



WCWI 

STATEWIDE SURVEY: WELLNESS AMID COVID-19: A FOLLOW UP

Well Practice

WCWI Member Resource

July 2020

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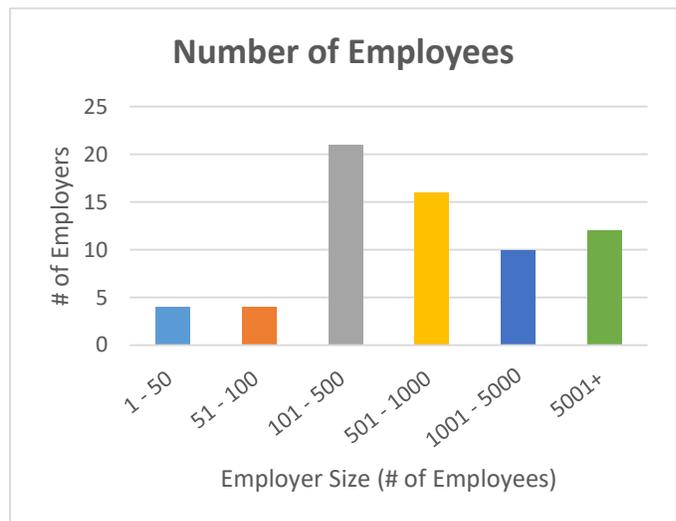
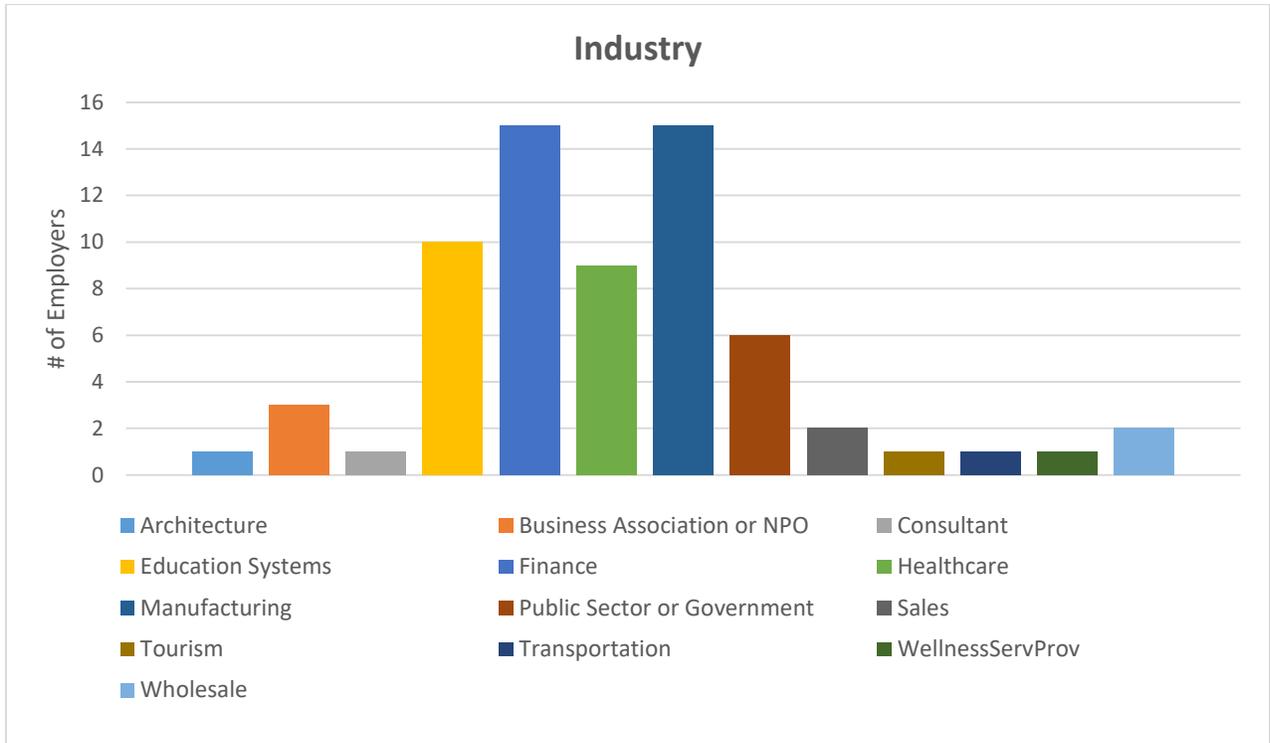
WCWI, a community of connected employers who are transforming Wisconsin's workforce.

