

GROWERTALKS

Features

10/31/2025

Rooted in Health & Wellness

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Has the pace or demands of work ever pushed you to mental exhaustion or caused physical sickness? Do you see your team's production and engagement declining and turnover increasing due to the challenges your business is facing? Are you starting to wonder if it's worth the stress?

You're not the only one in our horticulture industry. Due to a surge of challenging business, personal, socio-economic and global events, it's no wonder that employees are experiencing physical and mental health

struggles, leading to a worst-case scenario of burnout.

Why wellness matters in 2025

The horticulture industry has experienced notable changes since 2020 introduced us all to the pandemic. This drove the increase in remote work, extreme decline of in-person communication and over-reliance on social media. These causes led to symptoms of isolation, depression, anxiety and an entire generation in their formative years not learning how to relate interpersonally. Thus, the rise of health and wellness as a dominant issue.

Multiple studies have shown that anxiety and depression rates have risen steeply since the pandemic. Unfortunately, many companies still treat health and wellness as an afterthought. Overlooking your team's individual health and employee wellness is destructive and costly. The World Health Organization identified that mental health is costing businesses around the world \$1 trillion a year due to lost productivity. The American Psychiatric Association found that employees with unresolved depression experience a 35% reduction in productivity.

Why invest in health & wellness programs?

Investing in and creating programs that support your employees' focus on topics like employee motivation, stress management and leadership directly impact wellness. The right strategies will make a world of difference.

- A recent Society for Human Resource Management report found that every dollar invested in health and wellness resulted in nearly \$6.00 returned in cost savings (think lower health care costs due to fewer claims, disability and workers comp) and productivity.
- A study by Harvard Business Review found that companies with high employee engagement are 22% more profitable.
- A recent Gallup poll found that only 21% of employees feel their employer cares about their overall well-

being.

- A clinical study done for Forbes' "Live Outcomes Report" showed that employers save \$580 per employee engaged with mental well-being tools.
- Absenteeism due to mental health issues is up 300% from 2017 per analysis from ComPsych, a mental health service provider.
- Improve hiring and retention! Millennials and Gen Z want to work for companies committed to employees' total health and wellness. They'll tell their friends, improving your company's brand as a top place to work in the community and industry.
- Burnout is real. The lower the stress level, the lower the chance of burnout occurring.

How to create a culture of health and wellness

Employee wellness has too many times been an afterthought in a company's benefit programs. While pizza parties can be a wonderful coping go-to, it doesn't solve the root of the problems and creates additional physical challenges if utilized too much! To provide our teams a health and wellness program that works in 2025, we must focus on the longer-term behavior these programs can positively influence.

When developing health and wellness programs, there are four initial steps that are critical to the foundation:

1. Communicate with your current health care provider to learn about physical and mental health options they have that you may not be aware of. These can include a wellness fund to support initiatives, activity challenges focused on preventative care, cash awards for completing annual wellness exams and lower rates if all employees complete wellness steps such as no smoking.
2. Recognize that it's okay to talk about and address mental and physical health challenges as a society, a company and as individuals. Reduce the stigma surrounding seeking help.
3. Meet your team where they're at when identifying specific programs. Don't guess what's needed—communicate with them to listen to their stressors related to their mental and physical health. The magic is matching your programs to your people and your culture.
4. Owners and key management leading by example. This includes budgeting for health and wellness programs. A WellHub study found that executives who lead by example increase wellness participation from 44% to 80%.

What are some currently effective programs?

- Wellness programs personalized to a company's employees and culture lead the list
- Work/life balance is not about time off, but flexible work schedules that identify when employees do their best work or have personal responsibilities, such as picking up children or caring for elderly parents
- Training leaders to spot signs of stress so appropriate support can be provided
- Stress-reducing activities, including mindfulness and meditation programs
- Gym memberships or an in-house exercise area
- This one should be easy for our industry—the positive effects of plants at work!
- Welcome an office or facility dog to the team
- Health awareness initiatives such as screenings, dietary or exercise education
- Providing proper rest-and-recovery schedules (think about your grower and production teams)
- Encourage and provide no-hassle mental health days

- Virtual therapy services
- Company or individualized wellness goal challenges
- Mentorship and/or buddy programs
- Celebration of employee professional and personal milestones
- Ergonomic chairs, desks and working conditions
- Incorporating calming or uplifting music
- Technology solutions offered by fitness trackers and apps designed to de-stress (NOTE: These provide data to help meeting your employees where they are)
- Relaxing break areas
- Availability of healthy foods
- Financial counseling and coaching provide a significant peace of mind
- Group wellness education or sessions, such as yoga

Employees today are drawn to companies that promote a positive community at work and outside of work. Providing your team not just a physically safe environment, but one that promotes an overall mental and physical health atmosphere will lead to comforting magic words both employers and employees want to hear and say: "I love my job!" **GT**

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