

Wellness for HR and the wider workforce



Introduction

Promoting wellness is high on the agenda for many organisations this year, following the mental and physical strain that COVID-19 imposed on the workforce in 2020. With concerns arising about the effects of long COVID, and the psychological toll of ongoing lockdowns and restrictions, businesses need to invest time and money into their workforce's wellness.

HR also needs to be mindful that they are employees too, and their wellbeing is equally important. Remembering to use the HR tools available to them to support their own careers and wellness is essential in making sure the HR department remains healthy – in all senses of the word.

Included in this report are 5 blogs to help HR manage wellness:

- How to support workforce wellness in 2021
- Supporting your own wellness as an HR professional
- Using your HR system to support your career wellbeing
- How HR can champion kindness and wellbeing
- 5 things that HR can feel hopeful about in 2021



Blog 1: How to support workforce wellness in 2021

It's no secret that people have had enough of COVID-19 and some are reaching the end of their tether with the ongoing restrictions. So, what can businesses do to promote wellness? And how can organisations promote mental wellness when resilience is wearing thin? The vaccine is here and a return to some sort of 'normal' is hopefully on the horizon, but employees may need some extra support to get through the intervening period.

Resilience

For HR practitioners looking to increase resilience in their workforce, a course might be a good port of call. The CIPD offers ['Building Resilience'](#), with an 'in-house' option for organisations, too. The course is described as '... for those looking to remain optimistic, curious and motivated under pressure, and optimise their performance at work whilst ensuring well-being.'

But courses aren't the only solution. People's resilience levels within an organisation will differ, perhaps due to personality type or life experience. HR could seek to harness this by identifying people who are known for their resilience and asking if they'd be willing to buddy up with people who might be struggling at the moment. For anyone suffering from loneliness, connecting with another staff member in an informal way might help with that, too.

The power of storytelling is a tool that can help build resilience as well. In ['Three remote working lessons from the most isolated professions'](#) in HRZone, we explained how wildlife rangers, who often work on their own, are benefiting from 'narrative therapies'. The article also looks at how live-in carers and long-distance truck drivers deal with isolation. Do you know of anyone in your own organisation whose life or work story embodies resilience? With their permission, sharing these kinds of experiences with your workforce will give people hints and tips for building their own resilience.

Taking a break

For most people, taking regular breaks from work is important for their wellbeing. There will always be some staff members who want to power on without taking a break for a variety of reasons. But for those who do want – and need – a break this year, HR needs to encourage the business to do everything it can to accommodate their leave requests.

Unfortunately, in some organisations, leave ends up being denied due to short staffing and this puts employees who have to work – when they really need a break – at risk of burnout. There's no point being seen to have all hands on-deck if those hands are physically and mentally exhausted!

The other side of the coin can also be true – staff being very diligent and not asking for a break because they are afraid of leaving their teams under resourced. If you think your workforce might be at risk of this, remind your staff that it's okay to ask for leave and that management will do what they can. Whole teams are unlikely to be able to take leave at once, but managers could come back with a staggered approach that works for everyone.



Resources

If you're concerned that your staff may be feeling confused and stressed about what to do to stay COVID-19 safe/compliant given all the updates and rule changes over the last year, it might be helpful to provide a list of reliable resources for them to consult, so hearsay and inaccurate reporting don't cloud their decision making.

In addition to links to Government and medical sites about COVID-19, providing some suggestions for mental health support resources would also be useful. If you have an HR system, you could use a workspace to signpost people to websites like [Mind](#), [Time to Change](#) and [Together](#). The [NHS](#) also has a comprehensive list of organisations that people can reach out to for help.

Your workforce may also appreciate some ideas of things they can do if they want to 'holiday' at home. Parents looking after young children would probably love some new ideas for keeping them entertained, and staff living on their own might enjoy a list of ways to stay social from their living room. You could set up a workspace on an [HR system](#) like Cezanne HR purely for sharing these kinds of ideas, encouraging staff to get involved by telling each other what's worked for them over the last year.

Blog 2: Supporting your own wellness as an HR professional

HR professionals often find themselves in the unenviable position of facing pressure on multiple sides. Balancing legal and compliance obligations, instructions from business leaders, and feedback and requests from the workforce isn't easy, and these demands aren't always aligned.

