Corporate Wellness Initiatives Too Focused on Sick Individuals, Should Be Building Healthy Organisations Instead

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Let's Get (Beyond) Physical: Crafting a Multidimensional Approach to Employee Wellbeing

Wellbeing is front of mind right now as businesses, in a fight for survival, try to ensure their people are able to perform well in radically altered conditions. But as the economic implications of Covid-19 become clearer, and organisations look to cut costs and restructure themselves to survive and thrive in the future, will employee wellbeing slide down the priority list? What will employees' wellbeing needs look like, and will organisations have the knowledge and resources to meet them?

This Corporate Research Forum (CRF) report (summary available here), supported by Lane 4 and Mercer, is based on extensive interviews with HR leaders from FTSE 100 and similar sized businesses and a survey conducted in January and February 2020, of 150 HR professionals from multinational organisations.

- **Organisations are missing an opportunity to bolster their employees' financial wellbeing.** Poor financial wellbeing costs UK employers £1.56 billion annually through absenteeism and presenteeism, yet only 44% of organisations are targeting their people's financial wellbeing. This issue is likely to move quickly to the forefront as Covid-19 damages the economy.

- **Organisations are not strategic in their approach to employee wellbeing.** This is especially true of taking a data-driven approach to diagnosing wellbeing problems and evaluating solutions. Only 26% of organisations consistently or often use workforce data to drive decisions about investments in wellbeing; only 32% are evaluating the effectiveness of their wellbeing initiatives consistently or often. "I believe we have reached a crossroads of maturity where health and wellbeing at work is about to move on from haphazard and uncoordinated programmes based on anecdotal evidence. The future requires a strategic and evidence-based approach, grounded in data, sector insights and benchmarks," says Dr. Wolfgang Seidl, Head of Health Management Consulting EMEA, Mercer.

- **Organisations must take a more systemic approach to wellbeing.** This means leveraging senior leaders, line managers, the culture, the physical environment, and the nature of the work to create a healthy organisation in which most individuals, managers, and teams can thrive most of the time. There is too much focus on helping 'sick individuals', rather than building healthy organisations.

- **Organisations' wellbeing strategies should consider the 'whole person'.** Covid-19 is demanding greater resilience as large portions of the workforce grapple with grief, illness, multiple forms of stress, isolation, loneliness, and anxiety – all at the same time and for the foreseeable future.

With key insights from HR leaders at the Bank of England, BT, CERN, Rolls-Royce, Shell, and others, this report offers a practical way forward for the ambitious HR function, and importantly, examines the implications of Covid-19 for wellbeing strategies. "Approaches to employee health and wellbeing at the most advanced organisations are consistently strategic, systemic, and take account of the whole person," says report author Dr. Carmen von Rohr. "A multidimensional wellbeing strategy has important benefits to the business, including enhancement of employer brand and Employee Value Proposition, increased engagement and retention, and improved morale."

"Developing holistic wellbeing and resilience in people's mind, body and broader environment, including their financial wellbeing, equips them to better unlock their own potential and thrive in all aspects of working life," says Dr. Alison Maitland, Director of Product and Research, Lane4.

The report's **findings will be shared at CRF's upcoming webinar** on Wednesday 27th May, 11.30am to 12.30pm BST. Guests Dr. Wolfgang Seidl of Mercer and Lynda Guttenberg of Ericsson will join us for a discussion of wellbeing in the time of Covid-19, and beyond. You can register for the webinar here.

Should you be interested in finding out more or for a copy of the full report please contact **Carmen von Rohr** at carmen@crforum.co.uk.

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For more information on CRF please contact Richard Hargreaves, Commercial Director, on +07787 411 572 or at richard@crforum.co.uk

Company Contact:

Corporate Research Forum

T. 07787411572
E. Richard@crforum.co.uk
W. https://www.crforum.co.uk/

Additional Contact(s):
Carmen Von Rohr, Research and Digital Manager
Carmen@crforum.co.uk

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