



THE WELLNESS HORIZON: 5 Trends Shaping Employee Health in 2025



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Introduction

Corporate wellness is a massive \$63B market, and it's only growing—because healthy, happy employees mean higher productivity, satisfaction, and retention.¹ However, employee expectations are evolving just as quickly. Rising stress, chronic illness, and economic uncertainty are making well-being more essential—and more challenging—than ever.

Luckily, research from novel areas of study, such as relational neuroscience, has shed new light on the best ways to attract and retain talent through corporate wellness initiatives. This report explores **five key trends shaping the future of workplace wellness**. Backed by the latest corporate wellness data and consumer insights, these trends will help you understand how the world of employee health is changing so that your company can be proactive in serving your employees and achieving your goals in 2025 and beyond.



We're Collectively Burned Out on Wellness

There is a fine line between motivating employees to pursue wellness and adding additional pressure that reduces it. This trend is fueled by numerous microtrends, such as high-intensity exercise, biohacking, and the nonstop onslaught of increasingly extreme fad diets. All of these encourage a 'more is better' approach to wellness and add to the pressure that individuals feel.

In their landmark report, which surveyed 16,000 respondents worldwide, Lululemon uncovered startling insights that have significant implications for employee health.

In their survey, *Global Wellbeing Report 2024: The Pressure to Be Well*, the researchers found that despite respondents spending more time and money than ever to improve their health, these actions frequently have the opposite effect.

Somewhat counterintuitively, the relentless pursuit of wellness negatively affects our overall wellbeing. They coined this contradiction 'wellness burnout,' and a startling 45% of survey respondents experienced it in 2024.²



While this assertion by Dr. Doraiswamy may seem confusing, the data clearly shows how some current practices are ineffective and how the industry must change to facilitate holistic wellness for all employees.

Wellness burnout has significant implications for employees' mental and physical health overall and, therefore, how they show up at work. Three data points stand out that provide the most insight into the phenomena and may provide solutions:²

"Often, the pressure to improve our wellbeing causes us to overthink and fixate on what's lacking in our lives."

DR. DORAISWAMY, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY AND
BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES, DUKE UNIVERSITY &
LULULEMON MENTAL WELL-BEING GLOBAL ADVISORY
BOARD

63%

of those experiencing
wellness burnout feel
powerless when it comes to
improving their wellbeing²

61%

of people experience
overwhelming societal
expectations to appear
well²

2 in 3

respondents are feeling
pressure from others and
society to support their
wellbeing in specific ways²

Employees who feel pressured to be well but do not have the resources or knowledge to achieve their goals and those who feel socially isolated are at much higher risk.

To truly address wellness burnout, HR leaders need to shift the focus from "more" to "meaningful." Instead of overwhelming employees with generic well-being initiatives, organizations should allow employees to choose what well-being means to them through flexible benefits like wellness stipends, self-paced programs, or mental health days.



Societal pressure, isolation, and a lack of efficacy are crucial factors at play for those experiencing wellness burnout.



2 The Rise of Social Wellbeing

A growing body of evidence suggests that our social wellbeing—sometimes known as social fitness, social health, social connectedness, or social wellness—enormously impacts our physical and mental health. ³

The impact of the health of our relationships is so crucial—and conversely, loneliness so detrimental—that researchers in the growing field of relational neuroscience have proposed that metrics of social wellbeing be monitored by healthcare professionals just like other health screening markers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made people aware of the dangers of social isolation, and many want to learn how to address their social wellness as a part of their overall health. **A study conducted by the National Institutes of Health found that a lack of**

social support made adults significantly more likely to experience depression.⁴ While the research on social wellbeing is ongoing, the data paint a stark picture of why it's such an essential aspect of our overall health and why employers should understand the [social determinants of health](#).



89%

of those with wellbeing burnout say that loneliness is a contributing factor ²

Individuals at high risk for **depression** benefit most from having more than one form of social support ⁴

Loneliness can **increase** the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, suicidality, dementia, and early death ⁵

In the context of work, social wellbeing also plays a huge role in how we show up, how engaged we are in our work, and our productivity and satisfaction. Employers then have a golden opportunity to help create working environments that foster healthy work connections and offer the protective health benefits of robust social wellbeing.



