

HR Insights

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Employee Wellness as a Recruitment Factor

Workplace well-being transforms every day, and many organizations have a renewed focus on employees as people. Employees want to be treated like human beings—not just resources. More than ever, workers want to belong in the workplace and feel recognized, appreciated and safe. Correspondingly, when employees' well-being is thriving, they often take fewer sick days, increase their job performance, manage stress better and experience less burnout, all of which directly impact organizations. Thus, employers can yield positive benefits, including strong attraction and retention rates, by offering programs and resources that enhance employee wellness.

This article explores employee wellness as a recruitment factor and how employers can leverage it.

Employee Mental Health and the Workplace

Mental health remains a top issue today; many workers battle stress, anxiety and other mental health conditions in their personal and work lives. Fortunately, the mental burden of the COVID-19 pandemic has enabled more transparency and empathy around the topic, especially in the workplace. As attitudes about employee mental health have dramatically shifted for the better, employers are poised to bolster their mental health support for employees through benefits and other workplace resources. Employers are incentivized to do so, as mental health can impact employee performance and recruitment and potentially increase costs.

The American Psychological Association's (APA) 2022 Work and Well-being Survey validated that employee expectations related to mental health support are shifting, with 71% of workers reporting that they believe their employers are more concerned about employee mental health than in the past. More than 80% of

workers agreed that how employers support employee mental health is an important consideration when they evaluate jobs. Employees' ideal resources go beyond health benefits. According to the APA survey, workers want the following:

- Flexible work hours: 41%
- A workplace culture that respects time off: 34%
- Remote work arrangements: 33%
- Four-day workweeks: 31%

These findings underscore the importance of mental health support in the workplace—and with a greater focus on mental health support, employers can work to attract more talent in a tight market.

Employee Wellness and Recruiting

As a whole, workers are increasingly prioritizing their wellness. Forward-thinking employers can understand workers' desires and leverage them to attract and retain more employees. Consider the following key findings:

- More than three-quarters (87%) of employees considered wellness and well-being when choosing an employer, according to a study conducted by Workforce Magazine.



- Two-thirds (67%) of employees who worked for organizations with wellness programs liked their jobs more. The same percentage was “extremely” or “very likely” to recommend their employer to others, an Aflac Workforce study found.
- Nearly half (45%) of employees working at small to medium-sized companies said they would stay at their jobs longer because of employer-sponsored wellness programs, according to the Principal Financial Well-Being Index.

Despite these survey results, many employers today struggle to prioritize wellness initiatives within their overall benefits strategy. Furthermore, these programs often are not fully integrated into recruiting strategies. Savvy employers have an opportunity to consider how wellness programs can take care of their employees and aid in recruitment efforts.

Employer Considerations

The work environment and the ways employees do their jobs can significantly impact mental health. More employers are continuing to embrace flexible and hybrid work formats, focusing on how everyone contributes rather than where or how they’re doing their job. While many employees are worried about their compensation keeping up with inflation, they also hope for nonmonetary factors that impact their work life.

Employers may pursue the following strategies to support employee wellness:

- Establish an employee assistance program, or EAP.
- Review employee benefits packages to ensure they include mental health-friendly offerings.
- Offer a variety of mental health resources, including telemedicine options.
- Develop and implement holistic wellness programs.
- Support work-life balance and caregiver responsibilities.
- Focus on creating a flexible working environment, regardless of the type of work model.
- Incorporate employee wellness into the workplace culture.
- Promote employee wellness in employer branding.
- Reconsider your organization’s employer value proposition (what value an employer offers in exchange for the employee’s contributions) and ways to round it out and incorporate employee wellness.

If employers are wary about the investment in mental health, a 2023 study by mindfulness app Calm found that for every \$1 invested in employees’ mental health, employers can save \$2-\$4 on other expenses, such as health care costs—that’s a win-win in today’s economic climate. Employee mental health is more important than ever before, and employers are uniquely poised to offer resources and support their current and prospective employees. Today’s workers want and need psychological safety in the workplace. Therefore, effective employee recruitment comes down to ensuring workers’ safety and well-being during their workdays.

Organizations can start by evaluating current wellness initiatives and thinking about ways to improve them. To ensure offerings and investments resonate with the workforce, it can be helpful to survey employees first and see what they find most valuable and necessary for their overall well-being. To better support employees, it may also be helpful to understand what is stressing workers out. The APA survey found that a current significant stressor for employees is compensation. Specifically, most employees are worried about their compensation keeping up with inflation.

Contact us for employee wellness program ideas or ways to leverage them for recruitment.