

# 7 TIPS TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE WELL-BEING POLICY




E-BOOK

 **fitcoins**

## Introduction

If Covid19 has had one positive effect in companies, it is certainly the increased attention to people's well-being. This is visible, among other things, in the number of functions and roles that are created around this, in increasing well-being budgets, and in internal and external communications of companies. Well-being is becoming big business, where it is no longer just about cost reduction in the form of less absenteeism and loss of performance in the workplace. In addition, there is a clear growing focus on profit that can be created through employee well-being. This trend is noticeable from the smallest SME to the largest multinational, **and companies that do not invest in this are at risk of losing control of the labor market and their employees.**

In addition to the increasing attention to well-being, we also note that well-being has been given a broader and more comprehensive interpretation than before. Before Covid19, the focus was mainly on ergonomics and mental well-being in companies. That is still the case, with additional ergonomic challenges for home workers, for which many companies were not prepared and are still often seeking. Working from home is "here to stay" and seems to be one of the important arguments in the choice of employer for many candidates on the labor market. But mental well-being is also under extra pressure, due to, among other things, a blurring of the boundary between work and private environment, lack of 'real' social contact, worries and uncertainty about the future, poorer results of the company, etc. This additional pressure also seems to be 'here to stay', because in many companies the pressure to perform will remain very high long after Covid19. The trick is therefore to find a sustainable balance between performance orientation and people orientation, or to balance results with energy. Never before have so many people been concerned with their physical health in the form of exercise and other things that contribute to increased immunity. Also on a mental level we see a shift of focus from the curative to the preventive.

A decorative graphic consisting of several overlapping teal-colored curved lines on the left side of the page.

Many companies are looking for ways to offer their employees quality of life and even happiness in life.

# New challenges for HR and well-being managers

New trends in society and in companies inextricably bring new responsibilities. In such cases, a need for vision, organization, structure and processes automatically arises. In the meantime, ad hoc initiatives are often started. We therefore see different maturity phases in companies:



## Phase of awareness

**A** Companies have **starting attention for well-being** and facilitate or sponsor **ad hoc initiatives** from the employees. The advantage is that one shows that one has **attention and willingness**. The biggest disadvantage is mainly the ad hoc fact, which means that spontaneous initiative falls back just as quickly and one often only reaches a more limited group of enthusiasts.

## Phase of responsibility

**B** Here the organization realizes that it bears a **responsibility**, often fed by a direct or indirect influence in **important business results** (e.g. retention, employer branding, etc.). They provide a relatively limited budget and also organize a number of **ad hoc initiatives themselves**. Examples are **information sessions, workshops, team activities**, etc. Here too, the disadvantage often remains that the drive within the organization is difficult to maintain and one often only manages to reach a part of the population, namely that part that is intrinsically already motivated to consciously deal with health.

## Phase de proactivité

**C** Here the organization evolves into a **proactive approach**, in which one begins to **structure and organize well-being initiatives**, for example in the form of a **(partial) responsibility** within HR, a project owner, etc. More budget is made available, whether or not supported by a business case that also indicates where profit is redeemed in exchange for the investment. Employee satisfaction with initiatives is measured, whether or not linked to **relevant business KPIs**.

Management of initiatives is still spread over different systems and roles, but is already partly managed / controlled centrally. Well-being is a recurring theme on the boardroom table. The challenge in this phase lies in developing a coherent vision, fully centralizing and optimizing the management, and getting the larger part of the employees on board.

## Phase of integration

**D** Well-being is an essential part of the company's **vision and values**, and is an important theme in the **success of the organization**.

KPIs are clearly defined and measured. The responsibility for well-being is assigned and there are one or more roles in the organization that have a main focus on this.

The theme is recurring and prominent in internal and external corporate communications. A significant budget is made available. The challenge in this phase is often creativity and continuously reinventing oneself with regard to initiatives that allow the vast majority of the employee population to be reached. Selecting partners who convey the vision and values to the employees in the same way can also be a challenge. Today, we notice that few organizations are already in the phase of integration. When this is the case, it is often linked to strong company values and/or to external influences that have forced this evolution (e.g. War for Talent among larger consulting companies).

Nevertheless, they too continue to face the challenge of continuing to distinguish themselves sufficiently from competitors.

A large part of Belgian companies is still looking for ways to take the next step towards a well-being policy that responds specifically to the new needs that live in our society and on the labor market. Developing your own (basic) vision on well-being, its organization and the discussion about resources versus return is often central and can be difficult.

# 7 tips for building a sustainable well-being policy



## 1 Determine the core goals and make progress measurable

A cliché, and yet many organizations jump into action before they have thought about it properly. That makes the support at board level very fragile, pushes you as a well-being manager into the corner of the 'cost items', and that is where the blows fall when budgets come under pressure because of disappointing business results.

Before anything else, think about what the core drive of your well-being policy is. That seems obvious and logical, but it is not necessarily so. Some possible reasons are:

- Cost savings on illness and absence
- Increase efficiency
- Increase retention
- Employer branding
- Employee engagement
- Hybrid working
- ...

