EMPLOYEE WELLBEING: THE KEY TO TRANSCENDING WORKPLACE BORDERS AND CREATING A UNIVERSAL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE
Wellbeing Is Key to a Successful Culture

Why Is Culture So Important?

Believe it or not — it pays to keep your people happy. In fact, the reason workplace culture is so important becomes crystal clear when you look at the facts:

Organizations with rich company culture
- 13.9% chance of turnover
- Happy workers
- more productive than the average worker

Organizations with poor company culture
- 48.4% chance of turnover
- Unhappy workers
- less productive than the average worker

And we know that workplace cultures are crucial to increasing employee engagement within an organization. According to a 2013 Gallup report, “companies with engaged workforces have higher earnings per share (EPS).”

That study also found:

- Companies with an average of 9.3 engaged employees for every actively disengaged employee experience 147 percent higher EPS compared with their competition.

The business case for creating a strong company culture is clear. But even more valuable than improving employee retention, productivity, or engagement, the biggest benefit of investing in culture is in sending the message to employees that their organization cares about them.
OK, Culture Is Important. But What Does Culture Have to Do with Wellbeing?

Everything.

“Take care of your employees and they’ll take care of your business.”
— Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group

Employee wellbeing has an incredible effect on how happy your employees are, how they can interact with each other, and how they can knock down the barriers that divide them in the workplace — geographical or otherwise. In fact:

> 80% of employees voice that they feel better about their work culture thanks to wellbeing programs

Employee wellbeing drives incredible employee experiences. And incredible employee experiences are made up of the day-to-day activities that make coming to work challenging and enjoyable. When your employees interact with each other every day in an environment that’s fun and engaging, they create a thriving, authentic workplace culture — a “culture of wellbeing.”

What About Multinational Organizations? Can Wellbeing Improve Their Culture?

So glad you asked. Wellbeing programs are having a huge impact on an overwhelming majority of global organizations. Across the world, organizations report that wellbeing programs have the largest impact in the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational image</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall wellbeing</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and retention</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7-10. Ibid.
Wellbeing plays a huge role for companies across the globe, and it has an impact on several important areas. Yet, the top three barriers to an organization’s global wellbeing strategy are:

- Differing cultures and laws
- Lack of global oversight for health and financial strategy
- Inconsistent global strategy

These barriers can be massive pitfalls for the implementation of global wellbeing programs. If these obstacles aren’t addressed, workplace culture could suffer.

And it all starts with wellbeing. But first, let’s look at what happens when employers don’t invest in culture across entire organizations.

### When Workplace Cultures Divide

#### The Obstacles Workplace Cultures Face

As organizations grow, teams and departments can form their own niche cultures. Sales teams may only go to lunch with other sales teams. Directors may only consult with other directors. Even for small companies, cross-departmental collaboration and socialization can be a challenge, and as companies scale, the concept can get lost altogether.

But the way work is actually done in today’s workforce contradicts this idea of forming niche cultures. Especially when you consider:

- 92% of companies cite redesigning the way they work as one of their key challenges.
- Only 26% of large companies are functionally organized today.
- 82% of companies are either reorganizing, planning to reorganize, or have reorganized to improve responsiveness to customers.

In today’s workforce, teams need to be able to collaborate and work together. The way that work actually gets done in today’s world requires that teams be able to communicate with one another across organizations, regions, and the globe.
The Danger of a Disconnected Workforce

Disconnection isn’t good for culture, it isn’t good for productivity, and it certainly isn’t good for your organization. When teams aren’t able to work together:

- Mission and values can get muddled
- Messaging and tone can be lost
- Temporary employees can feel disconnected

But by using wellbeing to bring cultures together, organizations can change on a global scale.

That world exists today. Let’s take a look at the local level.

Improving Culture Across Your Business

Bringing Individuals Together Through Wellbeing

Improving employee wellbeing doesn’t just impact the individual — it impacts the culture. When employees actually enjoy their work and engage in wellbeing activities, workplaces become the place that they want to be instead of a place they have to be.

