

# Virtual Wellness Program for Employees during Pandemic Covid-19

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**Abstract:** Virtual employee wellness programs are initiatives designed to encourage healthy habits in remote team members. Implementing employee wellness program create a win-win situation between employer and employees. Employer win with reduce tangible cost in the area of healthcare, disability, absenteeism, and employers will pivot wellness programs to empower them to better cope with the health crisis and reduce their health risks amid the pandemic and beyond. The components of employee wellness programs can vary greatly from company to company, but the expected benefits that are sought remain similar. Wellness programs have the ability to change the way people feel about their work environment and also change the way people perform their work .A good wellness program helps employees achieve their aspirations and goals. It makes employees feel valued and cared, and this makes them achieve milestones at work. These campaigns occur through platforms such as Slack, Zoom, and social media. They target all areas of worker health, including mental, physical, social, and financial aspects.

**Keywords:** Virtual wellness program, pandemic, win-win situation.

## 1. Introduction

The health and wellness of the employees usually have a direct effect on the productivity and profits of a company. An employee wellness program includes activity designed to support better health at work and to improve health outcomes. The World Health Organization (WHO) on 30 January, 2020, declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). In the following weeks, the virus quickly spread worldwide, as a result governments of affected countries implement lockdown measures to decrease rate of transmission and prevent the overload of hospital emergency rooms. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in changes to the working arrangements of employees. Millions of employees adopted work from home culture .Due to COVID-19 crisis, working conditions have deteriorated and that employees are more likely to experience mental health problems, such as stress, depression, and anxiety. Organizations have started virtual wellness programming and initiatives to help ease the stress and anxiety of working from home during a global pandemic. Virtual employee wellness programs are initiatives designed to encourage healthy habits in remote team members. These campaigns occur through platforms such as

Slack, Zoom, and social media. They target all areas of worker health, including mental, physical, social, and financial aspects.

## 2. Benefit of Wellness Program

### 1) Increases Productivity

Poor employee productivity can be defined as physically being at work but not working. This type of poor productivity is called presentism. One of the leading causes of poor productivity is poor health. Poor health behaviors are usually linked to high levels of unproductivity and ultimately lead to higher health risks and chronic diseases .When you are unhealthy, you are tired and feel less motivated to work. Employees who eat healthily and exercise regularly are likely to be more productive than those who don't. A study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine found that participating in wellness programs can help improve productivity levels among employees and save money for their employers.

### 2) Decreased Health Care Costs

Healthy employees have fewer health-related problems thus reducing the costs of employee health care. A study shows that workplace wellness programs reduce health care costs. When your employees are healthy, they do not have to go to the doctor and pay their bills and buy medicines. In this way lot of money can be saved in the long run.

### 3) Breaks the Monotony

Doing the same thing over and over again every day makes work boring, repetitive, and tiring. This lowers employee morale and productivity. When your employees take part in wellness programs, they are engaged and feel motivated. Doing and learning new things that promote good health and fitness is fun and beneficial at the same time. Wellness programs mix things up and create enthusiasm among employees and create a great work environment.

### 4) Improves Employee Retention

Good wellness programs will help companies to hire, as well as retain the best employees. An employer that helps employees work toward achieving their personal goals by introducing a wellness program can make them loyal. Many people are strongly influenced by the presence of health offerings and other benefits when they choose an employer.

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When company offers wellness program, it shows your concern for their health and wellbeing. It shows how much the company cares about its employees' health and emphasizes its importance. Employees feel valued and appreciated, which is an essential factor of employee retention and recruitment.

#### 5) *Improves Health Behaviors*

Behavior changes are the basic of every good wellness program. A well-organized wellness program can help employees adopt and maintain healthy habits such as regular physical activity and healthy eating. It can also help them decrease bad health behaviors such as smoking and substance abuse. Healthy behaviors lead to lower health risks, and lower health risks lead to less chronic disease. With less chronic disease employees have fewer health care costs

#### 6) *Reduces the Risk of Diseases*

Wellness program help employees to adopt healthy behaviors such as eating well, exercising, and avoiding tobacco. Healthy behaviors decrease health risks, leading to less chronic disease. All health problems like high blood sugar, high blood pressure, etc., are caused by lack of exercise and poor nutritional choices. A wellness program helps your employees learn to implement healthy choices in their lives, making them healthier in the long run. When they exercise and eat healthily regularly, they improve their health and reduce the risks of health problems which in turn reduce health care costs.

