

Why is Wellness Important in the Corporate Context?

Background

Modern work environments can be stressful places. Widespread adoption of technology has revolutionised the way we live and do business. The positive side of this situation is an increase in efficiency and productivity. Unfortunately the negative side to a high-tech life is that constant access to email, instant messaging etc. means that many people never truly leave work and switch off to rest.

On top of this the increase in the pace of life in the last few decades has led to higher customer expectations. The now generation has very high expectations of any organisation they do business with and this adds to the pressure on employees.

To compound things even further many businesses in South Africa operate in a very challenging financial environment. This places major pressure on staff to produce more with less on a daily basis.

The ultimate result of all of these factors is an increase in stress levels. This can have a significant impact on the health, psychological state and productivity of employees.

A 2011 study by Concordia University (Canada) titled *Psychosocial Working Conditions and the Utilization of Health Care Services* probed the relationship between job related stress and usage of medical facilities.

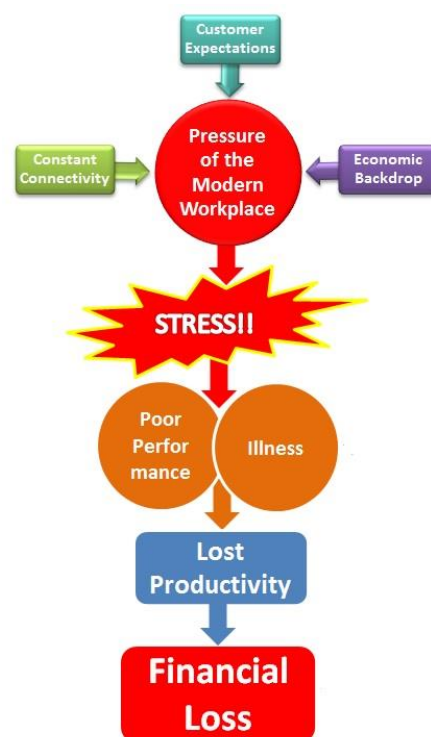
The study was based on data from the *Canadian National Population Health Survey* and limited to 18 to 65 year old people, i.e. those that typically make up the bulk of the labour force.

Some of the conclusions reached by study authors Sunday Azagba and Mesbah Sharaf were:

- An increasing number of workers are using medical services to cope with job stress
- There is medical evidence that stress can adversely affect an individual's immune system, thereby increasing the risk of disease
- These results show that people in medium-to-high stress jobs visit family doctors and specialists more often than workers with low job stress

This situation is not limited to Canada. According to a 2011 survey conducted by the American Psychological Association, 39% of adults surveyed reported their stress levels increasing and more than half of all surveyed reported personal health problems as a source of stress.

As the operating environment in companies worldwide has many common elements it stands to reason that workers in most developed and developing economies are subject to the same stresses and effects.



Obviously a rise in illness and doctor visits associated as a result of conditions caused or aggravated by stress leads to a loss of productivity, and by extension a negative effect on the employer's bottom line.

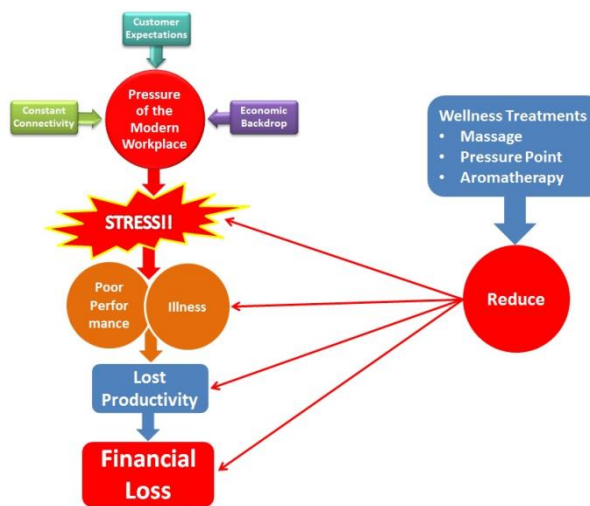
In January 2012, based on 12 months of research, human resources effectiveness group *The People Element* estimated that up to 3 billion rand a year in the form of reduced productivity was being lost by South African businesses.

The Link between Wellness Treatments, Overall Health and Employee Productivity

Stress is a part of daily life and many people already know and understand the benefits of massage as a stress-fighting tool. Based on their first-hand experience, massage therapists have also known for a long time that wellness treatments like massage; pressure point stimulation and aromatherapy help to reduce stress.