The Wellness Council of Wisconsin is the only nonprofit organization in Wisconsin dedicated exclusively to helping employers design results-oriented wellness programs to maximize the health and productivity of their most valuable asset- their employees. As Wisconsin's premier resource for workplace wellness, WCWI's mission is to serve by:

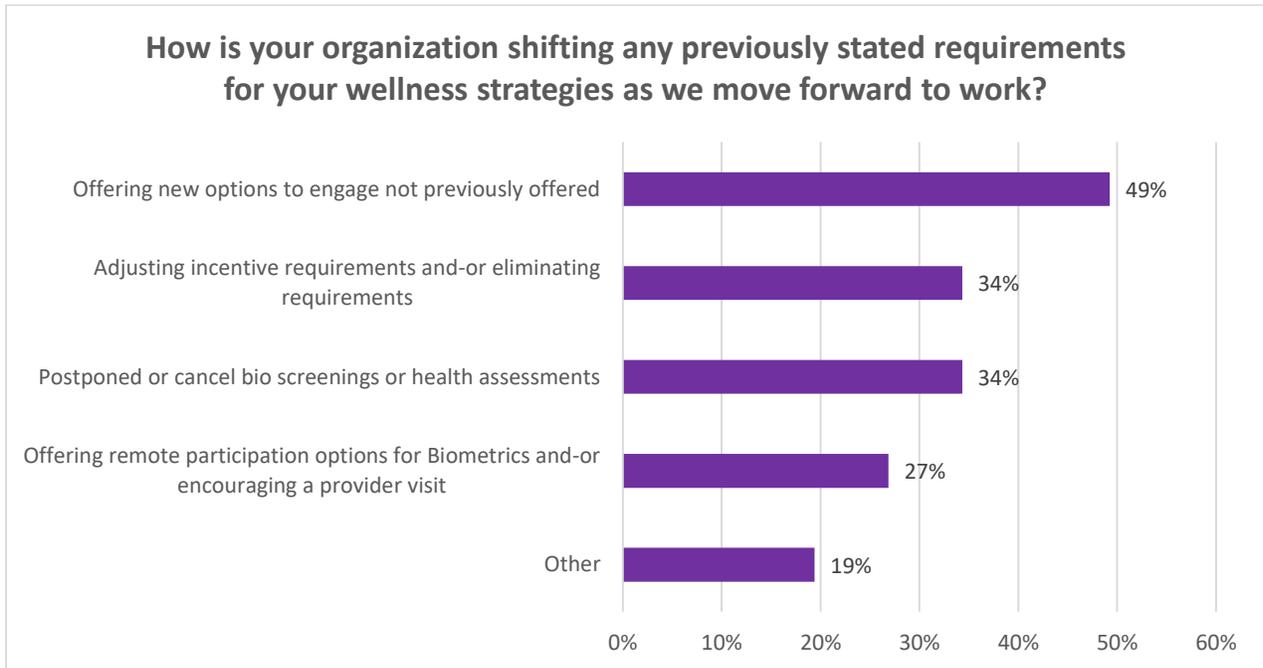
- Empowering organization in transforming culture to change lives;
- Helping employers build comprehensive and sustainable programs;
- Dedicated to local support with a national network;
- Connecting over 700 likeminded professionals who support over 500 organizations.

DEMOGRAPHICS

As a follow up to the Wellness Council of Wisconsin's (WCWI's) statewide survey "How are Wisconsin Employers Responding to COVID-19?" launched in March 2020, this survey serves to explore more specifically, what actions Wisconsin employers have taken to further support their employees through wellness strategy and/or policy changes. This statewide survey was conducted in June 2020, with a response rate of 18% of WCWI member employers representing many industries and sizes.



