:** Finding meaning in life is what separates a truly alive person to a ‘just existing’ person. Doing something bigger than one’s self gives a positive boost to one self. It is argued to be the calling of every human, to do something larger than oneself and be of value to those around.

5. **Achievement:** Achieving something helps in realising one’s potential.

6. **Health:** Consciously taking care of one’s physical health leads to positive feelings about oneself.

This PERMAH framework lays the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of Wellbeing. Various organizations have been working upon it in accordance with their business strategy.

**Gallup’s Framework**

Tom Rath and Jim Harter’s **WELL BEING: The Five Essential Elements**, an outcome of Gallup’s workplace research on what makes life worthwhile, talks about five different aspects of human wellbeing. These aspects are:

- **Career wellbeing** basically refers to a proper fit between who we are and what our career is. Career wellbeing is perhaps the single most aspect of wellbeing, as we invest the most productive years of our life in our career. The state wherein a person’s career is aligned with his/her interests, getting opportunities to use one’s strength for the benefit of his/her career and finding meaning in the work one does, is when an employee is truly engaged and has positive experiences. This leads to a win-win situation as an organization too benefits from the higher employee productivity, without which our lives remains unfulfilled.

- **Social wellbeing** takes cognizance of our living in an interdependent world, relying on people around us, in varying degrees, to fulfil our goals. Our interactions and relationships with the world around us become an indispensable part of our lives. The research by Rath and Harter suggests that our wellbeing depends upon our entire network. Data collected from 12,000 people, who were part of an interconnected network, found that the chances of their being happy increases by 15% if people in their direct connection of social network are happy. This remarkable finding suggests that chances of one’s being happy increase drastically if one frequently interacts directly with someone who has a higher wellbeing. What is even more remarkable is that not only does one’s direct contact make an impact, it is the second or down the line connections that also make an impact on one’s wellbeing. In fact, the chances of an increase in happiness go up by 10% if one doesn’t even know or have interacted with this happy second hand connection. Incidentally, this finding was later supported in the Framingham Heart Study through a 20 year longitudinal analysis which revealed that people’s happiness depended upon the happiness of others with whom they were socially connected in a network. The study by James Fowler and Nicholas Christakis, published in the *British Medical Journal*, showed that formation of Happiness clusters (and not merely happy individuals associating with each other) illustrated that happiness was more contagious than depression!

It can be seen easily that the Gallup element of social wellbeing overlaps with the Relationship aspect of PERMAH framework. The importance of human contact through relationships lies in the fact that people in meaningful relationships reinforce our strengths, support us through our challenges and make us experience positive emotions.
Financial wellbeing is not about fat pay checks. There have been numerous studies which have shown that rising income does not necessarily correlate to increase in happiness. Beyond a certain point, extra money ceases to be of importance for an employee. Here, it is ‘financial security’ which has three times greater impact than employee’s pay check, on his/her wellbeing. People who are satisfied with their standard of living, who spend their money well and organization assists its employees for doing so and the act of spending on experiences and people rather than on things, contributes positively towards financial wellbeing. (Rath & Harter, 2010)

Physical wellbeing refers to the good health and adequate energy aspect of an individual’s life. A healthy person, characterized by mental and physical health, can indeed be more productive. As health is an outcome of choices we make, organizations which drive awareness and consciousness towards a healthy lifestyle positively affect an employee’s sense of wellbeing and thus his/her workplace productivity.

Community Wellbeing can be linked to the sense of engagement one has with the area one lives in. Altruistic behaviour facilitates disengagement from self-reference by focusing on others. By doing so, an individual develops a more indulgent perspective towards one’s own challenges. (Efklides & Moraitou, 2013). Employees, when given an opportunity to contribute to a cause greater than themselves, add meaning to their lives and enhance their self-worth. Organizations too benefit from higher productivity of the engaged employees and the positive image of employees indirectly enhances the company’s image in the outside world.

Emotional Wellbeing: It is being argued that the GALLUP framework misses out on a crucial element of individual wellbeing. Emotions are an important part of an individual’s existence as they are generated on a day to day basis. What is that individuals can do to be faced with positive emotions? These positive emotions make us feel happy and these can be achieved by simple strategies. The field of Positive Psychology has much to offer in this regard by providing scientific evidence in favour of gratitude, humility, appreciation, and focusing on what is good in life to make us feel good. Organizations, on their part, can raise awareness on the importance of mental health, thereby promoting sound emotional wellbeing, both inside as well as outside the organization.


Another influential framework of employee well-being comprises four core needs:

1. **Physical well-being** which deals with improving an employee’s overall physical health.
2. **Emotional well-being** deals with crafting those initiatives that leave employee feeling more positive than negative. A conscious effort is made by firms to deal with emotions like stress, anxiety, tiredness and boredom and replace them with more positive emotions like happiness and enthusiasm.
3. **Psychological well-being** refers to initiatives which aid employees in realizing their full potential. Experiences which give employees more autonomy, personal growth and help them achieve their life purpose and attain self-mastery. It can also be associated with realizing one’s spiritual needs.
4. **Social well-being** refers to being part of a social community and contributing towards a cause with equitable and beneficial involvement in social communities. The positive association of improved trust and collaboration amongst employees leads to employee well-being.

The NYT article further states that meeting the above-mentioned core needs of employees leads to an increased experience of job satisfaction, loyalty, workplace engagement, and positive energy at work. Not surprisingly, lower stress levels result.

Wellbeing in Organizational Context

Overwhelming research evidence suggests that organizations have a lot to gain from an employee base that focuses upon all-round wellbeing. Happy work groups are more cohesive and lead to greater productivity and lower turnover rate (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Further, individuals with high wellbeing feelings are more likely to be successful in various domains of life, which includes health & longevity, work & income, and satisfying social relationships (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). Given that employee engagement in various factors is a perquisite for any business strategy to work, Wellness is central to business strategy.
Great Places to Work Survey, 2016

Economic Times and Great Place to Work Institute aimed at identifying the best places to work in India covered 791 organizations across industries, and surveyed 155,119 employees. This study identified the Top 10 best companies to work for and laid out several lessons which we can learn from the best companies.

Employees in best places to work as well in other companies have assessed the workplace characteristics similarly. The high scoring areas were alignment with organization’s goals, non-discriminatory and friendly work environment. The low scoring areas were equity in pay, profit sharing, benefits, politicking and favouritism. According to this study, best places to work differentiate employee experience on the low scoring areas, which was prevalent in both the groups. Best workplaces address employee concerns by investing in practices which enable differentiation of pay for hot skills, equipping managers to handle employee concerns on compensation and benefits, spot rewards, sessions on total rewards or ownership stocks. They exhibit superior understanding of managing employee expectations around equity in pay and profit sharing.

Secondly, the great workplaces spend a lot of their efforts on engaging employees below 35 years and those having 1-5 years of work experience, wherein there is a huge overlap between these two groups. Also, these are the groups which constitute almost 69% of the working population and is simultaneously the most disengaged. Hence, it makes sense to focus on this group as once employees complete the critical mass of 5 years in an organization, they tend to be more engaged and motivated.

Thirdly, Employees whose parents are graduates, post graduates or are professionally qualified, have higher expectations from their employers compared to the rest, and rate their employers less favourably if dissatisfied.