**That drive is the core of your strategy and should be the common thread in all plans, actions, communications, etc.**

Preferably, this is of course linked to the company values. Based on the main drive, measurable KPIs are then chosen. These can be directly or indirectly, objectively or subjectively measured. Very often, with some creativity, they can also be translated into financial parameters, and that is certainly advisable. After all, this ensures that well-being is no longer seen purely as a cost, but as an investment that yields a clear return and is an essential part of the success of the organization.

## 2 Make the policy attractive to a broad target group

There is a major challenge here around the question: how can we get the large part of our people moving, literally and figuratively speaking? After all, getting those employees who were already consciously working on their health to move further is not that difficult.

Many companies are currently working with sporting 'challenges'. In the best case, they provide a few months of enthusiasm for a relatively limited group. The disadvantage is that one has to come up with challenge after challenge to keep the policy permanently in the spotlight, but also that the focus is mainly on the physical aspect.

Getting those who are not yet consciously engaged in health to move, one often bumps into the wall. After all, cultivating healthy habits is often not easy. It is a high mountain to climb for many, where the effects of effort only become visible sparsely or only after a longer period of time. And that while our reptilian brain continuously challenges us to stay in our comfort zone.

Habit formation takes time and temptations are around every corner. The most difficult step for that large target group is therefore the first step. The threshold is high there. Once you get people over that threshold and manage to stimulate them long enough to persevere, then over time they will start to discover the benefits, and then you will potentially get behavioral change.

Anyone with a little background in psychology knows that people are ideally intrinsically motivated (because they want to and recognize the benefits deep within themselves) and that extrinsic motivation (e.g. reward) is not sustainable. Extrinsic motivators, however, can bring the non-believers over the threshold, and keep them, until the moment the intrinsic benefits become visible.

A policy that responds to both, and therefore also provides for forms of remuneration in addition to responding to deeper motives (e.g. tickets for a popular event or a voucher for a popular product), will in any case have the broadest effect in the organization, certainly in an initial phase.

### 3 Approach the total well-being of man

Health and fitness are often initially linked to the body. That is to a large extent true, but the link with the mind is inextricable.

**Body and mind continuously influence each other and call on the same energy.** An unhealthy body absorbs energy at the expense of the mind. An unhealthy mind does the same to the body. One pulls the other down with it, but also vice versa in a positive sense. This has long been scientifically proven, and yet few companies are concerned with the health of their employees as a whole. That is why we would like to give a number of aspects that should be more focused on in the business world:



#### **Movement:**

More and more companies are evolving from a pure focus on ergonomics to an extensive focus on employee movement. Exercise does not have to equal sports at all and can be made accessible to everyone. The body is not made to sit on a chair for hours on a row, and it has also been proven that the mind is not exactly more performant because of this. Our blood must circulate to provide all our organs, including our brains, with the necessary fuels and energy. In addition, we now also know that certain forms of movement have an impact on our brain waves, and can thus bring us into the mode or focus that we need at that moment.

**A good well-being policy therefore knows how to get the broad masses moving, does not limit movement to sports, and educates its employees about the positive effects of exercise.**



#### **Nutrition:**

Nutrition has not stood still in recent times. People are discovering more and more about the effects on body, mind and therefore on productivity. Nutrition is directly linked to our energy, and yet we see a lot of misinformation in companies, people who do not take the time to eat, do not think about what they eat, or even do not eat at all during the working day.

Add up this potential profit across all employees per day worked in a company and there is a huge margin of productivity gains. As an employer, you can easily respond to this **by offering healthy and energy-giving food to the employees**, but certainly also **by working on awareness and knowledge.**



#### **Recovery and sleep:**

To this day, there are many companies where it is fashionable to emphasize how little sleep you need and how long you have worked on your presentation. However, **sleep is the most important mechanism of recovery for body and mind.**

In our contacts with employees, we notice how many people sleep poorly and tired after sleeping. In many cases, this leads to exhaustion in the long term.

Before that happens, it mainly leads to reduced productivity. Those who do not sleep well process things more difficult, are less alert and creative, can concentrate less well. Sleep quality is therefore a characteristic of, for example, top performers in sports, and that is no different in any other performance-oriented context. Those who sleep well feel better, those who sleep poorly feel less well. And yet few people know how to improve their sleep quality.

In addition to sleep, there are plenty of other ways of targeted recovery. Those who consciously know how to build these recovery moments into their working day can handle larger peaks of stress. This is certainly a short-term effect, but even more so in the long term.

A good well-being policy therefore ensures recovery moments after peak periods and teaches employees **how they can effectively and specifically recover from those peak moments themselves**, in order to be able to peak to the same height again afterwards.



### Social relationships:

Man is a social animal par excellence and we need those contacts to be happy. In psychological studies, the importance of 'social support' was thoroughly investigated decades ago as one of the factors that makes the difference in people's well-being. And yet forming healthy relationships and connecting communication are not easy for everyone, especially in a business context. Of course, this aspect also manifests itself in relation to customers, and there is a direct return.