3

Healthcare Affordability is Paramount for US Workers

In their State of the Workplace 2024 Financial Benefits Study, Morgan Stanley found that in 2023, 66% of employees were experiencing financial anxiety and admitted it was affecting their professional and personal lives. ⁶

One of the biggest drivers of financial stress for US workers is healthcare costs, with **many US adults—insured and not—forgoing essential medical care due to an inability to afford it.** In 2023, *The Commonwealth Fund Health Care Affordability Survey* spoke with US adults with and without health insurance, and what they found was startling: ⁷

43%

of employed insured adults said it was very or somewhat difficult to afford healthcare

54%

of people with coverage reported delaying or forgoing care due to cost said their health problem worsened

34%

of adults avoided care or filling a needed prescription due to medical debt

30%

of adults with employer coverage were paying off debt from medical or dental care

Stress contributed to by financial worries can have a significant impact on physical health and make employees more likely to develop expensive chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease. Considerable increases in the cost of living, including food and housing, and ballooning direct healthcare costs are putting a massive financial strain on US employees.

Employers must [support financial wellbeing](#) in a multi-pronged approach by offering comprehensive healthcare coverage education and support so employees can understand their coverage and responsibilities and remove barriers to access.



4

Employee Recognition Reigns

While many aspects of employee wellness require significant financial investment to move the needle, this next trend shows how companies can significantly aid employees for free. Yet very few employers are tapping into this powerful resource.

In 2023, Gallup and Workhuman collaborated on their joint report, *From "Thank You" to Thriving*, which examined recognition's impact on company success and employee wellness. In it, they surveyed 10,000 employees in the US to understand the state of worker wellbeing and how it can be improved.

The authors state bluntly that the US is facing a worker wellness crisis, as "Fewer than 1 in 4 employees say their employer cares about their wellbeing—nearly half the number who said the same before the pandemic." While the causes of this problem are many, the **researchers found one easy, free, and highly effective tool that boosts employee wellbeing, performance, and retention** – [employee recognition](#).⁸



For best results, workplace recognition should be strategic and encompass five pillars:

- Fulfill employee's expectations
- Authentic
- Personalized
- Equitable
- Embedded in the corporate culture

The report found that employees who receive the right amount of recognition for their work are:⁸

90%

less likely to report significant burnout levels

40%

less likely to report high levels of stress, worry, or sadness

Twice

as likely to report feelings of gratitude at work

10x

as likely to report they feel like they belong at work



Most importantly, employees with great strategic recognition experiences are more likely to receive praise for their performance, perceive their paychecks as fair, and be less likely to search for a new job.

Strategic employee recognition practices represent a massive untapped resource companies can use to create a healthy workplace culture, improve individual employee wellness, and ultimately improve overall company performance.



Data Will Continue to Steer the Employee Health Journey

While most trends come and go, some remain and permanently shift how we work, live, and pursue health. Leveraging data-driven insights fueled wearable health tech and health risk assessments with biometric screening have rapidly become the standard practice in corporate wellness and will be an invaluable part of future wellness initiatives.

Wearable Health Tech

Since their introduction in the early 2000s, [wearable health tech](#) such as smartwatches, heart rate monitors, wearable ECGs, and, recently, glucose monitors have exploded in popularity. These devices motivate and empower people to take charge of their health by using tangible data and behavior monitoring to create healthier habits.

When employees use wearable tech to help guide their decisions, **research shows they exercise more consistently and make healthier lifestyle choices that reduce their risk for chronic health conditions and improve their total wellbeing.**⁹



In addition to behavior modification, wearable health tech even aids in the diagnosis of serious chronic diseases like hypertension and arrhythmias.¹⁰

Employees overwhelmingly use some form of wearable health tech and desire that data be incorporated into their employee wellness programming. Therefore, companies that use digital [wellness platforms](#) with seamless wearable tech integrations encourage employees to take charge of their health behaviors and benefit from the data and trend-tracking these technologies offer. A true win-win scenario.