Another aspect is about the leaders themselves in these great places to work. Emphasis on employee’s wellbeing is not a personal choice, but central to their business strategy as well. Such employers are perceived to be more reliable as they empower employees with a say in important decisions, treat them as individuals (and not merely as resources) and, as a consequence, are able to attract talented employees.

The above study concludes with the insight that any organization can become a great place to work if it really is committed towards its employees and strives to build a culture based on trust.

Study on Indian Organizations

To gain an insight into the wellbeing practices practiced in the Indian corporate sector, a qualitative and quantitative study was conducted amongst the PGCHRM students of XLRI, who represented organizations across sectors in India. An online survey was rolled out to approximately 300 students, with a response rate of 99%. The study also comprised 20 face-to-face interviews with senior HR leaders in NCR region. Gallup’s wellbeing framework was used to classify the various wellbeing aspects as it was found to be more comprehensive and explored wellbeing in its entirety.

The study on corporate wellbeing practices revealed the following:

A. **Awareness** - Through the responses gathered for our survey, an estimated 97.6% were aware of the employee wellbeing practices in their firms. Only 2.4% of the surveyed respondents were unaware of the wellbeing practices prevalent in their organization. This is a positive sign for increased awareness regarding employee wellbeing practices in the Indian corporate sector.

B. **Career Wellbeing** - Indian organizations give high value to career wellbeing practices, with almost 98.3% of organizations having some career wellbeing initiatives. Through the online survey, the top priority areas which see a lot of emphasis in the corporate are- internal job postings (18%), Training & Development (16%) and Rewards & Recognitions (16%). Interactions from senior HR leaders revealed Talent management programs, Internal Job postings and Career paths as the priority areas. Employees are provided support through policies and developmental initiatives for moving across functions and geographies and pursue higher education (through tie-ups with various business schools) for grooming and retaining top talent.
C. **Social Wellbeing** - Social wellbeing practices too have a widespread coverage with almost 99.3% organizations following them. Employee Engagement activities scored highest as being the most impactful social wellbeing initiative. A lot of work is going in this sphere with initiatives like Town hall meetings, Reward & Recognition programs, Fun at work, family day celebrations etc., apart from others are being actively followed by organizations.

D. **Financial Wellbeing** - Almost 96.5% of the organizations are following financial wellbeing practices, with Medical & Health insurance coverage as being the most preferred ones. Some of the unique initiatives in this area are allowances on birthdays and marriage, profit-sharing options for senior management, online portals for driving awareness regarding tax saving and planning. A unique initiative was a few firms in the manufacturing sector giving up to 70% subsidy for apartments being purchased by their employees.

E. **Physical Wellbeing** - Over 95% of the organizations surveyed promote physical wellbeing practices with annual health check-ups being the most popular. Some new positive initiatives in this aspect are sports competition, tie-ups with partners to provide healthy food options, use of pedometers and providing Fit Bit’s to their employees. Inter-corporate tournaments are also an increasing trend, which not only encourage physical wellbeing but also help in keeping employees engaged.

F. **Community Wellbeing** - From the responses received, six out of 7 organizations follow community wellbeing practices, with the most popular ones being adoption of communities for health and education being the most popular one at 25.6%. Promoting compulsory off for doing something towards a cause, or contributing towards charitable causes like monetary contributions towards health-/marriage-related expenses of the poor staff in the organizations, and offering time and services to the needy are some of the initiatives which are gaining momentum in the Indian corporate sector.

G. **Emotional Wellbeing** - Mental health is regarded as one of the important aspects of one’s health, and organizations have focused initiatives (89%) to promote sound mental health. Organizations are also becoming more conscious about promoting mental health and these are some of the initiatives which have gained popularity in the Indian corporate sector. Raising awareness through education on mental health issues is the most popular initiative in this arena (42.5%) followed by employee assistance programs providing counselling either online or by engaging with professional counsellors.

**Conclusion**

The survey conducted in Indian organization shows that a majority of organizations are alert to the concept of a multi-dimensional focus on employee wellbeing practices. The ‘Great companies to Work’ rankings too places an overwhelming focus on wellbeing practices, and provide a well-differentiated employee value proposition, which helps in talent attraction and retention. Organizations are also building their own framework as part of their organizational strategy. India Inc. has embarked on this journey, however more work needs to be done in this area to balance the inducement and contribution at both ends.
Incorporating Wellness in an Organization’s DNA: The KRYA experience

About the Authors

Preethi Sukumaran is a co-founder of Krya. She is an alumna of Stella Maris College & IIM (Kolkata). She worked for 8 years in the consumer products industry before starting her entrepreneurial journey. She is deeply committed to the study and application of the timeless principles of healthy living as laid down in the Ayurvedic canon. She has synthesized Ayurvedic principles with her botanical expertise to create a unique range of organic personal care products that have defined Krya as a company and won wide acclaim among discerning Indian consumers. She looks forward to the journey of establishing Krya as the most preferred wellness brand while building a planet-positive and people-positive company.

Srinivas Krishnaswamy is the other co-founder of Krya. He is an alumnus of IIT (Madras) & IIM (Bangalore). He worked for 8 years in the FMCG industry before creating Krya. At Krya he looks forward to the challenges of crafting the company’s DNA – products that delight consumers, manufacturing excellence, a winning team and sustainable, profitable growth.
Incorporating Wellness in an Organization’s DNA: The KRYA experience

Mark Twain once said that “The two most important days of your life are the day that you are born and the day that you find out why.”

Leading a life with purpose and thereby fulfilling your potential is one of the greatest gifts that one can aspire for in life. In this article we are going to make the case that helping your employees discover their life’s purpose and keeping them motivated daily to stay on purpose can be the foundation of a company’s corporate wellness program. And this foundation can go a long way in improving the company’s bottom line.

From warm bodies to “engaged employees”

We co-founded Krya Consumer Products to create 100% plant-based solutions for home cleaning and personal care categories. We manufacture our products at our eco-factory in an industrial estate just outside Chennai. This facility is also our company’s headquarters.

A significant percentage of our factory’s employees are young women from the neighboring villages in the 20 – 25 years age group. Many of them have not completed school and some of them are also college graduates, but for all of them, Krya is the first opportunity at “formal” employment. Nearly all of our employees have had a chequered past in terms of work experience as contract labour, in temp jobs, part-time roles and even as security staff – but none of them were formally enrolled in a company’s books and were only paid in cash. During our first recruitment drive, when we were setting up the factory, it became very evident that giving our employees a clear identity and financial inclusion was far more important that we realized. For the majority of our team, their Krya salary account was the first interaction with a bank and on salary day every month, there is a big smile on their faces when they receive the SMS with the salary credit update. Another source of pride is their formal title as Associate or Supervisor. So for each new employee, we have a formal on-boarding process on the day they join Krya, when we create their employee file, take them to the bank to open a salary account and then fill up the statutory medical insurance forms. We have observed that this official on-boarding process creates a sense of belonging to the company and certainly improves their self-esteem. This also gives them a sense of legitimacy of belonging to a formal and select group.

Factory employees, especially in the MSME sector are often treated as “warm bodies” – as replaceable units who punch in, operate machines, pack finished products and then punch out at the same time every evening. Government reports and textbooks refer to this class under one sweeping generalization, “labour”! Labour is said to be interested in fixed wages, fixed times and are not looked at as being quality oriented or taking pride in their work. Most importantly, there is no skill-oriented training that is used in their jobs, so they are considered substitutable.