ADJUSTING WELLNESS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS



Nearly half (49%) of respondents reported they are now offering new options for employees to engage that were not previously offered. The most popular response has been offering more virtual and mobile-based programs and services and increased utilization of virtual platforms (WebEx, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) for presentations, health coaching and appraisals. About a third of respondents have adjusted or eliminated their previous incentive requirements. A similar response rate showed employers canceling or postponing biometric screenings to a later time of the year, while encouraging employees to see their physician or go to a clinic for a checkup, or do a home test kit for blood work.

HEAR FROM YOUR MEMBER COMMUNITY: Descriptions of Program Adjustments

49% - Offering New Options to Engage Not Previously Offered

Virtual and mobile programs, including behavioral virtual care through a phone app (by [Sanvello](#)), telehealth, and video conference benefit services. Wellness emails sent weekly instead of monthly.

Implemented **WebEx virtual presentations and virtual coaching** and working on offering virtual health appraisals. We've developed new processes for health appraisals and other services that include social distancing measures, PPE measures, and extra sanitation.

Sharing more **volunteer opportunities**, as well as mental health and financial advising resources that are free to use.

Instead of lunch hour fitness classes on-site, we now offer employees the opportunity to join in via **video conference** on Microsoft Teams.

Offered a few new ways for our employees to engage and connect with coworkers such as: [Kynd Kits](#) and face mask photo share

The most popular activity was the **weekly virtual "Happy Hour"**: employees could quit work at 4 pm on Thursdays and participate in a Zoom meeting with coworkers and imbibe in their beverage of choice (No judgement!) There were only two rules 1) don't over-talk anyone and 2) no shop-talk. Management also held casual weekly meetings with each department.

34% -Postponed or Canceled Biometric Screenings/Health Assessments

Cancelled biometric screenings in March, and **re-opened provider visit screenings** in June. We also **added new activities with similar incentives** to biometric screenings.

Postponing biometric screening until the fall for all new hires. Regular employees no longer need to follow up with the provider this year. We will have everyone start fresh in October with the new year.

34% -Adjusting incentive requirements and/or eliminating requirements

We **canceled our participation-based health insurance premium incentive** due to COVID. A lot our programs were in person, now they are mostly virtual.

We will only be doing a Health Risk Assessment and one health coaching session. We have **removed the biometric screening** component for 2020.

Screenings will be optional and we will only require an online health assessment.

27% -Remote Participation Options for Biometrics and/or Encouraging a Provider Visit

Cancelled onsite biometrics, and encouraged two other remaining options (**physician visit or third party lab**).

We are putting the responsibility on our team members to **schedule a screening with their doctor**, or simply go to a local Walgreens or clinic. We are **giving everyone the discounted price for insurance** as a one-time gift.

We plan to offer a **biometric home test kit** rather than bringing a vendor onsite to conduct the biometric screenings.

