

# 4

## Exceptional Examples of Employee Wellness Initiatives



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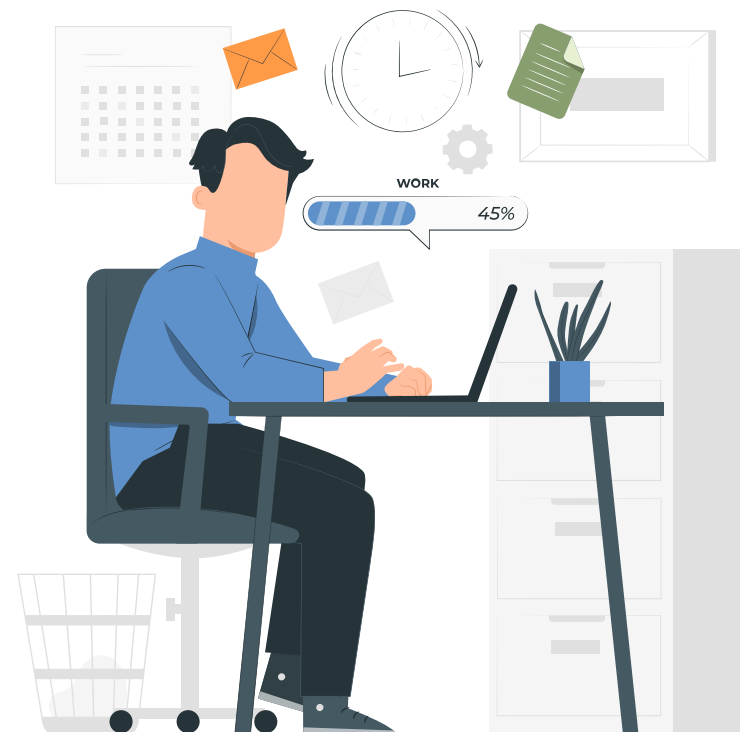
Wellness is everywhere in the modern workplace. Over [80% of large companies](#) (200 employees or more) offer some type of wellness program, a percentage that has been steadily rising over the past several years.

More and more companies are investing in wellness because the ROI is simply too good to ignore. Wellness programs have been shown to increase productivity, reduce healthcare costs, decrease absenteeism, boost creativity, and strengthen morale — among [many other business benefits](#).

But that doesn't mean every employee wellness initiative gets these results. Building a successful wellness program—one that your employees are excited about—requires:

- ▶ Deciding which [wellness program performance metrics](#) matter most to your company.
- ▶ Understanding your employees' wellness needs and interests.
- ▶ Aligning those needs and interests with the [many different wellness program](#) options available.
- ▶ Developing an [employee communication strategy](#) to spread the word about the program.
- ▶ Tracking the program's progress, gaining employee feedback, and continually improving the program.

You can make wellness work for your company. Just look at the examples offered by the following four employers. Each put in the time and resources to construct wellness programs that employees use and love, and each has seen their investments pay off.





#1

# Johnson & Johnson Sets the Standard

*Johnson & Johnson*



Wellness in general—let alone employee wellness—was barely a concept back in 1978 when Johnson & Johnson chairperson Jim Burke set out to make his company “[the healthiest in the world](#).”

Ahead of his time, Burke believed that unhealthy behaviors like smoking and overeating, along with conditions such as stress and hypertension, were costing his company billions of dollars in healthcare costs. So, that year, Johnson & Johnson launched Live for Life, possibly the longest-running employee wellness initiative in corporate history.

The initial Live for Life pilot included onsite access to behavior modification tools and education on nutrition, stress management, and other wellness topics. Over the years, Johnson & Johnson has continued to lead the way on employee wellness, offering [innovative benefits](#) such as access to a resilience app, childcare support for new families, daily well-being reminders, and student loan coaching.

Noting in 2018 that the company was on track to engage 100,000 or more employees toward a personal best in health by 2020, the chief human resources officer pointed out that employees’ health stats (including obesity rates and triglyceride levels) were [consistently below national averages](#).



“Our healthcare costs in the U.S. are, on average, two to three percentage points lower than the costs most major corporations deal with on an annual basis,” he said.

#2

# Google Focuses on Resilience

Google



Google has long been a leader in employee wellness, [providing benefits](#) like onsite wellness centers, access to mental health apps, and one-on-one financial coaching to its 130,000-plus employees.