It is this attitude that has lead to the trend of outsourced production, contract labour and a decline in manufacturing competitiveness. In fact we were appalled to receive a government form that asked us for the number of skilled & “un-skilled” workers in our unit. Now, why would we employ someone who we have defined as “un-skilled”?

Our daily quest as entrepreneurs is to get a pulse on how engaged our employees are to create a culture that fosters and sustains high levels of employee engagement which in turn keeps our organization focused on high quality and high customer service standards.

A Culture of Wellness

At the end of our first full year of factory operations, we ended up with a high TELD (Total Employee Leave Days). Barring just one employee, everyone had availed leave days well above their allotted quota of earned
leave. The reasons for the absence were the usual – recurring illnesses, caring for a sick family member. During this period the company provided a number of medical choices for the employees, to help them achieve lasting changes and to boost their productivity.

Krya’s products are manufactured using principles of traditional Indian Systems of Medicine (ISM) – particularly Ayurveda and Siddha. As a company we have relationships with some of the finest Ayurvedic and Siddha Doctors in Chennai & South India. As a special company perk, we would provide access to these doctors and set up appointments for any employee who chose this option since these doctors were not covered under the regular medical insurance network. In special cases, we even arranged for consultations via video conferencing from specialists in other cities. In the Indian system of medicine, proper food and nutrition plays a vital role in curing illness and maintaining good health. After every such consultation, our employees would return with recommendations on changes to their basic diet along with medicines and supplements. A common recommendation was the elimination of processed food, highly spicy & sour food and the inclusion of nutritious foods and ghee and milk. In Ayurveda, such simple changes in food choices along with the proper medicines can bring about profound cures to even long-standing ailments. To encourage the switch to these choices, we started stocking the factory pantry with ghee and providing milk as an option during tea breaks.

After the first year, during which nearly every employee availed of a special consultation with Ayurvedic doctors, we noticed a similar pattern of adoption and dropouts. In the first few days they would make special effort to make better food choices and consume the medicines regularly. This would lead to an immediate relief from the symptoms and an overall improvement in health. However, in a few days they would revert to the old, unhealthy food choices, find several excuses to not consume the medicines and it was all back to square one. One of the reasons was the fact that none of our employees were exposed to the ISMs and it was a completely new mindset to move from a quick-fix OTC medicines habit and to reexamine their lifestyle choices and food habits. Further, there was some resistance from the families to adopt the new ideas.

Therefore, despite the initial break-through in results, most of our employees could not sustain the lifestyle changes. There was a two-fold cost to the organization. One was the lost days whenever employees called in with sick leave. The second, of course, was organizational time & effort since we often gave our team time off during work for doctor appointments. When required, we would also send another co-worker with the patient for support.

Over the last two years of working to improve our team’s health, we have instituted a few changes. As a part of employee benefits, everyone is now enrolled in the ESIC program – this gives everyone access to quality medical care at a fraction of the cost they would have paid and also provides insurance. For certain special long-term health conditions like anemia where the holistic care offered by ISM is far superior, we encourage our employees through regular talks on health to try out ISM. To encourage adoption, we cover up to 75% of the cost of the medicines prescribed.

We integrate discussions on wellness during work. Since our products focus on skin and hair care, we use product training meetings to discuss how diet, sleep, lifestyle affect skin & hair health. We are attempting to create a culture of wellness by exposure all our employees to new ideas, like talks on yoga and the use of natural products at home.

**Measurable Progress in Reasonable Time**

Motivational speaker and success coach Jim Rohn popularized the concept of “measurable progress in reasonable time”. At Krya we have used the same idea in our HR process. We define reasonable time as one year and at the end of each year we ask each employee if they have experienced growth as an individual. While we do have defined goals, both employee and supervisor must instinctively agree that significant progress has been achieved in the last one year.

The starting point on this journey of employee growth is a very “focused conversation” to understand the motivational triggers for each employee. In this conversation we keep an open mind to discover what makes this person tick. Sometimes, the answer lies outside of what is normally considered to be within the scope of company’s goals.
For example, one of our production associates has a college degree and aspires to become a school teacher, preferably in her native village. A necessary step in fulfilling her purpose is a postgraduate qualification either in her subject or in teacher training. As employers we are comfortable with the fact this employee's long-term goal is not with Krya and is actually elsewhere. This girl felt that her spoken and written English skills were inadequate and an improvement in this skill would help her realize her dream. It is to cater to such needs and aspirations that we have an ongoing program in the workplace to help our associates learn English & other basic skills.

We have an option where we pay for after-work classes. We actively create on-the-job opportunities to use English for documentation and general communication to further their skills. While the benefits of this approach is obvious for the employees, as an organization it improves our productivity as these employees can communicate better with customers and suppliers, maintain excellent records and also access technical books which are usually available only in English. As a final step, for this employee we have also given some direction in choosing a distance education program to get her started on a postgraduate degree. This employee is one the best performers in her team, is highly motivated to do her job and on several occasions told us that she loves to come to work at Krya.

Some employees like the one mentioned above, have a fair idea of their life’s purpose and have specific ambitions. In their case we have to find out if we can help them with these goals. For some others, especially those who are just starting their career, such purpose may not be too evident. We encourage them to think about their goals and to keep refining their ideas. In the short term, we help them with the achievement of other meaningful goals to make progress on the road to finding their purpose. Such short-term goals include creating a financial plan to get out of debt or to save for children's school fees or to purchase a scooter to drive to work. During such conversations, Preethi discovered that one of our team members had a flair for fashion and styling. On further probing, she revealed that her first career choice was to be a hair stylist. So Preethi decided to put this girl on the team developing a new range of organic hair colours, which was very close to her area of interest.

One of the benefits of the “focused conversations” is the discovery of such hidden interests and talents and to match them with our work projects. Drawing form our experience, we are convinced that aligning an employee’s talents with organizational goals is an excellent win-win process.

Even if your life’s goals or purpose is not clear, a good organization must help you do your basic job really well, help you discover the joys of planning and organizing your day and slowly nudge you to a self-directed state, where you are able to achieve your goals for the organization and have some time left over for special projects that help harness your special qualities and strengths.

The College experience & Team Wellness

At Krya we have a unique situation at hand which has defined the contours of our culture. There is a great deal of homogeneity in our team – in terms of age, life-stage and family background. A significant number of them have missed on a “fun” college experience as they entered the work force right out of school. As co-founders we have articulated the “college experience” as a key element of the culture. We actively encourage the fun, informal, high-energy, activity-led elements of college life at the work place. We create cross-functional teams to work on projects right from the best way to celebrate birthdays to launching new products. We also encourage a “buddy system” at Krya. As a young team, they cannot look for mentors within, who are older and more experienced. So the “buddy system” helps form friendships at work to help the team cope up better with work and life pressures.

The Results

At Krya we have invested considerable time to articulate our philosophy of how to recruit and select talent, how to motivate and reward employees and at a very fundamental level on how to treat our employees. In our earlier corporate jobs, we learnt some great lessons and also experienced some pain-points in the regular corporate organizational culture. So we were clear about avoiding those mistakes in crafting the Krya organizational culture and building upon the universally good ideas.
In the last couple of years, we have observed some interesting results from putting our ideas into practice at our factory.

