

Workplace Wellbeing: Where to focus in 2024



5 Strategies to Build Employee Wellbeing for Stronger, Happier Teams

This report is presented by



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American wellbeing is on the wane

When it comes to being well, people may have a sense of how they are feeling, but feeling better can get complicated. For people and employers, the complexity arises in identifying and addressing so many diverse factors - mental, physical and financial in nature.

The physical health of Americans has gotten worse since the COVID-19 pandemic, according to research by Gallup¹. Obesity and diabetes are on the rise, our eating has become less healthy and exercise remains unchanged. Currently, 38.4% of American adults can be classified as obese, a 6% increase since 2019.

The U.S. Federal Reserve found a sharp decline in the financial wellbeing of Americans, as well². Those adults that are able to say they are “living comfortably” fell by 5%, and 35% of those surveyed say they are worse off than last year. This is also the first year that white respondents and those with a bachelor’s degree or more reported their financial wellbeing as lower since the survey began in 2013.

While these physical and financial trends are concerning, many recent headlines have focused on the mental health of Americans.

According to a recent report³ by the U.S. Surgeon General:

76%

of U.S. workers reported at least one symptom of a mental health condition

84%

said workplace conditions had contributed to at least one mental health challenge

A well employee is a strong employee. But with three quarters of American workers experiencing mental health challenges (many of them due to work), the U.S. workforce is clearly not operating at top capacity.

Many employees feel strongly that their workplaces should have a stake in their mental health, with an overwhelming 81% of them saying they will be looking for employers that support mental health in the future⁴.

The workplace mental health crisis is not going away on its own. Only strong leadership and intentional efforts can heal what ails us. To help focus your efforts, Reward Gateway is launching 2024 with a report on the wellbeing of American workers and strategies to boost it. In keeping with our regular efforts to keep a finger on the pulse of workplace developments, we checked in with 1,000 employees across the nation and discovered some fascinating insights for HR leaders vying to attract talent, engage employees and boost productivity.



Highlights include:

- **2 in 5** people don't remember being **recognized** by a manager in the last year.
- Entry-level employees are the most likely age group to be looking for a **new job**.
- Gender non-conforming people are more than twice as likely to experience **burnout**.
- After pay, top reasons for leaving a job are **being overworked and lack of benefits**.
- After a pay raise, employers can enhance employee wellbeing by encouraging a healthy **work-life balance and recognizing and rewarding** employee success.
- Employees feel the most promising benefits of AI are improved **efficiency and productivity**.



Get to know **Gen Z**, the future of your workforce.

Read through our full results to learn more about the state of employee wellbeing across age, gender and work mode, and discover what leaders and managers can do to improve mental health and build resilience across the workforce.



Spotlight on wellbeing

Wellbeing is a complex and interrelated combination of physical, mental, emotional, social and financial health. It is much sought-after since it includes so many great things like happiness, health, a sense of purpose, social connections and the ability to manage stress. Truly, how we feel about every aspect of our life influences the state of our wellbeing. One strongly positive factor might counterbalance other trailing factors: A supportive family can lessen strife at work, or a fulfilling job can help us overcome problems with friends.

The meaning of wellbeing can vary by age. For example, 25-34-year-olds are 10% less likely than average to include physical and mental health in their definition. Gen Z (18-24) is almost 10% less likely than the norm to include work-life balance and fulfillment.

Are employers responsible for their employees' wellbeing?

Employers usually have no influence over factors like an employee's relationships with family or friends, or the current political or economic situation of a given place. But in the face of declining wellbeing in the U.S.⁶, they need to recognize not only their responsibility for wellbeing, but also their broad power and great need to influence it. We do spend a third of our lives working, after all. With 79% of managers saying they feel responsible for their team's wellbeing, it stands to reason that employers should shoulder some of this weight.

Using the tools available to them, employers can help employees enjoy more time with friends, gain enough resources to live comfortably and sustain a healthy self-view. By turning their attention to wellbeing, employers have the opportunity to engage employees and boost wellbeing to create a workforce that is happier, more productive and more likely to stay.

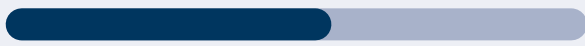
What does wellbeing mean to employees?⁵



70% Feeling physically and mentally healthy



56% Achieving work-life balance



56% Experiencing overall satisfaction in life



56% Financial stability and security



51% Having a sense of purpose and fulfillment



Let's talk about wellbeing

A fairly large percentage of employees is comfortable talking about wellbeing at work. Of course, comfort varies with the type of wellbeing they're discussing. As you might expect, people are more willing to talk about their physical wellbeing (63%) than their mental (53%) and financial (41%) wellbeing at work.

How does this break out across age groups?

The age range most comfortable talking about wellbeing is 25-34-year-olds, with high comfort across all types: physical (69%), mental (68%) and financial (57%). Younger employees tend to be more comfortable talking about financial wellbeing at work than their older colleagues. Comfort with wellbeing discussions drops in each increasing age group - 35-44, 45-54 and 55+ - but there's a surprising twist: 18-24-year-olds are the least comfortable in a wellbeing chat overall.

