BOSTON COLLEGE **National Workforce** **R O U N D T A B L E**	THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE FOR WELL-BEING Compiled by the Center for Work & Family February 2014

### WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DIVERSITY AND WELL-BEING?

Diversity & inclusion initiatives within an organization can lead to greater performance and productivity, by attracting and retaining a highly talented workforce, by creating an inclusive workplace where innovation thrives, and by being able to address the needs of a more diverse customer and client base. Diversity & Inclusion efforts are only more recently being linked to wellness and wellbeing, but little research is available about the direct connection between these two workforce strategies. However, we know that:

1. Ensuring a supportive and inclusive culture is important for professional and personal wellbeing. It has long been accepted, according to social psychological theories, tokenism has **negative implications for the performance and well-being** of ethnic minority members because race and ethnicity becomes more salient and visible when the group has a small representation in the workplace (Kanter, 1977). As the workforce becomes more diverse, these findings will apply to any affinity group (LGBT, employees with disabilities, women, multi-generational workforce…)

2. To create a healthy workplace, programs should address the five elements of well-being: **career, social, financial, physical**, and **community**.

The linkage between inclusion and wellbeing is work-life integration. Therefore:

- **Work-life integration is a key signal of inclusion:** An employee's ability to integrate their work-life commitments is a key driver of an employee's feeling of inclusion. It signals that an employee is seen as a whole person with a life within and outside the workplace. In other words, employees' feelings of inclusion, as well as their perception of organizational commitment to diversity, are driven by their tangible day-to-day experiences of work-life integration (Deloitte, 2012).

- Robertson Cooper's "6 Essentials" model shows the key aspects of working life that affect employee wellbeing and engagement: **resources & communication, control, balanced workload, job security & change, work relationships**, and **job conditions**.

- An employees' increased schedule control has been correlated with an increase in sleep hours, and an increase in the likelihood of visiting the doctor when sick (Kelly et al., Changing Workplaces to Reduce Work-Family Conflict)

An overview of the key factors that influence wellbeing at work:

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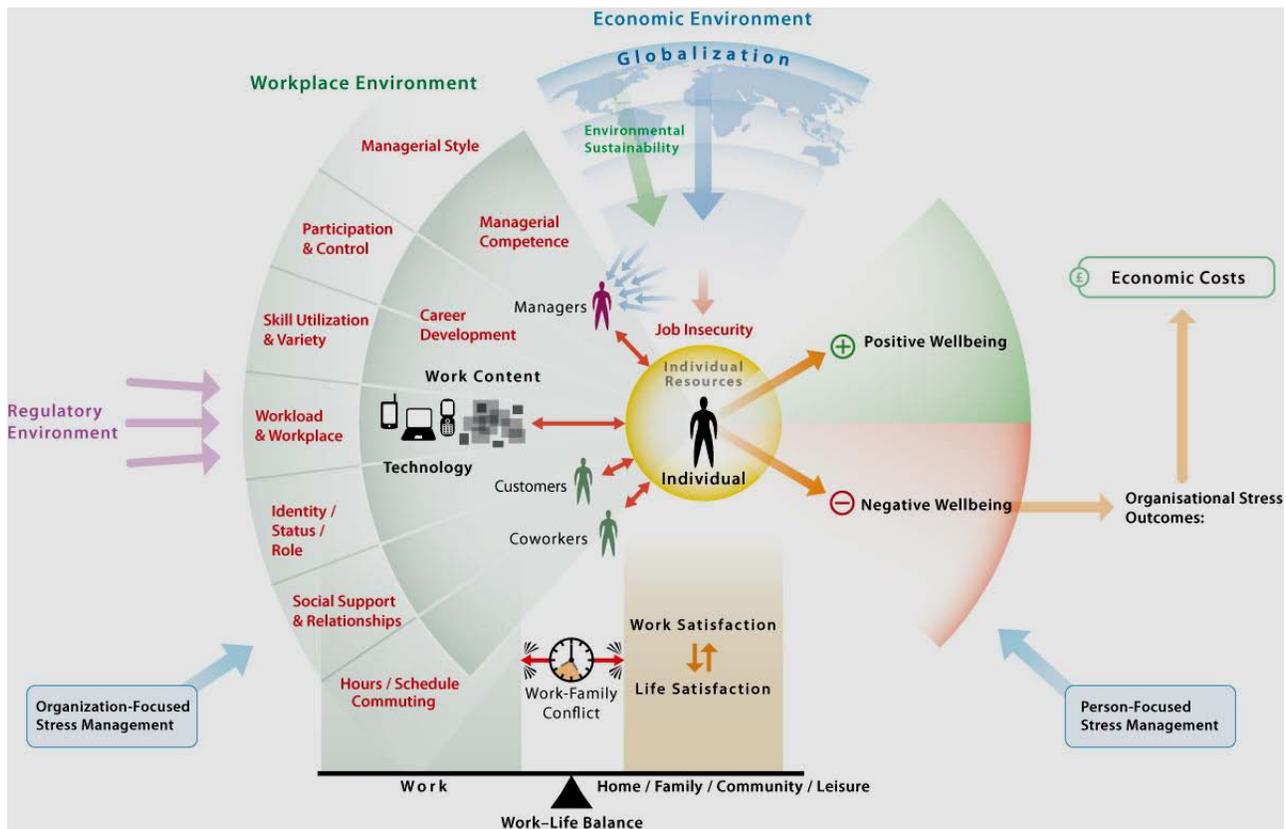
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- **An inclusive workplace values differences in work and non-work roles.** Importantly, the inclusive workplace does not view nonwork or caregiving identities as barriers to an individual fully contributing and fulfilling one's potential at work and promotes involvement of all employees regardless of their nonwork demands and preferences. (Ryan and Kossek, 2008).

