



OVERCOMING THE HUMAN ENERGY CRISIS: A Case For Workplace Wellness In Corporate Nigeria

Gbenga Owolabi (Biz. Devt. Director) and Billy Usani, MD. (COO), Penergia Ltd.

The next time you walk into any business environment, endeavour to feel the atmosphere and observe the noticeable energy of the employees. We bet you will likely pick up subtle and not-so-subtle cues that tell you whether it is a happy and thriving environment, or a workplace with disgruntled and disengaged staff just getting by day to day.

Indeed, whilst the pressures of a workplace environment can foster positive results to help raise the game of teams and induce motivation of employees, thus energizing and making them fulfilled, adversely, employees can also become disengaged, stop caring about their contributions to their team, customers and even their health and happiness.

The following questions readily come to mind:

- Are your employees thriving or (barely) surviving?
- Is your fast paced, highly pressured work environment causing burn out and disengagement?

- Do your employees know what is needed or have the requisite skills to thrive in the face of change?
- Do you have a strategic approach to enhance your employees' energy levels to guarantee results?

Many studies conclude only about 35% of workers ultimately drive the performance of a company. Gallup reports that 65% of workers are disengaged in the United States (more than 85% worldwide), implying that only about one third of the workforce is driving the company forward. Evidently, more engaged workers will lead to substantially better results. It's a fact.

According to Gallup, companies with highly engaged workforces outperform their peers by 147% in earnings per share and such employees are more likely to put 57% more effort on the job than other employees who are disengaged.

The reality is that all business executives desire sustained high performance (SHP) for themselves and their employees. In order to achieve this, it is imperative to properly align and marshal the energy of the human body correctly. Without the right energy, hitting performance goals becomes almost impossible.

Indeed, Human Energy is the foundation of everything in our lives – from building and sustaining relationships, to managing careers, to controlling moods, fulfilling dreams and attaining overall success in life. The human being is designed as a fully integrated, multi-dimensional energy system; therefore, management of energy is the most effective model for achieving high performance and resiliency. When a person's energy is hurting, everything else in their lives suffers.

To perform at maximum potential, humans (i.e. executives and employees) must routinely train like elite athletes, in order to truly excel in competitive and high pressure corporate environments.

The human being is designed as a fully integrated, multi-dimensional energy system; therefore, management of energy is the most effective model for achieving high performance and resiliency. When a person's energy is hurting, everything else in their lives suffers.

It is against this background that employers - with global best-practices - have begun to realize the positive impact 'wellness in the work place' has on Return on Time (ROT) and Return on Value (ROV), as well as the traditional Return on Investment (ROI); and how tied the productivity of the workplace is to the wellness and health of their employees. These organizations deliberately design and deploy corporate wellness programs as an integral part of their employee value propositions to improve the fundamental elements that enhance human energy, and go beyond the generally accepted practices of helping their employees improve the management of their competencies and time.

Benefits of Workplace Wellness Programs

There are numerous benefits of workplace wellness programs. In fact, there are more than 200 scientific studies indicating the positive return-on-investment for worksite wellness programs.

Workplaces are crucial to improving the health of workers because significant proportion of adults spend most of their waking hours at work than anywhere else, making it a prime venue for promoting healthful habits.

The organizational culture and environment of workplaces are powerful influences on employee behavior, and these needs to be put to use as a means of assisting employees to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

Benefits of workplace wellness programs for employees include:

- Lower health care costs (as a result of healthier employees)
- Lower sick days and lost productivity; (e.g. in UK, unscheduled time away costs roughly \$3,600 per year for each hourly worker and \$2,650 each year for salaried employees.)
- Lower employee turn-over; with costs for lost knowledge, recruiters and training
- Increased employee engagement and contribution
- Increased employee morale, energy and stamina

- Increased camaraderie among co-workers
- Increased job satisfaction and self-esteem
- Less employee depression, and substance abuse
- Less workplace hazards and improved ergonomics, minimizing injury and repetitive strains
- Less workplace bullying or harassment

The concern for employee wellness is an increasing trend for businesses in general. Why? The link between employee wellness and the bottom line is clear and consistent. Employers who integrate wellness in their overall business objectives experience most of the above listed benefits.