Let's make a note of that: Your youngest, likely entry-level employees are the least comfortable talking about wellbeing.

Managers: The new wellspring of wellbeing

As we already mentioned, an overwhelming **79% of managers feel responsible for their team's wellbeing**. But are managers prepared to support employee wellbeing? Are some of the most crucial people in your organization set up for success? We explore this question later in our report, with our five focus areas for 2024.

Levels of burnout:

The end of the wellbeing road

24% of all employees experience burnout frequently or very frequently.

How does burnout play out across gender?

 **20%**
Men



53%
Non-binary or gender non-conforming people

 **25%**
Women

And age?

 **36%**
18-24

 **25%**
25-34

 **32%**
35-44

 **19%**
45-54

 **22%**
66-64

 **11%**
65+

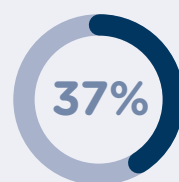


Wellbeing matters to your business

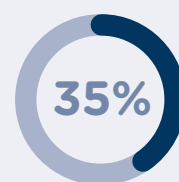
Let's talk retention and attrition. No one wants to incur the cost and effort of hiring new employees to replace the ones you've lost. Add to that the skills and corporate knowledge you lose - often to competitors - when an employee walks. It's most definitely in your best interest to delve into who's leaving and why.

Our survey showed that, on average, 23% of any workforce is looking for a new employer now or within the next year. Think about that: Almost a quarter of your workforce has their eyes and minds turned elsewhere. Why? For many, the reasons are tied to employee wellbeing.

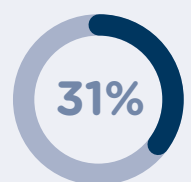
Who is looking to change jobs?



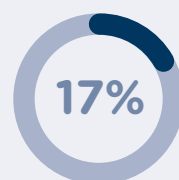
18-24



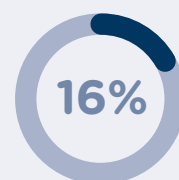
25-34



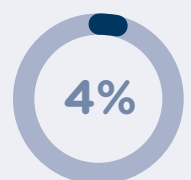
35-44



45-54



55-64



65+

The urge to move is strongest in younger employees and drops off as age increases. Remember the stat about the 18-24 crowd being the least comfortable talking about wellbeing? Well, it also happens that they're the most likely to leave. So if they're not talking, how will you know if they need support so you can engage and retain them? Are managers comfortable starting the conversation? If not, they will need support. Now let's look at solutions.

Top 6 reasons employees are looking for a new job



65%
Want more money



33%
Burnt out



41%
Overworked and underpaid



24%
Do not feel supported by my manager



35%
Looking for a new career or role change



23%
Don't think my employer cares about my wellbeing

Pay is always going to be a big deal - more on that later. But in another question, our survey uncovered factors that are more important than a significant pay raise of 10%, like an **employer (44%)** or a **manager (43%) who cares about their wellbeing.**



Top 5 things employers should focus on in the next year



When we asked U.S. employees what they most wanted their employer to focus on in the next year, the top three were employee benefits, reward and recognition and wellbeing – the same results as 2022. Interestingly, wellbeing jumps from third to second place for fully remote employees and those in healthcare.

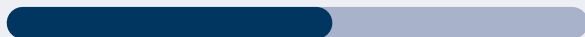
Supporting wellbeing as a company

The stats starkly highlight the failing state of U.S. wellbeing and the need for resources devoted to it. But all is not dark: Senior leaders understand the need to support employees in this way. A study of 125 CEOs identified that 90% say they are taking action to support mental health and employee wellbeing, but intent doesn't necessarily lead to improvement.

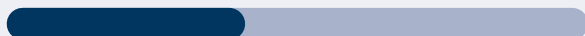
At the same time, we still see only 4 in 10 people rating their companies' wellbeing support as good or excellent. As the importance of these benefits soars, visionary companies will seize this opportunity to stand out in the market. How?



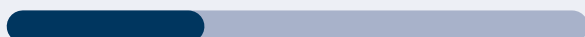
Top 3 ways employers can enhance employee wellbeing



56% Provide a pay raise or bonus



41% Encourage a healthy work-life balance



34% Recognize and reward employees for their contributions

It's worth mentioning that employees' fifth suggestion was that employers set realistic expectations for roles and responsibilities, at 26%. This is so closely tied to encouraging a healthy work-life balance that, viewed as one response, this advice would jump to 67% - and number-one recommendation for bosses.

