

# The importance of wellness in your small business

In the past, I have been fortunate enough to manage both large and small businesses.

While I prefer the small, boutique business environment, I understand that it brings with it a unique set of challenges. Above the pressure of being a small-business owner, the very fact that we are small means that all of our staff need to be operating efficiently and effectively and any breakdown in process can have an acute impact not only on our stress, but on the overall health of our business.

If we are to lead strong businesses, we must support the wellness of our staff and ourselves, so we are all performing at our best.

From a neurological and wellness perspective, the evidence shows that those of us who actively manage wellness, experience lower stress levels, greater mental alertness, more energy, higher self-esteem, better memory, greater work fulfilment, less workload pressure and greater concentration.

Now imagine that you and your staff could experience a boost in these factors by just 5%. What impact would this have on your business and your life?

## The six cylinders of wellness

While there are a number of theories and philosophies telling us what we need to do in order to achieve wellness, a practical assessment of the evidence allows us to identify specific actions that you can take in order to be at your best, in and out of the workplace. We call these the six cylinders of wellness. As you review the actions below, give yourself a score out of 10 for each one and in doing so, you will arrive at your own wellness@work profile.

### 1. Nutrition

Having a nutrition plan in place is just a guess without a thorough and accurate diagnostic of what your body needs right now. The smart thing to do is to get a complete blood work done with a nutrition expert. Doing this every 18 months and encouraging your staff to do the same ensures that you are fuelling your body with

what it specifically needs. Without the right fuel, everything is harder.

### 2. Activity

Humans are not designed to be sedentary for longer than 45 minutes at a time, so it's important that you get up, stretch and get the blood moving regularly throughout the day. Make sure that you and your staff don't become slaves to the desk so that your brain gets the blood flow required to operate at a consistently high level.

### 3. Sleep

We can't fight our body clock, but we can work with it to reboot and refresh. One common mistake is choosing to take technology to bed as this stimulates the brain when the body is on a down cycle toward restorative sleep. The result is a disturbed sleep pattern and not nearly enough quality restoration.

This can result in 'sleep debt' that is equivalent to being above 0.1 blood alcohol. Therefore, regular sleep patterns and a good old fashion alarm clock is a great investment in sleep quality.

### 4. Social connections

Regardless of your personality, we are a social species and our brain chemistry benefits from connecting regularly with positive people. Social withdrawal, however, is an early-warning signal that pressure is having an impact. If you notice that you or a member of your team are becoming more withdrawn or isolated, make a commitment to catch up and connect.

### 5. Time out

Your business will survive without you, and your staff need time out – fact. Make time out a priority as a sustainability measure that just happens to be pleasurable as well. Whether it is a family holiday or just a weekend away, book it in now.

### 6. Outlet

Your outlet is simply any activity that engages your mind and body to the extent that you lose track of time. Yoga and surfing

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are good examples, as are gardening, golf and walking the dog. We are not built to run from one adrenaline-fuelled situation to the next, and to attempt this results in an 'illusion of effectiveness' that's not sustainable.

Encourage staff to find and engage their outlet regularly so they can be at their best.

### Take action

Now look at your scorecard. What is something practical that you will do differently to improve your low scores? Our website has a comprehensive guide for you and your staff to follow. Our 2014 research shows that making small changes here reduced stress by 8% and workload pressure by 16% in six weeks.

When our businesses are running well, these actions are easier. However, the time that we need this the most is when things are tough. So no matter where you are on your business life cycle, a focus on wellness will have an impact.

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