"Your wellness program should be embedded in everything your organization does," said Jason Lang, team lead for workplace health programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "It's just as important as sales and marketing. It's just as important as research and development. It's just as important as customer service."

The most comprehensive meta-evaluation of worksite wellness program studies shows something very exciting! It shows that worksite wellness programs are not only effective at helping to reverse the rising spiral of health-care costs, but these programs are also becoming more effective at enhancing the aggregate performance of employees.

The average cost-benefit ratio has increased from 1:3 for earlier programs to 1:6 today. Simply put, the average reduction in health-care costs, sick leave, disability costs, and workers' compensation is more than 25 percent for well-designed programs. Worksite health promotion provides a long-term approach for helping keep employees well. The single most important thing you can do for your employees is to start a worksite wellness program now!

But, while most companies do "something" to promote employee health and well-being, very few—just 7% of companies surveyed in a nationally representative 2008 study in the U.S.—offer what Laura Linnan, a professor of public health at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and head

of the CDC-funded Workplace Health Research Network, calls a “comprehensive program.” And, she says, “What we know from the literature is that people who have comprehensive programs have better health outcomes and other outcomes we expect from a comprehensive approach.”

Case for Wellness Programs as Value Proposition of Organizations in Nigeria

To achieve this however requires a paradigm shift from the conventional

across these three dimensions to improve their personal productivity, creativity and performance.

If a company provides their best to an employee, the natural result is that happier, healthier employees bring their very best to the job. But, as with any change in a corporate environment, it first must begin with a shift in attitude that starts at the top, with measurable actions to follow suit. Corporate leaders need to be fully engaged and champion a company-wide wellness strategy for true success and measurable outcomes.

risk factors. Every test parameter and questionnaire area would have pre-defined ranges and attached points to determine overall score of an individual’s wellness status. The scores are then categorized into various pre-defined wellness profiles.

Phase 1.1b: This segment will involve the assessment of organizational policies, physical environments and the ergonomics of various types of workspaces (e.g. office, factory or mobile locations such as cars, truck cabins, etc.) to determine suitability of the workplace to promote healthy lifestyle, enhance social interaction and optimal



If a company provides their best to an employee, the natural result is that happier, healthier employees bring their very best to the job.

corporate health concept and practice of remediation and treatment to promotion and prevention, and from sickness and chronic disease management to human energy and performance management. A comprehensive corporate wellness program embodies all elements and dimensions that focus on human energy enhancement. They must be life-changing programs that take a holistic, mind and body approach at helping employees to make positive fundamental changes in their lives, thereby enhancing their optimal performance at work and home.

The goal of such programs is to assist individual employees to become physically energized, emotionally connected, mentally focused, and completely aligned

Steps to Implement a Corporate Wellness Program

To successfully implement a corporate wellness program, an organization will typically engage in the steps outlined below:

Phase 1: Assessment, Analytics & Awareness (Triple 'A') on Wellness

Phase 1.1a: In this segment the organization conducts medical tests and administers questionnaire to establish a baseline on the extent of wellness of all employees in the workforce. The medical tests are non-intrusive, while the online psychometric questionnaire determines the level of exposure to stress and other

movement of employees.

Phase 1.2: Using Analytics, the pre-defined wellness profiles of individual employees, aggregate organizational units or company-wide basis, are analyzed to find correlation with other pre-existing data from key HR metrics e.g. performance curves, absenteeism, direct medical costs etc., which are further compared/benchmarked against each other. The wellness status results, profile categories and the correlation with data from other HR metrics are then integrated within Presentations for educating and improving awareness.