Over the last few years the medical community and academic researchers have increasingly validated the use of massage and other wellness therapies as a means to reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, increase focus and promote a general sense of wellbeing.

In a 2005 collaborative study conducted in Australia by *Griffith University* and the *Princess Alexandra Hospital* and published in the *Australasian Emergency Nursing Journal* under the title ***The Effect of Aromatherapy Massage with Music on the Stress and Anxiety Levels of Emergency Nurses***, researchers came to the conclusion that,



“...research has demonstrated that aromatherapy massage with music significantly reduces the anxiety levels of emergency nurses thereby enhancing their comfort and over-all wellbeing.”

Another similar but more recent study was published in *Massage Magazine* during February 2013 (issue 201, page 66) under the title ***Chair Massage Relieves Stress, Anxiety among Nurses*** found that regular chair massage therapy,

“...tremendously improves the stress-related symptoms and anxiety among inpatient and outpatient nurses.”

In 2006 the *American Massage Therapy Association* published a position statement under the title, ***Massage Therapy Can Relieve Stress***. In the statement numerous medical studies are cited – all of which led the association to state that,

“It is the position of the American Massage Therapy Association (AMTA) that massage therapy can be effective for stress relief.”

and later in the same statement that,

“...there is considerable research that validates our experience. In a study on the effect of trigger point therapy¹, there was a significant decrease in heart rate, systolic blood pressure, and diastolic blood pressure⁸. Measures of oxygen consumption, blood pressure, and salivary cortisol levels were all lower after a 10 to 15 minute chair massage.”

In addition to the stress-relieving effects of massage and other wellness therapies, it is also important to monitor basic health indicators of staff members, for example:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Glucose levels
- Weight assessment

Employees can then be advised and encouraged to seek appropriate medical assistance where applicable. This helps to prevent existing or developing conditions from worsening due to a lack of medical intervention and treatment.

Aside from their direct impact, preventable and treatable conditions that are allowed to worsen can also add further stress to the employee’s life. This can have a detrimental effect on their productivity and attendance, with a resulting knock-on effect to the bottom line of the business.

In a 2010 *Harvard University* Study titled: **Workplace Wellness Programs Can Generate Savings**, researchers Katherine Baicker, David Cutler and Zirui Song found that,

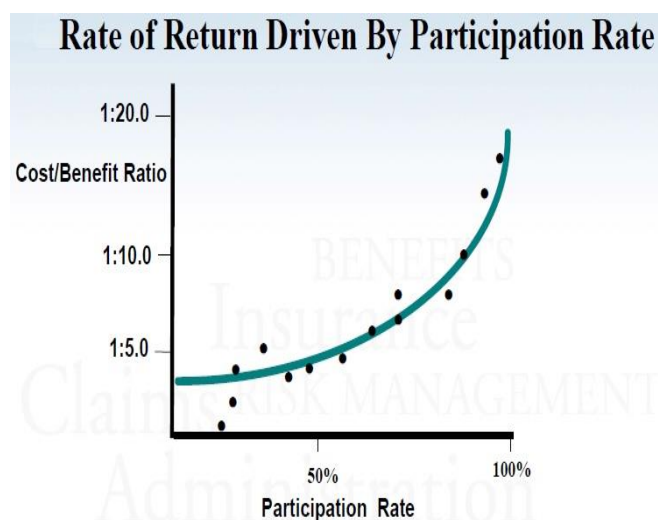
“...medical costs fall about \$3.27 for every dollar spent on wellness programs, and absentee day costs fall by about \$2.73 for every dollar spent. This average return on investment suggests that the wider adoption of such programs could prove beneficial for budgets and productivity as well as health outcomes.”

This study (and others) clearly indicates a link between employee wellness and a reduction in absenteeism and productivity loss. Of course the exact ROI will differ from company to company and can be influenced by the profile and demographics of the employee base. However it is clear that the benefits of a less stressed and healthier workforce outweigh the costs of a wellness program consisting of therapeutic, stress-reducing treatments and basic medical screening.

The Impact of Employee Participation

Based on research results contained in the publication *Proof Positive: An Analysis of the Cost Effectiveness of Worksite Wellness* by corporate wellness expert Larry S. Chapman there also appears to be a direct link between how widely wellness programs are utilised within an organisation and the resulting ROI benefit to the employer

In the book he uses this graphic to illustrate how the rate of return increases to as much as 20 to 1 depending on the rate of participation by employees.