Based on these survey results and our decades of experience in the realm of employee engagement, we are proposing **five ways** employers can lead in this domain:

1. Don't overlook the power of pay (and benefits)
2. Go all-in for work-life integration
3. Use recognition as a strategy
4. Get excited about AI
5. Support managers to help employees

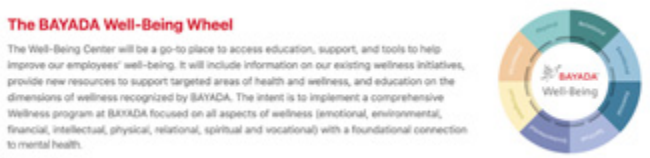
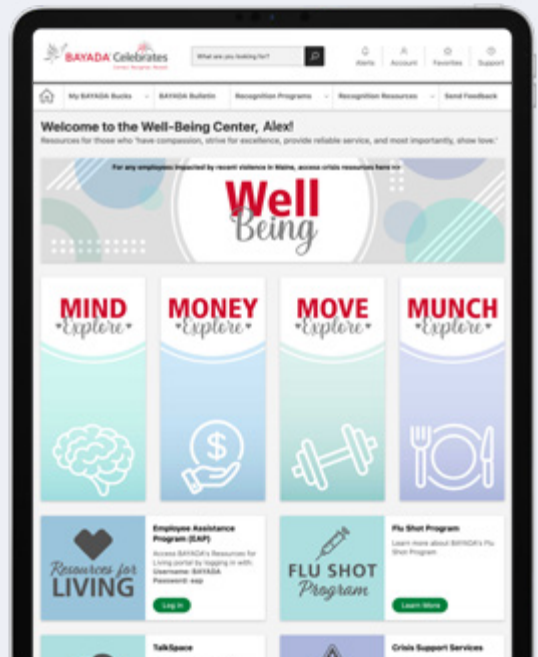
CASE STUDY

BAYADA Home Health Care takes wellbeing seriously



At BAYADA Home Health Care, supporting wellbeing is not a new thing. Their **BAYADA Celebrates** employee platform has been helping their geographically dispersed workforce of 30,000 better communicate and recognize each other for being guided by compassion, excellence and reliability. To date, more than half of all employees have received eCards or rewards from their colleagues and managers for living **The BAYADA Way**.

Recently, the company built on this success by adding a wellbeing hub to the platform. The hub features Reward Gateway’s library of videos and articles to support mental, physical, financial and nutritional wellbeing, as well as links to other employee supports like an employee assistance program, crisis support services and a flu shot program. Since the hub was implemented, BAYADA saw higher scores for “BAYADA cares about my wellbeing and health” in their employee survey.



Top 10 ways employees think they should impact their own wellbeing



Spend time with **friends and family**



Exercise and eat **healthy**



Don't work **long** or **extra hours**



Take **paid time off** regularly



Go for a **walk** or get out in nature



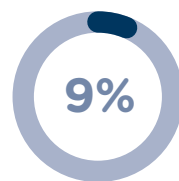
Receive **cash awards** like bonuses or gift cards



Connect with work colleagues on a personal level



Connect with friends outside of work



Meditate, be mindful and spend time alone



Support other people's **wellbeing**

Focus #1:

Don't overlook the power of pay (and benefits)

The good news is that we've made progress on the financial front. Last year, 65% of U.S. employees said that cost of living stress was negatively impacting their work. This year, it's only 42%.

Even with this improvement, we can't ignore pay as a focus in 2024. Any way we asked, the top concern for employees was always cash. More money (pay raise, bonus, benefits) was top choice across the board for:

per week rank pay as second in importance to a healthy work-life balance, while pay is the top must-have for fully remote workers.

While pay is key, **44% of employees** said that a company that cares about their wellbeing is more important than a 10% pay raise.

61% Top employer must-have

65% Top reason to leave a job

56% Top way for an employer to boost wellbeing

Not surprising. A higher salary can help employees cover necessities with less stress, get out of debt or splurge on a much-needed vacation to boost wellbeing.

Demographic breakout

Desire for a pay raise or bonus ranked #1 for more than 50% of all age ranges, but strongest for those 35-44 (66%) and entry-level employees (65%). Hybrid workers that spend fewer than two days in the office

How employers can support employees to manage cost of living outside of a raise⁷

-  **50%** Ensure I am aware of all the benefits available to me
-  **43%** Give me access to financial wellbeing support
-  **42%** Offer an employee discounts program
-  **41%** Survey employees on how they can help
-  **34%** Offer mental wellbeing support

Better benefits, better communicated


While the current economy is likely hurting your bottom-line ability to pay employees more, employers have other mechanisms at hand beyond offering actual salary increases – the most significant being benefits.

Do you offer benefits? If not, it’s a great time to start addressing this number one employee concern. If you do, how would your benefits package rate against top requests⁷ like financial literacy, employee discounts or mental wellbeing support? Can you enhance it at a reasonable cost? Could you offer a 401K program with matching contributions?

Outside of the benefits themselves is your company’s ability to effectively communicate what you’re offering. Unfortunately, the group least likely to be aware of the benefits available to them is also most likely to be impacted by cost of living stresses. 59% of 18-24-year-olds believe cost of living stress is negatively impacting their work (compared to 42% overall), but almost half of them aren’t confident they know how to maximize financial benefits.

Addressing benefits communication across the company is not a heavy lift. A benefits hub lets you gather and present an organized portal into everything you offer employees, from wellbeing support to a 401K program to discounts and rewards.