Responsible for many of Google's wellness innovations is wellness manager Lauren Whitt, who goes by the title "Head of Global Resilience."

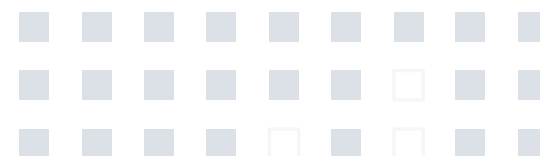
[Whitt says](#) resilience is "your ability to respond to and recover from stress."

During the tumultuous COVID period, resilience is just what Google's employees needed to survive and thrive, Whitt realized. To help them "[meet the moment](#)," Whitt and her team created a series of resilience [training videos](#).

Each video was five or six minutes long and centered around a specific topic, including breathing, the importance of sleep, parenting, and dealing with anxiety. Whitt collaborated with experts and high-performance sports coaches on the videos.

According to a CNBC report, 30,000 Google employees watched the videos in less than a month. Whitt told the company blog:

"While I'm not personally making something that launches us all into the future, I can help the people at Google who are doing that be their best."



#3

# American Express Tackles Chronic Health Challenges

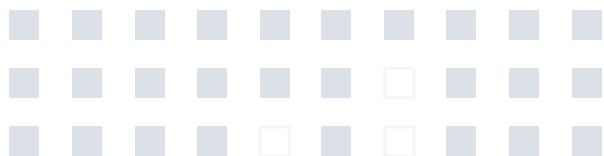
AMERICAN  
EXPRESS



American Express is consistently recognized for its commitment to employee wellness, receiving honors from the Business Group on Health [11 years in a row](#). The company's wellness offerings include free coaching, onsite and virtual fitness classes, in-house wellness centers, and the mental health-centered Healthy Minds program.

In 2012, the company's wellness team became determined to take on one of the most common and expensive wellness issues in the American workplace: diabetes. [According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#), diabetes costs the U.S. workplace nearly a third of a trillion dollars in direct costs like hospitalization and medical care and indirect costs like increased absenteeism and reduced production.

For its 2012 pilot program, American Express partnered with the non-profit Community Health Charities to roll out Healthy Living With Diabetes. The program included periodic blood sugar testing, webinars and learning sessions, one-on-ones with medical professionals, healthy living tools and resources, and online content, including videos and quizzes.



The results were significant. By year three, several hundred employees had joined the program. Follow-up measurements found that **62% of participants had their blood sugar levels within a healthy range**, and about half said they started an exercise program and lost weight because of the program.





#4

# Marriott Prioritizes Employee Wellness



In 2019, Marriott International's chief HR officer summed up [the hospitality giant's philosophy on employee wellness](#): **"The future success of our business is completely dependent on the extent to which we're promoting our associates' well-being and that they're inspired."**

As far back as the 1930s, when company founders hired a doctor to look after employees, Marriott has recognized that its employees are the face of the company. After all, when you check into a hotel, you don't deal with the CEO; you interact with desk clerks, cleaning staff, and valets. Happy, healthy employees make satisfied customers.

Marriott's employee wellness initiative, TakeCare, takes a holistic perspective on wellness. Mental and emotional health, career development, financial wellness, sustainability, and social impact are all elements of the TakeCare program. [To receive TakeCare certification](#), Marriott properties answer questions like:

- ▶ "Do you offer healthy food and beverage choices at meetings or sponsored events?"
- ▶ "Do you promote tools and resources that educate and support a diverse and inclusive culture?"
- ▶ "Do you sponsor at least one day per year focused on volunteerism?"

As of 2018, 88% of Marriott-managed properties encourage physical activity among employees with walking breaks or sponsored fitness breaks. **Over 50% of properties made space for private meditation, prayer, or relaxation available to all associates.**



## Employee Wellness and Your Organization

There are countless ways to support your employees' health and well-being. Check this space often (or subscribe to our blog); we'll offer more tips and tools for workplace wellness programs (and all kinds of other HR initiatives) regularly.



# About Flimp Communications

## We're Employee Communications Experts

Flimp Communications is a leader in HR, benefits and employee communication and provides virtual communications solutions including **software, decision-support tools, workforce texting and interactive digital content** to employers, HR consultants, insurance carriers and healthcare providers.

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