



Your guide to achieving employee engagement

You've chosen your health and wellbeing partner, and you're ready to implement your strategy.

But how can you ensure that your staff will engage?

We've pulled together this simple guide to help you on your journey to employee engagement and ultimately achieving your health and wellbeing objectives.

The following tips will help you communicate and engage your staff with your health and wellbeing provision.

1. Review your original objectives

Before you start to create your communication and engagement plan refer back to the original objectives you set out to achieve when developing your health and wellbeing strategy (see 'How to win the case to invest in employee health and wellbeing').

In step 1 ('Defining the right health & wellbeing strategy') you will have considered if you are implementing a common health and wellbeing plan across your entire workforce or if you are tailoring it to meet the needs of your different employee groups. Depending on the approach you have taken you will need to adapt your communication plan accordingly.

Be realistic with your engagement objectives. Not everyone will engage with your health and wellbeing strategy. Our research indicates that at least 5% of your employees will never engage with any initiatives in place, with some employees believing that their health and wellbeing has nothing to do with their employer and feel it's not their place (The Employer View, 2015).

2. Have a plan

Research by Cass Business School shows that failure to effectively communicate your benefits package costs UK companies £2.7bn every year through increased staff turnover and sickness absence.

In support of that, our research papers 'The Employee View – health & wellbeing in the workplace' and 'The Employer View – investing in employee health and wellbeing in the workplace' identified a consensus that employee health and wellbeing should be a shared responsibility between the employer and employee – giving impetus for closer working to address employee health.

In truth, offering benefits but not making your workforce aware of them is no better than not offering benefits at all. Therefore, it's fundamental that you have an effective communication plan.

3. Communicate effectively – you need to apply know, feel and do

Always ask yourself what do you want your staff to know, feel, or do as a result of your communications. Thinking about the concept – know, feel and do – will help you to organise your thoughts quickly and shape a clear message to your workforce.

First you need to decide what you want your employees to 'know, understand, learn'. Second, assess how you want your staff to feel and finally, what do you want your staff to do as a direct result of your communication? For example, what is the next step you want your staff to take? Would you like them to consider an offer or engage in a particular event? Applying the know, feel and do concept to all your communication plans will help you to view your audience as decision makers and organise your thoughts according to how your staff listen and engage.

It's simple - tell staff what your wellbeing strategy is

Effective communication isn't just about telling staff what's on offer, it's about making sure they understand why it's on offer, and what the benefits will be to both them and the business.

And explain what you want to achieve...

Employees need to be fully aware of your company's health and wellbeing strategy. Is it in place to reduce absence or is it there purely as an employee benefit? Either way, tell your staff why health and wellbeing is on your agenda, inform them about the steps you have taken to get there, explain why you have selected the benefits you have, the challenges you've faced and what you hope to achieve.



Demonstrate that you're listening

Many organisations make the mistake of launching benefits without giving staff the opportunity to provide feedback. This is an important part of the engagement process. You've already done a lot of research to develop the best strategy for your company and select the right provider. If you consulted your staff as part of your strategy development then share your findings; show that you've listened to what they asked for and demonstrate how your strategy addresses their concerns / requests.

Staff are more likely to engage if they see they've influenced the decision making process. Results from 'The Employee View' and 'The Employer View' surveys indicated that the best way to engage with staff to take up health and wellbeing initiatives is to embed the three Cs: care, communicate and consult.

Care: 27 per cent said if their employer cared more or showed more interest about their health and wellbeing they'd engage more with what's on offer.

Communicate: 30 per cent asked for better communication by the employer about the programmes on offer to them. 74 per cent of employees agreed that it's important for health and wellbeing to be promoted and supported.

Consult: When asked what would make them engage more with work health and wellbeing initiatives, nearly half of employees said that they would engage more if their employer asked them what they'd like.

To ensure a continuous feedback loop throughout adoption and usage of your chosen health and wellbeing initiatives, conduct an employee survey mid-year – a simple and cost effective way to openly talk to staff and obtain feedback. It doesn't need to be long; between five to eight good questions will be ideal, and you can even use free software such as Survey Monkey to deliver it. In addition, a focus group of between six and ten employees can be a very effective way of gathering staff feedback. Following the survey/focus group, it's very important to read, respond and communicate all results to all areas of the business, from management through to staff.

4. The power of internal communications

It's important to understand the pivotal role of internal communication, as effective and well planned communications can lead to an engaged, motivated and well informed workforce. Also, don't underestimate the power of who the message is coming from. Many suppliers will have standard communication templates available for you to use. However, staff are more likely to engage with a message from a named individual within your organisation. Why not use the insight available from your staff survey to inform where your internal communications need to be targeted. Share information and insights with managers on the most and least popular benefits and their value so they can feed back through their teams.