So, what do you do when you're feeling overwhelmed and you're not sure where to start? Creating a hierarchy that determines how you prioritise tasks and requests is essential.

What are the must dos?

The tasks that must always remain a priority for HR are those that fall under the heading of 'legal and compliance'. While every business will have a different appetite for risk, establishing and sticking to at least a baseline for keeping up with legal and compliance related tasks is very important. Needless to say, a lack of support in this area can also cause a lot of unnecessary stress for HR professionals trying to do the right thing but without the backing of the business.

In '[6 Ways Cezanne HR can Improve your Bottom Line](#)', we discuss how using an [HR system](#) can help you stay on top of compliance. Cloud HR software allows you to store important documentation in one easy-to-find place, helps you to record and manage processes, and enables you to provide a record of truth if HR is challenged on any legal or compliance issues.

In addition to using good technology, your HR team should be very clear on who is responsible for what in terms of legal and compliance needs. Ensure those given these tasks have the right qualifications to complete them. Don't delegate to inexperienced staff members – it can cause distress and avoidable errors, draining further time from HR resources.

Prioritising the rest...

Once you've ensured you're operating legally and compliantly – and this might not always be the thing that business leaders shout about the loudest, likely assuming it's a given that this is being looked after – you need to determine the rest of your hierarchy of priorities. It may be helpful to think about tasks in terms of needs and values.

Payroll

If [payroll](#) is part of your HR function, this should be at the top of your list. If you don't pay your people, you won't have a workforce – unless they're volunteers, people won't work for long, if at all, for free. So, 'payroll day' will always need to take a high priority, and if someone tries to pull resource away from this activity, HR needs to gently remind them why payroll is important.



Business-critical tasks

HR also needs to think about what their workforce needs from them to do their jobs. While HR will get lots of requests, anything that is business critical, like making sure a new starter has an employee record and can actually begin working on their first day, is a top priority. An HR system with an [onboarding module](#) and checklists makes fulfilling this priority very straightforward. It's important that HR doesn't drop the ball on business-critical activities because not only will it stop people from being able to perform their duties, it will also damage HR's relationship with the business.

Organisation values

With the top HR activities identified, it's a bit easier for HR to manage the pressure they're under from the business. Being able to articulate these priorities to senior managers and staff alike should help buffer HR from unreasonable demands. Non-essential requests could then be prioritised according to how aligned they are with the business' values; and working with your business leaders to regularly align HR time with your organisation's values should help reduce unwanted pressure on HR.

If, for instance, your business is working towards improving employee engagement, then HR can agree with senior leaders to dedicate HR time to engagement activities and surveys to measure success. Or perhaps your organisation has identified environmental issues as being an area of focus and HR wants to champion that. Whatever values HR chooses to focus on, make sure it's done in consultation with your business, so everyone respects how HR is spending its time.

Routine activities

Tasks that need to be completed on a regular basis are another consideration when working out your hierarchy of priorities. Annual/half yearly performance reviews are one such example, and they require HR, line manager and staff time. Using a [performance module](#) in an HR system can help you manage this process.

For the sake of your talent pipelines, you will also want to dedicate some time to talent mapping, understanding what skills you have in your business, and planning how to fill any gaps. While this activity might not have the same urgency as payroll for instance, it's important for the future health of your business and does also need attention.

HR will always be on the receiving end of demands from all area of the business; it's part of the nature of the role – HR is there for 'the people'. HR professionals need to have confidence in their own expertise and ability to prioritise, so they can explain to the business why certain tasks trump others, and provide a solid rationale for a hierarchy of priorities. When all is said and done, HR professionals need to be able to stand their ground and maintain a sense of wellbeing and focus, despite being pulled in lots of different directions.

Blog 3: Using your HR system to support your career wellbeing

It's time for HR to challenge how they perceive their tech solutions. Yes, an HR system can dramatically reduce HR's admin load, organise and streamline processes, and help provide more accurate, easily accessible data. But, what is often overlooked is the fact that great HR systems can also help HR professionals progress in their careers.

