

A Case for Corporate Kindness

By Dr. Monica Vermani, C. Psych, Clinical Psychologist
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“Transparency, honesty, kindness, good stewardship, even humor, work in businesses at all times.”
— John Gerzema, author, social strategist, leadership consultant.

The corporate workplace has long been regarded as a competitive and tough space, where corporate profits and the bottom line are top considerations, with all other considerations further down the list of priorities. But these days, attracting, retaining, and creating a workplace that engages and supports employees is critical to the success of an organization. But increasingly, leading businesses are working to create kinder, more compassionate corporate cultures and working environments, workplaces that foster team cohesion over competitiveness, support employee engagement, and strive to keep employees in all areas and levels of employment healthy and happy while also meeting corporate goals and targets.

Creating a culture of kindness in the workplace involves demonstrating respect to all employees, building a culture of openness, and consistency. Kindness involves investing in employee wellbeing, training, work/life balance, and fostering a culture where employees are engaged and supported.

Concerning numbers

In their recent State of the Global Workplace 2021 Report, Gallup Inc. shared the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of employees from 116 countries around the world. And much of what the report reveals should cause concerns for employers around the world. Globally, only 20 percent of employees’ report being engaged in their job, down 2 percent from the previous report. Canadian and American employees fared considerably better than the average, with employee engagement at just 34 percent. Globally, 43 percent of employees reported experiencing high stress. Here, an astounding

57 percent of Canadian and American employees reported experiencing high levels of stress... a full 12 percent over the global average.

Room for improvement

With employee engagement in Canada at just 34 percent, there is clearly much room for improvement in boosting engagement, team cohesion, and interactions in our working environments.

Equally concerning is the high level of stress — a whopping 57 percent — reported by Canadian employees. While some stress is inevitable, and not all stress is bad, long-term stress carries many serious health implications, and can negatively impact productivity and job satisfaction. Stress is also linked to chronic fatigue, headaches, heart problems, gastrointestinal problems, and sleep disorders, and is one of the leading causes of absenteeism in the workplace. According to a 2021 CIPD/Simply Health Absence survey, stress is currently the number one cause of long-term absence in the workplace. In Canada, corporations lose an average of 16 days of productivity a year per employee due to stress, anxiety, and depression-related issues. Furthermore, 40% of worker turnover in Canada is due to on-the-job stress.

Where the benefits of a kinder workplace come into play

Kinder workplaces make for happier and more engaged employees. A happy, engaged workforce shows up, and functions at a higher level, with increased creativity, collaboration, and teamwork. Workplaces with higher levels of employee engagement,

support, and satisfaction experience less absenteeism and presenteeism (where an employee is present but disengages and unable to carry out their role). Workplace cultures that prioritize kindness are also more successful at attracting and retaining talent. The case for creating a corporate culture that includes kindness has never been stronger.

A great place to start

The question today is not whether to create a culture of kindness in the workplace, but how and where to begin. Creating a kinder workplace is not something that can be done overnight. It requires an intentional and concerted organizational effort to treat employees in every area and at every level of the organization, with respect and dignity. It means communicating in a meaningful way with employees, settling conflicts and disputes fairly and transparently, and providing compassionate supports and for employees through challenging times, and creating working environments where everyone feels safe, included, and appreciated.

Investing in enhanced employee wellness is a great way to begin building a kinder, more supportive work environment and culture. Understanding the value of committing to and investing in a tailor-made wellness program

that leverages strengths and enhances kindness in the workplace can greatly assist in attracting, engaging, and supporting their employees, while positively impacting the bottom line.

Organizations invested in employee wellness report greater employee engagement and job satisfaction, team cohesion, and increased success in attracting top talent. Customized wellness programs can help build and nurture kindness in the workplace through enhancing self-care knowledge and offerings, like meditation, yoga, exercise, and counseling. They teach employees valuable interpersonal skills, like how to build solid, supportive teams, resolve conflicts, and how to balance career and family responsibilities. Wellness programs also open the channels of communication between management and staff, which leads to greater team cohesion, congeniality, and kindness.

Attracting, retaining, and creating a workplace that engages and supports employees is critical to the success of an organization, perhaps now more than ever before. As the end of a very challenging year approaches and we look toward a future in a world that is beginning to cautiously reopen, let us remember that there is always more room in the world for kindness, including in the workplace.

Source: *State of the Global Workplace 2021 Report, Gallup Inc.*



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About the author

Dr. Monica Vermani is a Clinical Psychologist specializing in treating trauma, stress and mood & anxiety disorders, and the founder of Start Living Corporate Wellness. She is a well-known speaker and author on mental health and wellness. Her upcoming book, A Deeper Wellness, is scheduled for publication in 2021.

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Dr. Vermani has recently launched an exciting online self-help program, A Deeper Wellness, delivering powerful mental-health guidance, life skills, and knowledge that employees can access anywhere, anytime. <https://www.adeeperwellness.com/>