- Studies have shown that **organizations** in which employees experience **high levels of emotional exhaustion perform sub-optimally** (Taris & Schreurs, Well-being and organizational performance, 2009).

- Failure to achieve balance was associated with **reduced job and life satisfaction, decreased well-being and quality of life**, as well as **increased stress, impaired mental health, and family conflict** (Gröpel & Kuhl, Work-life balance and subjective well-being, 2009).

- Workplace flexibility has a positive impact for employers in terms of reduced absenteeism, turnover and sick leave usage, as well as increased energy. (Van Steenbergen and Ellemers, Is managing the work–family interface worthwhile? Benefits for employee health and performance, 2009)

- **Psychologically healthy workplaces** have **25% less turnover, 17% fewer employees reporting chronic work stress, and 10% higher employee satisfaction** than average US employers(APA, Psychologically Healthy Workplace Program, 2011)

- There is clear evidence that people with higher levels of **psychological well-being** at work are healthier (both mentally and physically), have happier lives and live longer (Cartwright and Cooper, 2008).

Employees with Disabilities:

- To date, the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC) has not issued specific guidance to employers in relation to the intersection of wellness programs and the ADA, but in a recent meeting, the Commission stressed that wellness programs need to be created and offered in a way that does not put the employer at risk of violating equal employment opportunity laws. It is especially important that employers are able to accurately define whether or not a wellness program would be considered "voluntary" under the law, in order to avoid legal pitfalls. (source: [Avoiding Discrimination in Workplace Wellness Programs](#))
- The language in the Affordable Care Act protect consumers from being discriminated against in relation to health status, and allow employees with medical conditions, which may or may not include employees with disabilities, to equally receive wellness-related rewards. These new laws work in tandem with the ADA regulations. Employees with disabilities are more likely than their coworkers to have secondary health conditions; therefore adding a level of inclusion to worksite wellness programs is both the smart and right choice.
- Include employees with disabilities in wellness program planning either on the wellness committee or working closely with the wellness coordinator to ensure program activities are accessible and meet the needs of all employees.
- Create inclusive marketing materials by using images of people with and without disabilities, person-first language, and inclusive terminology such as "Moving Meeting" and "Run.Walk.Roll 5k".
- Ensure accessibility of marketing materials by providing a variety of formats such as audio, picture-based, large print and accessible electronic formats.
- Consider a smoke-free workplace policy which will impact all employees, but especially employees with disabilities, since they are [more likely](#) to smoke cigarettes (25.4% vs. 17.3%).
- Include healthy options in vending machines and ensure they are accessible to employees who may use a wheelchair. (Source: [A Culture of Inclusion in Workplace Wellness](#))
- Provide relevant incentives for employees with a variety of abilities.

LGBT Employees:

- Most employers are able to extend **benefits to same gender partners** and children on a voluntary basis. Not all do; and those employees that receive (and/or employers which offer) benefits to same gender domestic partners or spouses pay thousands of dollars in extra taxes. Understand the special benefits circumstances of your LGBT employees (in every state).
- Welcome family members and same sex partners to health fairs, financial wellness counseling and training.

Multi-Generational Workforce:

- Millennials are looking for jobs that provide them with: work-life balance, good pay and benefits, opportunities for advancement, meaningful work experiences, and a nurturing work environment ([New Generation, Great Expectations: A Field Study of the Millennial Generation](#), 2010 and [PwC's NextGen Study](#), 2013)

- Many older workers want to continue to work for financial reasons, health care benefits, as well as for personal fulfillment, but they may not want to work full-time (Center on Aging and Work, 2009).
- A recent MetLife study found that employees providing eldercare were more likely to report their **health as fair or poor** and to report **risky health behaviors** such as smoking and alcohol use (MetLife, 2010).
- Robust health and wellness programs will help to engage and retain older workers.

All Employees

- **Bullying and harassment** can severely damage health and wellbeing. Companies should have clear guidelines on protecting employees.
- Offer **workplace flexibility** so that all employees can manage their schedule and location.
- Understand personal life as a **hidden dimension of diversity**
- Use supportive and flexible work environment to attract, retain and motivate a diverse workforce.
- Integrate work/life messages into diversity action plans
- Create a work environment which meets the needs of diverse employee groups – now and in future.
- Provide opportunities for alternative career paths, networking and mentoring
- Encourage and support the creation of employee network groups focused around wellbeing issues.
- Invite employees to identify barriers to inclusion and take action to remove the barriers

Sources

Kanter, R.M. (1977). Men and women of the corporation. New York: Bassie.
Enchautegui-de-Jesús, et. al, <u>WELL-BEING IN THE CONTEXT OF WORKPLACE ETHNIC DIVERSITY</u>, 2006
Van Steenbergen, E.F. & Ellemers, N.(2009) 'Is managing the work-family interface worthwhile? Benefits for employee health and performance' Journal of Organisational Behaviour, Vol 30, pp 617-642.