See how a wellbeing program can impact an entire workforce:
Using Healthy Competition to Inspire a Culture of Wellbeing

Wellbeing initiatives can inspire healthy competition among your workforce, and social challenges bring a workforce together. The employees of Monarch Beverage Company know this to be true from their company-wide challenges, which resulted in:

- 82% of participants achieving the recommended amount of physical activity
- An average of 10,900 daily steps per member
- An average of 330 interactions per member throughout the month of the company’s “Indy 500 Challenge”
- 63% overall company engagement

Monarch Beverage serves as a great example of what can happen when a company leverages social challenges as it expands toward a total wellbeing strategy. Social wellbeing challenges allow employees to connect with each other and build toward a true “culture of wellbeing.”
Including Activities for Everyone Improves Wellbeing Cultures

Not everyone wants to track steps, and that’s OK. Successful workplace cultures of wellbeing include options for the preferences of every participant within an organization.

Wellbeing programs that adhere to ACA compliance will include options for exercise that may be considered nontraditional. For instance, employees should have the ability to track swimming, weightlifting, and even archery — yes, archery — if they want to participate in their organization’s wellbeing initiatives. This diversity of activities should also include options for people with disabilities, such as the ability for people in wheelchairs to track “wheeling” rather than steps.

When wellbeing programs allow employees to tailor the types of exercise they’re able to track, everyone can be included and everyone wins.

Including Everyone in Your Wellbeing Program for a Cohesive Culture

On top of accounting for nontraditional exercises, there is a large segment of the workforce population who traditionally gets overlooked: temporary employees. Which is startling, especially when you consider:

> 40.4% Contingent workers make up 40.4 percent of the U.S. workforce.  

That’s a large percentage of the workforce who might be left out of your company’s culture and wellbeing initiatives. Successful wellbeing programs allow temporary employees to feel connected, too.

It’s crucial to include temporary employees in your organization’s wellbeing plan to ensure the strength of your culture across the entire workforce.

And much like contingent workers, the dispersed workforce poses its own unique obstacles to a unified organizational culture. Let’s examine.
Improving Culture Across a Dispersed Workforce

Breaking Down Regional Barriers with a Healthy Culture

Improving culture within the confines of a company’s headquarters is absolutely achievable through the lens of wellbeing. But what about the dispersed workforce? Dispersed workforces can often feel forgotten, which is astounding when you consider:

- 79% of employees reported always or frequently working in dispersed teams
- 1 in every 3 employees is completely mobile with no office
- 4 out of every 5 employees spend at least some time working outside of the office
- 50% of employees are expected to complete work no matter where they are

The numbers are there: The world is turning to dispersed workforces. Employers need to respond to these trends and employee preferences, because the best workplace cultures and wellbeing programs are adapting.

Molding a Healthy Culture of Engaged, Dispersed Employees

A great example of a dispersed workforce that came together under wellbeing is Norfolk Southern Corporation. As one of the nation’s premier transportation companies, Norfolk Southern tackled the daunting task of engaging its 30,000-employee workforce — 25,000 of whom worked in railroad operations, traveling with no home office and without easy access to computers and email.

By investing in a culture of wellbeing, Norfolk Southern was able to accomplish:

- An average of two fewer sick days for participating employees
- 71% of participating employees meeting or exceeding their recommended levels of physical activity
- 81% of participating employees getting the recommended amount of vigorous aerobic activity
- An average of 10,600 daily steps per employee

---

24-25 Ibid.
27-29 Ibid.
After this initial step of getting its dispersed workforce to focus on healthier initiatives, Norfolk Southern began looking to implement a program that would create a culture of health that empowered and united employees and their spouses to be healthy by removing the barriers to entry. This program also connected the dispersed population with a tool that didn’t require regular access to a personal computer, and it was simple enough to engage those with limited technical know-how.

