Could a Simple Wellness Shift Be the Secret to Happier, More Loyal Teams?

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In the post-pandemic world, there has been a palpable shift toward prioritizing health and wellness. From growing investments in health products and services to the rise of viral "self-care" routines, the wellness industry has dominated the market. For business owners, this presents a unique opportunity that, if taken advantage of appropriately, could pay dividends in terms of recruitment, retention, work performance and overall culture.

When it came to Wigdor LLP, one thing I considered as a business owner was what type of perks to offer our employees, particularly in the wake of a pandemic that forced so many of us to examine and recalibrate our lifestyles.

Aside from the usual offerings — office snacks and coffees, catered lunches and flexible PTO — I sought to stand out, but in a meaningful way. I wanted to demonstrate that I cared: about them, their well-being and their lives outside of work.

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A changing society

I've played tennis, basketball and golf for most of my life. I also keep a regular yoga practice and meet with a personal trainer several times a week. As both an attorney and a business owner/founder, I know firsthand how much of an impact physical wellness has on mental health, productivity, focus and overall attitude.

This was particularly true when the pandemic hit and our society, collectively, had to adjust to a new way of living. Health and well-being became part of our daily priorities—and anxieties. Needless to say, I was thankful to have a solid fitness regimen.

When quarantine lifted, I wanted my employees to experience the same benefits that grounded me during those two uncertain years. That is why I decided to bring my trainer, Derian Calnick, on as a member of our staff. All employees at Wigdor LLP can reserve six one-hour sessions with Derian each month, as well as one massage every six weeks. Sessions occur during work hours, and we encourage employees to take them.

The results: Employees report feeling more alert, engaged and generally calmer and more confident — all traits necessary for success in not only the legal field, but the professional world at large. They can often

be seen in our office discussing their workouts, sharing progress pictures and swapping sessions with one another.

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Recruit the best

Wellness and a positive work culture go hand in hand. And with the wellness market valued in the trillions, it's safe to say wellness is not merely a buzzword or ephemeral trend, but rather an indicator of a larger shift in culture and how we view our health.

Take Gen Z, for example. Statistically, they tend to drink less or abstain entirely from alcohol, and they invest more in wellness products and services, from skincare to spa trips. They also make up a significant portion of the emerging job pool, so for business owners looking to recruit talent, eyeing economic trends like this is crucial.

This demographic is also discerning, not easily swayed by "trendy" wellness perks like apps and sporadic outings, which tend to seem more like obligatory afterthoughts than well-thought-out offerings. Business leaders in particular should not dismiss Gen Z and millennial applicants' expectations. Instead, try empathizing with their concerns and analyzing what candidates truly value.

I always see incoming employees' eyes light up when they learn they will have access to a personal trainer, something that would cost up to hundreds of dollars a month elsewhere. Needless to say, it's something that makes Wigdor stand out from many other firms and businesses at large.

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Retain and foster talent

The legal field, as many know, is imbued with pressure and intensity, and burnout is all too common. As business leaders, it is largely up to us to prevent this in any way possible and make our employees feel valued and considered. Otherwise, we risk losing them. With everyone from our paralegals and intake staff to firm partners accessing the same trainer, there is a team-first spirit and unity among staff that I feel sets our work environment apart.

However, none of this is to say that an onsite personal trainer is necessary for every business to succeed. Wellness perks do not have to be luxurious. Perhaps you can consider including Mental Health Days in your PTO package, offering subsidized gym memberships, outfitting your break room with comfortable seating and warm lighting to make a "recharge space" or staff outings that encourage group physical activity.

Per the National Library of Medicine, shared physical activities have been proven to promote social bonding, synchrony, and of course, teamwork. Synergy among employees is the foundation for success in business. For your next staff outing, consider an activity that is not only fun but requires employees to work and move together, be it in teams or as a large, unified group.

Being based in NYC, we recently had our staff come together for a scavenger hunt through Grand Central Station that simultaneously educated them on the storied station's past and architecture—something the majority of the 750,000+ daily commuters that pass through it never get to experience. A seemingly simple activity to arrange became one of our most memorable, with employees traversing the massive station in groups and uncovering its hidden historic gems.

We also hold an annual staff tennis tournament where employees compete in teams against each other, with the winner receiving an engraved trophy.

A little thoughtfulness can go a long way when it comes to employee wellness, and there are plenty of options for thinking a bit outside of the box. Your employees will see and appreciate your effort, and in turn, you are likely to see enhanced productivity, enthusiasm and tenure.

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