Health Risk Assessments & Biometric Screenings

Two other highly impactful tools that collect and use data to help guide the employee wellness journey are [health risk assessments](#) used in combination with biometric screenings. Health risk assessments (HRAs) are standardized tools used to collect employee health data and predict risk.

When used in combination with other tools like Biometric Screenings, The Common Wealth Fund says that they can be 'enormously effective' in helping employees become engaged in their health, adopt healthy habits, and increase prevention and health literacy.¹¹

The best employee wellness programs use data collected via HRAs and biometric screenings to create a personalized wellness plan for each employee. This tailored approach is far more effective at improving physical and mental health outcomes, and it's what people overwhelmingly want.

Employers who use validated tools such as HRAs and biometric screenings and successfully incorporate that data into a highly personalized wellness program are at a significant advantage over those who don't. Not only does this approach improve employee wellness, but it can also improve performance, retention, and satisfaction over time.



Key Takeaways: How HR Professionals Can Apply 2025 Trends to Support Employees

To Beat Wellness Burnout

The problem: The overwhelming societal pressure to be well, the onslaught of conflicting health information, and the lack of support worldwide have led many employees to feel burned out on wellness itself.

The solution: Companies must invest in evidence-based health resources and employee education to improve health literacy and self-efficacy—key elements of a healthier workforce. Rather than overwhelming employees with one-size-fits-all well-being initiatives, organizations should offer flexible benefits that empower individuals to define and prioritize their own well-being.

To Foster Social Wellbeing

The problem: Employees increasingly understand the importance of social wellbeing and its role in their overall health. They want workplaces and wellness programming that help them foster it.

The solution: There are numerous ways to boost social wellbeing. Company leadership must lead by example and practice healthy social etiquette to model for employees how others are to be treated. They can also provide opportunities for employees to establish different types of bonds and enrich their relationships and social wellbeing.

Lastly, another way to help improve your employee's social wellbeing and overall health is to incorporate peer support models throughout the rest of your wellness programming. Peer support groups are when two or more people with a shared health condition connect to provide emotional support, education, and encouragement to each other in addition to medical treatment.¹²

To Combat Healthcare Related Financial Stress

The problem: Financial stress significantly contributes to rising healthcare costs and causes emotional turmoil for US employees, which actively increases their risk of developing serious chronic medical conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

The solution: In addition to financial wellness programs, which 77% of employees view as a desirable benefit, HR professionals must also provide ample education and support to help employees navigate and understand their health benefits. Employers must meet this need using a multi-pronged approach by offering comprehensive healthcare coverage, education, and support to remove barriers to access.

To Be an Industry Leader in Employee Recognition

The problem: Employees worldwide do not feel supported or valued by their employers, and those feelings contribute to burnout, low retention, and low performance.

The solution: Leaders at every level of the organization can make a huge difference in employee performance, retention, and satisfaction simply by creating and maintaining a culture of employee recognition. Strategic employee recognition encompasses the five pillars, which include fulfilling the employee's expectations in a way that is authentic, personalized, equitable, and embedded in your organization's culture.

To Harness Data for Better Health

The problem: Employees want personalized wellness programming driven by their unique health data, collected from sources like wearable health technologies, health risk assessments, and biometric screenings.

The solution: Companies that can keep up with the pace of health technology and use digital wellness platforms with health tech integrations built in are at a significant advantage over those that don't. These companies allow employees to use their favorite devices while leveraging the data they collect to improve their health and wellbeing.

About CoreHealth

CoreHealth is a leading digital health technology company trusted by global companies to power their health and wellness programs. Our innovative wellness platform helps maximize health, engagement, and productivity for over 4.5 million employees worldwide.

Discover how CoreHealth can revolutionize your organization's wellness strategy! Contact us today to learn how we can help you design and deliver a tailored, configurable, and scalable digital wellness solution for your organization.

Ready to see what you've been missing?

Speak to one of our technology experts today!

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