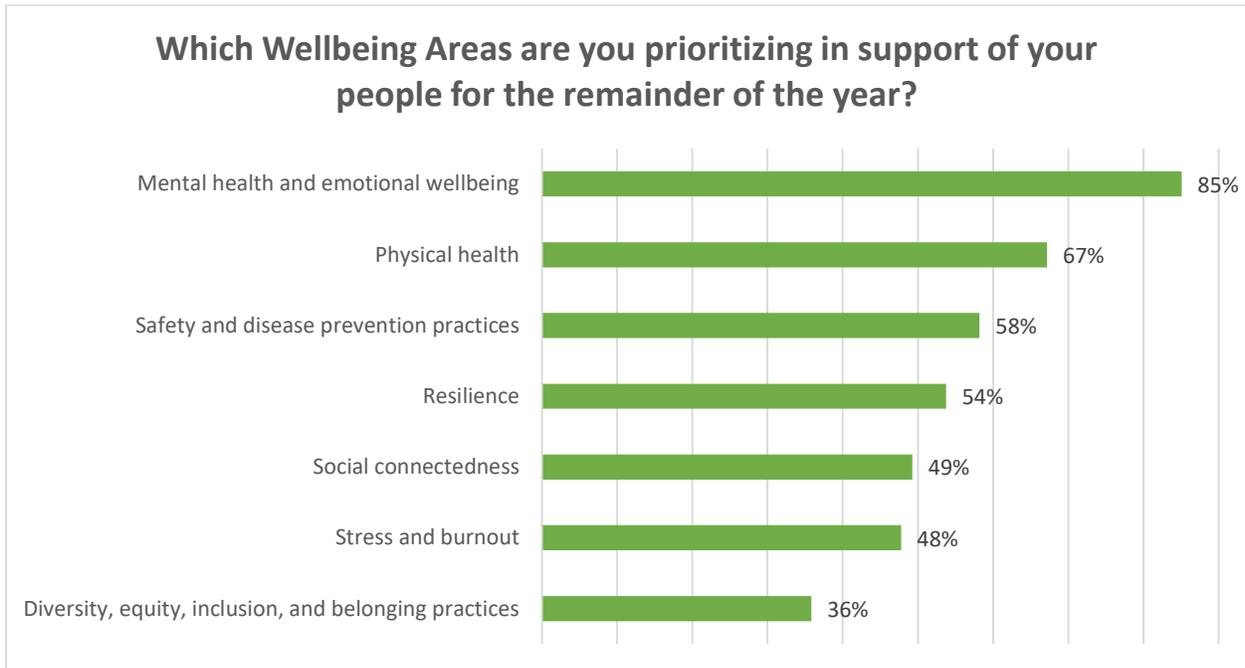
We are **using TeleDoc**. Not doing full HRA this year. Blood tests can be done by primary care doctor and we are also utilizing outside service for additional tests. We want employees to take ownership of their health

49% -Other Program Adjustments

COVID testing is covered at 100% by the company. All virtual visits are paid for by the company, as well, versus the employee paying the cost out of pocket on ALL virtual visits.

We allowed employees to take out **401k hardship withdrawals with no penalties** due to COVID-19.

PRIORITIZING WELLBEING



The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many organizations to pause and reflect on how can they best support their people. While physical health remains a high priority, mental health and emotional wellbeing has shifted to being the top priority among respondents. In these uncertain times with most organizations operating and communicating virtually, we see a rise in social connectedness, resilience, stress and burnout strategies being intertwined with the shift of focusing on mental health and emotional wellbeing of their employees. Physical and psychological safety measures are being implemented as some organizations are reopening offices while others continue to adjust with a remote workforce. Employers are also reevaluating and updating policies, and increasing practices around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging—rounding out the top 7 prioritized areas of wellbeing reported by Wisconsin employers.

