

How to foster a wellness culture that works

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING WORKPLACE WELLNESS



A happy, healthy employee is good for the bottom line

The importance of individual employee wellness is top of mind for most organizations. However, the direct connection between employee wellness and overall corporate success might not be as apparent.

It's becoming increasingly evident that a happy, healthy worker is good for the bottom line.

While executives often set the wellness strategy, it's often facilities managers and administrative professionals that make the important choices that impact the daily lives, health and wellness of the people who work in the office. Whether it's the office layout, indoor air quality or the snacks available in the breakroom, these decisions can impact employees' health.



The American Heart Association found that for every **\$1 invested in workplace wellness**, companies could expect to **receive up to \$3 in return.**

America's health is suffering and it's costing us millions.

- [According to the CDC](#), chronic diseases are responsible for 7 out of 10 deaths each year, and treating people with chronic diseases accounts for 86% of our nation's healthcare costs.
- The Gallup HealthWays Survey states, ["The obesity rate among U.S. adults in 2015 climbed to a new high of 28.0%, up 2.5 percentage points since 2008. This represents an increase of about 6.1 million U.S. adults who are obese."](#)

Gallup states that, "Full-time workers in the U.S. who are overweight or obese and have other chronic health conditions miss an estimated 450 million additional days of work each year compared with healthy workers - resulting in an [estimated cost of more than \\$153 billion in lost productivity annually.](#)"

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Wellness programs are the future of the workplace

When Staples conducted their [2016 Workplace Index](#), the results were telling. Instead of technology reducing employee workloads, it turns out employees are working more than ever. In fact, most respondents reported working longer hours to try and catch up on work they couldn't tackle during an eight-hour day. That workload is taking a toll on the health of our people.

64%

of respondents say their workplace has contributed to stress.

13%

have even taken a workplace stress-related leave of absence.

50%

report feeling overworked and is motivating them to look for another job.

66%

of employees still consider the office as the most productive place to get work done.

“There is a tremendous opportunity for organizations to focus on and design employee experiences where employees truly want to show up. Offering employees health and wellness programs, well-designed office environments and up-to-date modern technologies are all a part of that employee experience. This is crucial to be able to attract and retain top talent.”

– Jacob Morgan,
author of The Future of Work

62% of survey respondents said the availability of a wellness program is a selling point when looking for a new job.

58% reported their workplace doesn't offer a wellness program.

Five ways to gear up for wellness

Corporate wellness programs can go a long way toward contributing to great corporate culture in the workplace. However, you can't just launch a corporate wellness program and expect it to be universally adopted.



- 1** | **Know your culture.** A young-staffed boutique PR agency's workplace wellness program may look different than a global organization's with thousands of employees. Being realistic about the demographics and cultural attitudes of your organization won't dictate whether or not to have a program, but it should determine what it becomes.



- 2** | **Know your budget.** Executives probably aren't going to hand over a blank check for a wellness program. But don't make assumptions that there isn't money that can be reallocated to make healthier improvements. There is a business case for creation of the program and purchases along the way, so take it as seriously as any other initiative.



- 3** | **Invest wisely.** Once you know your budget, make smart investments in technology, marketing materials, rewards and other program-related items. [Research technology that really works!](#) Don't just rely on fliers for your internal marketing strategy. Buy (or budget ahead) for rewards that actually mean something to employees. Offering a range of products from [fitness trackers](#) to a box of KIND® bars can help.



- 4** | **Get executives to take an active role.** When you see the CEO sporting her FitBit, it helps liven up and validate a focus on wellness. Any initiative that is thrust into the organization without executives playing along is likely to be less successful. From sharing their own goals to leading walks (executive walks and talks are a cool concept), this buy-in will resonate with employees.



- 5** | **Know the federal standards.** Make sure someone on the team is well versed with the ACA, HIPAA, ERISA and the ins and outs of healthcare and privacy laws.

Four ways to promote wellness internally

Buy-in: It's not just for executives anymore. To succeed, workplace wellness initiatives must reach and

engage the very people who need and want a healthier work environment. Intentional messaging and marketing can make an incredible difference.