Create the perfect benefits hub



“We ensure that employees can access what they need, when they need it, by centralizing our benefits on a hub with easy-to-navigate sections, like different areas of wellbeing or stages within your employment journey.”

Kaitlin Howes,
Reward Gateway’s
HR Business Partner

Focus #2:

Go all-in for work-life integration

Whatever way we asked them, employees were quick to identify work-life balance as a top concern this year. They mentioned work-life balance second when defining wellbeing. Being overworked rose to the second-ranked reason for leaving a job after poor pay. And the #2 way, after a pay raise, for organizations and managers to support employees? You guessed it: work-life balance.

This hunger for better balance is a natural outgrowth of today's working conditions. The average worker now spends 288% more time in meetings than before the pandemic⁸. The same amount of work still awaits, but it gets stuffed into different pockets of time. Work has changed so quickly, but the wellbeing balance hasn't kept up.

Ideas to make work-life balance work

Work-life balance has been a focus for so long, we might assume the problem has been adequately addressed. But our survey reveals that it still needs work.

What can we do today to support work-life balance or integration? "Work-life integration" is a pandemic-borne term that seeks to better describe the work-from-home ethos: As the boundaries blur between 'work' space and time vs. 'personal' space and time, finding that all-important work-life balance requires intuitive integration and delineation at the individual level.

- Train managers and supervisors on what "good" work-life integration looks like. Are they holding themselves to unrealistic expectations to appear



hard-working? Work with your leaders so they are **modeling - and even demanding - work-life integration** that aligns with your company values.

- If you have a remote working population, share best practices to **set clear boundaries**. Try having camera-off meetings to reduce pressure. Remind employees to turn off notifications on their phone when they are done for the day or on vacation.
- **Celebrate taking time off**, like stepping away from your desk to eat lunch. Remind employees to actually use their vacation days.
- **Highlight policies and benefits** that support mental wellbeing.
- **Let employees choose how they work.** A recent survey revealed that full-time employees' preferred work mode is spread evenly among remote, hybrid and in-office. The key to wellbeing is not the work mode, but the ability to choose.⁹ In fact, flexible work arrangements ranked fourth in ways employers can enhance employee wellbeing.

More balance, more diversity

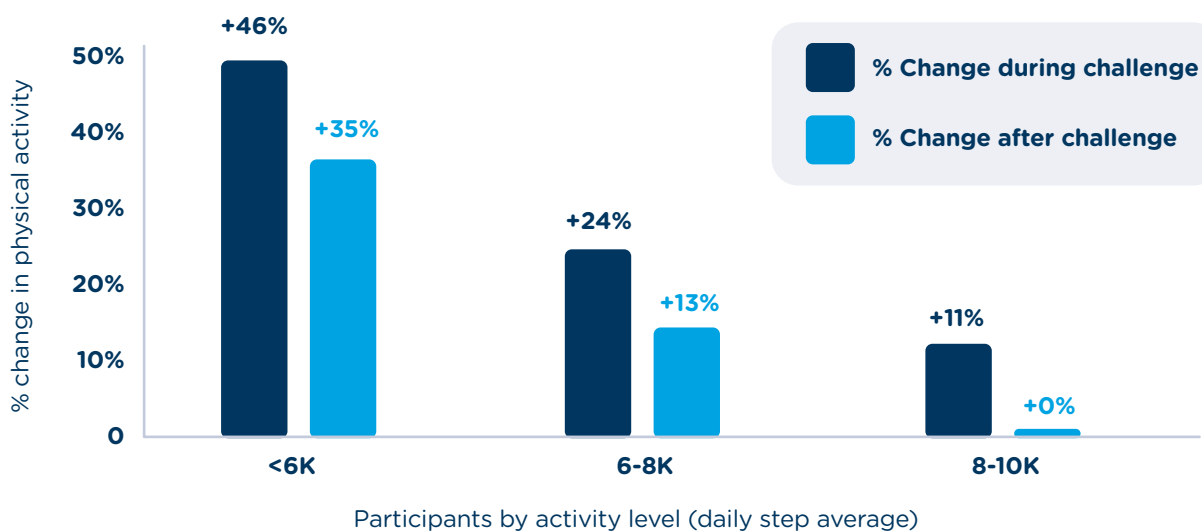
A valuable side-effect of good work-life balance is increased diversity in your workforce. Recent research¹⁰ revealed that corporate work-life balance programs not only promote productivity, reduce turnover and improve health, they are actually better than most popular racial equity programs at boosting your organization’s diversity.

Flexibility is the key here. A full 52% of nonwhite adults who quit a job in 2021 cited a lack of flexibility, compared with 38% of white adults. For women, who cover off many of the family-related tasks like meals, school and child health, better balance is key. Clearly stating and adhering to policies of work-life balance can make your company more welcoming to more types of employees, a great advantage when you are seeking talent.

Can employers impact employee physical health?

