



# Taking Care of Remote Employees

---

The Key To Business Success  
Beyond the Pandemic

**Großker**

---

The writing is on the wall: remote working, in some capacity, is here to stay. While remote and hybrid work models deliver a lengthy checklist of benefits – and organizations are largely “bullish” on these – employers have their work cut out for them when it comes to ensuring employees have the resources they need to thrive. To put a modern spin on the old adage, “With great opportunity comes great responsibility to take care of today’s workforce.”

---

# A Remote Workforce: A Beyond-the-Pandemic Reality

---

If anything has turned out to be a truism as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that remote working works – from the perspective of both employers and employees. Remote and hybrid work models are successful on a large scale, and distributed workforces have proven themselves in many ways. In fact, a Gartner, Inc. survey revealed that 74% of CFOs and finance leaders will move at least 5% of their previously on-site workforce to permanently remote positions post-COVID-19. That's great news for more than half of the workers, according to Pew Research Center, who are doing their job from home all or most of the time and want to keep working from home even after the pandemic.

To a large extent, the work-from-home trend was a fait accompli. COVID-19 made it necessary for employers to allow their non-frontline workers to be at home, helping to keep them safe from a terrible disease that, to date, has infected more than 114 million and resulted in the death of more than 2.6 million people worldwide. Employers had no choice, really, and the traditional workplace has forever changed.

## Wellbeing For Employees Working Here, There, and Everywhere

What does it take to help your employees feel cared for, perform their best, and stay connected? In this guide, you'll explore what it takes to support your employees' whole-person wellbeing no matter where they're working. Moving forward with a post-pandemic workforce, the importance of workforce wellbeing takes on new meaning. Wellbeing programs will need to be delivered in a way that fits in seamlessly with the “anywhere, anytime” reality of today's workers while also making a personally meaningful impact on their lives.

## Beyond the Pandemic: Existing Challenges Intensified

There's a lot of media coverage focused on how remote workers continue to struggle even as the threat from COVID-19 diminishes. While people are able to work in comfortable sweatpants and can avoid long commutes to-and-from the office, few would say, on balance, that their lives are any "easier" at the moment. It's common sense. Living and working during a pandemic is overwhelming, exacerbated by any number of pressures, from financial uncertainties to having kids and other family members constantly underfoot. That's not to mention the isolation and lack of social support felt by others.

### Where does the rubber hit the road?

Grokker Innovation Labs' 2021 State of Stress report reveals that 76% of workers are feeling stressed — and those who work from home are more than twice as likely to feel completely overwhelmed. What's more, pandemic stress is leading employees to have the following issues at work:

**50%**

Difficulty concentrating

**46%**

Procrastination and lack of motivation

**33%**

Lacking creative inspiration

**31%**

Difficulty connecting with clients and colleagues

**24%**

Missing meetings and deadlines

**10%**

Missing days of work





It stands to reason that most of your employees are, to some degree, feeling the weight of the world on their shoulders and experiencing a combination of stress symptoms that impact their engagement and productivity. Employees — especially remote workers, whose home and work lives are playing out simultaneously — are exorbitantly stressed and can't see an immediate end to their struggles. Many are grappling with feelings of depression or anxiety, headaches, vision problems, and any number of other stress-induced aches and pains.

### Be Aware of At-Risk Employees

Without the life experience and resilience to buoy them during challenging times, Millennials and Gen Zers are especially vulnerable. Younger workers are dealing with the brunt of widespread mental health concerns, which, according to the Standard, are compounded by less job security, less housing stability, more debt, and lower wages.

And consider the plight of women in your workforce. During the pandemic (but mirroring pre-pandemic trends, to be sure) working mothers spend 15 hours more per week than fathers on childcare and household duties — that's almost 8 workdays more per month. It's alarming, but perhaps not surprising, that upwards of two million women are contemplating downshifting their careers or leaving the workforce entirely, proving that when something has to "give," it's often one's career. For

employees contemplating this decision, burnout seems imminent without the support they need to push through.