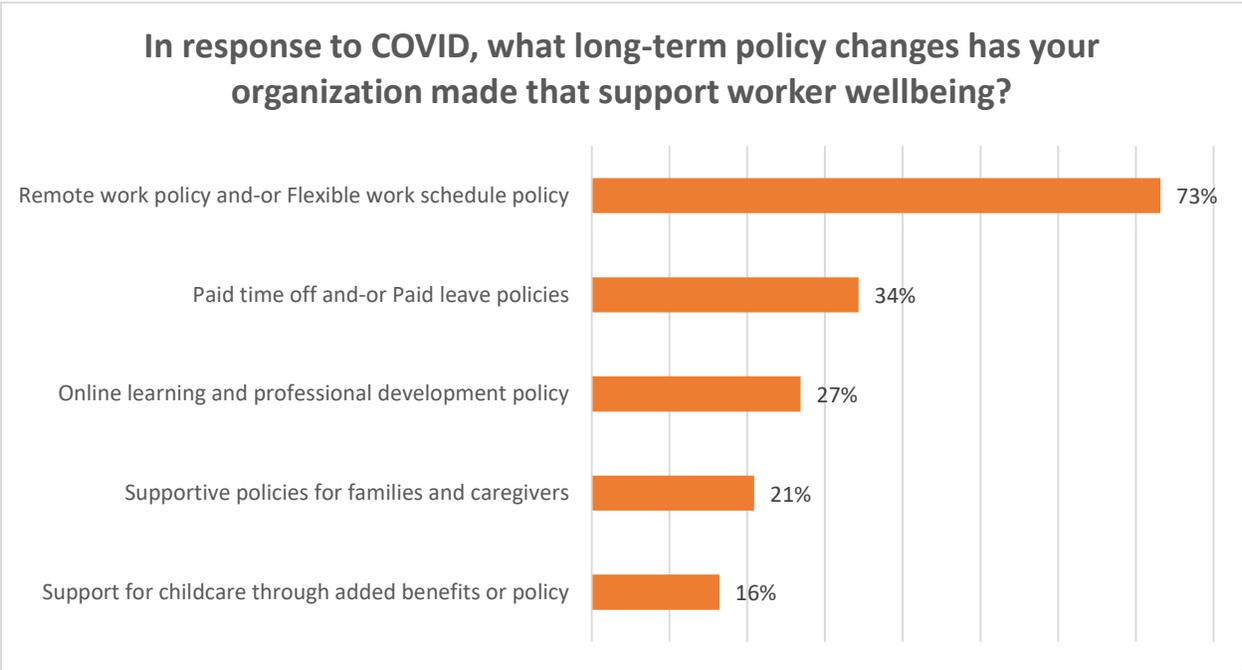
Really we've shifted gears and have had to put some health and wellness goals on the back burner to focus on the growing need of mental and emotional wellbeing. We work in an industry where people tend to keep to themselves, so that's making this even more challenging.

-Jason Crisp, Halvor Lines

PRIORITIES	EMPLOYER STRATEGIES
<p>MENTAL HEALTH & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING (85%); STRESS & BURNOUT (48%); RESILIENCE (54%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnered with Employee Resource Centers (ERC) in the Fox Valley creating “Managing Difficult Emotions during Difficult Times” webinar. Additional, shorter webinars will be provided for staff that pertain to specific concerns indicated in the follow-up survey given after viewing the webinar. • We did a virtual leadership training and a company-wide training on Resilience • Our Risk Management team has been reviewing our psychological safety and prevention practices as it relates to our new situation post-COVID. They have created many resources and toolkits for associates and managers, such as a well-being WFH toolkit covering virtual workouts, well-being courses around change-anxiety, distributed workforce, insights under stress, and well-being defining a balance. • We collaborated with our Police Dept to create an Employee Resource Guide and Support Resource Phone Numbers for all of our employees and their families. The guide includes resources for COVID-19, mental health, professional support, financial, family support, relationships, self-care, and fun for kids and families.
<p>PHYSICAL HEALTH (67%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented employer paid telehealth visits for mental health, as well as physical health. • Access to live virtual fitness classes, virtual meditation, and virtual Registered Dietitian one-on-one meetings. • We've purchased a piece of home exercise equipment for all employees with at least one year of service. • Rolled out Wellbeats, an on-demand wellness portal/app that allows employees to access hundreds of wellness and fitness classes when it is convenient for them. We also started LIVE exercise classes by our corporate personal trainers to include kids boot camp, fitness classes, and cooking classes to help keep the kiddos busy at home so parents can work.
<p>SAFETY AND DISEASE PREVENTION PRACTICES (58%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a COVID team to provide and communicate resources and protocols to all employees, and handle all details when an employee tests positive and/or if a location needs deep cleaning • More robust and frequent cleaning services with more sanitizer stations. • Rotational work schedule to promote social distancing. • Management team built a 3-Phase Back-to-Work Strategy and communicate that to all staff. When a group was phased in, managers called each employee and asked about concerns and comfort levels.