- As a factory, we follow standard times to start and close the working day, with scheduled coffee breaks and lunch times. We also pay overtime as per regulations. In the early days we had a culture of clock-watching, where the team would scramble to get in time for work and plan to leave work 15 minutes before the scheduled closing time. Now after a year of putting our ideas into play, we have a highly motivated team that is focused on results and getting the job done. Most of the team members arrive 30 minutes before scheduled start and use the quiet time to plan the day’s work. Near the end of the day there is a tremendous buzz of energy as they work to achieve the day’s production target or dispatch target. When they wind up for the day, they are happy with the achievement and are aware of the time only as they sign out.

- Krya is a wellness brand. Our organic, plant-based products are planet friendly and great for skin and hair health. Before joining Krya, our entire team had deeply ingrained habits of using regular, chemical products based on cost and convenience. On the day they join, each Krya employee learns about the very generous employee discount on our products. Yet in the early days, despite the eye-popping employee discount, there was very low adoption of the very products they manufactured. In the last year, through personal example, better education and by regularly sharing customer testimonials, our employees have become loyal users of Krya products. They have reported that it solved skin and hair problems and helped them look good and feel great. This has created a virtuous cycle where our team goes the extra mile in paying attention to quality manufacturing as they feel good about using those very products.

- Our team actively recommends Krya as a great place to work in among their peer networks. As a result, we get several job applications through referrals. This helps in reducing both the cost and cycle time of filling up positions. There is also a significant improvement in the quality of candidates to recruit from. As a start-up, this gives us advantage as we are not yet a global “name” brand, large–company employer.
Neeta Nagar, Managing Director, Accenture, is currently leading technology delivery for a large client engagement in Finland. She has over 23 years of experience across different roles in sales and delivery in large Information Technology multi-nationals. She has led large global teams from diverse cultural backgrounds, and brings that rich experience to bear upon any issue. She has extensively travelled across North America, Europe and Asia and has had the opportunity of long-term residence in Canada, US, Finland and India. She also holds a Doctorate from Indian Institute of Management in Finance and Accounting area and has been an occasional visiting faculty for premier institutes in India.

Her mix of academic and global corporate experience is a sound foundation for her views on the subject of corporate wellness. She believes that corporate wellness is being dealt with rather superficially in the form of scattered initiatives and therefore requires deep engagement with issues on the ground. It is important to design and implement such a program considering the cultural factors specific to any work environment. According to her, the success of these programs should be directly linked to the performance objectives of senior leaders and the HR department in any company.

*The views in this article are solely personal and do not represent any particular company or situation.*
Corporate Wellness Programs: A Global Perspective

A typical corporate workday in India comprises minimum two-hour commute, digging oneself into the computer for 8 to 9 hours, multi-tasking between dynamic requests that one dare not say no to, and attending to meetings or conference calls in different time-zones. In addition, it is quite normal to stay in office for extended hours and work over the weekends due to critical project delivery pressures. One might also have to cut short one’s vacations during the times of crisis. The evaluation or perception of one's performance is strongly related to one’s capability to cope with all these pressures without saying no. A few mindful ones manage to control their schedule, but most of us remain in the rat-race to perform and build our careers.

If I compare this situation to the corporate life in any country in the developed world, especially in a European setting, the dynamics of work pressures could be as different as different can be. There are no stressful commute issues, no long working hours and no compromises on vacations. Due to strict labor regulations in these countries, the cost of not allowing the employee the vacation that’s one’s due or forcing an employee to working overtime is too high. That said, there has been a drastic change over the years in their work environment from individual-centric consultant job profile to one where one’s working with global teams, comprising members of vastly different national cultures. Such a shift is bringing about a sea change in the developed world employer’s expectations too. While the growth in technology has been an enabling factor, it does not take away the stress created due to work pressures in multi-national settings. The insecurity of losing one’s job as a result of global outsourcing phenomenon is quite real. Even the protectionist attitude in these countries is slowly fading away because of the financial pressures both at corporate and country levels.

In general, the health care costs associated with chronic diseases are projected to increase by 42% by 2023, which is equivalent to $4.2 trillion in terms of cost and lost economic output. (DeVol et. al. 2007). On one hand, employers are passing on their financial pressures to the employees. Simultaneously, they are also building new mechanisms to improve employee satisfaction and retention. Corporate insurance is one such mechanism that is perceived as a security by the employees. With healthcare costs rising around the world, health insurance is an essential tool to cope up with the high cost of treatment for costly fatal diseases such as cancer. However, just relying on insurance to deal with cost of treatment is not enough either for employers or for the employees. There is a definite need to explore comprehensive preventive mechanisms such as integrated wellness programs, to manage health and stress at work.

There is no dearth of research that links the implementation of corporate wellness program with reducing cost of healthcare. Most respectable global companies across different sectors have begun to adopt these programs as part of their employee engagement strategy. Taking a global practitioner’s perspective, I believe that these wellness programs require specificity in their implementation based on the country and cultural factors that drive the work environment. Based on my experience of leading large teams in multi-national and multi-cultural corporate environments, I propose the following implementation matrix for a wellness program that can be used as a framework in any corporate setting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Stage</th>
<th>Building Awareness</th>
<th>Creating Investment Mechanisms</th>
<th>Measurement of Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventive Health Management</td>
<td>• Initiatives based on relevance for a working environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness in daily work life</td>
<td>• The staging of these initiatives based on the maturity of working environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating Opportunities for fun activities</td>
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According to the above framework, specific initiatives should be planned and implemented for each thematic area based on the relevance and maturity of the work environment. Following paragraphs illustrate the implementation of this framework by drawing comparisons between working environment of a developing country such as India against any other developed country in general.

Preventive Health Management

Based on my experience, the awareness of preventive health management is much lower in any developing country such as India. The social health benefit structure is inherently weak and corporate employees remain hesitant to spend anything beyond the corporate insurance program. One also sees pervasive lack of urgency to schedule any preventive health checkups for oneself or one’s family. The reasons could be conflicting priorities, lack of awareness or cultural factors. For example, Indian working women are busy juggling work and family and quite often ignore the prioritization of proactive health checkups above everything else. In these situations, any wellness program has to focus upon increasing awareness and setting up mandatory health checkup facilities within the corporate premises. There is also a need to actively monitor the usage of such investments against the insurance reimbursements to measure the effectiveness of such an initiative.

On the other hand, health checkups are part of the social health benefits in any developed country and people are well aware to proactively schedule these without any extra motivation or reminders. The advanced facilities and culture in these countries motivates people to take care of themselves without any external push. However, the modern lifestyle in these environments too is prone to issues like smoking, excessive drinking, and/or obesity. In such situations, the wellness program should focus primarily upon raising awareness through public events like marathon, posters in the elevators or work premises or social media to bring changes in employees’ lifestyles.

