How to create a workplace that’s *fit for the future*

Moving from wellness to wellbeing
With data and informed decision-making, you can direct the workplace experience to foster both mindfulness and physical wellness to create overall wellbeing, helping your organization to be fit for today—and tomorrow.

By Bernice Boucher
I have a friend who’s a wellbeing expert and yogi in London. She runs mindfulness and meditation sessions for leaders and their teams for a number of global companies before, during or after work. Though she started out working with technology firms, she now has a wide range of clients, including several major banks. It’s amazing to see so many companies that otherwise seem impersonal making these personal-wellbeing programs available. It tells me not only that they recognize the connection between employee productivity and mindfulness (the ability to focus and to enable peak performance), but also that they’re looking at good data to support it.

The fact is, there’s a major shift underway in the workplace from employee wellness to wellbeing. Almost all (96 percent) of the 6,500 organizations surveyed by WorldatWork offer elements of a wellbeing program, and three-quarters of them are increasing their offerings in the next two years with the main objectives of improving employee health, impacting healthcare costs and increasing productivity.

While the two terms “wellness” and “wellbeing” might sound much the same, in the workplace context they mean very different things. The wellness programs of recent decades typically centered only on the physical aspects of health, such as blood pressure, blood sugar and so on. By contrast, wellbeing is more holistic—focused on “being”—acknowledging the connection between the body and mind, as well as the workplace environment and experience itself.

The ability to be mindful—to train the mind to be focused—is a skill that underpins everything we do. We actually know from research that the biggest de-railer for leadership is not IQ or intensity, but the challenge leaders face in staying focused. Once mastered, mindfulness can be applied to anything you’re doing—in THIS moment. This is a significant advantage given that data confirms: Multitasking means not tasking very well at all, and many of us are victims of continuous partial attention as we are trying to adapt to the fast pace and intensity enabled by technology. Mindfulness in turn is a form of inner technology that helps us be alert and present. From this place we can gain perspective and clarity in any situation—particularly when the pressure is on.

But this is only the starting point, as mindfulness also applies to relationships (or connections), communication and the organization at large. Many of the benefits can be explained by neuroscience and how our human brain works, and how lack of focus is limiting engagement, connection and performance. Organizations are now recognizing that practices such as mindfulness and meditation are an important part of a broader approach to enabling employee wellbeing to increase engagement, peak performance and greater productivity.

Directing the workplace experience to foster greater wellbeing does not only include providing yoga classes and personal fitness. It means making informed decisions about the nature of the workplace environment, giving employees certain choices around where and when to work, giving them the permissions they need to do their jobs, and more.

When organizations focus on improving the experience of work and on overall wellbeing and engagement, they drive productivity and greater bottom-line benefit to the organization. The WorldatWork study found that organizations with an integrated approach to wellbeing report lower voluntary turnover rates, while turnover rates amongst organizations with traditional wellness programs has grown since 2011.

How are the demands of senior leadership on the CRE team changing in terms of alignment with the firm’s strategic priorities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand</th>
<th>% reporting increased demands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing productivity of the real estate portfolio</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting scenarios and solutions to the business on demand</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing more flexibility to the leasehold portfolio; creating on-demand space</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling flexible (remote, mobile) working</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting cultural change</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning CRE to business drivers and functional areas (HR, IT, Finance)</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracting and retaining talent</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving the corporate sustainability/CSR agenda</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering a platform for growth in select markets</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: JLL Global Corporate Real Estate Trends 2015

Base: 491 respondents
Turning to a different study, JLL’s 2015 Global CRE Trends survey, it’s evident that the real estate executives who participated have a strong interest in workplace productivity. There was also surprising growth from previous years in the percentage of respondents who are focused on the experience of the workplace and workplace change. This is fascinating because it’s more typical for Human Resources to focus on these areas, not Corporate Real Estate. But real estate executives are focusing here because the workplace is the melting pot where business strategy and the workforce come together—it’s not just “where” work happens, but part of the experience of “how” work happens, and this changes over time.

Today, with Boomers retiring at a head-spinning rate and a shortage of Generation Xers to replace them, the focus is on attracting Millennials to fill the gap. Millennials are considered to be pickier than their predecessors about choosing employers. In general, they reportedly like being connected to meaning in their work and to the organization’s strategy. Yet when we advise clients on workplace strategy, one of the assumptions we make is that most people want to be productive and contribute to something larger through their work, regardless of age. Purpose is one of the three major employee motivators named by business author Daniel Pink in his bestselling book, Drive. To paraphrase:

- **Give me a purpose** — What is my role here? How do I fit in the organization?
- **Give me mastery** — Make sure I’ve got the right training, resources and tools.
- **Give me autonomy** — Yes, I need a manager, but let me make my own choices around getting this done.

