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4 Strategies to Transform Employee Wellbeing Through Recognition

FINDINGS FROM A GALLUP-WORKHUMAN STUDY





Employees are struggling with stress, burnout, and loneliness like never before. It's no surprise that four in 10 U.S. employees say their job is negatively impacting their mental health. You read that right: Forty percent of Americans who showed up — or signed on — to work today are struggling more in life because of it.

This data suggest the workforce is headed toward a tragic wellness crisis if things don't change.

To boost employees' wellbeing and help them thrive, employers can implement strategic recognition. New research from Gallup and Workhuman has found that when people's wellbeing is struggling or suffering, recognition matters even more.

Here's the catch: Great recognition, coupled with great wellbeing, takes performance to a whole new level — but recognition done poorly can undermine those benefits.

Unpacking the intricate connections between recognition and wellbeing can pave the way for better business outcomes and thriving workplaces.

Let's get started.

A closer look at wellbeing and strategic recognition

Through decades of research, Gallup has identified five key elements of wellbeing that contribute to people's thriving, struggling, or suffering in life.

Five key elements of wellbeing

Career wellbeing	People's relationships with others and whether or not they have meaningful connections and positive interactions with others
Social wellbeing	How people spend their days and whether or not they generally like what they do with their time
Financial wellbeing	People's economic stability and standard of living and whether or not they have the funds they need to provide for themselves and/or their family
Physical wellbeing	People's health and physical condition and whether or not they have the energy and endurance to be productive each day
Community wellbeing	People's daily environment and whether or not they feel satisfied, connected, and engaged with the areas in which they live

These five elements then help differentiate how someone’s life is **really** going:

Thriving wellbeing	High wellbeing across most elements
Struggling wellbeing	A mix of high, medium, or low wellbeing across all elements
Suffering wellbeing	Low wellbeing across most elements

Broadly speaking, recognition is defined as giving and receiving praise, appreciation, acknowledgment, and thanks. But to do recognition strategically requires more than a reactive and occasional “thank you.” Gallup and Workhuman have identified five pillars of recognition that are critical to driving the impact of recognition.

Five key pillars of strategic recognition

Fulfilling employees’ recognition expectations:
The amount you receive makes sense.

Authentic:
It isn’t just a “checklist” thing.

Personalized:
One size doesn’t fit all.

Equitable:
It’s given fairly without playing favorites.

Embedded in an organization’s culture:
It’s integrated into the day-to-day.

The link between recognition, wellbeing, and job searching

Struggling employees are more likely to have one foot out the door. This figure is magnified for those who also don't feel appreciated at work.

Sixty-two percent of suffering employees are looking or watching for job opportunities. Among those with poor recognition experiences, this rate soars to 75%.

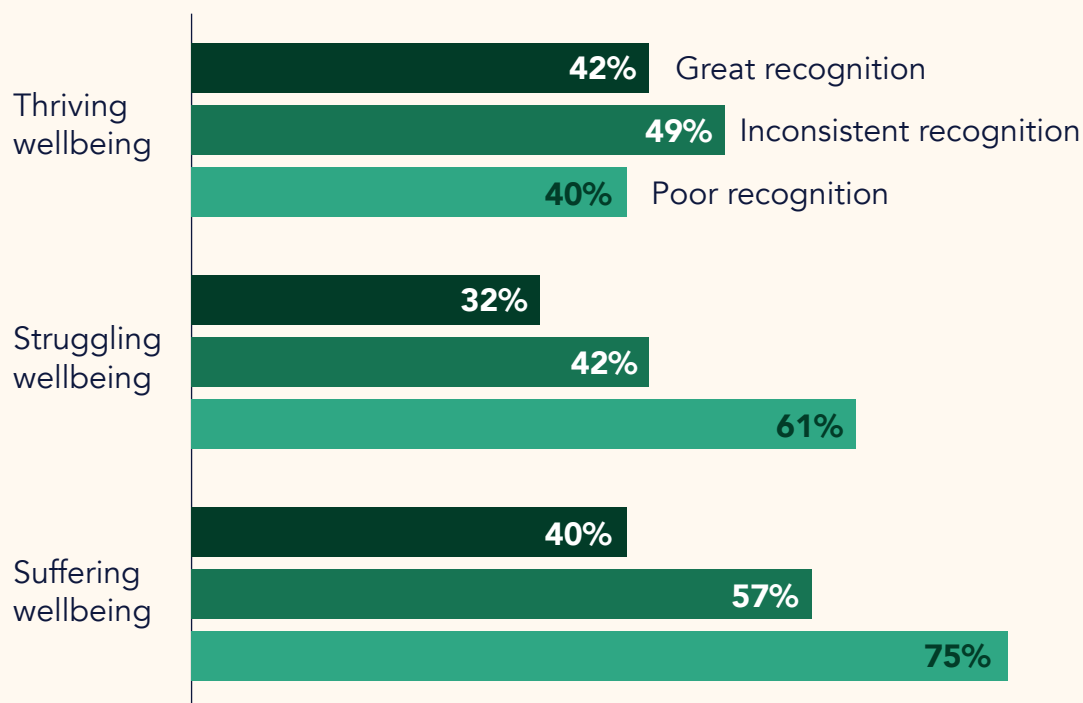
That means three in four employees whose wellbeing is suffering and who are poorly recognized are actively seeking or watching for a way out of their organization.

But there's a bright spot – strategic recognition can make a big impact on employees who are suffering. Strategic recognition – or recognition that is “great” – fulfills all five of the pillars of recognition.

When employees have suffering wellbeing, but are experiencing great strategic recognition, **only 40%** are actively looking or watching for job opportunities.

This figure illuminates the effect.

Percentage of employees who are actively looking or watching for job opportunities



Especially among struggling and suffering employees, **great** strategic recognition experiences are buffering the relationship between low wellbeing and job hunting.



Next steps for leaders

Leaders and managers can make a positive impact on the wellbeing of employees by strategically ensuring recognition is spread throughout their organization. To make a change, start with these four steps.

1. Link wellbeing and recognition strategies.

Seek and recognize feedback from managers and employees to identify how improvements can be made at each level of the organization to promote recognition and wellbeing together. Be strategic when addressing these gaps. Consider supporting your employees by providing – and promoting – opportunities to focus on their wellbeing.

2. Empower your managers.

Educate every manager on the importance of recognition and wellbeing, and underscore the synergy between the two. Regardless of the tools or budget at your disposal, every manager should be equipped to recognize employees strategically by leveraging recognition and having conversations with their team about wellbeing.

3. Executives lead the way.

Whether it be recognizing someone for their good work on a project or implementing policies to prioritize work-life balance, employees are watching what their leaders are doing and taking note. When it comes to recognition and wellbeing, be the change you want to see in your organization; others will follow suit.

4. Create opportunities and celebrate healthy habits.

Show support for your employees by helping them put their health first. Consider implementing company-wide wellbeing challenges that include opportunities for employees to recognize one another's efforts. These initiatives will not only promote employee engagement, but will foster a culture of wellbeing and recognition.



To learn more about the relationship between recognition and wellbeing, [download our latest free report](#). This report will arm you with the tips and data you need to harness strategic recognition and create positive change across your organization.

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