Reward Gateway’s wellbeing solution offers physical activity challenges to encourage wellbeing. After studying¹¹ the app’s activity data for 2,200 participants, University of Kentucky’s Department of Kinesiology and Health Promotion found the wellbeing challenges increased physical activity among participants both during and after the challenges, especially for people who started out with lower activity levels. Those averaging 6,000 steps a day or less saw a 46% increase in physical activity on average during the challenge. This effect persisted following the challenge (+35%), “potentially indicating a longer-lasting lifestyle change.”

Impact of challenges on physical activity



Work-life balance or integration as 9-5 vanishes?

The flexible work hours and global locations of today’s post-9-to-5 world are creating the need for integration over balance. We may be sitting at our office computer, but are we always working? Will we finish up tonight at home? Especially for employees who work primarily from home, ‘work’ and ‘life’ blend and flex with individual needs, which is when the ‘integration’ side of ‘balance’ is most important to refine. In this climate, we need to be able to trust our employees to do a good job until they don’t. And then we shouldn’t change our policy because one person took advantage of the freedom.

For roles that must work within certain times and locations such as healthcare, retail or service, flexibility can come from letting employees swap shifts, adjust start and finish times, or create split shifts so people can work around other priorities.

Employees should now expect better work-life integration, and leaders must create the new work environment where people feel comfortable talking about and integrating their life outside of work without struggle.



“By prioritizing reduction in the stress of work-life balance, we give employees the freedom to show up to every commitment, letting them bring their best selves to work and life’s responsibilities.”

Kaitlin Howes,
Reward Gateway’s
HR Business Partner

Focus #3:

Use recognition as a strategy

According to employees, the third-best way for managers to enhance wellbeing is to offer regular feedback and recognition.



In fact, one third of employees think consistent and frequent recognition is more important than a 10% pay raise.

But employees are indicating there is room for improvement. A full 2 in 5 people don't remember being recognized by a manager or senior leader in the last 12 months, and **60% said they'd like to be recognized more.**

A powerful motivator

Recognizing good work is often overlooked as a motivator, but it can play a pivotal role in retention and productivity. For 78% of employees, it's a way to make them more likely to stay at the company. And for 76%, it's a motivation to work harder. Recognition is a superpower, and so affordable.

Recognition by managers sends a compelling message. But are you providing ways for employees to recognize each other, potentially covering off a blind side for managers? Turns out 1 in 5 employees say they don't feel empowered to recognize their colleagues. And while one in three employees want an increased investment in recognition, only 1 in 5 HR leaders want the same.

Top 5 ways employees think managers should better recognize people

- 

45%
Offer more tangible rewards like bonuses and gifts (there's that \$ again!)
- 