Stress Management

The factors causing work-related stress are far more basic in nature in countries such as India where people struggle with rudimentary facilities in general. For example, daily commute to office because of excessive traffic is a prominent cause of stress in large Indian cities. Minimum two hours commute in a polluted and noisy environment chips away the motivation to focus at work. Further, over a period of time, these issues are taken for granted both by the employees and employers and they become accepted norms of their working life. Stress borne of such environmental factors builds up silently and brings a sense of helplessness and low confidence once its effects manifest in the form of physical health and psychological issues. Similarly, spending excessive hours at work leaves no room for any significant health interventions which affects both the individual and the family. People are not left with any time to spend upon stress reduction activities as part of their personal daily schedule. All the wellness initiatives in such a scenario should focus on activities that can be made a part of the regular work schedule. Corporates are setting up gym facilities in the premises but their usage is sporadic at best and unmeasured. There should be awareness sessions such that employees can dedicate a specific slot in their daily schedule for fitness. Employees should be provided access to a forum to voice their concerns through anonymous help lines, individual and group coaching sessions, corporate friend/buddy channel, and/or informal networking events where they can speak up freely without any fear or hesitation. Corporates should include stress management as one of the key objective and performance area for their Human Resource Management function.

As compared to a developing country scenario, the domain of stress management is very different in the developed world. People are usually self-motivated to make fitness as part of the daily regime. The employees in this environment are stressed about coping with the global environment. Their tolerance to situations that have the potential to impact their individualist outlook and demands for independence is rather low. In such a scenario, it might be advisable for the focus of wellness programs to rest on raising awareness on different global cultures through coaching or cultural sessions, and individual counselling sessions.
From the foregoing we may surmise that there is a distinct difference in understanding and approaching stress-related issues in these two environments. The focus in the developing world has to be more on getting the issues out in open and then helping arrive at the solutions. However, being candid about the issues is rarely a concern in the developed world. Their need is to shift the excessive focus from self that is the biggest cause of stress. Creating awareness of the global social environment and creating a fine balance within the team should be the focus of any wellness program in such an environment.

**Improving Mindfulness in day-to-day work environment**

This theme seems to be the most neglected by corporates though it offers considerable potential to be explored in any work environment, especially with the increased usage of gadgets and social media. There is both an expectation and tendency to keep up with multiple activities all at once leading to constant distraction and lack of productivity. The employees are expected to remain virtually connected 24x7 even outside office hours leading to less and less separation between work and personal life. It is commonly observed that the employers are tacitly promoting and even rewarding this culture.

Although the theme is common, the issues vary between developing and developed work environment. In case of former, the area is loosely handled because of excessive social and financial demands upon the employees. Both the employers and employees are unmindful of drawing lines between work and personal life. Multitasking is part of the daily work schedule and there is an inherent expectation to delivery instant results for all the activities simultaneously. These misleading expectations lead to unmindful reactions and conflicts resulting in low productivity and self-confidence. In my experience, employees in such environment become compliant and accepting with no awareness of its impact on their life. The wellness initiatives in such cases should focus on basic time-management coaching, setting goals and prioritization, email management, and managing multiple (oftentimes contradictory) expectations. Corporates should become mindful of not promoting or rewarding excessive long hours (also known as face-time). Instead, senior leaders’ performance should be measured on the basis of productive working hours and not on unmindful, unlimited work-hours delivered by their teams.

Many European countries are becoming stringent on the number of hours any person can work in a week. A few governments are bringing in legislations where employees cannot receive any work-related communication outside of work hours. These standards and regulations are creating an imbalance within global teams in any organization. While the employees from the developed countries remain inflexible, the workload is transferred to teams on the other side in an uncontrolled manner. The scenarios on both sides of the divide are a cause for concern if employees are not aware of the disparities and employers are ignoring the issue as long as the work gets done. Corporate wellness programs should resolve these conflicts in a global environment instead of looking at issues in a piecemeal fashion. Some of these initiatives should be measured as part of overall corporate governance while the specific initiatives can run as part of the wellness programs.

Based on my experience, corporate wellness is a much more complex and important topic than how it is perceived and pursued currently. It cannot be treated as a “look good” program for the corporates to showcase on posters and in their annual reports. The underlying issues have a direct impact on the organizational productivity and personal life of their employees and should be implemented in a more serious integrated fashion. In a global setup, the issues should be looked at from specific work environments and focused initiatives should be planned accordingly. A robust measure of the effectiveness of these initiatives is missing and should be directly linked to the performance of senior leaders and HR executives in the companies. The proposed framework can be used as a tool to plan and track the success of the corporate wellness program.
Corporate Wellness: Where do Organizations Go Wrong?

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Corporate Wellness: Where do Organizations Go Wrong?

According to the WHO, lifestyle diseases are likely to claim 7.6 million lives in India by 2020, as compared to the statistic of 3.78 million by 1990. Also, diabetes, along with cardiac ailments and cancer are expected to cost income losses of over $236 million dollars in India. While this has led to an increase in adoption of wellness programs by the corporates, there has been some debate about their effectiveness, both on the employees’ wellbeing as well as the bottom line of the company. Most corporates still visualize wellness initiatives as just a program meant for cost reduction. There is a strong need to consider it as a core element of the strategy and not a separate initiative. In this article, we have tried to highlight some of the issues prevalent with these programs and how organizations can deal with them in order to leverage the true power of employee wellbeing within the organizations.

Support of senior Management

A common problem with many wellness initiatives is the employee resistance that the organization faces when implementing the program. According to a Gallup study, only 24% of employees at companies that offer wellness program actually participate in it. Further, only 12% of employees strongly agree that they have substantial overall well-being because of their employer. Some employees claim lack of time, claim little perceived benefit or simply a dislike for exercise or a lifestyle change. This leads to organizations trying to motivate, convince, and finally impose restrictions on employees leading to a decrease in workplace productivity and an increase in voluntary attrition, which are two of the most important reasons for implementing wellness programs in the first place. Instead, organizations should encourage leadership buy in at multiple levels to increase the response from employees, and decrease this resistance. For instance, if the CEO or top executives feel strongly about wellness, and talk about and practice it, employee will feel more inclined to consider their state of wellness, since the self-consciousness regarding such practices reduces considerably. Similarly, middle-level managers can encourage employees to avail the various benefits of the wellness program, and try to integrate it in the workplace. Another Gallup survey has found that direct reports of supervisors with thriving well-being are 15% more likely to be thriving six months later. Thus, managers can play a critical role in promoting well-being by directing employees towards and providing opportunities to use well-being resources, creating culture of support over wellbeing issues among employees.

Alignment with organizational goals and aspirations

Another common problem is the way organizations introduce their wellness programs. Rather than focusing on it as a strategic imperative, organizations create an illusion of wellness by implementing crowd-pleasing policies with short-term impact. While this may work in the beginning, when organizational strategy and goals change, these wellness programs are left behind, becoming an isolated policy, with no direct link to the organization’s values and aspirations. For example, if an organization introduces a tobacco cessation program, but employees can’t participate because of organizational barriers such as privacy concerns, lack of time, and an unfavorable work schedule, employees can’t benefit from the program. Wellness programs must be designed and introduced in a way that permeates into employee lives right from the beginning, thereby allowing it to develop as both the organization and employee grows. A major American financial firm jumped the wellness bandwagon when it started becoming popular, and tried to impose routine health check-ups and talk from senior management about wellness and its various benefits. Predictably, there was massive employee resistance, since they did not understand the sudden change in company policy, and were suspicious of the motives. Senior management was also uncomfortable to address such personal matters with the employees, and the organization had to go back to the drawing board to identify what went wrong. Hence, it is important to create a culture where the organization integrates wellness into its values, beliefs and
systems, modifies its policies and processes to facilitate employee wellbeing and employees take interest in improving their own wellbeing.