### Challenges Change Shape

That said, people are likely to see much of their stress subside once they no longer have to actively worry about the spread of COVID-19, when their children go back to school, and it's once again safe to spend time in close contact with family and friends outside of our pandemic "bubble." But even in a post-vaccine environment, remote workers will continue to need to cope with back-to-back zoom meetings, a commute-free and therefore largely sedentary workday, and some degree of social isolation from coworkers.

Willis Towers Watson's 2021 Emerging From the Pandemic survey makes clear that employees will struggle in previously uncharted ways. Fifty-four percent of survey respondents reported rising stress or burnout as the biggest wellbeing challenge connected to the pandemic, while 40% cited higher mental health-related claims as a top challenge. To address these challenges, 62% cited enhancing mental health services and stress/resilience management as a top priority over the next six months, compared with just 47% six months prior to the January 2021 survey.

**In order to stay on track and be successful with remote and hybrid workforces once the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, it's imperative that leaders put the trends and research data together and prioritize the culture-building and caretaking of employees.**

# Your Commitment to Wellbeing Makes a Difference

---

Predicting the precise post-pandemic business landscape, even in the short term, is daunting. But employers have the responsibility and opportunity to acknowledge that their traditional approaches to helping employees manage stress may have been far from effective — as evidenced by the pre-pandemic prevalence of workforce stress and burnout. With that said, clinging to those same insufficient approaches in today's more complex environment will absolutely fall short. It's clearly no longer enough to subsidize gym memberships or host a monthly lunch-and-learn and claim that you are helping employees achieve a sustainable sense of whole-person wellbeing.

**Success with workforce wellbeing requires big-picture thinking — and an intentional response to helping your employees feel happy, healthy, and connected.** Digital wellbeing trends accelerated during the pandemic, and it's now critical to keep building on what's been established. Innovative employers are acting with urgency to take their wellbeing programs to the next level; to achieve this transformation, they will ramp up their efforts to listen to employee needs and align their benefit programs with a focus on whole-person health and on-demand tools.



The fact is we won't return to recognizable routines any time soon, and it's possible our routines will change again. We just do not know. So what will it take to be ready for the unknown future state as well as this "new normal," while making a difference to employees today? At a bare minimum, business leaders need to:

- 1 Listen and learn.** *Understand the forces and challenges behind today's workforce realities and how they impact your employees, specifically. What do your employees need to feel and perform their best, wherever they're working? Ask them.*

---

- 2 Devise actionable plans.** *Assemble the right people to decide what you can do organizationally, culturally, and with benefits to make a meaningful impact on employees' daily lives. Your goal should be to show you care by making it easy for your people to take care of themselves across all areas of their health and wellbeing.*

---

- 3 Follow through and follow up.** *Let employees know you're aware of their concerns and taking action to support them. This means implementing changes, establishing trustworthy feedback loops, measuring effectiveness, and keeping it up.*

At the end of the day, your work is twofold: you must build a culture that acknowledges employees' unique needs and deliver benefits that truly help employees manage their lives and overall wellbeing. You want employees to show up at work — wherever that may be — feeling like they matter, that they belong, and that you value their wellbeing. By empowering employees with the powerful combination of cultural support and wellbeing resources, you give them the permission and tools to prioritize self-care and achieve whatever wellbeing means to them. In turn, they bring their best to you.