34%
Provide more verbal praise
- 

31%
Give more opportunities for professional growth
- 

30%
Provide regular constructive feedback and mentorship
- 

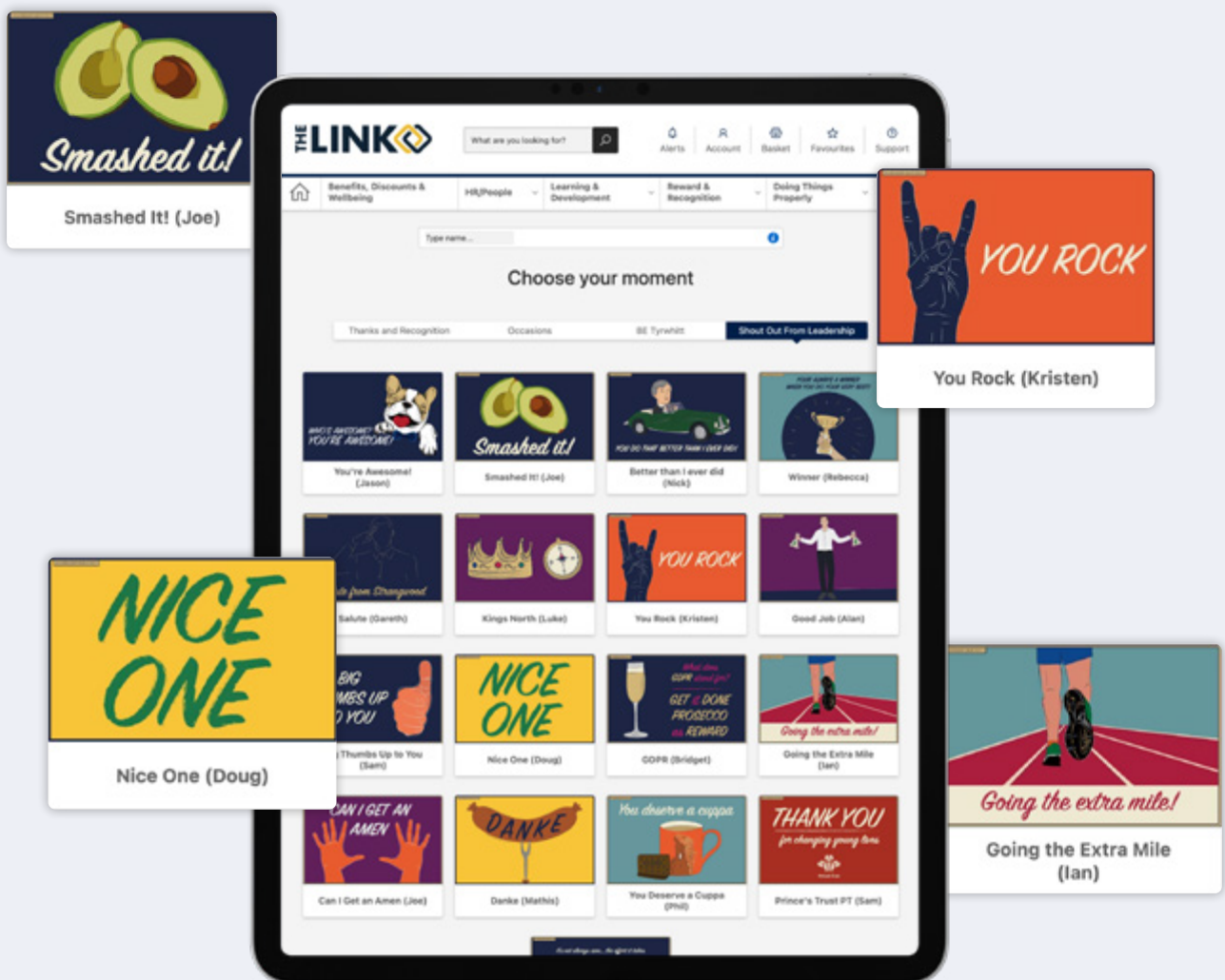
27%
Acknowledge achievements publicly

CASE STUDY

Charles Tyrwitt

CHARLES TYRWITT

Charles Tyrwitt engaged its dispersed, multi-generational workforce by launching its innovative customized reward and recognition platform in 2017 to great success. Today, with the desire to help managers connect with employees, the global retailer of timeless menswear made recognition feel special by creating custom branded eCards for each senior leader that only they can send.



Focus #4: Get excited about AI

In our survey, employees were clear in their concern about work-life balance and distribution of work. Work-life balance was #2 at 41% in employee wellbeing requests, while setting realistic expectations was #5 at 26%. To support the idea that overworked people turn their gaze to other horizons, reason #2 to leave a job was being overworked (41%) and #4 was burnout (33%).

An inexpensive way to improve productivity and fight burnout

As productivity pressure mounts, the solution to these overwhelmingly important issues is staring us in the face.

Artificial intelligence is exciting in many ways, not the least of which is the ability to make a clip of yourself speaking several different languages. But we're going to focus on its ability to make work easier and less time-consuming.

Employees already know that AI can help them. When asked about the benefits of AI, their top two were improved efficiency and automation of repetitive tasks. Indeed, HR organizations that are making better use of technology are shown in our research to be 1.2x more likely to be high performing at supporting change.

Top 6 benefits of AI for employees' role and responsibilities



32%
Improved efficiency and productivity



25%
Automation of repetitive tasks



21%
Streamlined workflows and processes



21%
Improved creativity and idea generation



19%
Cost reduction and resource optimization



17%
Enhanced analysis and decision-making abilities

Investments are needed

But according to McLean & Company’s 2024 trends report, only 28% of companies are taking steps to implement generative AI in 2024. Many employees also don’t feel comfortable with the use and implications of AI. Only 1 in 10 employees were offered training on AI in 2023, according to the Society For Human Resource Management, despite 85% needing training on how to use AI effectively and ethically¹².

“As AI becomes more tailored to individual needs, it’s helping automate and even improve mundane tasks, letting professionals focus on more strategic, people-focused initiatives and achieve better work-life integration.”

Anthony Knierim,
Reward Gateway’s Managing
Director of North America

What can you do as a company?

As an organization, you will likely have to bring in AI sooner or later, so go ahead and lay the groundwork for it in 2024.

- **Find out where AI is already being used in your business:** Your developers or engineers may already be using AI tools to improve quality and save time. Celebrate those successes and share this ingenuity with other areas of the business to get people thinking on how they might take advantage of these efficiencies.

- **Uncover promising areas for AI integration:** Which processes take up the most employee time and resources? Could any of these tasks be done well enough (or better) by AI? Engage employees in the brainstorming, research and decision-making about where and how best to use AI. For example, would implementing an AI chatbot in chosen areas help increase responsiveness, either internally or with customers?
- **Research and highlight ethical considerations for AI use:** Artificial intelligence can fall victim to the same biases as people¹³. Are your teams trained to understand how to ensure time-savings doesn’t lead to longer-term problems or ethical issues? Do your content teams know how to use AI without risk of stealing content from other sources?

“People with the technical know-how automated the repetitive parts of their jobs years ago. Now AI is helping non-technical people do the same and be more strategic about our work.”

Emily Mellwood,
Reward Gateway’s
Content Manager, Americas



Focus #5:

Support managers to help employees

Human Resources has traditionally been the go-to team for employees who need support. But that is changing. Employees are increasingly comfortable talking about wellbeing with their direct managers, and 79% of managers feel responsible for their team’s wellbeing.

