

Supporting Financial Wellness as a Manager

1st March 2020

From making ends meet to saving for an emergency, money is the primary source of stress for most of us and it can follow people to work. Financial wellness has an impact not only on employee well-being but also on the corporate bottom line because high levels of stress can lower productivity and lead to absences. As a manager, it is vital that you learn how to support financial wellness among your team.

Financial stress and its impact in the workplace

Tom Rath and Jim Harter, co-authors of the bestselling book *Well Being: The Five Essential Elements*, define financial well-being as “effectively managing your economic life.” This includes being financially prepared for emergencies, living within your means rather than on credit card debt, and making informed financial decisions.

Through their research, Rath and Harter found that there are things organisations can do to help employees boost their overall well-being, including their financial wellness. The first step is to recognise when an employee might be dealing with financial stress. The signs include:

- periods of unplanned absence
- arriving late or leaving early
- spending an unusual amount of time on personal calls or emails
- presenteeism or being present at work but not engaged
- showing more greater-than-usual levels of fatigue, low-energy, or depressed mood; being irritable, hostile, or angry; having frequent abrupt changes in mood or outbursts; and making more mistakes than usual
- borrowing against retirement savings
- requests for advance pay

Ways to support financial wellness

There are many ways to support individual and team financial wellness as a manager. Here are some ideas:

Encourage employees to take advantage of resources available through your organisation.

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These could include financial counselling through the assistance programme; seminars on budgeting or saving; employee discount schemes and perks; and company benefits like a savings plans. It could be useful to inform employees about these resources and encourage them to take advantage of them as many may not be aware they exist. Consult your human resources department to learn more about how to support employees during difficult times.

If you see an employee is struggling to keep pace or that their job performance is lagging, have a private conversation about this. Bring up your concerns tactfully, and be specific. You could say, "You seem very stressed. That isn't like you. I know work has been pressured." Also be sure to remind them that resources such as the assistance programme are available to help with the emotional and practical sides of financial well-being.

Maintain confidentiality and respect employee privacy. Keep what you know about an employee to yourself and follow codes of confidentiality.

Remember that well-being is interconnected. By learning to how to champion financial wellness in your workplace, you can help your team balance their physical, mental, and emotional health and be happier in and out of the office.