5. Start from the top

Employee wellbeing is now starting to sit higher up on the corporate agenda compared with five years ago. However, to achieve greater employee engagement, you need to make sure that the board and all senior management support the strategy and understand what is on offer to staff.

The important role of the line manager

Line managers are on the front line with their team, and have the ability to cascade information - both up and down. Invest sufficient time and effort briefing them so they're confident and knowledgeable when communicating the health and wellbeing strategy to their team. Regular team meetings are a great place to talk to staff and reinforce the importance of health and wellbeing benefits. Remember managers can help you to deliver your strategy, therefore ongoing training and regular communication with managers is fundamental.

Lead by example

Be a role model and use the products you want your staff to use. Management need to fully support and engage with the health and wellbeing strategy if staff are to believe in your company's investment in their health. This will demonstrate confidence in the supplier and the products you've chosen.

6. How to communicate your employee wellbeing strategy

Here are a few effective ways to communicate with your staff:

- **Employee engagement events** – hold a health and wellbeing day at work, or during lunch or break times. Invite suppliers into your workplace to provide an added value experience for employees. This could be an opportunity for the supplier to showcase their products and give staff the opportunity to ask questions.
- **Visual reminders** – screensaver images, desktop reminders, noticeboards in common spaces. All simple ways of reminding staff in an eye catching and visual way.
- **Gamification** – promote employee engagement by rewarding individuals / teams who participate in companywide competitions and campaigns.
- **Company intranet** – keep staff up to date. Ask your supplier to send you interesting content, insight and information on a regular basis to keep the messaging fresh and front of mind.

When planning your health and wellbeing communications consider what channels you already have in place and how these might work best for your different employee groups. For example, email and intranet might work well for any office based staff whereas face to face and posters might work better for shop or factory based staff. Every company is different, so what worked in another company may not be the best approach for you. Test new communication channels and evaluate what's worked and what hasn't and why. Some ideas will work better than others, it's a case of trying and seeing what works with your employees.

All too often email messages get lost in a mix of other emails, therefore make them stand out – why not publish a video of the management team or your supplier talking about health and wellbeing? An internal newsletter, preferably online to reduce costs, would be a good place to remind staff about health and wellbeing initiatives, or produce dedicated employee wellbeing communications.

You may hold regular communication events for your staff, so you could consider combining messages about your health and wellbeing strategy with your regular business updates. It's also a great way for staff to meet fellow colleagues and to make the management team visible and approachable. Good internal communication is about listening as well as talking so asking your staff regularly is important.

Be a communication champ

Communication can fall down when there's no ownership. Identify who should lead the communication strategy, often the most effective partnership is with HR and an internal communications representative. Why not ask staff to volunteer to be communication champions, or take the time to set up an employee engagement group with staff from around the business? You'll find that focus group participants make excellent candidates.

Be timely

Communicate information on a timely and regular basis. Your message needs to be repeated several times for your staff to start to engage with it, and on an ongoing basis. So, ensure that when you communicate you have your next communication scheduled.

7. Embed your provisions

To ensure that your health and wellbeing provisions are at the forefront of employees' minds and to keep the momentum going, meaningful, ongoing communication with employees must occur. Here are a few effective ways to communicate with your staff on an on-going basis:

- **Team meetings** – make employee health and wellbeing a standard agenda item at team briefings. Line managers can then collate feedback and report back to management.
- **Induction and probation reviews** – how are you communicating your benefits package to new employees?
- **Staff appraisals, reviews or ongoing promotions** – maintain engagement with existing employees.
- **Total Reward Statements** – provide staff with information about the value of their employment package and include details about the benefits provided to them.

8. Be honest

Is your health and wellbeing package being clearly communicated in the best possible way to your employees?

Ask yourself the following:

- Is your health and wellbeing provision being clearly communicated, to the right people, at the right time, in the right place?
- Does your strategy still reflect your staff's needs?
- Are all key stakeholders fully engaged with and supportive of the strategy?
- What barriers are there to communicating in your business and how effective/ not effective are your current communication channels?
- Do you communicate often enough? If you're not sure what is often enough or what is too much, ask your staff direct. They will tell you how often and the best possible method to communicate.

Employees perform better when they're healthy, motivated and focused. Smart and forward-thinking employers effectively communicate and listen to their staff, make decisions based on research and insight, have clear objectives of what they want to achieve and, importantly have support from the whole company.

It worked for Boston College, can it work for you?

View our case study from Boston College, who implemented a health and wellbeing strategy to their staff. Their greatest success was their effective communication plan and high staff engagement rates.

Visit westfieldhealth.com/toolkit to see how they did it.

Here to help

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