That’s just as well, since HR seems to be going through a bit of a rough patch. A full 29% of HR professionals are looking for an industry or career change. Compare that with 9% for people outside of HR.

So specifically, what kind of wellbeing support are employees seeking from managers, and how are managers currently supporting wellbeing?



Top 7: What managers say they're already doing to support wellbeing



60%
Ensure fair workload distribution



55%
Create a positive and inclusive team culture



53%
Promote work-life balance and flexible hours



51%
Recognize and reward achievements and efforts



45%
Encourage discussion of wellbeing and check-ins



28%
Offer professional development opportunities



24%
Provide access to mental health resources

The big standout here is that the most important way for managers to support wellbeing in all age groups is to listen. This is great news for managers. Their first step should be to talk to people to determine how they are doing and work to create solutions together. To make things even easier, here are some ideas - in addition to listening - that employees suggested.

The question is: How can you help your company's managers get better at supporting employees? Are they willing and prepared?

How managers can support wellbeing

Remember that a person's wellbeing results from a combination of factors - some leading, some trailing. Managers may not have any influence over events in employees' personal lives, but they can help tip the scales at work to rise the tide of overall wellbeing. Here are a few ways managers can be trained, encouraged and even incentivized to support wellbeing.

- **Communicate wellbeing programs:** Make sure every employee knows the programs and benefits available to them, whether in support of physical, mental or financial wellbeing.
- **Schedule regular check-ins with employees:** Our survey shows that the four top ways managers can enhance employee wellbeing are to listen to and address concerns, provide clear goals tied into vision and mission, offer feedback and recognition and ensure a more fair distribution of work. All of this can be done effectively through regular one-on-one discussions. Managers can also add a wellbeing check-in. No need to play the role of therapist; simply listen, ask questions and recommend available EAP resources to help with mental wellbeing.

- Encourage and model self-care:** Managers can encourage conversations by showing employees that they value their own self-care and work-life balance. At Reward Gateway, managers encourage employees to attend those once-in-a-lifetime family events like concerts and games. Why not recognize people for going on vacation and truly disconnecting?
- Put wellbeing on the agenda:** Start meetings with light conversation to get a sense of how people are doing and feeling. No need for direct questioning or calling out an individual. Just create an atmosphere that says “we’re here for you.” Perhaps more focused challenges quarterly to directly people’s attention (e.g., Mindful May, or Step into Spring step challenge).
- Providing professional growth opportunities:** Survey says Americans may be getting better at this. In our 2022 survey, the #4 reason to leave a job was a lack of professional development and advancement opportunities, at 35%. But this year, that reason dropped to tenth place, at 18%. But it was interesting to see that people seeking a new job want their managers to encourage professional growth opportunities – in second place for enhancing their wellbeing. Clearly employees may not think about how important this is until they are already looking for fulfillment elsewhere – when it may already be too late.
- Ensure teams have the training and tools to work effectively and efficiently:** Whether skills, software or access to AI, the best resources can help your employees work more quickly, achieve more and avoid being overwhelmed.

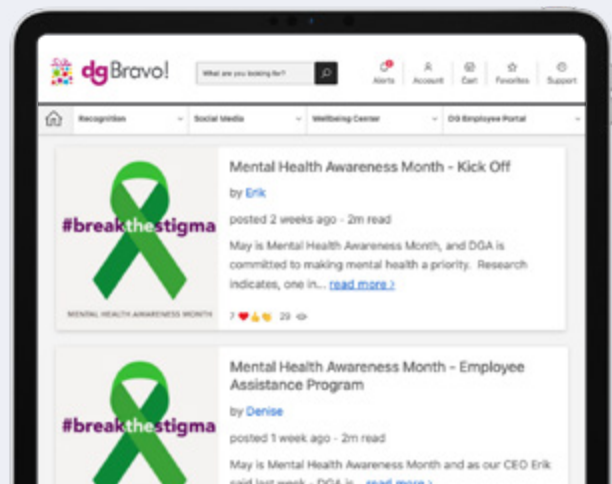
CASE STUDY

Design Group America



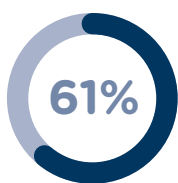
Design Group Americas (DGA) is an international family of companies that creates products to celebrate life’s special occasions. After an acquisition doubled DGA’s workforce in 2020 just as the pandemic was hitting, the company worked hard to overcome employee disconnection and forge a new shared culture and values with the Reward Gateway-based **DG Bravo!** Platform.

After improving connection, engagement, recognition and onboarding, DGA took it a step further to increase employee focus on mental health by using senior leaders as role models. During Mental Health Awareness Month in May 2023, senior leaders posted articles sharing their perspective and experience with mental health challenges, helping make it more comfortable for all employees to share their stories.