Choosing the right HR system can open doors for HR. From generalists who want to pursue a speciality, to those who seek better business insights to improve the advice they're giving, an HR system can help with these needs and more.

A great HR system can deliver the structure, time and insights HR professionals need to move up the career ladder.

Benefitting from your tools of the trade

It's a well-known paradox that people often forget to use their trade skills for themselves – the plumber with the leaking tap, the carpenter with an unfinished deck, the insurance broker who forgets their own insurance, and so on. HR can also fall into this trap, forgetting that HR tech can help with their own career development.

As one of the people who best understands your business' HR system, make sure you're getting the most out of it for yourself and your team. The right HR system can help you to keep track of your skills and qualifications. It can record your goals and check-in conversations, and help with succession planning for your HR team, too.

Your HR software can also assist if you wish to make a sideways career move within HR. If, for instance, you've been focusing on onboarding, but you'd like to move across to absence management, you'll have the advantage of working within a system that's already

familiar to you (allowing for differences between HR modules), and you'll also be able to quickly get up to speed with your new focus area using the data that's conveniently stored in the system.

Time to think

For HR generalists drowning in spreadsheets and paperwork, having time to stop and think about their own career can feel like a pipedream. The treadmill of never-ending absence enquiries, new-starter and leaver paperwork, performance management forms, etc. doesn't leave much time for HR people to think about themselves or to come up with a plan about where they want their career to go.

The right HR system can deliver a change in pace for HR, giving you time to step back to think about your work more objectively. You can then better determine what you like and don't like about your role. You can plot out a career that plays to your strengths and interests, and look for opportunities that align with them. When there's no time to think and plan, years can go by before you realise that you might be in a professional rut.

Having time to think also allows you to work less like an administrator and more like a strategic leader. For example, your HR system can manage logging sickness leave so you can look at seasonal sickness patterns and plan ahead to cover resourcing. Your HR system can also look after onboarding paperwork so



you have time to personally connect with new-starters, focussing on making them feel welcome and checking how they're settling in. Leaving the paperwork to the software gives you more opportunities to shine and move forward in your profession.

Insights that help your business and your reputation

Intelligent insights are a key ingredient for career progression. Being able to show a deep understanding of your business and put forward ideas that are backed by hard data is a great way for an HR professional to get noticed in a positive light. And, honing in on critical business challenges and having access to specific intelligence helps HR to carve out areas of expertise.

An HR system like Cezanne HR will give you the depth of information you need to have an impact on your business. Using the data your software provides, you can become known to senior leaders in your business as a go-to person for business intelligence. Your knowledge of your workforce, from performance and absence trends, to onboarding insights and more, will help ensure that your business recognises you as valuable talent, to be retained and nurtured.

If you want to support the wellbeing of your career, you're missing a trick if you don't make the most of a great HR system. You need to harness HR software, both as a system administrator and a system user, deriving the maximum value from it for your business and yourself. The right software can give you the time, insights and tools you need to find and pursue the speciality that's right for you – and to gain the recognition you deserve!

Blog 4: How HR can champion kindness and wellbeing

Kindness took centre stage at the last Mental Health Awareness Week*, organised by the Mental Health Foundation. It continues to be a great focal point for conversations as the world navigates the mental health concerns arising from COVID-19.

Over the last year, there have been many stories about human kindness. Neighbours helping the more vulnerable in their community, retirees returning to the frontlines of public service, and of course, the healthcare professionals tirelessly caring for their patients.

Putting a spotlight on kindness and wellbeing, what can HR do to ensure it's ingrained in their company culture?

Kindness is conveyed through both words and actions. Discovering where your company can improve in the kindness stakes necessitates looking at both.

Start with your values

Kindness is a value that most people were taught at an early age, but unfortunately the competitive nature of the workforce can sometimes result in behaviours that are less than kind. HR should be at the forefront of championing kindness as an important value for their organisation. Setting a high expectation for how people relate to each other supports good teamwork and respect.

Articulating kindness as a value also makes it easier to identify and address behaviours that are unkind, and counterproductive to a harmonious working environment. Expectations of kindness can be reinforced as needed in performance reviews, helping to shape the overall company culture.