### Stress regulation:

Stress aims to help us act quickly and effectively against danger. The necessary physiological reactions prepare body and mind for this. Many employees feel high daily stress levels in a work context and we are not made for this. Simple relaxation techniques can be applied by anyone at any time, and yet these are unknown to most. As a company, teach your people these techniques, and they are again able to quickly alternate high stress peaks with relaxation, in order to be able to go full back for the next peak.

At the same time, watch over simplicity: make sure that people find information in a central place when they are looking for it, that the information is clear, that registration and participation is easily accessible, etc.

## 4 Look beyond the pure work context

We no longer live in a time when people turn on the "work button" at 9 o'clock in the morning and turn off the "private button", and then do the opposite at 5 pm.

Technological and social evolutions mean that time and space have become very flexible and the boundaries between different contexts have become blurred. This is a knife that cuts both ways: on the one hand, the employee must become stronger and more assertive with regard to guarding those boundaries, on the other hand, this flexibility also offers a lot of possibilities if one knows how to use them properly.

For example, more and more employers offer sports facilities and/or activities at work. We see the same with services that support the family, for example ironing help, childcare, etc. The work computer has become part of the home context, and the home context is visible at work.

Happiness in the figurative workplace determines happiness in the private context, and vice versa. A good well-being policy therefore not only responds to the needs that employees have at work, but also needs that they have outside of it in their role as a family member, friend or girlfriend, member of the hobby association, etc. This will also include the success of well-being initiatives. The more the well-being policy approaches people in all their life contexts, the stronger the effect on their well-being as well as the connection with the company will be.

## 5 Promote the policy actively and easily

People today are constantly bombarded with new stimuli. The offer is very broad and is continuously made known.

In the context of well-being, this is no different. The result is that things that are now bringing about great enthusiasm will no longer do so potentially within a few weeks. People get bored easily. And so actions and initiatives in the context of well-being must also respond to this. Make a plan per quarter, come up with a new theme to which you link actions, ensure internal branding and recognizability, emphasize the different benefits to appeal to all target groups, use different channels to communicate initiatives, and regularly check whether you reach everyone and whether your message has come across well.



## 6 Let the community work for you

Implementing a well-being policy is a process of change: a part of the population immediately jumps on the bandwagon and embraces the change. The large mass moves more slowly and initially looks which way the wind blows. They need to be convinced of the benefits and will evolve along with it. Once the critical mass is convinced, the balance tilts and the larger group jumps on the bandwagon. Finally, there are always a number of people who are not willing to participate, but do not offer any opposition as long as the critical mass is large enough.

In order to create support, it is advisable to identify and deploy ambassadors within the organization and to involve them in a task force. Do not make the mistake of only taking people who are already conscious about their health.

In addition, look for a number of people who already have a motivation to behave healthier, but who do not yet know how to put it into practice. After all, they represent the most important part within most organizations. Through their participation in the task force, the cognitive dissonance in them will automatically be increased.

Being a member of a task force on health and well-being, but not taking sufficient care of your own well-being, that creates a tension that our brains have to solve. Because of this tension, they start moving, and show others what is possible.

Moreover, they are the ones who know better than anyone what is going on in the organization, and how others can be involved. This role can also be actively assigned to them as ambassadors. The interaction between these different people often gives a lot of creativity.

Other tips for the proper functioning of such a task force are:

- **Recurring meetings to evaluate progress and adjust actions where necessary**
- **Facilitation by an expert.** The expert should therefore not put himself in the foreground, but should offer references to experiences in other companies: what works well, what works less? If you do not have such an expert in-house, it can pay to hire an external expert.
- **Finally, dare to change the composition of the task force,** for example every six months or annually. That way, you avoid this extra role becoming a burden on people who have other core responsibilities. But it also ensures that creativity remains high (often drops after a few months) and that a clear signal is given in the organization that everyone is involved. If you wish to change the composition of the task force at regular intervals, it is best to communicate this in advance so that it is clear to everyone that the role is 'temporary'. Also give the reasons why you do this.

## 7 Use nudging technology

In the current technological evolutions, more and more use is being made of nudging technology. This means that techniques are used to influence the thinking and behavior of employees or consumers. This is called 'nudging'. In the digital world, technology is used for this. This technology can of course be misused, but can certainly also be achieved for positive goals. After all, such technology not only allows to track and analyze people's behavior, but also to test and to influence behavior.

One can create feedback loops based on this data (the continuous repetition of the aforementioned sequence of measuring, analyzing and influencing) so that one can measure and optimize the success of influencing. Influencing techniques that are relevant in this context are, for example, personalizing content, making suggestions, self-monitoring, conditioning, etc. All this, of course, taking into account the privacy laws and with the consent of the user.



fitcoins.be

Or book your  
no-obligation  
demo

## Discover the Fitcoins application:

- ✓ Improved **physical and mental** condition
- ✓ More **contact** between colleagues
- ✓ **Decrease in absenteeism**
- ✓ More **productivity** and more **fun**