Norfolk Southern employees also use their wellbeing program to engage in company-wide challenges and connect with colleagues. As Norfolk Southern Manager of Health Promotion Mary Pitman put it, “We were surprised to see just how effective the program was at creating a culture of wellbeing.” This wellbeing program provided a positive way for employees to interact that went viral within the organization.30

Creating Healthy Competition Across Regions and Dispersed Workforces

Proper wellbeing programs allow entire regions to challenge each other and set different wellbeing-related goals through regional administrators to ensure company culture, voice, and messaging remain intact.

When regions challenge each other, they encourage healthy interactions among employees, including executives challenging other executives, sales teams challenging other sales teams, and even interns challenging other interns.

But cultures of wellbeing aren’t just important for employees dispersed across regions.

With a true culture of wellbeing, remote and dispersed employees feel like they are part of the team.
Improving Culture Across the Globe

Solving for the Problem of a Global Culture of Wellbeing

The top two concerns for global organizations are:

1. Improving performance and productivity (59%)  
2. Improving employee engagement and morale (56%)

Employers are beginning to realize the key role wellbeing can play in solving these issues. Many multinational organizations are starting to make investments in wellbeing, considering:

69% of multinational organizations have a global health strategy

Yet many organizations recognize that their investment needs to improve. The increasing desire to improve wellbeing is obvious when you consider:

- 83% of employers aspire to have a strong culture of wellbeing
- Only 33% of employers claim to have a strong culture of wellbeing
- 52% of leaders support a culture of wellbeing — up from 43 percent two years before

Multinational organizations are putting increasing value on a strong culture of wellbeing as they simultaneously realize that their own culture is lacking.

Having a wellbeing program that can culturally break down employee, regional, and global barriers is mission-critical for multinational organizations. Such wellbeing programs can improve their organization’s culture, engagement, and overall wellbeing on a global level.
The best wellbeing programs will also include other global considerations, such as:

- **Having a culturally sensitive wellbeing program.** Culturally sensitive wellbeing programs have *calendaring* options to account for holidays across cultures. Culturally sensitive wellbeing programs allow for global administrators who can keep messaging and activities consistent across the organization — all while respecting religious and cultural needs.

- **Allowing employees across the globe to challenge each other.** The best wellbeing programs allow employees across the globe to challenge each other and communicate and encourage one another.

These features help create a full-fledged, well-rounded culture of wellbeing across entire multinational organizations. After all, stronger connections across the globe ensure a strong, cohesive company culture.

Ultimately, with the right investment in wellbeing, you can empower your organization to not only achieve a strong company culture — but a path to engagement, as well.

And you can do it all with Virgin Pulse.

**Prove It with Virgin Pulse**

 Virgin Pulse Is Changing Lives, Businesses, and Cultures of All Sizes for Good

Collectively, Virgin Pulse has changed 5.4 million lives around the world. And we’re just getting started.

**We take a “meet people where they are” approach.** Virgin Pulse works collaboratively with clients to determine where they are on their wellbeing journey today and where they’re going. Then we make a plan to progress toward those future-state goals in a way that works for each client, understanding that every organization’s wellbeing journey and goals are unique.
Whether workforces are local, dispersed, or multinational — we can help them build a culture of wellbeing.

We are committed to helping clients deliver a positive, effective, and exciting employee experience through our irresistible, delightful, modern, and mobile-first platform. Virgin Pulse users engage with our platform multiple times a day. It becomes a part of their daily routine, and they’re always using it. And that kind of engagement is priceless for your business.

Your engaged workforce will want to interact with the platform and with each other through social challenges.

Virgin Pulse Is Changing Entire Organizations for the Better

We believe employee wellbeing has the power to:

• Drive strategic decisions for your company
• Effectively and transparently make your workforce happier and more productive
• Change your employees and organization for good
• Create a culture of wellbeing for your workforce

With Virgin Pulse, driving outcomes is not only possible, it’s provable.

Contact Virgin Pulse Today

Contact Virgin Pulse today for proof on how engaging people in wellbeing is changing lives and businesses for good.