

The 7 essentials of an effective employee wellness program

by [Lyndsay Swinton](#)

Do you enjoy an employee wellness program? Many companies now recognize the value of keeping their people at work, fit and ready to work hard. Employee wellness programs can safeguard companies from costly lowered productivity, absence from work and litigation. Here are the 7 essentials of an effective corporate wellness program.

1. Safe Stress

Some stress is essential - being too relaxed will turn in a sub-par performance. However the reality for most working people is that their daily stress outweighs their capacity to deal with it, and over time they burn-out. Ensure your employees work at an [optimal stress level](#), taking regular comfort breaks and working normal hours.

2. Health Promotions and Employee Wellness

Ensure your employees have access to information and services that promote health. Does your restaurant provide healthy options or is there a chocolate bar lurking around every corner? Do social activities revolve around [alcohol and a drinking culture](#)? Can your employee access health services during working hours? Have you arranged a discounted membership for a local gym?

3. Workplace Environment

Repetitive strain injury, manual handling and exposure to toxic substances are three risks to employee's health and are usually managed through effective health and safety policies. You can go many steps further and "Google" your environment - Google California employees can eat, work out, get their car fixed and have a haircut [all on Google soil](#)!

4. Modern Working Practices and Culture

Do you offer anything other than the routine 9 to 5? Can employees work from home, part-time, condensed hours or even annualized hours? There is a strong [business case for flexible working](#) encouraging a more diverse and loyal workforce, including older people and working parents.

5. Multiple, Multilayered Communication Routes

Talk, talk and talk again to your staff. And then talk some more. Lack of communication is a regular complaint about poor management, isolating employees and contributing to a loss of control over the workplace.

Have a weekly team catch-up meeting to go over plans for the week, have monthly business update with the bigger team, have quarterly "town-halls" with entire departments, have skip-level meetings so junior staff can talk directly to senior staff.

Use technology to your advantage with moderated employee forum's, instant messaging, screen sharing software for easy multi-location meetings and controversially, social networking, to build geographically dispersed teams.

6. Training, Development and Self-worth

"If you always do what you always did, you always get what you always got."

Train your staff in the basic skills to do the job, and then push them some more. You'll build their self worth, and importantly, their worth to the company. Go here for help with [goal setting and personal development planning](#). Holding regular, meaningful one-to-one's encourage people to wield their own stick and chase their own carrot and be truly self-motivated.

7. Absence/Attendance Management

Robust absence/attendance management policies keep healthy employees at work and allow genuinely un-well people time to get better. Keep records of attendance, hold return to work interviews and have honest discussions with people struggling to keep regular attendance.

Employee wellness programs have a valid place in a hard nosed corporate culture. The sums add up – money spent on corporate wellness is more than compensated for by increased attendance and productivity. British Telecom Group report [massive savings](#) in real estate, savings on recruitment expenses, and [lower fuel costs](#) all attributable to their employee friendly policies. Fortune favours the brave company who sticks to their corporate wellness program during a troubled time, as they will reap the rewards when the economy recovers.