<p>SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS (49%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers encouraged to reach out to their associates, esp. those working remotely, regularly. Increased online appreciation and gratitude opportunities via personal notes, gift cards, bonuses, etc. • Moved company calls to video and host virtual social get-togethers • Offered virtual connection activities for employees such as virtual Pet Photo Contest, Virtual Book Clubs, online auction to support a local charity
<p>DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING PRACTICES (36%)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Inclusion and Diversity/Associate Resource Groups share important firm communications to employees • Created a Diversity Team and have held company-wide conversations on the topic • Currently updating our DE&I policies to be more inclusive and supportive for underrepresented and marginalized groups

LONG-TERM POLICY CHANGES



With the ongoing safety measures and social distancing recommendations in place, as outlined by the [CDC COVID-19 Guidelines](#), organizations have recognized several of their policies may need to be created or updated to continually support their workforce through this pandemic and beyond. A vast majority of employers (73%) reported they have implemented or are currently creating long-term changes to policies that support remote work and flexible work schedules. Jason Crisp of Halvor Lines shared that while “some employees have flourished with this new reality and want to continue going forward... some employees are really struggling with

the lack of daily face-to-face interaction, [and we're] in the process of creating a remote work policy." Employers are also recognizing the increased needs for childcare, family, and caregiver support while employees are working from home. The remote/flexible work schedule policies and expanded PTO/Paid leave, FMLA policies in accordance to the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(FFCRA\)](#) give employees more control regarding work-life balance so they are able to prioritize the demands of their job with the demands of their personal life beyond this pandemic time.

HEAR FROM YOUR MEMBER COMMUNITY: Long-Term Policy Changes

73% -Remote work policy/Flexible work schedule policy

Most office personnel now are working remotely and the company made it **top priority for IT to assist** them with equipment needed and tutorials to help with setting up at home.

All of our work force has been told that **no one is required to go back to the offices** and that employees can work from home through end of 2020, possibly longer.

We have **moved our shop worker schedules to 4 shifts a week at 10 hours** to allow them more days at home. We have allowed our office employees to WFH with more flexible schedules. Our company has made so much progress with technology to accommodate these new ways of working.

34% -Paid Time Off/ Paid Leave policies

We have provided **80 hours of COVID-19 Time Off** for employees to use to care for children, themselves, childcare, or family members due to COVID-19.

We instituted a **paid time off donation bank** so that employees could help other employees. We modified time off policy to allow for employees to go into the negative. Remote work policy was dated and is in the process of being updated.

27% -Online learning and professional development policies

We have **implemented telework options** and online learning options for employees to improve and/or develop additional skills

Through Workday Learning, we have been providing webinar learning and professional development opportunities since we no longer have the on-site option. **Our Talent Development and IT teams have been working together** to make sure that we have enough bandwidth to support all of the new webinars given the new working arrangements.

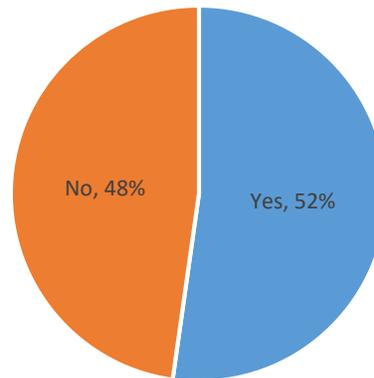
Supportive policies for families, caregivers (21%) and childcare (16%)

Parents are allowed to **apply for loan** to help with child care. (Employer is a financial institution)

Each manager meets with their employee to work out a specific plan for their personal and/or professional needs during COVID.

EVALUATING FOR MEASURES THAT MATTER RIGHT NOW

Are you evaluating your wellness strategy and initiatives differently due to the disruption that COVID caused?



Organizations across the state (and country) have been forced to re-prioritize business and wellness strategies due to the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. This leads us to question how do we measure and evaluate the wellness strategies and initiatives that have been created or adapted to support employees during this time. Many employers have shifted focus on supporting employees in areas of mental and emotional wellbeing, stress and burnout, and social connection. We found 52% of employers reported looking at different measures to evaluate some of these “intangible” areas of wellbeing.

HEAR FROM YOUR MEMBER COMMUNITY: Evaluating Measures that Matter Now

- Less reliance on biometric/health metrics and more on mental/emotional measures
- Our whole wellbeing plan was halted and we're now focusing on people working from home, burnout, EAP resources, return to work and safety.
- Periodic pulse surveys to gauge how the staff is feeling and what they need increased support for.
- With the work from home scenario, a lot of these technology and convenience issues need to be addressed/measured
- We have changed our options for screening this year (doctor visit, lab visit, home test kit). Feedback is going to be very important this year around how these alternatives worked for our employees.