Accessibility

Many wellness initiatives are offered beyond working hours and quite a distance from the place of work. Participating in a seminar on stress, joining a fitness center or team-building programs on an individual’s personal time defeats the purpose of corporate wellness. Naturally, it’s far easier to skip such opportunities at the end of a long day at work when accessibility is an issue. One way to overcome accessibility barriers is to have facilities, seminars and programs in the workplace premises whenever possible. For instance, at a leading Analytics Company, 70% of the employees use the campus recreation center at least twice a week. The center is open before and after work and on weekends, and the staff develops a variety of engaging programs. [5]

Another way is to conduct these initiatives within working hours. A multinational energy corporation conducts stretch breaks within certain units at set times. [5] This allows employees to reap the full benefit of such wellness initiatives. Finally, organizations can take their wellness initiatives online, by providing information and seminars online, and creating a website or an app to facilitate remote access. For many decentralized organizations, an online presence is critical, thereby keeping its employees connected to its culture of wellness despite the differences in time and location. Thus, it is important to bring the wellness program to the employee rather than having employees go to the program, to ensure maximum participation. It is important to note here that employee metrics such as utilization (the total number of employees in specific programs), penetration (the percentage of employees who have participated in at least one wellness activity), depth (the percentage breakdown of employees who are light or heavy users of wellness activities), sustainability (the number of employees who continue to engage in a risk-reducing behavior) and satisfaction (with the program’s scope, relevance, quality and accessibility) can be used to measure and tweak the program accordingly to improve the impact of the wellness initiatives. [6]

Carrots and Sticks

Wellness programs are popular amongst the employers. As per the RAND Corporation, half of the organizations with 50 or more employees have them. Another study by Kaiser Family Foundation in the US showed that 36% of firms with more than 200 workers tie financial incentives to health objectives like weight loss and smoking cessation. Even larger firms offer incentives for employees to get health assessments and identify health issues. [6] Providing financial incentives for employees who adhere to the demands of a wellness program become financial penalties for those who resist participating in the program, or those who aren’t as healthy as their colleagues. This can lead to a feeling of discrimination within the organization, resulting in employees resisting such policies or filing lawsuits. Also, most of the times, these incentives don’t work towards encouraging healthy behavior beyond the completion of these programs, acting as a major roadblock for these wellness programs which aim to be sustainable and promote health and wellness of the workforce in the long run.

The problem here lies with the ‘One Size Fits All’ approach used by the companies while designing their incentives program. Not all employees are influenced by financial incentives. Also, these financial incentives are generally delayed into the future that is, paid after a period of time while the employees are looking for immediate recognition and gratification. It is really unfair for organizations to expect employees to put in effort for something as challenging as quitting smoking or losing weight, when the rewards are due next year. [7]

The organizations need to take a cue from behavioral economics, while designing these incentives. The first change, as discussed above, should focus on making these incentives immediate in nature while the second change should focus on making incentives more noticeable to employees. For instance, employers personally giving a wellness cheque or direct cash would serve more purpose than cash deposit just going directly in their accounts. Incentives should be designed in way which encourage people to change their daily habits, rather than just serving as a periodic bonus.
Another problem seen with the wellness initiatives offered by organizations is the prevalence of a wide array of options. For instance, in Jet Airways, such activities range from teeth cleaning to completing a triathlon. Too many options can just overwhelm employees, and organizations end up wasting money on such programs that don’t really address the workers’ biggest health concerns. To add to this, many wellness initiatives expose employees to a plethora of health tests and screenings, which possibly results in higher healthcare cost which could have been avoided.

At present, most of these programs are very individualistic in nature. In order to build a culture of wellness within the organization, the companies need to incorporate the ‘social aspect’ in these initiatives. A control group study by the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine indicated that teaming people up, and allocating rewards on their individual physical activity goals as well as their team members’ goals doubled the period of time people spent in working towards these goals. This idea also holds a great potential for building team spirit within the organization. At NextJump, teams of employees participate in a weekly Fitness Challenge, where winning teams are rewarded with virtual cash. This has helped in creating camaraderie and increasing social cohesion amongst workers.

In order to build a total culture of health, the organizations need to integrate healthy practices into every aspect of their business practice. This culture should incorporate every facet of well-being—emotional, financial, physical and social. The wellness initiatives should be supported by flexible schedules, healthy meals, health promoting policies etc. Dow Chemicals has promoted such a culture over a period of 30 years, with results shown in terms of better health of employees and reduced healthcare costs.

**Scope and Relevance**

Another emerging issue of concern is the employers’ seriousness about the quality of wellness initiatives. Most of the wellness programs appear slightly superficial in their approach as they primarily focus on things like fitness club memberships, general health screening etc. but not on initiatives which can actually reduce risk of diseases like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. For instance, most employees are aware of their ‘Total cholesterol number’, but this measure is not sufficient to determine the risk to their health. Employees must be made aware of and asked to routinely measure their total Cholesterol/HDL ratio every 6 months, and compare it with the prescribed target levels. Similarly, organizations should encourage employees to get a C-reactive protein blood, test which is one of the best measures to assess heart risk. Such sophisticated measures of wellness are lacking within most of these corporate wellness programs. Just providing feedback reports to employees about not smoking or exercise is not going to motivate them to change behavior. They need to be provided with tools and resources to track their health on a regular basis and gradually incorporate change in their lifestyle.

**Measuring the Return on Investment**

Most of the employers tend to believe that the wellness programs offered by their organizations have been effective, but lack a well-established plan in place to measure the ROI of such initiatives. The return on investment for corporate wellness programs should typically include the cost savings achieved on overall health care of employees along with the productivity increase due to reduced sick leaves. While these are concrete savings, the employers should also not overlook the additional benefits accrued by such programs like boost in energy and increased positivity. An energized and happy employee is more likely to lead to a better customer experience which can further lead to better sales. These additional contributions by physically and emotionally healthy employees could go a long way in determining the company’s future.

**Conclusion**

Corporate wellness plays a huge role in talent attraction, improving job satisfaction, reducing absenteeism, improving engagement, and hence, it is too important to be ignored by employers. At a time when higher productivity and talent retention is the key to an organization’s people strategy, it is the need of the hour for organizations to be prepared for possible pitfalls in their wellness programs, rather than simply being reactive. Too much is at stake and it is now time for organizations to switch to high gear and focus on the arduous, yet exciting journey ahead.
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The Harvard Grant Study (HGS), originally called the Harvard Longitudinal Study and then the Harvard Grant Study of Social Adjustments, eventually became known as The Harvard Study of Adult Development. Developmental Psychology had by far spoken only about stages of development in children, right through adolescence, a process that would cease by age 21. The Harvard Grant Study sought to turn this very basic premise of Developmental Psychology on its head. It eventually came up with findings that very clearly showed that human beings continue to evolve for the rest of their lives, even after having crossed adolescence and adulthood, well into their sixties and seventies. It spoke about Adult Development in a way that no other study had ever done in the past. The magnitude of effort in terms of time as well as funding that went into this project eventually is unprecedented in the history of Developmental studies. HGS data has resulted in the publication of four titles, namely, Adaptation to Life (1977), Wisdom of the Ego (1993), Aging Well (2002) and the latest Triumphs of Experience (2012).