Align HR with Internal Comms

If your HR team isn't already working closely with your internal communications team, now is a good time to start. Having set kindness as a key company value, look at the tone that's being used to communicate with staff. Does it reflect a kind and caring organisation? Do company-wide communications speak in a language that you'd like your staff to emulate?

It might be a useful exercise to work with the internal communications team on creating a style guide that reflects company values. This is especially important in helping senior staff members to communicate with a common voice, embodying kindness and empathy from the top down.

Walk the talk

Once you've established that kindness is important to your organisation, and you've ensured the language your business uses is aligned to that, it's time to bring kindness to life through your actions.

Do you have any current HR initiatives that show kindness to your workforce?

Would your HR policies stand up to scrutiny if you looked at each of them through a 'kindness' lens?

Do you know of any team leaders who are great at showing and promoting kindness in their team?

Taking a 'kind' approach to your HR activities sets a tone that the rest of your business will pick up on. It will help build relationships between HR and the business, and it will show HR as role models for thoughtful business practices.

From small kind gestures to bigger actions, below are some activities HR can lead on to embed kindness in their organisation, especially during COVID-19:

- Send virtual cards to celebrate birthdays and milestones, and encourage line managers to do the same to say thank you for a job well done.
- Remind your workforce about the resources and support you have available for mental health, so staff have the information to hand if they need it.
- If someone has been unwell, or a member of their family has been ill, send a card/flowers/etc. as appropriate.
- Use internal communication channels to remind people that being thoughtful in the moment is just as important as planned actions – giving people extra space to observe social distancing, inviting quieter members of the team to talk during group discussions, and remembering to say thank you go a long way!
- If you know that someone has been struggling with work or personal issues, give them a call to see how they're getting on. Likewise, if you know staff members live alone, make sure they are in regular contact with their team or other members of the organisation.

- Be as flexible as possible with requests for time off and changing holiday allowance carry over. This act of kindness can make a big difference to people in managing their work-life balance.
- Encourage senior management to think about additional perks they might be willing to offer while people are managing work and COVID-19 related stresses and distractions. For example, duvet days for people's birthdays, Friday afternoons off, greater flexibility in working hours, etc. can all be a nice way to show your workforce they are appreciated.
- Budget permitting, explore giving staff prizes by way of vouchers or other rewards. The prizes could be for exceptional work, behaviours that bring to life company values, or other activities you'd like to highlight.
- Identify and make available the training opportunities (free and paid-for) that will be most beneficial for your workforce.
- Organise a fundraiser for a charity that is meaningful to your organisation and your staff. If you have staff members whose partners provide an essential service, such as the NHS, raising funds for them is a good way to show solidarity with your staff and help the wider community.
- Ask your people what they need! Sometimes it's easy to forget to simply offer a helping hand, making it clear that the business can work with staff to find solutions to challenges (work related or otherwise).

People express kindness in different ways. Conveying kindness in how you communicate with your staff, as well as showing them they work for a thoughtful, kind company through initiatives like the above might just be the panacea the world needs to the current health crisis.

[*https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week)

Blog 5: 5 things that HR can feel hopeful about in 2021

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the UK has given everyone cause to hope for a better 2021. But what can HR look forward to professionally this year?

After an extremely challenging 2020, when HR was called on to lead organisations through rapid change to operate in COVID-19-safe ways, HR can be hopeful and excited about 2021. Less paperwork, more technical aptitude in the workforce, and a chance to work more strategically are just some of the highlights this year could hold for HR.

1. An increase in technical skills

For many organisations, 2020 forced people to use digital communication and workflow processing tools – whether they had a lot of previous experience with them or not. Presumably most people who now rely on these online tools are more competent in their use.

This technical aptitude is good news for HR. If a baseline of competency has been established across the workforce in performing team-conferencing calls and utilising HR software, it's that much easier for HR to reach the workforce with consistent HR processes, and to check they're being followed. If, for instance, HR and line management need to onboard a new employee working from home, this should be a smoother process in 2021 as people are hopefully more familiar with the technology involved.

2. Better use of HR software and less paperwork

Being forced to work off site in 2020, or with teams that were a mix of both on- and off-site workers, would have encouraged many HR professionals to embrace HR software – or to upgrade their current solution if what they already had in place wasn't up to par.