1 **Tap into the marketing/PR teams.** Tap into the skillsets of those who know how to craft a compelling message of why wellness matters and how the company is offering a healthier lifestyle. If you're going to invest in a facilities overhaul with wellness in mind, promote it!

2 **Convey the benefits of workplace wellness overall.** Don't assume people know why time, money and effort are being dedicated to the initiative. Be prepared to share data and anecdotal evidence as to why a healthier workplace is a wise business decision. Be specific about how it will culturally and financially improve the organization.

3 **Get a little personal.** Although it's important to share the benefits of wellness as a whole organization, be specific when you can. "Rhonda, this standing desk may help with your lower back issues; John, I know you went running this morning, go grab a protein bar from the breakroom!"



4 **Have a breakroom kickoff party.** Turn up the music, bring energy to the room, hand out water bottles and get people excited. Select an executive who knows how to pump people up. Get people motivated about what they can achieve together with the right materials and support.

Five ways to build wellness into your culture

The employees surveyed in Staples Workplace Index 2016 made it clear they want more from their employers. Here are five ways to answer their call for action.



1 Create well designed, inspiring workplaces.

66% of employees still rate the office as the most productive place to get work done, even with all of the remote workforces. But sadly, many workers describe their workspaces as being less than inspiring.

According to the survey, “The majority of survey respondents describe their office as standard, plain and dull. 43% would like to see more attention paid to workplace design, with respondents also citing a desire for natural light, private spaces,

[standing desks](#), lounge areas and ergonomic/flexible furniture for multiple uses.”

According to a study by Texas A&M University’s Health Science Center School of Public Health, [standing desks also improve productivity](#). The study monitored 167 employees in a Texan call center over a six-month period, and found that, “employees using stand-capable desks were more productive than their colleagues in standard, seated desks. And the productivity of the standing-desk workers continued to increase over their seated colleagues steadily over time. In the first month, the stand-capable group had 23% more successful calls than their seated colleagues, and by the sixth month, they had 53% more successful calls.”



2 Make breaks mandatory.

45% of employees eat lunch at their desk every day. Not surprisingly, the survey revealed that more than three-quarters of employees say they feel more productive after a break. So why don’t they take them? Guilt.

“Taking a break in the always-on modern workplace can seem like a pipe dream, but it shouldn’t be.” — Kerry Anne Carter, Vice President, Staples.

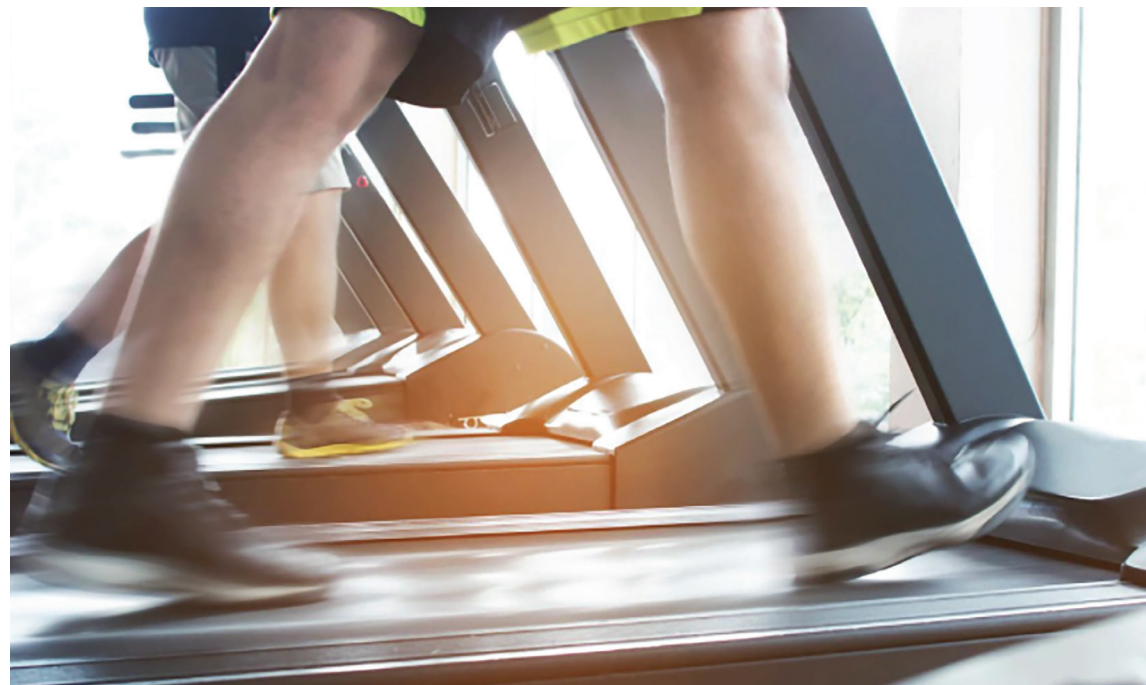
More than half of those surveyed want breaks to be actively encouraged, and even simply having a well-stocked breakroom offering healthy snacks can significantly increase employee productivity. The report states that, “employees seek well-stocked break areas for improved happiness and productivity, as well as to create a more social environment and to decrease stress.”

