

Healthy LEADERSHIP

MASSIVE CHANGES TO THE WAY WE LIVE AND work put relentless pressure on all of us. Yet most workplaces still struggle to recognize the effects on employees.

A great deal of stress is imposed by technology innovations. Technology allows us to be vastly more efficient and productive, but also creates expectations about the speed of response and our general availability, blurring the line between time at work and time away from work. Employees are typically left to figure out that balance for themselves.

Meanwhile, jobs themselves are changing. Some people feel liberated by the thought that they will not be in the same job or at the same company for the duration of their career. But others feel overwhelmed by the need to regularly develop new skill sets and grow into shifting areas of expertise. Companies and whole occupations are being redefined—even disappearing—at rates faster than ever before.

Add to these the stress caused by financial worries (such as the rising cost of education or the uncertainty of retirement savings), environmental concerns, or political and societal uncertainties. The impacts felt by the individual employee ultimately affect a company's bottom line if left unaddressed.

What's needed is resilience—the ability to bounce back from repeated stress. Most of us can handle a single event, but repeated stress over a period of time can have significant health impacts and has been linked to major diseases. The fallout costs employers billions of dollars in healthcare, absenteeism, turnover and low employee engagement annually.

Company-sponsored wellness and awareness programs—yoga classes, meditation apps and health savings accounts—are helpful, but they're not enough. Workplace culture has to support well-being. If an employee works for a toxic manager, is expected to wade through 200-plus daily emails in addition to their work, or feels ashamed to tell anyone about their deteriorating mental health, their well-being declines. It becomes harder to bounce back. In that environment, encouraging employee responsibility for well-being is a message that is likely to ring hollow.

Building a culture of employee resilience drives sustainable performance, say Brunswick's **KAROLINA KARR** and well-being expert **KYRA CAVANAUGH**.



KYRA CAVANAUGH is President of 15Be, a learning experiences company that helps employers improve workplace, team and individual well-being through workshops and WELLTEAM leadership certification. **KAROLINA KARR** is Brunswick's Chief People Officer, based in New York.

There's a lot that business leaders can do to dramatically improve the culture in their organizations. Here are five strategies to help develop resilience:

1. Build sensitivity at the top. Traditionally, we've trained leaders to optimize performance. Now they need to manage for well-being as a performance driver. Leaders with consistently high turnover rates and low engagement scores need training and coaching. When all else fails, show them the door. Build well-being leadership practices into development programs. Recognize high-performing leaders who grow a team culture of belonging, respect and well-being.

2. Give your employees autonomy. Command and control is out. Trust and decentralized decision-making are the keys to drive innovation and support growth. Start from a place of trust and give every employee the direction, freedom and decision-making power they need to demonstrate success. Offer flexibility in where and when they do their work. Encourage risk taking and allow room for mistakes.

Institutionalize consistent feedback so that employees and managers always know where they stand.

3. Encourage social connection. Loneliness is at epidemic levels. Social infrastructure and the value placed on personal interaction are on the decline. Build shared spaces where employees bump into each other to share conversation and ideas. Include remote employees and satellite locations in team and company activities. Encourage coffee breaks, lunch away from the desk, and events outside of work. Create device-free interactions. Find ways to casually share ideas and build social capital.

4. Remember the golden rule. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Bring civility back into the workplace. Gratitude, compassion, empathy, au-

thenticity, being fully present and attentive—these are characteristics of the best leaders.

5. Live your values. If you expect constructive behavior, you have to live it. Demonstrated, it can increase the humanness of your workplace and, in turn, employee resilience. Show you're serious.

Since the Great Recession it's been standard procedure to maximize profits by putting performance ahead of well-being. It's time to recognize employee well-being drives that performance we seek. Your employees' health depends on it; your organization's financial health depends on it. Higher employee productivity will result. Resilience drives performance. ♦