While the initial set up of HR processes online can take time, the reward is dramatically reduced paperwork for HR. Out of necessity and safety, 'paperwork' completed on actual paper, is likely to become a relic of the past.

3. A focus on analytics and strategy

Less paperwork and more digital solutions at HR's fingertips might be just the right impetus to free up and redirect HR's time to more strategic work. And for many businesses, this time could be well spent on HR analytics.

By creating or advancing an HR analytics discipline within an organisation, HR can increase their own job satisfaction by being able to see, tweak and prove the value in HR interventions, and business leaders will be armed with much deeper insights into their workforces than they've ever had before.



4. Business-wide recognition of work–life balance as a priority

2020 shone a light on just how important staff wellness – mental and physical – is to a business. All the processes that HR had to hurriedly put into place to keep people safe will allow businesses to be more agile in 2021 and beyond. HR professionals who have been beating the drum about work–life balance for years couldn't have envisioned that it'd take a pandemic to firmly cement flexible working practices, but they can now use the lessons learnt during COVID-19 to evidence how flexibility has worked for their business.

With homeworking, or a hybrid of on- and off-site working now the norm in a lot of organisations, HR can progress the conversation about flexible working even further in 2021.

We've already seen ideas floated about 4-day working weeks in the news. Businesses could also consider higher degrees of flexibility in terms of working hours and patterns. HR professionals likely have many ideas about flexible working and how it could work within their own organisations – 2021 will hopefully produce a more receptive audience for these ideas with flexibility front and centre of business leaders' minds.

5. Diversity and inclusion gaining increased business support and focus

COVID-19 wasn't the only issue dominating workplaces in 2020. Diversity and inclusion (D&I) was also high on businesses' agendas (including the overlap between COVID-19 and concerns about some groups being disproportionately affected by the virus).

Important conversations about equal opportunities, regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, sex, age etc. that gained momentum in 2020 need to continue in 2021. As with flexible working, HR no doubt has many ideas about ways their businesses can be more diverse and inclusive, and with increased world attention on the issue, they are more likely to get support for D&I initiatives now.

COVID-19 made 2020 a very difficult year for everyone, but the issues that were raised, and the advances made to cope with new ways of working, should lead to more progress and opportunities for HR projects in 2021.

How an HR system can help

A good HR system can be a real asset in promoting wellness in your workforce. You can use HR software to stay in touch with your staff via workspaces, notification emails and even SMS. Workspaces can also be used as a forum to discuss wellness concerns, with threads dedicated to different topics that are important to your organisation.

HR software with absence and performance management capabilities will also enable you to manage wellness on a practical level. You can see who is absent, when and why, as well as keeping an eye on performance so you can spot where interventions might be needed. Having workforce insights readily available puts HR on the front foot in maintaining a healthy workforce – and their own wellness!



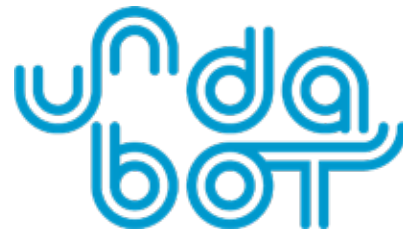
Good HR systems include:

- Module flexibility so you can add and remove what you need to
- A variety of communication tools to stay in touch with your people
- Easy accessibility via the Cloud and self service so data can be maintained
- A great customer support team to help you get the most from your software

In our customer's words

Head of HR at Undabot, Davor Pukšić describes how Cezanne HR has helped them throughout COVID-19...

‘We’ve been ‘remote friendly’ for some time now, but having Cezanne HR does always help with working from home. Being able to have all our data in one place with Cezanne HR has always been very important for us – it makes activities like updating the core data in the system easier. Easy access to information, like contact details for employees, has been important, too.’



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About Cezanne HR

This report was written by Cezanne HR. Cezanne HR is leading the way in delivering smart Cloud HR software solutions to mid-sized and growing businesses, both locally and globally, at a cost unthinkable just a few years ago. Cezanne HR's system is quick to deploy, easy to manage and packed full of features that save time and help everyone work together more productively and successfully.

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