Therefore a vital factor in the success of any wellness program is to what degree employees show enthusiasm for and adopt the program as a part of their lives. It is important that the program is seen as something that is fun and will benefit them rather than simply another task imposed by management.

In order to achieve this mentality it is important that the wellness program offers a range of options and benefits to employees, both during wellness days and outside of these events. On-going engagement with staff members on themes related to wellness and health also helps to make the program part of their daily lives.

Benefits of a Wellness Program in the Workplace

Aside from tangible benefits in the form of increased productivity and reduced absenteeism, workplace wellness programs also lead to happier, more motivated staff - which can only be good for the quality of their work.

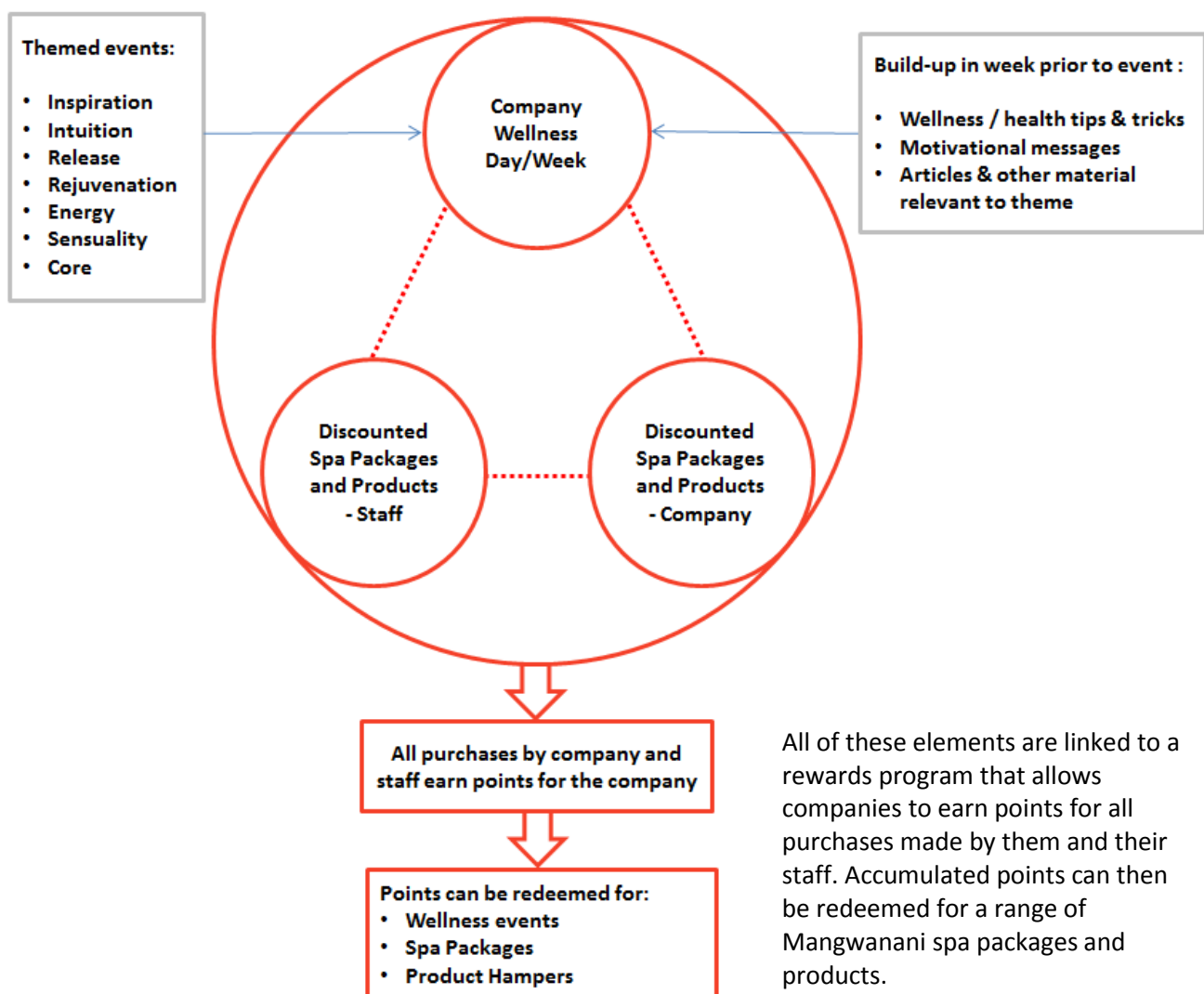
Employees spend a substantial part of their lives in the work environment – it makes sense for this time to be as pleasant, fulfilling and productive as possible.