What, if anything, would make you leave a job? 2023 results



61%

Poor **pay**



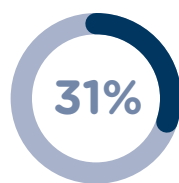
42%

Being **overworked**



34%

Lack of **employee benefits**



31%

Poor **company culture**



29%

A lack of clear, honest **communication**



26%

A lack of **financial, physical or mental wellbeing support**



25%

No **flexible working opportunities**



23%

Lack of confidence in the **leadership team**



21%

A lack of **reward and recognition** for my efforts



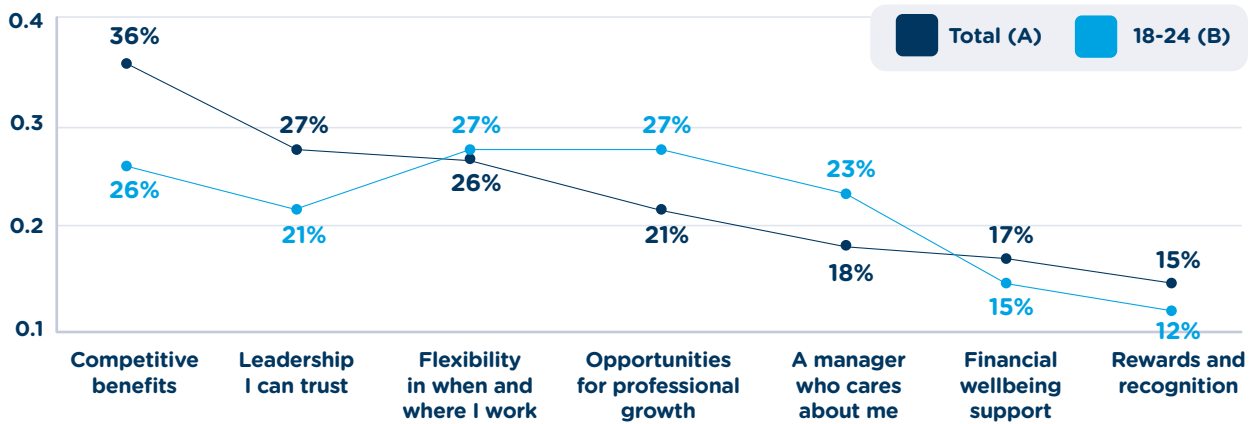
18%

Lack of **professional development or advancement opportunities**

Gen Z: What does your future workforce want?

Your entry-level employees have the biggest potential to contribute significantly over time. As Gen Z arrives in your workforce, these insights into their concerns, goals and feelings can help you successfully mentor, engage, develop and retain them.

What younger employees want from an employer (outside of pay)



While employees overall are more focused on competitive benefits and leadership they can trust, 18-24-year-olds are **more focused on workplace flexibility, opportunities for professional growth and a manager who cares**. Gen Z also tends to care slightly less about financial wellbeing support, rewards and recognition.

What Gen Z is feeling:

- **Financial pressure:** They are the most likely of all age groups to say cost of living stress is negatively impacting their work (59% versus 42% on average).
- **Disconnection:** They feel less connected to their workplace than other age groups (71% versus 80% on average).
- **The value of education:** More of Gen Z thinks the need for a college degree is increasing (31% versus 21% on average).

What Gen Z is seeking:

- **Connection:** They ranked connecting with colleagues on a personal level in second place for impacting their wellbeing (21% versus 12% on average).
- **Social engagement:** They want their organization to engage with a social issue (95% versus 70% of those 65+).
- **Flexibility:** Gen Z is the only generation that thinks flexibility in where and when they work is more important than competitive benefits. It's second only to fair pay for what they are looking for from their employer.
- **A new job:** Gen Z is more likely to be looking for a new employer in the next year (37% versus 23% on average).

2024: The year of living well

HR leaders have always known that employee wellbeing is critical to success. Well and happy employees mean engagement, retention of roles and skill sets, succession and productivity. What's different today is that employees are also keenly aware of their own wellbeing (or lack of it), and are expecting support from their employers to boost it.

This year's survey uncovered some surprising insight about wellbeing at work, insight that HR leaders can use to build wellbeing and resilience. Given that work dominates people's schedules and is closely tied to a sense of self and accomplishment, employers are in a unique position to not only boost retention and productivity, but also to have a big impact on their employees' personal happiness and engagement.

“Companies must start investing in employee wellbeing via systems, tools and practices that support employees as ‘whole humans’ – not just workers.”

Anthony Knierim,
Reward Gateway's Managing
Director of North America

Implementing even a few of these strategies will help you not only strengthen individual wellbeing, but promote a culture of wellbeing across teams, departments and your organization as a whole. We wish you all the best in your efforts and a prosperous 2024.

Survey methodology

Carried out in November 2023, this research involved 1,000 people in companies with more than 100 employees in the U.S. (aged 18+).

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5 All unattributed stats in this report are from Reward Gateway U.S. workplace wellbeing survey, 2024.

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13 “Shedding light on AI bias with real world examples”, IBM, 2023
<https://www.ibm.com/blog/shedding-light-on-ai-bias-with-real-world-examples/>

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