#### 7) *Reduce stress*

Workplace stress is very common in our day-to-day live. Stress is an unavoidable part of daily life. Employees get stressed when work is high demanding and things are difficult. When we are stressed, we are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviors and destroy our mental health. Stress is unhealthy for employees and employers alike. It leads to poor work productivity, poor employee health, and unnecessary sick days. Activities like exercise and meditation can help them relieve stress and feel more relaxed. Wellness programs to combat workplace stress, you can improve your employees' productivity and performance.

#### 8) *Enhanced Company Image*

How much company cares about and treats its own employees creates the Public image of a company. The support of wellness programs is one way that a company can send a message that it cares about its employees, thus enhancing its image (Lee *et al.*, 2010). That is, if employees are happy to work for a certain company then this sends a positive message to the public, thus enhancing the company's representation in the prospective applicant pool and community at large. Consequently, this outcome could have positive effects when trying to recruit workers (Baicker *et al.*, 2010)

### 3. Virtual Wellness Program

Most employees now working from home and potentially adopting remote work in pandemic era, the pandemic has revealed the need to offer virtual wellness programs. With the advancement in technology various innovations are being made in the field of wellness. Now different digital wellbeing platforms and software are available which allow organizations to deal with employee health more effectively through

advanced reports and analytics. Corporate wellness programs now include more online health solutions, such as virtual fitness classes, webinars, and mindfulness exercises to meet the needs of the large remote workforce. Employers start using more mobile applications and platforms that offer wellness solutions. Wellness technology provides organizations with the infrastructure to efficiently identify the health risk levels of employees so organizations can develop and deliver wellness programs to help motivate, engage and incent employees in a variety of healthy behaviors. To offer virtual Wellness program to employees computer based technology is used which include wellness software, tools and systems that may also be referred to as:

- Wellness management system
- Wellness portal
- Wellness software
- Wellness system
- Wellness platform
- Population health management solution
- Health engagement platform
- Employee engagement

### 4. Methods of Virtual Wellness Program

#### 1) *Virtual Fitness Classes*

Remote work has made people demotivated and procrastinates even more. Thus, despite having the time and means available, only a few people indulge in exercising frequently. Online Virtual Fitness program delivers fitness classes, challenges, and fitness assessments to employees anytime, anywhere. Program content and technology enable individuals and families to take control of their health with fitness solutions that fit their lives.

#### 2) *Home Office Makeover*

The physical environment as an aspect of the workplace environment has direct impact on the human sense and can slow change interpersonal interactions and thus productivity. This is so because the characteristics of a room or a place of meeting have consequences regarding productivity and satisfaction level. Lighting and other factors like ergonomic furniture has also been found to have positive influence on employees health and consequently on productivity. Ambient features in office environments, such as lighting, temperature, existence of windows, free air movement etc, suggest that these elements of the physical environment influence employee's attitudes, behaviors, satisfaction, performance and productivity. Home Office Makeover wellness program cover the expenses for wellness equipment and furniture purchased by employee at home like

- Ergonomic chair
- Standing Desk
- Treadmill or bike desk, Blue light glasses
- Light therapy lamp
- Plant subscription
- Humidifier or dehumidifier
- Chair massager
- Air conditioner

- White noise machine

### 3) *Water Drinking Challenge*

The water drinking challenge is one of the most beneficial online wellness challenge ideas. During the Water Drinking Challenge the goal is to consume eight glasses of water per day. Nevertheless, employees might not be drinking enough water at home. To ensure that virtual employees stay hydrated, company launches a water drinking challenge. Company makes a dedicated Slack channel, and message channel members to take drinks periodically throughout the day. It could also order a tracker water bottle for employees and challenge them to upload pictures of their empty canteens.

### 4) *Clean Desk Challenge*

A Clean Workspace = A Productive Worker

A Clear Desk policy will result in a workspace that is free of clutter, consequently reducing distractions. A Clean Desk Policy can help keep an organization's data safe, whether it is operating in a remote or a shared office capacity maintaining a tidy workspace promotes focus and mental health. Company encourages our virtual employees to keep their at-home offices neat by launching a clean desk challenge. At the end of each workday or workweek, ask participants to upload photos or video clips of clean desks to a channel or form.

