

Save your bottom (line) with well-being

By [Linda Trim](#)

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Have you ever spent the day at work but never actually achieved anything? Have no fear, you are not alone. Due to poor workplace well-being, presenteeism is a phenomenon spreading far and wide across the globe and is a result of disengaged employees who present themselves at work, but do not actually complete or achieve anything.

Ready, Set, Well: According to Gallup's global workplace survey, more than 60% of the workforce is "not engaged." These individuals might be doing their job, but they are not inclined to give anything extra. Even worse, another 24% are "actively disengaged" - seen as discouraging their co-workers' success.



- Take a break! Trendy yet functional, Red Bull's head office in Cape Town promotes workplace well-being by providing a games room for staff to escape and enjoy.

Research shows that happy, healthy and engaged employees produce more, cost less, and are more productive and engaged in their work. Eight different studies by organisations including Harvard Business Review, World Economic Forum and the American Journal of Health Promotion, showed a return on investment of wellness programs of between 144% and 3,000%.

Seen as a holistic approach to creating high performance organisations through establishing the right workplace environments and surroundings to create employee engagement, workplace well-being relates to all aspects of the work life. The World Health Organization defines "health" as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Well-being is connected to physical health and wellness but primarily emphasises the social and psychological dimensions of the workplace, workforce, and the work people.

So, the question lies - if we know that good health requires more than just physical wellness and that employee well-being can have a big impact on business outcomes, why do so few make the investment in it? Our research and intelligence arm, Know More SA, provided local statistics that lean towards this. The most significant one being that almost half (a whopping 41%) of South African employees feel their buildings support workplace well-being, yet so little actually do.



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When one looks at implementing workplace well-being, employee's physiological and safety needs should serve as the foundation. These are primarily related to the physical aspects of work and wellness: adequate lighting, temperature, acoustics, and privacy, etc. Far too often we have seen employees extremely dissatisfied and irritated when these simple yet basic needs are not addressed. But even once these needs are met, this does not create total fulfilment.

From indoor gyms to laundry services, catering and yoga rooms, the list for workplace well-being is endless, but it doesn't always have to come with an expensive price tag. Here are six simple solutions for companies to consider when implementing well-being, and best of all, they won't break the bank balance either:

- 1. Let there be light:** make sure your office has plenty of windows to provide natural light.
- 2. Allow for flexible working hours:** employees with flexible work schedules report greater satisfaction, less absenteeism, and overall higher productivity.
- 3. Add colour:** colours can easily change our moods and impact productivity. Colours such as blue or green can lead to higher contentment and productivity, while red increases alertness and attention to detail.
- 4. Keep the noise down:** this would be another tip that seems obvious, but scientists have discovered just how damaging excess noise can be to workplace productivity.
- 5. Keep moving:** stimulating movement at work helps to make employees healthier, happier and more alert. This can be anything that gets people out of a typical seated position to breaks, and standing desks etc.
- 6. Promote healthy eating:** supplying the right snacks can improve mental state and help staff to be more productive.

Presenteeism, depression and anxiety are now the leading causes of long-term sickness absence from the workplace. The direct cost of poor health is estimated at about 15% of payroll whereas presenteeism costs even more. Combined together, direct healthcare and the cost of productivity lost to presenteeism can total 35% of salaries.

In the end, what is good for people is good for the company. Top talent is not only becoming harder to recruit, it is also getting harder to retain. LinkedIn recently announced startling findings that 85% of the global workforce is actively, or passively, looking for a new employer. With this in mind, organisations need to place efforts on retaining their people. When companies improve employee well-being, they create more engaging places to work and greater returns for the company as a whole. As South African corporates wake-up and smell the workplace benefits, it's evident they realise that well-being is fast gaining attention, and for good reasons. Looking forward, in order to beat competitors, companies will need to focus their efforts on ensuring the sustainability of their most important assets, their staff.

ABOUT LINDA TRIM

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