

HR ROUND TABLE

Digital Technology, an enabler in driving wellness



OBJECTIVE

To debate the unique challenges of Indian organizations in driving wellness initiatives, and to understand the role of technology here.

CONTEXT

Dynamics of India Inc. is very different from US market, which is largely driven by: health insurance players, cost of individual cover, and an aging work population. India on the other hand has more than 80% of millennial workforce, insurance cost is low, and job mobility is very high. Hence, the drivers for the two markets are vastly different.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Employee participation has been a challenge in wellness initiatives. And retention is another big hurdle. Fraction of employees are intrinsically motivated to participate in wellness programs.

- a) Which wellness programs have worked well across the board?
- b) How technology has played a role in extrinsically motivating employees to join wellness initiatives?
- c) Is “self quantification”, “gamification” and “social” helping to bring desired change in employee’s attitude towards wellness?

QUESTIONS & RESPONSE



Can simple programs like Step Challenge help in driving wellness initiatives?



Cisco [Christian Barrios]: The step challenge has helped us move the mindset of our employees, that’s why it is done year on year and it drives great employee engagement. It is important for us to do everything at a scale where it is consistent across the organization. This is where connected technology plays an important role.

Accenture [Col. Gurdeep Bains]: At the outset, the response for such initiative is huge. Team building & diversity happens. We see a clear value in doing this.

Deloitte [Aditya Gurjar]: We have tried to move away from technology. We are encouraging team activities and sports in our company.

Goldman Sachs [Rupa Parasuram]: Generic programs have never worked for us. We feel every division needs a different program for it to succeed.





Is budget a constraint for driving wellness initiative in companies?



Accenture [Col. Gurdeep Bains]:

Budget has never been a problem, where employees are the mainstay of the organization. Our most important and only asset is our employees. To ensure that our business succeeds, it is very important that employees come to work with a lot of energy and a clear mind.

Quintiles IMS [Intikhab Wani]:

Sometime we have issues in utilizing the budget, as employees are not availing the services available for them to consume.



Is millennial workforce of India Inc. ready to take wellness programs seriously?



Quintiles IMS [Intikhab Wani]: The millennial population is not very aware in terms of their health and doesn't take it seriously many a times. The eagerness to rise quickly in the corporate ladder is making them self consumed and very stressed. We want to make the employees understand that their health is very important. If that is taken care off our business gets taken care automatically.

Standard Chartered Bank [Deep Pal Singh]:

We need variety of programs which can engage these millennials, and thus manage their stress levels. Building communities of like minded people is the right approach.



What are the expectations, and expected outcomes from wellness programs?



Cisco [Christian Barrios]: We would like a program which is democratic. A program like a Step Challenge (step-a-thon @Cisco) is the catalyst that can help you democratize, touch more people, because there is where true change management happens.

Cisco [Samprita]: We have seen productivity improvement of 4% over three years.

Cisco [Ranjana Keshavan]: Simple measurable outcomes like - high energy levels among employees, good bonding during the program, improvements in health conditions like joint pains, allergies, migraine, heart burn etc., and high self esteem due to weight loss are good indicators of success.

UHG Optum [Richa Walia]: We feel evaluating wellness programs on return on investment (ROI) is a very myopic view, so we look it at the Value of investment (VOI). We assess absenteeism, presenteeism and employee engagement of employees on a regular basis to measure the success of wellness initiatives.





Do we need to relook at wellness strategy, considering millennial workforce? Does it require realignment for this new breed of population, which is mobile first?

Accenture [Col. Gurdeep Bains]:

From the design point of view, health and wellness programs have to go broader than just physical dimension. It has to have dimensions of nutrition, weight management, physical fitness, and stress management. A digital platform for wellness, offering basket of services from specialized service providers is the need of an hour. Everyone can choose their approach to the common goal of wellness.

IBM [Dr. Deepak Nanjundaswamy]:

We have done many programs for employees in silos. The concept of a platform resonates with us, which integrates all.



What are the secret ingredients of a successful employee wellness program?

Cisco [Samprita]: One of the most important component is communication. This has to be done right. It should be simple, exciting & fun. Secondly, program should be inclusive, challenging, competitive

and rewarding for all. And finally, drumming should happen with involvement of senior management. Communities and group dynamics has shown results.

CONCLUSION

- HR clearly wants to run variety of wellness initiatives for employees, catering to diverse interest group.
- Technology platform is key to integrate multitude of programs under one umbrella.
- Wellness platform helps in building communities, allows seamless & targeted communication, quantify outcomes, and serves as catchall for DATA from multiple sources.
- For increasing the participation in wellness programs, gamification is important.