What’s more, while many firms are investing heavily in workplace strategies that are designed to better support the work that their people do, what most companies are failing to consider is whether or not the work their employees are doing is actually the work that creates the most value for the organization. Each job function might require a different percentage of certain types of activities versus others. The organization must understand how the workplace can support those different activities and give people what they need to create value, achieve wellbeing and deliver their peak performance—to keep them engaged.

Research has found that companies with the most engaged employees show 89 percent higher customer satisfaction, 54 percent higher retention, and four times the revenue growth. When you take into account the global Gallup poll finding that only 13 percent of people are engaged with their jobs, there’s an a-ha moment: Is the secret sauce of engagement to pay attention to all of the factors that contribute to wellbeing?

---

Has it ever occurred to you how we tend not to notice when things are okay, but we do notice when things aren’t okay… For example, employees may never give a thought about the fact that they have a safe working environment but do react strongly if something there is not safe. No one comments if the temperature, air quality and acoustics at work are fine. However, they do complain if the workplace is hot, stuffy and noisy. It’s human nature not to notice that one’s office is really quite nice, but to resent it if the other offices in the company are nicer.

If workplace dissatisfaction remains unresolved, it can fester to undermine employee engagement—and can mushroom into active disengagement. This can be especially acute impact for people who are in jobs that are inherently boring and stressful, where there was not that much engagement to begin with… Providing a good working environment is essential to attract and retain these employees—perhaps even more important than for those who have interesting jobs.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements</th>
<th>Productivity gains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved acoustics</strong></td>
<td>+ 66% memory and 6% productivity savings⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 67% accuracy⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 48% ability to focus on tasks⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 27% high blood pressure and heart rate⁷</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved lighting</strong></td>
<td>+ 2% productivity⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daylighting and views</strong></td>
<td>- 6.5% sick leave⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 7%-12% faster processing of calls in call center and better overall performance⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 15% more time focused on primary task (programming) versus chatting on the phone or to another⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ 46 minutes more sleep at night, improved sleep quality, sleep efficiency, fewer sleep disturbances and less daytime dysfunction³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved indoor air quality (IAQ)</strong></td>
<td>+ 10% units of output (typing speed)¹⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 35% short-term sick leave and + $400 per employee¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improved thermal comfort</strong></td>
<td>+ 4%-6% logical thinking performance²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Layout, comfort, social cohesion</strong></td>
<td>- 6% measured stress of call center operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- 28% employee turn-over of call center operators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ $15 million savings per year in Bank of America call center operations¹³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If wellbeing is top of mind for organizations, then how do you get data on it to justify investments and measure effectiveness? Overlaying data from your real estate portfolio metrics like total occupancy costs with HR data like employee satisfaction can reveal insights into which sites are really making employees happy. You can then determine how best to bring those practices across the portfolio.

Sometimes, if you can’t measure productivity, you measure what gets in the way of productivity. We’ve surveyed client employees about how much time they waste per day by asking, “What gets in the way of you being more productive?” They might say, “I waste 15 minutes a day, every day, looking for a meeting room. And once I find it, I waste another seven minutes trying to get the technology to work.” Issues like these, which regularly get in the way of productivity, can be measured and addressed.

In a project we worked on for one large organization, we put employees in a classic, activity-based environment and gave them choice and control over where they sat—whether it was a quiet space or a collaborative space, or a project room they could own until their project was done, or some huddle-spaces and café spaces. There were 750 people doing desk-sharing with 600 seats, and the people who had autonomy in choosing their workspace were 13 percent more engaged with the organization than employees who were not sitting in those areas.

It’s important to take into account all of the different components of the workplace that contribute to the experience of work and wellbeing. For example, cleaner air, cleaner water, daylight and views all have an impact on the experience of work and can increase someone’s sense of greater wellbeing. It’s possible to assess and measure what productivity gains an organization can realistically expect to achieve by making improvements such as maximizing the use of your space, reducing the use of resources including energy and water, and providing a comfortable and efficient workplace. High-level frameworks are available for building owners, occupiers and their advisors to track the impacts of buildings on employee health, wellbeing and productivity in order to use that information in financial decision-making.

Though such improvements may be driven by cost and environmental benefits, they can also translate into big gains in productivity through improved employee wellness and performance, and an individual’s sense of connection to the culture, the brand, and the values and mission of the organization.

