



From Actions to Outcomes Employee Wellbeing in a Global Workforce

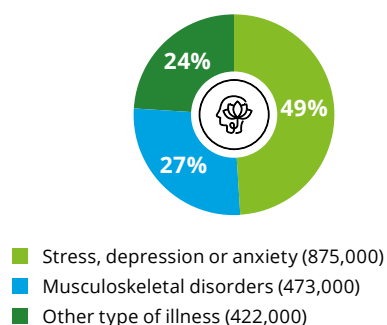
One of the most pressing challenges facing employers today is work-related stress, anxiety and depression within their global and domestic workforce.

Mental health and wellbeing continue to be a top priority for the C-Suite and the employees. In fact, 81% of C-suite and 68% of employees say that right now, improving their well-being is more important to them than progressing their career¹. From a purely business perspective, studies have found that the average return on investment is thought to be £5.30 for every £1 spent². So, it comes as no surprise that employers are implementing policies to improve employee wellbeing.

However, a disconnect exists between employer actions (with 96% of CEOs report that they are doing enough for the mental health of their workforce) and the desired outcomes (68% of employees report that they are struggling or suffering)³.

In fact working days lost due to work-related stress, anxiety and depression accounted for over 50% of all lost working days due to work-related ill health⁴ in 2022/23 in Great Britain and is estimated to have cost £56 billion in lost revenue⁵.

New and long-standing cases of work-related ill health by type in 2022/23⁴



So, employers continue to explore new initiatives and methods to improve the mental health and wellbeing of their workforce.

While this is no easy challenge for any employer, a global workforce creates added complexities due to the intense and personal nature of moving internationally for work, coupled with a reduced level of oversight from the employer (when compared with a domestic workforce).

Recent studies estimate that large organisations are spending around \$11 million on employee wellbeing⁶. This investment sounds impressive, but as the data has shown us, it is not reflected in the outcome.

So, this leads us to ask the question, why do employers continue to invest without assessing the impact of this expenditure on their workforce?

A cynical view may be that being seen to invest and create policies containing popular 'buzz words' is designed to drive positive public relations for an organisation, rather than focussing on driving improvements in employee wellbeing.

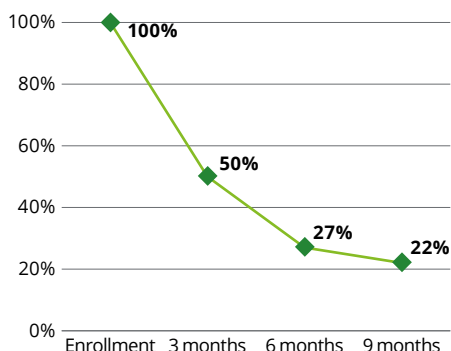
The more likely reason, however, is that employers do genuinely care about their employees and their wellbeing (after all, the economic case for employee wellbeing is clear, with wellbeing linked to employees being 56% less likely to be looking for other job opportunities and five times more likely to recommend their organisation to their friends and family⁷), but are disconnected culturally from the everyday employee experience that often drives workplace experience.

Organisations need to challenge their existing approach to wellbeing and invest time in exploring the root cause of wellbeing issues, as well assessing the impact of existing and proposed policies.

This article focuses on how and why an organisation should prioritise gaining an understanding of what drives employee wellbeing as a first step towards creating outcome focussed solutions.

A recent example of a global organisation taking these steps is explored later in this article.

Drop-out rates following employee enrollment into wellness programmes³



Do organisations know what their employees experience?

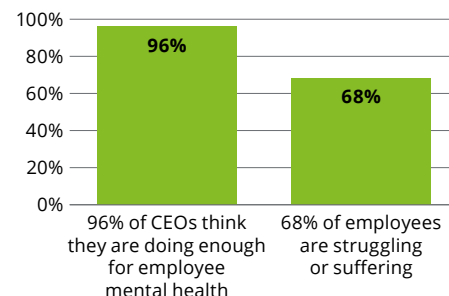
One potential route that organisations can use to examine the issues that influence employee experience is by undertaking a user experience review. User experience reviews are traditionally used to gather information on users' perception and satisfaction with technology products. However, they can also be a powerful way to evaluate the impact of policies and processes on employees. Although many organisations measure their employee experience through regular surveys and feedback forms, these are often structured in a way that inhibits the ability to reveal significant underlying issues that were otherwise not apparent.

As Global Mobility policy makers are not always impacted by the policies that they design, there are numerous examples of assignee and globally mobile employees suffering due to unanticipated policy failings. From assignees with children being provided with inappropriate schooling arrangements in host locations, to a lack of support for accompanying spouses in dual career families obtaining visas and work permits. The impact of these policy failings is broad and damaging.

In one notable example, an organisation had operated a policy for many years whereby senior employees were provided with accommodation on the highest floors of apartment buildings. While in the home location this was seen as a sign of respect to high level employees, when this policy was extended to employees being assigned abroad little consideration was given to whether the policy remained appropriate. The result was that assignees and their families arriving in Johannesburg, South Africa, were placed into inappropriate high-rise buildings in a less desirable part of the city.



The Disconnect Between Intention and Impact³



A cynic may deduce that these employers did not 'care enough' to ensure that these assignees were provided with appropriate and sufficient arrangements. However, once again, the more likely scenario may be that the organisations in each of these cases were simply unaware of the more specific needs of their assignees. Supporting a global workforce can be complex and appropriate levels of support can differ between both employee demographic and location.