The HGS cohort originally comprised 64 hand-picked students from three consecutive batches, all of them being male. The first batch was soon joined by the more groups in the subsequent years to finally end up with the sample of 268 subjects. Although the initial plan had been to study these men only for the first fifteen or twenty years, with frequent updates to the data gathered from time to time; it actually lived to become a longitudinal study that spanned 75 years! The young men who had been tracked from the very inception of the study, lived to be ninety years old and contributed significantly to the study, in terms of the experiences they shared and the changes that they went through over those many years. The men of the HGS displayed a positive correlation between personality and physical and mental health on a wide range of variables and also gave valuable insights to researchers on how mental and physical illness could be predicted.

The HGS was a longitudinal, prospective study, wherein the subjects were studied in real time scenarios. The Grant Study is the only one of its kind that has interviewed three generations of relatives of the men and consistently obtained objective information on both psycho social as well as biomedical health. The HGS is unique not only at Harvard but is a class apart in studies on human development around the world as it has even published life span histories and has shown the relationship they have with statistical data.

Dr. Vaillant also confesses in Triumphs of Experience that he is, at the moment, 78 years old and the participants of the study were 90 and that there were significant changes that had come about, both in them as well as in him. He also documents how the world they inhabit changes and the questions that he had put to the men had changed over the span of 40 years. The questions changed in terms of not only the fact that the world they inhabited was in a state of constant flux, but also because of the fact that the study had been spearheaded by four different men at different points in time. Each researcher came in with his own unique style and a distinctive focus area. The first director had focused on Physiology, the second on Social Psychology, Valiant was the third and he focused on Epidemiology and adaptation and the fourth director, who succeeded Vaillant, prioritized relationships and brain imaging.

Dr. Vaillant discovered, through his observations and questions, the truth of the French adage, “People change but they also remain the same.” One main finding of the study was that the men who had fulfilling personal relationships and a good enough social life were emotionally better off than the men who lacked in both of these respects. More often than not, childhood memories of repression and feelings of being ‘not so loved’ by their own parents, carved out a personality in the growing boys that held back from the sharing of love, as illustrated by the case history of Adam Newman. These undercurrents of thought are, in the book, shown to be quite dominating and overpowering up to a certain age., Beyond that age the self-constructed boundary built around themselves crumble, as they undergo a mental and emotional metamorphosis. They become more relaxed in their approach to life and more accepting and forgiving in general.
Dr. Vaillant illustrates that longitudinal studies are as unsettling as they are enlightening and that longevity is not in itself either a guarantee of suffering, or a promise of fulfillment. He mentions that value judgements are transformed into science through the availability of repeated measurements over time, one of the greatest strengths of longitudinal studies. He describes how childhood and adolescence do affect old age and how the rough terrains of a strict personality are eventually smoothened out by experiences over a period of time. This remains applicable to the extent that men were, after a point of time, unable to have even a vague recollection of events and happenings that had transpired in their early years.

Psychological homeostasis has been an enduring concern of the HGS. Psychological defense mechanisms produce behaviors that may appear pathological to others, but in fact reflect efforts of the brain to cope with sudden changes in its external or internal environment without too much anxiety and depression. The study showed that defenses allow humans a period of respite, when necessary, to master inescapable realities that cannot be integrated immediately by providing a mental time-out, without which an individual would become acutely anxious and depressed. Such ‘coping mechanisms’, as they are more commonly known, too play an important role in shaping the development of an individual over the years and they could be classified under the broad heads of both ‘positive’ as well as ‘negative’. Mature coping mechanisms like humor and patience were shown to attract people and immature ones like projection and hypochondria, whilst providing temporary relief, appeared self-centered to other people and eventually alienated them. Triumphs of Experience shares multiple instances where coping mechanisms like sublimation and repression helped the subjects lead fulfilling lives.

A major effort of the HGS had been dissecting the psychological mechanisms of homeostasis by which human beings achieved resilience in the face of socio-cultural challenges. Alcoholism and its effects were also studied and it was quantified not by reports of quantity or frequency of drinking but by the numbers of alcohol-related problems. Empirical investigation provided clear answers to the Study’s three major questions about involuntary coping mechanisms. First, maturity of defenses can be rated reliably, they showed predictive validity toward future mental health and that it is independent of social class and gender but is affected by biology.

In conclusion, it can be gauged from a thorough reading of the work by Dr. Valliant in the form of this book, that the Study’s identification and charting of involuntary coping mechanisms has shown to researchers the pathway to understand the psychological layers of people through the lens of empathy, wherein initially some people might appear to be unlikeable but we could eventually unpack the reason for it to appear so. It points out the fact that it requires a long study, spanned over several decades to learn about the maturation of defenses so that we do not undermine our own very strong intuitions regarding the same. Since adult development is a lifelong process, a lifelong study is essential to look into it properly; in order to study “personality”, which is unique to individuals. These proved that mature defenses were the be-all and end-all of warm, lasting and loving relationships. They have been downplayed in the role they play for sustained good health and the fact that the most important factor for joy and success in adult life is love (read, attachment).

Triumphs of Experience is filled with nuggets of wisdom on many established psychological processes. Valliant mentions that the “capacity for intimate relationships” as well as “good sibling relationships” went a long way in making men flourish in the later part of their lives. A major finding of the HGS has been reestablishing the truth of the established wisdom that positive family relations (resulting in a warm childhood) is the most important predictor of later life flourishing. A contentious claim is made in this regard: “the only thing that really matters in life are your relationships (p. 27).” It is asserted that this effect overrides the effects of social class, IQ, and other negative childhood experiences. This claim remains controversial since the generalizability of findings based on data from a privileged set of respondents selected on the basis of their high level of achievement may be suspect.

Dr. Vaillant, the author of Triumphs of Experience, has not hesitated to share his personal journey during the ardor he underwent whilst pursuing the men in this study. Men who had grown old and changed in ways that even they could have fathomed for themselves in the past, when the study had begun and they were very young. An important insight shared by Dr. Vaillant is that ‘time changes the observer as well as the observed’.
He further acknowledged the changes that came about in terms of the questions that were asked earlier, to what they evolved to be at a later point in time. The study collected data on many variables over time and periodically correlated this information with the overall health and success that each man in the study actually achieved. Dr. Vaillant did not for once shy away from confirming that he too came with his own biases and shortcomings and that in some way or the other, also impacted the study and its findings.

For the readers interested in employee and corporate wellness, Triumphs of Experience offers unique perspectives that may help focus not only on flourishing while being employed but also when their sunshine years are truly behind them!

That way, this title breaks fresh ground by forcing Wellness specialists to focus on the long-term implications of their current actions. Even though the universalizing claims – viz., effect of childhood relationships, mature coping strategies, etc. – may well be debated, the relentless focus on the long-term effects as an imperative may well be worth the effort that has gone into this monumental work.
Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and well-being by Martin E.P. Seligman - A Book Review

About the Author

Kshamta Sharma is a fellow student of XLRI Jamshedpur, India, specializing in organization Behavior. She also holds a degree in business administration with specialization in human resources. Before joining doctoral program at XLRI, she was in the profession of teaching for two years. Her research interests lie in the areas of positive psychology, eudaimonia, morality and self-compassion. She has presented a paper in the Indian Academy of Management Conference and published a case in Ivey Publishing. She is a member of International Positive Psychology Association and reviewer for the Academy of Management Conference. Her leisure activities include walking and bird watching.
Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and well-being by Martin E.P. Seligman - A Book Review

Flourish is another tour-de-force from Seligman that illustrates the importance of transferring the scientific evidence from research labs to the real-world for inspiring wellbeing. Martin E. P. Seligman, PhD, is currently on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. His major contributions have been in the areas of learned helplessness, optimism, positive psychology and psychological fitness for military personnel. He has received many research grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the Annenberg Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, etc. He has been decorated with multiple recognitions from the American Psychological Association, including William James Fellow Award and James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award for his contribution to the field of psychology. He was also the president of the American Psychological Association in 1998.

