

Benefits Insights

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Top 2024 Wellness Trends

As the workplace landscape continues to evolve, so does the understanding of employee wellness. In 2024, organizations are embracing innovative strategies to prioritize their workforce's physical, mental and financial health. While organizations may have already expanded their mental health support in past years, some are now pivoting and embracing a holistic approach to employee well-being.

This article highlights five employee wellness trends to look out for in 2024.

1. Supporting Employee Burnout

Employers shouldn't expect employee burnout to disappear anytime soon. A 2024 trends report from wellness portal provider MediKeeper notes that toxic workplaces, long hours, understaffing, lack of recognition, interpersonal conflict and unclear or inexplicable workplace policies are contributing to employee burnout. As such, organizations may prioritize strategies to prevent and alleviate burnout. Flexible work arrangements, realistic workload expectations and designated downtime are being implemented to help employees maintain a healthy work-life balance. Moreover, companies could encourage open communication channels that allow employees to voice their concerns and seek support as needed.

On a related note, many employers will renew their focus on mental health in 2024 as they acknowledge the impact of mental health on employees' overall well-being. Employee assistance programs (EAPs), counseling services and stress management workshops are increasingly becoming key components of workplace wellness initiatives. More employers are also investing resources to destigmatize the topic of mental health (e.g., anti-stigma campaigns, mental health literacy training and EAPs) and foster a culture where employees feel comfortable seeking mental health support.

2. Integrating Technology

Technological advancements will shape a new employee wellness landscape that incorporates digital health platforms, wearable technology and artificial intelligence (AI) solutions. More employers will explore these types of technology to understand how to integrate them into wellness or employee-focused programs.

Technology can enable real-time health monitoring, personalized wellness plans and immediate 24/7 access to health resources and services. Virtual health platforms can help overcome barriers to health care access. In 2024, apps are expected to go beyond fitness tracking and feature mindfulness exercises, nutritional guidance and personalized wellness plans. Despite their limitations, AI-driven approaches have the potential to promote preventive health care and detect or manage health issues. Personalized data allows employees to understand their health better and make informed decisions about their health or lifestyle. Employers are leveraging technology to tailor and improve their employees' well-being experiences.

3. Expanding Financial Wellness Programs

Money is a top stressor for employees and concerns have been exacerbated by prolonged inflation pressures throughout 2023. Financial stress can significantly impact an individual's mental and emotional health. In 2024, employers are expected to extend their wellness programs to include financial education and support to help contribute to a more secure and stable workforce.



Employers can consider the following common personal financial goals as they design their financial support efforts:

- Building an emergency savings
- Navigating cashflow changes
- Managing debt
- Choosing proper health insurance and benefits
- Preparing for significant life events
- Saving for retirement

Many organizations employ a multigenerational workforce, which means employees often face unique financial stressors. To provide relief, some employers offer financial wellness programs that vary in complexity but can include virtual personal financial planning meetings, tuition reimbursement and seminars. EAPs can also help employees navigate financial challenges. The idea is to provide a wide variety of services for the workforce. Employers can help reduce employee financial stress by exploring financial wellness resources and support options and offering attractive programs for current and prospective employees. Financial wellness is a critical component of well-being and can be a competitive offering.

4. Taking a Holistic Approach to Wellness

The days of compartmentalizing physical, mental and emotional well-being are over. In 2024, organizations are adopting a holistic approach that considers the entire employee. For example, holistic wellness programs encompass nutrition, fitness, mental health and stress management. An integrated approach aims to create a work environment that nurtures every aspect of an employee's well-being, fostering a sense of balance and resilience.

This renewed focus on holistic wellness is not just a trend; it's a fundamental shift in how companies approach employee care. Organizations can create a supportive culture that encourages education, open conversations and utilization of available resources by prioritizing mental and financial well-being in health and wellness initiatives.

5. Cultivating a Company Culture of Care

Perhaps the most transformative trend is the conscious effort to cultivate a culture of care within organizations. This goes

beyond workplace policies and programs; it's about fostering an environment where employees feel seen, heard, valued and supported. Team-building activities, mentorship programs and leadership training focused on empathy and emotional intelligence are becoming integral components of organizational efforts.

Additionally, psychological safety is a growing priority for employers. Being psychologically safe means employees feel secure in talking and being vulnerable in front of others. Organizations benefit when employees feel comfortable asking for help, sharing ideas or challenging the status quo without fear of negative consequences. Leaders play an essential role in nurturing psychological safety in the workplace, so it starts at the top. Employers can foster a psychologically safe work environment by reflecting on leadership styles, accommodating dispersed employees and demonstrating concern for employees. Employee wellness initiatives play perfectly into this. Employers can proactively train employees and managers on psychological safety to raise awareness and teach supportive behaviors and practices that foster trust and transparency around health and wellness topics (e.g., burnout and stress). Remember that psychological safety is a key work dynamic that takes time to build but just moments to destroy. It comes down to employers creating opportunities for open feedback and dialogue so employees can be themselves in the work environment.

Summary

Employee wellness is taking center stage in 2024, with organizations recognizing the interconnected nature of physical, mental and financial health. More employers are paving the way for a holistic approach to workplace wellbeing. As these trends evolve, employees can expect a more supportive and nurturing work environment that values their overall health and happiness.

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. Contact us for more for more wellness-related workplace guidance.