Phase 1.3: Following insights gained from the assessments and analytics segments, it is imperative to educate and improve employees’ awareness on the fundamentals

of human energy management, based on the contemporary knowledge of the core elements of fuel (nutrition), movement (strategic exercise) and recovery (rest) - and their link to wellness, employee productivity and performance.

Phase 2: Design of Wellness Program

From the wellness assessments of its employees and office systems and environment, the organization can now design a bespoke wellness program for the various categories of employees identified. The design phase will involve selection of wellness advocates from cross functional areas, and management and staff cadre as part of the design team.

The overall design of a corporate wellness program will depend on a number of factors such as budget, target employees, distribution of employee population into the pre-defined wellness categories and ultimately the objectives or goals intended to be achieved as a result of implementing a wellness program.

There are essentially three levels or variants of adoption of corporate wellness programs that have been observed to be implemented by leading organizations. These are:

- 1.) Education-intensive programs, with significant effort focused on providing employees with data, tips, and general information on lifestyle and its connection to wellness
- 2.) Corporate event-based or health risk-factor focused programs, with organizations having minimal involvement in actions taken by the employees, but giving employees high discretion to take control of their individual wellness, and
- 3.) Behavioural change programs, where organizations have integrated the comprehensive wellness program into the employee value proposition of the company and HR or Business strategies. The organization is also significantly involved in incentivising their employees to voluntarily enlist into corporately designed lifestyle regimes, and tracks the improvements in wellness on an aggregate basis across organizational units, management hierarchy levels and company-wide

to predict the level of individual and corporate performance expected. The scope of activities to enhance overall wellness may include defining criteria for procurement and management of key third party stakeholders that impact on their employee's wellness and healthy lifestyles (e.g. food vendors).

Phase 3: Deployment/Implementation of Wellness Program

Depending on the final design of its corporate wellness program as stated in phase 2, the organization deploys personnel, materials and resources to ensure the activities, results and objectives of its program are achieved and reported. These programs are implemented using various media platforms (e.g. digital, physical formats for internal communications such as notice board, computer screens, etc.) and Information, Communication and Education (ICE) materials and also integrated into other initiatives or practices to enhance the culture of the organization. The leadership of the organization typically sponsors and champions the implementation phase and provides exemplary behaviour for other employees to follow.

Successful program implementation is also as a result of phasing the measurements and reporting outcomes of the activities of the program across the company to provide intermittent periods of recognition and celebrations.

Presently, in Nigeria, there are a few leading companies that have or are at various stages of implementing their corporate wellness programs. These companies also have taken different approaches and are implementing their programs in different types of program adoption earlier described.

Although there are few analytics and business results in the public space to corroborate the success of these programs, we believe that companies whose wellness programs have features closer to those described as behavioural change programs will surely achieve greater benefits and return on value or investments.

About Penergia

Penergia is the leading one-stop corporate wellness and human energy Service Company in Nigeria. We have seasoned professionals, and established partners and specialists across all the elements of fuel (nutrition), movement (strategic exercise) and recovery (rest and sleep) to enhance wellness and guarantee performance of employees in their organizations. We have the expertise to design and implement outcome-based behavioural change programs, and provide the coaching support to ensure very high participation of employees, regardless of their type of workforce (e.g. extended-hours shift factory workers and administrative staff), that enhance the state of their health for improved productivity and performance.

Mr. Gbenga Owolabi is

a seasoned entrepreneur and professional with over 25 years working experience across various industries. His areas of functional expertise include:

- strategy development and execution
- organization design
- Performance management.

Dr. Billy Usani is a seasoned

medical practitioner, Integrative Physician & Wellness/Human Performance Coach with over 20 years working experience across various medical sub-specialties including Clinical, Sports & Exercise Medicine and Public Health. His areas of functional expertise include Human Energy Optimization for individual & corporate performance, with respect to functional nutrition, stress resiliency and recovery strategies as well as workplace wellbeing design, implementation and evaluation.