



It's Time to Rethink Your Wellness Program

The State of Health & Wellness Programs in the Workplace
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Wellness Programs in the Workforce

There is an increased awareness about healthy living and wellness but how often do we keep up our resolution and make the necessary changes to our lifestyle? With most of our time and energy spent at workplace, where we are so often overwhelmed by stress, long workdays and multitasking, it can become hard to embrace that healthy lifestyle.

Employers are now beginning to understand the importance of creating a healthy workplace and promoting health and wellness for their employees. According to a report by the Society for Human Resource Management, more than [two-thirds](#) of the American companies currently have wellness programs as part of their benefit packages. Chronic illnesses such as diabetes and heart diseases are no longer only a problem of the elderly, younger people belonging to the workforce are also being increasingly affected by these diseases. Therefore, effective wellness programs no doubt benefits the businesses as it could lead to increased productivity, lower absenteeism, healthcare costs, and turnover.

Some of the wellness plans currently employed include health promotion and education, weight management and fitness programs, stress management, screening and immunizations, smoking cessation, diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol management. However, studies show mixed results on the effectiveness of the existing wellness programs. Some of the factors that could [facilitate](#) the program reach include communicating with employees about the available programs, having activities that are convenient and accessible, and getting feedback on the effectiveness of these programs in order to continuously improve the wellness programs.

According to [WHO](#), “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. However, we have been treating physical and mental health as two separate entities and the care is disconnected. Physical health can have a detrimental effect on mental health and vice versa. Lifestyle factors such as exercise, diet, stress and substance use can have an effect on physical as well as mental health.

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Wellness is More Than Physical and It's Costing Employers

Most of the wellness programs focus on physical wellness, however, wellness also includes mental well-being. Stress and anxiety are known to have an impact on performance, quality of work and interaction with colleagues and must be taken into account while creating wellness programs. While there was an [increase](#) in the number of employers in the U.S. that offered wellness programs between 2008 and 2015 (from 58% to 70%), there was a decrease in on-site stress management programs (from 12% in 2011 to 5% in 2015). According to the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work report, over the half of the [550 million working days](#) lost annually in the U.S. is stress-related. However, only [one-fourth](#) of the employees with anxiety disorders report to their employers due to fear of stigma. Stress and poor work-life balance also lead to increased alcohol consumption, smoking and substance use disorders. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health showed that [companies bear high costs](#) due to substance use disorders among employees as a result of absenteeism, high turnover, and healthcare costs. For example, a company in the IT environment with 1500 employees incurs a cost of little over \$1.2 million per year.



It's Time to Break the Stereotype of Getting Support

When employees do report to their employers about their mental illness, only four in ten were provided support, and they were often referred to a mental health professional or a relaxation/stress management class. The negative stereotypes and stigma associated with stress and anxiety can make it challenging for employees to avail the resources when in need. Training the managers and team leaders to identify changes in their employees and promoting available resources can be helpful. Small interventions at an early stage can prevent long-term costs to the company

With the societal stigma, busy work schedule and fear of facing repercussions at workplace, an easily accessible chatbot that can be a 24*7 judgment free companion will be a great addition to the wellness plan. With long wait times and stigma associated with mental health, digital health and chatbots can be helpful. When it is hard to open up and talk about stress and mental health, it could be easier to use a chatbot.

At Enlyte, we aim to aid the HR improve employee wellness programs by providing them with anonymized and actionable insights. Along with a 24*7 bot buddy, the app would be able to give an overall aggregated data for the HR, to understand the pulse of the organization. This can greatly help determine where additional support might be necessary. The Enlyte app is here to provide employees the necessary support and help HR measure the effectiveness of the existing wellness programs.



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Her PhD focused on age-related neurodegenerative diseases and neuro-inflammation. She is a mental health advocate and enjoys learning about health care innovations, digital health and patient-centered care. She is currently focused on the use of machine learning and AI to help people suffering from stress, depression, and substance use disorders.

ABOUT ENLYTE

Enlyte LLC is an innovator in conversational bot technology specifically designed for health and wellness. Designed for organizations looking to help people manage stress and addictions, Enlyte offers a robust bot platform that can adapt to different types of users, conversations, and challenges. Enlyte brings decades of experience in understanding how people learn and consume information coupled with domain experience from the scientific healthcare community to deliver a scalable, health and wellness bot application, designed to improve the lives and productivity of individuals and the workforce. For more information, visit www.enlyte.bot and follow [@enlyte_bot](https://twitter.com/enlyte_bot) on Twitter.