# Crafting a Whole-Person Wellbeing Strategy For Every Employee

---

Workforce wellbeing is clearly going to be a major frontier in 2021 and beyond. It's never been more important to meet people where they are: at work, at home, or at the "home" office. This can mean a myriad of actions, including (but not limited to):

- Offering more flexibility with work hours
- Retooling your workforce's wellbeing program
- Destigmatizing mental health
- Providing meaningful on-demand digital benefits
- Expanding diversity and inclusion policies
- Discouraging back-to-back meetings for remote workers
- Acknowledging child care pressures
- Asking employees to take mandatory breaks
- Training managers to have difficult conversations

When it comes to your workforce wellbeing solution, you'll want to reach and engage remote employees with personalized, whole-person support that helps them feel their best — however they define it. Tactically, this means moving away from the traditional one-size-fits-all approach and making it easy for individual employees to take care of themselves based on their interests, abilities, and daily goals. Where one person may need a vigorous workout to feel energized and alert, another might need 9 hours of sleep and a daily meditation practice. Others might need all-of-the-above — and their needs might change by the day!



The workforce wellbeing solution landscape will continue to evolve along with technology advancements, digital trends, and, of course, employee preferences. Here's a brief analysis the categories of solutions in today's marketplace:

#### **POINT SOLUTIONS: EFFECTIVE, BUT LIMITED.**

By definition, point solutions offer programming for a targeted population. Smokers and those with musculoskeletal conditions, for example, are prescribed daily action to stop using tobacco or regain mobility after a joint replacement. Other point solutions include those that deliver single-dimension support, such as mindfulness or weight loss. While they're effective in helping specific people take specific actions to address specific issues, they're not serving the needs of every employee and therefore won't be widely utilized.

#### **BENEFITS NAVIGATION PLATFORMS: BROAD, BUT NOT ENGAGING.**

Large platforms serving as benefit portals are like "pipes" for connecting employees to their benefits, while also helping administrators manage their programs or distribute incentives. They fall short in the areas of content and engagement, though, and require third party vendor content to bring them to life and keep employees coming back for more.

#### **WELLBEING ENGAGEMENT SOLUTIONS: SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE, ANYWHERE AND ANYTIME.**

Wellbeing engagement solutions consist of the platform, content, and community employees need to take action on their goals across all dimensions of whole-person wellbeing — fitness, mental health, nutrition, sleep, and financial wellbeing. They connect every employee, on-demand, for a unified, consistent experience that spans time zones and individual preferences. Designed to meet every employee's day-to-day wellbeing needs, regardless of where they work or live, their content is delivered via HD video and feature expert instruction, elements of gamification, incentives tracking and management, and administrator reporting tools to measure program success.



When selecting a vendor or piecing together a variety of solutions, you'll need to keep utilization and engagement top of mind. It's imperative that your workforce sees value in the solutions you're providing and are motivated and excited about incorporating them into their everyday lives, making healthy behavior changes, and sticking with routines that make long-term impact on their happiness and health.

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✔ **Remote and hybrid work models are here to stay.**  
Employers need to make sure they're meeting the unique, ever-changing needs of employees no matter where they're working.
- ✔ **Employee stress, burnout, and disengagement were big concerns pre-pandemic, not to mention today, and they're not going away.** A caring workforce culture that encourages and celebrates whole-person self-care will help nurture employees from the inside-out.
- ✔ **Putting employees' needs first is essential for driving results with a truly resilient workforce.**  
Employers have an opportunity to listen and learn from employees, devise actionable plans to support them, and follow through and follow up for ongoing success.
- ✔ **Provide holistic content.** Keeping engagement at the center of your workforce wellbeing benefits approach will ensure you're delivering resources that make a difference in your employees' everyday lives. This creates a win-win for employers and employees, getting every stakeholder closer to their satisfaction and productivity goals.

#### NEXT STEPS

Check in with your employees and management team to identify any gaps in how you're caring for your workforce and determine what they need to thrive.

Whatever wellbeing strategies you can deploy to support your employees in a post-pandemic world — in ways that truly work for them, while driving actual behaviors and positive results for both employer and employee — will help you cultivate a level of workforce resilience that can carry you, and them, through whatever the future brings. Isn't that the end-game you're driving at?





Send us a question

[wellbeing@grokker.com](mailto:wellbeing@grokker.com)

Talk to our team

**408-876-0802**

Book a Demo

<https://go.grokker.com/book-a-demo>