Without in-depth qualitative reviews, the challenges faced by employees who have no impact on policymaking, may go unnoticed and unincorporated into policy design. This can impact an organisation's inclusivity, wellbeing, and retention as the needs of a diverse workforce go unaddressed.

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Conducting regular and systematic user experience reviews on employees can allow an organisation to determine the wants, needs, preferences, and pain points felt by their employees, so as to fully understand the experience that they are delivering. Through developing this understanding, organisations will be better equipped to design employee-centric policies that align the intended and observed impact on employees.

Case Study: Why a User Experience (UX) Review?

Moving internationally through an employer can be a challenging process, which will likely have a significant impact on an employee's perception of the organisation, their willingness to relocate again with the organisation in the future, and their wellbeing throughout the experience.

During global mobility processes, an employee will often interact more frequently with an external vendor than with their employer, which therefore limits the level of oversight that the employer has.



A large technology organisation understood it was crucial to deliver a positive employee experience throughout the global mobility processes and reached out to Deloitte to conduct a user experience review of their global mobility vendors.

The organisation had previously been collecting large amounts of feedback on the global mobility process from its employees. However, the anecdotal feedback and overall perception of the process was not aligned with the feedback received via surveys.

The business wanted to understand the experience of their globally mobile population with a view to implementing informed changes in the way that they work with their vendors.

What we did

We spoke with over 100 employees across the business to gain an understanding of their experiences while interacting with the vendor.

The decision was made to speak with the employees via 1-2-1 discussions in order to provide employees with the ability to openly discuss their experiences.

We were keen to ensure that our population represented the diversity of the organisation (region, grade, tenure etc).

To provide uniformity to discussions, we developed a structure to collect qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring that we could have both population-wide data driven insights and in-depth feedback on themes/experiences that had not been previously identified.

Over the course of the discussions, we had two key takeaways – people valued the chance to be heard i.e., that their organisation cared and wanted to understand and that their experience varied not just based on region, grade and tenure but on family circumstances too.

The impact

The user experience review produced a wealth of both quantitative and qualitative data. Our data analytics team were able to analyse both types of data to produce statistics and sentiment analysis to capture the breadth and depth of the feedback provided.

The review provided the organisation with new information on both areas which the organisation was already aware of, but more importantly, areas which had not yet been identified or considered.

These findings will be used to inform policy enhancements and can now also act as a benchmark for future reviews to drive continuous and iterative improvements, and to measure the return on investment of policy enhancements.

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In conclusion

Policies and processes which impact on employee experience can be expensive for an organisation, but may not be meeting the needs of their workforce. Similarly, failing to deliver on employee wellbeing can be costly to an organisation with the average cost of replacing an employee being 1.5 – 2 times their salary⁸. User experience reviews can be undertaken across many aspects of an organisation to gain a greater understanding of the workforce to inform policy design.

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The three key benefits to an organisation of undertaking a user experience review are:

01. Time and monetary investments can be focussed towards areas which have the greatest impact on employee experience and wellbeing, including areas which may not have been previously identified as requiring focus.
02. As workforces continue to become more diverse, so do the needs of employees. Reviewing policy impacts across a broad range of employees can allow organisations to identify these gaps and ‘blind spots’ and re-design their policies to maximise inclusivity.
03. Regular reviews can provide data across time periods to drive continuous improvement and measure the return on investment of policy and programme enhancements.

While employers are investing time and money into trying to solve the wellbeing challenges within their global workforce, this often is not reflected in employee perceptions and experiences, implying a disconnect between what are organisations are trying to do and the outcomes for their workforce.

Most employers do genuinely care for their employees and have a desire to create a positive employee experience, however it is challenging to create the right solutions for employees without gaining a thorough understanding of their needs and experiences.

While there is no one method or rule for delivering employee wellbeing, it is through gaining this understanding that truly effective plans and actions can be identified and implemented.

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Deloitte Global Workforce Consulting

In today's increasingly competitive world, businesses are having to find new ways to attract, acquire, develop, retain, and deploy key talent and skills. While traditional hiring practices and global mobility assignments are still in place new methodologies are emerging, and HR, Reward, and Global Mobility functions are at an inflection point where they need to consider how to respond to these exciting changes brought by the Future of Work. Deloitte's Global Workforce Consulting practice partners with organisations to help optimise and transform the operational, strategic, and digital aspects of Global Workforce Management and pride ourselves on being able to tailor our support to client specific requirements.

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Endnotes

1. [The C-suite and workplace wellness | Deloitte Insights](#)
2. [Mental health and employers: The case for investment – pandemic and beyond | Deloitte](#)
3. [Wellworking: How to make us all better at work | MindGym](#)
4. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/assets/docs/stress.pdf>
5. [Poor mental health costs UK employers up to £56 billion a year | Deloitte UK](#)
6. [New Research from Fidelity and Business Group on Health Finds Employers Answering the Call for Help: Focusing on Mental and Physical Health & Work/Life Balance as Employees Return to the Office | Business Group on Health \(businessgrouphealth.org\)](#)
7. [Unleashing the Human Element at Work: Transforming Workplaces Through Recognition, Gallup-Workhuman](#)
8. [This Fixable Problem Costs U.S. Businesses \\$1 Trillion](#)



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