### 5) *Gift Healthy Snack Boxes*

Most of the people need snacks at the time of working. Under this program Box of healthy snacks sent to your remote employee's. Boxes provide a wide variety of snacks, giving employees numerous options when they need an afternoon snack. Healthy snacking improves overall health, curbs cravings, fights weight gain, regulates mood, boosts brain power and gives you the energy you need to keep going all day. Snack options include protein bars, jerky, chips, nuts, and granola. This step is also a great perk that every employee would be sure to appreciate and show them that they are cared for.

### 6) *Online Group Workouts*

As the pandemic continues to force employees to stay home away from their offices, the company started virtual group workouts class sessions via Zoom or Google Hangouts. One way to encourage staff to move is to host. The best way to host an online exercise class for staff is to send a recurring calendar invite that includes a video meeting link. When the class begins, staffs meets via video call and workout together. Company can even hire a fitness instructor to lead the session, or recruit an athletic team member and compensate them with a perk like a bonus or extra time off.

### 7) *Virtual Happy Hours*

Virtual happy hours are social events held over video conferencing platforms like Zoom, Webex and Google Meet. The goal of these events is to have fun and build relationships between attendees. Virtual happy hour ideas are specific games, activities and themes that can boost engagement. These events build confidence and comfort between team members and develop better relationships at work.

### 8) *Online Employee Book Club*

Reading can be extremely important for career development and productivity enhancement for employee's. Online book

clubs offer employees personal enrichment and social time. Company every month, give participants a reading assignment. Company sends a physical or digital copy of the book. Teammates meet up on a Zoom call to discuss the book in real-time, or will post reflections on an internal forum or Slack channel. It is not compulsion to read work related book, members can read recent bestsellers or personal favorites instead.

### 9) *Hold Motivational Workshops*

During these stressful and uncertain times, it is extremely important to address employees' concerns and increase the positivity level of employees. Well-managed workshops have a significant impact on the motivation and wellbeing of companies staff. Hearing some inspirational and motivational seminars works to boost up mood, morale and provide inspiration. Hold virtual seminars with doctors, firefighters, soldiers, or basically anyone who are the front-line warriors in our battle against the pandemic. Company can invite influential authors, mental health advocates, or abuse survivors to conduct virtual motivational workshop.

### 10) *Inspirational Quotes*

One of the easiest free virtual wellness activities is to share motivational quotes with employees. You can include these quotes in company communications, such as internal emails or announcements. Or you could create a channel where employees can post and react to quotes. For maximum effectiveness, share sayings regularly, such as a quote of the day or week. To make the exercise more interactive, call on employees to find and share powerful quotes on a rotating basis.

## 5. Future of Virtual Wellness Program

As virtual health gains momentum, it is becoming a core component in helping employees improve or maintain their well-being, as well as playing an increasingly important role in the diagnosis and treatment of illness. Virtual health is a key component of our future of health vision. Virtual health has the capacity to inform, personalize, accelerate, and augment prevention and care.

## 6. Objective

The main objective of study is to generate more information about virtual wellness program to make organizations more aware about the new and different ways of making our employees mentally and physically fit. Even in time of pandemic, virtual wellness program provide digital platform to deliver innovative health and wellness solutions to millions of employee who are working from their home. It is an Attempt to recommend or to focus on some methods of virtual wellness program which can be used by organizations during covid and even in post covid period. Another objective of my study is to contribute to the existing literature reviews for future researchers.

## 7. Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. Secondary data are data that have been previously collected or gathered for other

purposes than the aim of the academic article's study. This type of data is already available, in different forms, from a variety of sources. Deliberate audit of gathered writing was done in detail.

### 8. Conclusion

As the COVID-19 pandemic began, most of employers have increased their digital wellness and virtual care offerings, with a focus on remote workforces. Wellness program is found to be influential to employee's job satisfaction, stress and absenteeism. Wellness programs have positive impact not only towards employee's wellbeing but also on organizations wellbeing as well. Many methods are there and many more can be developed for wellness of remote workers during covid period. Advancement in technology is proving to be a boon for accelerating virtual wellness programs. Most of the literatures being referred were conducted in the context of developed as

well as developing countries.

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