3 | Focus on personal and professional development.

Having the right tools available is a major step toward a healthier workplace. In addition to providing updated and relevant technology and software, offer a way for employees to continually better themselves. Implement a company-wide personal growth program, and work with individuals to reach their goals. Retention will improve — and that’s enough of a business case right there.

4 | Adopt flexible work hours and paid time off.

Stress kills, and there’s nothing more stressful than juggling life and work commitments. Allowing flextime and remote work options gives people control of their lives and goes a long way toward fostering employee loyalty. Plus, when they inevitably come down with an illness like the flu, they won’t feel pressured to bring those germs into the office, possibly infecting colleagues. Be sure to stock up on hand sanitizer and Lysol® wipes in the office, but also allow people to recover at home when they are sick and not share germs with the entire team.



5 | Include fitness into daily activities.

Having an on-site gym or offering fitness subsidies might sound like options only the largest of companies can afford, but even the smallest businesses can incorporate fitness into the workplace.

[Walking increases creative thinking](#), and we know that sitting all day is terrible for your health. Instead, get employees moving by holding “walking meetings.” Consider investing in fitness wearables and inspire teams to challenge each other in monthly or quarterly exercise contests. Make it easy for employees to bike to work by providing safe areas to lock up their gear, and, if possible, shower.

Five ways to keep wellness front and center

So you've invested in ergonomic furniture, stocked the breakroom with healthy choices, and have a FitBit competition underway. What will keep this energy high in two, four, eight months? Here are some tips to keep the energy going.

1 | Use consistent messaging.

Like any campaign, energy and momentum can drop along the way. Offer consistent reminders about why wellness matters. Send out email invites to meet up in the breakroom at lunch or try the Thursday yoga class; remind people what products are available at the company's expense that can aid in making healthy decisions.

2 | Create accountability groups.

When a friend is waiting at the gym at 6:00 am, she is undoubtedly the number one reason that her friend will show up. When someone has paid a trainer, he is less likely to sink into the couch for a Netflix marathon. We all know this. Think of creative ways to encourage accountability.



3 | Make the (next) finish line visible.

Even though workplace wellness shouldn't have an official "end date," it should have moments of victory in plain view. People want to reach their goals and then set new ones. Communicate goals and light the path along the way.

4 | Engage employees to weigh in.

It is important to have more than one communication tool available for employees to supply ideas. Did you know Diana in accounting is a dietician? And she's willing to do some free classes! And Doug in R&D wants to start a basketball club. Do you know we swap healthy recipes in the breakroom on Fridays? There is no way to know everything people want or are willing to do for the success of the program unless you ask.



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5

Reward employees.

Whether it's a half-day off, a financial reward or a gift card, people like free things. They also like to be told "good job!" Especially if they have been committed to their own wellness, taking extra steps, packing healthier lunches or revamping their workspace.

By your side

Whether it's offering positive food choices, establishing a fitness initiative or purchasing ergonomic furniture, anyone in the organization can be a beacon of wellness. But you don't have to do it alone. By working with a partner like Staples that understands your goals and resources, your workplace can easily be a safe haven for healthy living.

Additional Resources

[Staples Workplace Survey](#)

[Talent Culture Podcast: Creating a Culture of Wellness](#)

[Staples Health and Wellness Center](#)

[Staples Worklife Resource Center](#)