

Improving employee well-being via a data-driven approach

By Sriram Iyer

BURNOUT is a top reason for resignation. In a 2021 report by human resource technology company Limeade, 40 per cent of employees left their organisation for this reason. Remote work, social isolation, medical quarantines, and a blurred work-life balance have taken their toll. For businesses, this has led to increasingly high attrition rates and reduced employee productivity by 35 per cent. With worsening employee well-being, the next pandemic of "mental health" seems to be lurking around.

Yet businesses have missed predicting and preparing for this situation when the pandemic hit. In 2021, according to Lyra Health, only 22 per cent of HR leaders had recognised burnout as an issue affecting their company's workforce. Fortunately, it seems to be a different story for 2022. For many employers, the topmost priority this year is to make mental health services easily accessible. Corporate wellness programmes are now de rigueur.

But how do you ensure that wellness programmes work? Data will deliver the answer.

Leveraging data for customised wellness programmes

In the 2021 Gartner HR survey, 82 per cent of employees indicated that they wanted their organisations to consider them as people, not just employees. But only 45 per cent of employees believe their organisation does. The need for personalisation in micro-moments is now more than ever. The starting point is a data-driven approach.

Data can help HR teams to develop sustainable wellness initiatives that cater to unique employee needs and identified pain points. A data-driven approach manifests tangible results despite limited time and resources, enabling businesses to retain their operational agility. Companies can design solid wellness programmes, but they also need to communicate their intentions to employees in the right way, at the right time. Old ways don't open new doors. When efforts to promote well-being seem stuck, data proves to be the much-needed breakthrough. It opens new doors to employee well-being strategies that can be scaled up and implemented with agility.

The next step is to proactively use reliable data sources to identify those at risk of mental health issues. Data related to absenteeism, performance management, productivity, and organisational network analysis (ONA), among many others, can offer rich insights. In fact, some enterprises have been leveraging the Microsoft Viva Dashboard to see how employees are effectively spending time in meetings, email, chats, and calls, with an intention to proactively identify overworked employees and offer timely support. However, the story doesn't end here.

After using the right data, HR teams should put in place the right metrics to measure the success of wellness initiatives. If the results do not turn out well, they could also adjust their plans accordingly. For a start, here are a few HR metrics that will help in measuring employee well-being:

Employee satisfaction: Employee satisfaction can be obtained through employee listening tools to measure how much employees enjoy working for the company and the extent of their work-life balance.

Time to service: Relevant for well-being services, this metric tracks the time between the moment an employee requests help and the moment help is received. It is useful for measuring the effectiveness of the adopted initiatives.

Absenteeism: Companies could monitor the transition in employees' sick leave days and absenteeism after a wellness intervention. A positive shift showcases the initiative's fruitful impact, while a negative shift or no change would indicate the need to amend the programme or its implementation.

Organisations that have the best wellness practices have 11 per cent lower attrition than firms that do little or nothing for employee well-being. Apart from a lower employee turnover rate, other benefits include:

Higher participation rates: A key complaint by HR teams concerning wellness programmes is the traditionally low employee participation rates. By leveraging a data-driven approach, organisations can precisely identify employee needs and customise programmes that lead to higher participation rates. This will significantly reduce the cost per employee and make such programmes more viable.

Accurate measurement of Return on Investment: By measuring and analysing specific participation and outcome metrics, organisations can identify the true effectiveness of these wellness programmes and present a stronger business case to the C-suite for future interventions. This data-driven approach brings more accountability, cost-effectiveness and productivity to the activities and engagement.

Talent retention using real-time insights: Having access to real-time data and actionable insights can help organisations make quicker decisions, prioritising the most impactful well-being programmes to draw more talent to join and stay in the company. To prioritise employee well-being, HR teams can adopt a data-driven approach to extract profitable outcomes, guard against adverse business impact, and deliver organisational goals. As it's said, "it does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop".

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