The direct costs of a corporate wellness program must always be weighed against the direct and indirect benefits of a happier, healthier and more productive workforce.

Mangwanani Corporate Wellness Programme

The Mangwanani Corporate Wellness Program consists of three basic elements:

1. **Wellness events**, ranging from 1 day to an entire week
2. **Discounted** spa packages and products for **staff**
3. **Discounted** spa packages and products for **companies**



Wellness Events

- A Mangwanani Nomadic team will set up a relaxation station within the company premises.
- Ideally this will be located in a closed area, for example a boardroom or events room.
- All materials and equipment required to operate the relaxation station will be supplied by Mangwanani.
- The area will be tastefully adorned with Mangwanani's signature traditional African décor and branding to give the impression of actually being at a spa.
- Highly skilled and specially trained Mangwanani wellness therapists will perform selected treatments on staff members (within the limitations imposed by not being in a fully equipped spa facility).
- Specially-tailored stress-relief and relaxation treatments can also be performed on staff members in their own work environment. These take place in a normal office chair, no oil is used and there is no need for removal of any clothing.
- Each wellness event will have a theme. This theme will be mutually agreed by Mangwanani and company management in advance. Supporting materials relevant to the theme will be available to staff at the event.
- In the week prior to the wellness event a daily message will be sent to all participants to reinforce the theme as well as create expectation and excitement.

Discounted Spa Packages and Products – Staff

- Employees that enjoyed the wellness day can visit one of Mangwanani's spas and purchase high-quality, naturally-derived spa products at a discounted rate.
- This will encourage staff members to indulge in a spa experience in their free time.
- The company benefits from the points accumulated by these purchases as well as by having employees that are more relaxed, alert and focused, and less stressed.

Discounted Spa Packages and Products – Company

- Ideal for use as gifts for staff on special occasions, e.g.
 - Birthday
 - Wedding
 - New baby
- Can be used as a sympathy gesture for staff members that are in hospital or recuperating from a serious illness.
- A great choice for staff rewards, e.g.
 - Employee of the year
 - Long-term service recognition

Additional Services

On request Mangwanani can plan and participate in special events e.g. year-end functions, staff social days and conferences. This participation can take the form of:

A Nomadic Spa team setting up at an event held at the company's premises or other venue, or alternatively the event could be hosted at one of Mangwanani's Flagship Spas (River Valley, Sibaya or Zewenwacht).

Mangwanani Company Overview

Mangwanani African Day Spa (Pty) Ltd was founded in 2002 by Ms Erin Limbert. The company has grown exponentially since then and now boasts 14 branches spread across South Africa, including the following flagship locations:

- On the banks of the picturesque Hennops River in the Schurveberg area near Pretoria and the Hartebeespoort Dam
- Sibaya Casino and Entertainment Kingdom in KwaZulu-Natal
- Zevenwacht Wine Estate in the Western Cape

The company currently employs approximately 800 permanent and 600 seasonal staff, serving an average of 120,000 guests annually.

Core Vision and Values

- Mangwanani aims to position South Africa and the Southern African region as a sought after destination for traditional spa therapies in a manner reminiscent of Thailand.
- Mangwanani is committed to contributing to the development of South Africa and the Southern African region as well as the empowerment of the communities around its health and wellness facilities.

Employee Development and Training

Mangwanani has been committed to the development and upliftment of its employees from the very beginning. In keeping with this the company has always recruited and trained women from South Africa's rural and peri-urban communities as therapists rather than recruiting qualified therapists from competitors.

This is evidenced by the fact that 98% of the company's workforce (800 permanent and 600 seasonal employees) consists of previously disadvantaged women.

The company's in-house training programme offers an NQF Level 4 qualification which is the minimum qualification held by therapists in its employ.

Product Lines

Mangwanani has developed its own signature range of proudly South African health-care products. All of the products in the range are made from natural and naturally-derived ingredients. The company is in the process of re-developing its product range with a view to using ingredients sourced largely, or in some cases exclusively, from local suppliers.

Accreditation and Achievements

Mangwanani boasts a level 2 BBBEEE rating and won the South African Spa of the Year award every year since its first full year of operation in 2003 up until the discontinuation of the award in 2010.

Mangwanani African Day Spa provides an unrivalled African wellness and relaxation experience