“Our culture has changed overnight in that MOST of our workforce is now working from home - we are looking at all of our wellness offerings and asking ourselves HOW can we help employees through this pandemic and the aftermath. And how do we determine what is working and what isn't anymore? It's forced us to look more broadly across our entire population and listen better - it's a continual evolving process.”

-Nancy Stobbe, Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation

COLLABORATING IN SUPPORT OF WELLNESS

In what ways has your organization collaborated well over the course of this pandemic, to ensure a positive work experience for all employees?

Survey results indicated these three (3) areas stood out for what employers collaborated well in support of wellness:

Manager-Employee Communications

Senior leaders, executives, managers have been collaborative and responsive to the needs of their employees. Many have shown a high level of support and flexibility for working remotely, as well as connecting with their teams more regularly. Many organizations reported having closer [social] connection with their managers and coworkers.

Virtual Collaboration Tools

With majority of organizations needing to work remotely, virtual capabilities for communication, programs, and resources has drastically increased to support employees. The use of Microsoft Teams, WebEx, and Zoom Video Conferencing are common platforms to help teams continue to communicate with each other. Virtual options for employee support services like mini-EAP sessions and wellness coaching have seen more utilization.

Engaging Remote Workers

Organizations have provided more attention and support for managing employees working remotely. These include: Team-building strategies, training programs to help people with work from home strategies, how to set up a remote office, work/life balance and training programs; re-deploying employees who were unable to work (based on their job role) into areas of need.

BUILDING TRUST AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

From your learning and adjusting throughout COVID-19, what do you plan to stop, start, and continue to build trust and psychological safety amongst your people?

Survey results indicated these top three (3) areas for building trust and psychological safety amongst their employees:

Open communication/ Transparency

- Continue to keep the lines of communication from leaders/management open and transparent as decisions are made and/or adjusted to keep up with the changing landscape and latest developments due to COVID. Doing this helps to make sure employees feel as though their concerns are “heard” and addressed.

Increased Management/Leadership Involvement

- Creating a culture of trust by helping leaders within the organization develop the mindset and behaviors to navigate uncertainty. This helps with choosing the most effective response to lead a team by engaging remote workers, weekly manager-employee communication, virtual collaboration tools, organizational learning and employee resource groups. Increased authentic leadership and manager involvement helps us look ahead to the future so we can all come out stronger.

Focus on Mental Wellbeing and Emotional Support

- Focusing less on classes (yoga, cooking, etc.) and more on social and emotional support like building peer support groups, health coaching, webinars from EAP, encouraging open dialogue on mental health, and work/life balance will help lead to more social connection and openness among employees.

BIGGEST PRIORITIES

Since the future of work is the future of worker wellbeing, what is your biggest priority for the wellbeing of your people going forward, and why?

TOP EMPLOYER PRIORITIES	
EMPLOYEE MORALE/ CONNECTEDNESS	Creating clear connections across individual jobs, team objectives, and the organization's mission. Also, strengthening the link between belonging and organizational performance. For example, drawing visible linkages as to how employees' contributions are making an impact on the organization and society as a whole.
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	A priority is to make sure employees feel safe and respected in their work environments. They need to have the tools to feel connected and to succeed. Leadership needs to communicate the importance of diversity and reinforce non-discrimination policies to welcome diversity.
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY	Employers want to create a safe space for employees by focusing on physical safety, psychological safety, and social safety during this time of unrest in our country. We will continue to survey our staff to understand their needs and their level of perceived wellbeing throughout this process.
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION	Organizations want to move forward in improving communication channels between team members and team managers to ensure all employees are supported and given work that leaves them fulfilled, and create deeper connection between employees who at this time are socially distanced.

"It's important that we as wellness professionals provide as much love, empathy, care, and support as possible. We have discussed how we can look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs more closely during this time. We are truly shifting from biometrics and health data to making psychological and safety needs our priority."

-Jessica Lehman, School District of Neenah



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