What lies at the heart of Flourish is the applied positive psychology initiatives conceived and directed by Seligman and his fellow researchers. These applied initiatives, duly supported by theory and research, focus on strength building, development of positive emotions and grit among students and professionals alike. Flourish is a hands-on guide to understanding how to fill the gap between positive psychological science and its application in our daily lives. The field of positive psychology science is growing on the premise that examining positivity, its causes and consequences in personal lives is as important as examining negativity that had been the dominant focus till now in the field of psychology.

Flourish contains gems of wisdom in the form of compelling stories from Seligman’s long academic career. The evidence he has gathered have been convincing enough to influence even the long-standing critics of the positive psychology movement. Flourish reveals Seligman as a fallible human being, a caring father, an outstanding scholar, an involved academician, a decorated professor and a gritty reformist displaying the characteristics of an inspiring leader with charisma.

Seligman starts out with the theory of authentic happiness – elaborated upon in his earlier title of the same name. He then puts it aside owing to its monistic and one dimensional nature. In this latest title of his, Seligman shifts to a new theory focusing on the multi-dimensional nature of human well-being. The first reason for the shift from happiness to well-being is that happiness, in general, meant ‘buoyant mood, merriment, good cheer, and smiling.’ (p. 10). Such an emphasis some how did not capture the multifaceted nature of human aspirations and experience. Further, measuring happiness usually involves a limited focus on capturing moods and transitory emotions. Seligman argues that such measures are not useful for either positive psychology or public policy. Lastly, though emotions, engagement and meaning are important part of happiness, relationship and accomplishment are argued to be integral and inalienable parts of the same.

The subjective nature of emotions and the objective nature of relationship, meaning, engagement and accomplishment make the currently elaborated theory of well-being pluralistic. Thus it is that the new theory has much to offer to multiple constituencies, be they schools, or varied forms of organizations: both private and public.

It is not a mere accident that Flourish came after Authentic Happiness (Seligman, 2004). Seligman approves of the term flourishing over happiness in Flourish for three reasons –for it being over used and fuzzy, the inherent subjectivity, and its apparent connotations of hedonism. Seligman argues that individuals wish to not only be happy but flourish in their lives. Wellbeing theory suggests various interventions with examples that aim to maximize all five components of wellbeing, thus aiding in true flourishing.

After defining PERMA in the first two chapters, Seligman discloses his career path that led him to becoming the President of American Psychological Association in 1998. Thereafter, drawing from the curious lack of
application in psychology that focused primarily on basic processes side-stepping Well-Being completely, he established the Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) at Penn State University in 2005.

To spread the concept of flourishing at mass level, Seligman relates the training of teachers, coaches, game designers, military personnel, sport trainers, such that they could integrate the wisdom of positive psychology into their professional missions. The most influential initiatives discussed in chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 include Comprehensive soldier training/fitness, Global Assessment tool (GAT) and The Geelong Grammar School Project. These initiatives focus on social fitness, spiritual fitness, family, emotional fitness, trauma and growth. These examples demonstrate that institutions can be wholly changed by shifting the currently deficit-focused perspective to one on balancing life with meaning, flow and emotions.

Institutions and practitioners aiming to harvest benefits of positive psychology will appreciate the later chapters of the book. These chapters provide a step by step guide to implement positive psychology interventions. For example, chapter 9 covers optimism, its health benefits and organizational interventions for accentuating and harnessing optimism. In the following chapter, Seligman connects wealth with well-being, which seems slightly out of sync with the rest of the title. The chapter ends Vision 2051, aimed at making 51% of the population move to flourishing by the year 2051. The readers who wish to drill deeper into the background research shall benefit from more than a hundred pages of Flourish that are devoted to the signature strength test, index, notes and acknowledgments.

Interesting insights for practitioners

HR practitioners may benefit most from paying attention to the scientifically-validated concepts and exercises viz., Positivity ratio (Losada effect), gratitude journal, VIA, love letters, gratitude visits, etc. These can be used to measure individual well-being and institute various positive psychology interventions (PPIs) for impacting desirable organizational outcomes. Scientific reasons for pessimistic individuals being more vulnerable to cancer have convinced many practitioners to use PPIs to increase the level of psychological resources of individuals. However, it needs to be mentioned that practitioners likely to use PPIs mentioned in this book are advised to consider potential dark side of unhealthy optimism as discussed in a recent review article (Grant & Schwartz, 2011). Grant and Schwartz utilize the Inverted U theory and doctrine of mean to explain the potential negative consequences of PPIs, such as gratitude and optimism.

Fundamentally, it is hard to disagree with the concept of PERMA and its importance in organizations. However, the larger well-being theory suffers from the following weaknesses:

i. Well-being theory does not establish predictors and consequences of flourishing and just premises emotions, meaning, relationship, engagement and accomplishments as five component of wellbeing. However, evidence from other research confirms it. For example, good quality relationship makes individuals flourishing (Malone, Liu, Vaillant, Rentz, & Waldinger, 2016) and positive emotions enhance relationship building skills (Fredrickson, 2001).

ii. To my knowledge, no statistical evidence validates the claim that PERMA form a unifactorial structure. Thus, PERMA components may emerge and develop at different point of time.

iii. It is claimed that the term Happiness was substituted by Flourishing because of the former’s subjective nature. However, I retain my doubts on a valid objective measure for any constructs measuring emotions, engagement or meaning.

iv. The inspired goal of making more 51% world population flourishing by 2051 with a less developed well-being theory is questionable. Seligman seems to be aware of the lack of any scientific base to make such goals. So, he presents it as an appeal in Flourish.

v. Although most of the book has its base in scientific studies, findings of many such studies are not always and completely generalizable.

vi. The effects of positive psychology interventions mentioned in the book are time-limited, context-based and culturally-biased.
Although, well-being theory claims to be both subjective and objective, the selection of five specific components of Flourish seems subjective and preference based. Because other concepts which have been given important place in other well-being theories – viz., the concept of autonomy in Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) - are not even recognized by Seligman. Paradoxically, Seligman states 'The way we choose our course in life is to maximize...' which means control over our lives i.e., autonomy. Again, this statement has limitations considering cultural, social and political scenario in Middle Eastern countries, China etc. Such issues are huge blind spots for advocating positive psychology at the global level. Critics argue that absence of issues of inequality, freedom, autonomy etc., in well-being formulations shows ignorant and politically conventional perspective of the world. Despite all these flaws and limitations, Flourish, as a positive psychology read, offers exciting insights of a developing field of research. It is very informative, evidence based and written in story-telling format which makes it an intriguing and captivating book.

References:
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