---

Top 3 Crimes Against Productivity

When it comes to negatively impacting workplace experience and productivity, real estate departments regularly come up against these three villains:

“**It’s too hot/It’s too cold.**” There’s an aspect of wellbeing and employee satisfaction that relates to physical comfort. Due in part to differences in people’s metabolism, office air temperature is the number one complaint, and real estate facilities managers deal with it every day. While most buildings control the temperature for an entire floor, systems have been developed to provide underfloor air with a control at each desk, allowing employees to increase or decrease the flow depending on what’s comfortable.

“**I can’t find a meeting room.**” There’s an aspect of satisfaction that relates to whether or not employees can get their job done. You know what the supply of meeting spaces is, because you have a fixed number of them around the office, so you need to understand: What’s the demand? In almost every case where we’ve done this type of research with clients, we’ve seen that 80 percent of meetings have only two to four participants. If people can’t find a meeting space, they go to alternative measures: huddling in a cube or in the hallway, or meeting in the café. At one organization, there were so few meeting rooms that even though all the meeting attendees were present in the office, they all dialed in to a call. But people multi-task on calls. To better align supply and demand, you can use a number of tools and services to measure the actual demand for space and look at utilization.

“**I don’t have the quiet or privacy to get my job done.**” People who work in an open plan frequently complain that they’re unable to concentrate, and there’s too much noise and distraction to get their job done. A related factor is the need to protect confidentiality. Satisfaction around the office depends in part on people having the freedom from distractions or privacy they need to get their work done. Providing spaces for people to retreat to for focused, quiet or confidential work as needed is a good solution to the noise and distraction issues of the open plan.

Where Do You Begin?

**Get Aligned With Leadership**

Start by making sure there’s alignment with leadership, particularly the C-suite, HR and IT. Ask, “What is the value of the workplace to the organization? Where is the business going? How can we better align the workplace strategy with the business strategy?” Then, assess your organization in four different categories:

1) **Financials:** What are you trying to do around shareholder value? What are the financials around increasing revenue or decreasing operating costs?

2) **Customers:** Who are your customers/clients/members and how does the workplace come into play in helping your staff serve them better? By developing better products? By providing faster customer service?

3) **Process:** Look at the work processes and how you can improve them by breaking down silos between different groups to improve communication, by increasing vertical and market knowledge, and by increasing the speed at which you go to market with new products, to name just a few.

4) **People:** Consider your actual employees and your organizational culture. How well does your organization “message” who you are and what you do? How closely do your people feel connected to that? Doing an employee survey can help you understand how the people in the organization think about productivity, what’s important to them in the workplace, and how satisfied they are with how it performs. What are their work styles? Are they open to working in new and different ways?

**Develop a Strategy**

Having a strategy in place is an essential component. The WorldatWork study reports that less than half of study participants have an employee wellbeing strategy in place.

**Measure**

To determine if your strategy is working, measure its effectiveness. What is your participation rate? Has employee satisfaction and/or engagement increased? Are healthcare costs declining?

It’s clear that wellness programs are giving way to wellbeing. Champion the move and you could become a hero inside your organization, proving that your workplace—and your employees—are indeed fit for the future.
About the Author

Bernice Boucher is a Managing Director in the JLL Consulting group. She leads the Workplace Strategy practice in the Americas and is a senior leader in the Workplace Solutions practice globally. Her experience encompasses more than 20 years in workplace strategy and change management across a wide range of markets and industries, advising Fortune 100 businesses and corporate real estate groups on developing dynamic work environments and alternative workplace strategies in support of their strategic goals.

Contact

Bernice Boucher
Managing Director, Workplace Solutions
+1 212 418 2619
bernice.boucher@am.jll.com

Defining what creates real value for your organization is the first, crucial step in developing meaningful workplace strategies that boost productivity. The Workplace Solutions experts at JLL help organizations create cultures ready to adapt to the changing nature of work and the needs of the business; reduce occupancy costs and space requirements; increase revenue by creating environments that foster innovation and collaboration; increase employee engagement, satisfaction and retention; improve business agility and successfully implement change management strategies. Talk to us to learn more.

About JLL

JLL (NYSE: JLL) is a professional services and investment management firm offering specialized real estate services to clients seeking increased value by owning, occupying and investing in real estate. With annual fee revenue of $4.7 billion and gross revenue of $5.4 billion, JLL has more than 230 corporate offices, operates in 80 countries and has a global workforce of approximately 58,000. On behalf of its clients, the firm provides management and real estate outsourcing services for a property portfolio of 3.4 billion square feet, or 316 million square meters, and completed $118 billion in sales, acquisitions and finance transactions in 2014. Its investment management business, LaSalle Investment Management, has $55.3 billion of real estate assets under management. JLL is the brand name, and a registered trademark, of Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated. For further information, visit www.jll.com.