

AM Wellness

WELLNESS

WHITE PAPER

BRIDGING THE WELLNESS ENGAGEMENT DIVIDE:
Connecting Onsite, Hybrid and Remote Employees

Workplace wellness has never been easier to access, yet reaching employees is not the same as engaging them. This white paper explores how employers can combine digital convenience, personalized programming, human coaching and shared experiences to connect onsite, hybrid and remote workers. Backed by research, it shows how a more inclusive, connected approach can strengthen participation, sustain healthy behaviors and support better outcomes for employees and organizations.

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BRIDGING THE WELLNESS ENGAGEMENT DIVIDE:
Connecting Onsite, Hybrid and Remote Employees

Technology can extend the reach of wellness. Human connection helps turn that reach into engagement.

Workplace wellness can now reach employees in more ways than ever before.
Digital platforms put wellness resources in an employee's pocket. Live and recorded programs reach across diverse locations and schedules. Onsite programs bring visibility, energy and personal contact. Shared challenges, team goals and leaderboards give coworkers who rarely share a workplace something meaningful to do together.

But being able to reach employees is only the first step.
The real challenge is moving from access to engagement, from engagement to sustained action, and from sustained action to meaningful results.

Research has linked well-designed workplace health programs with reduced absenteeism and, in some studies, improvements in work ability, performance and productivity.[1–3] Those results do not flow automatically from offering a benefit. Employees have to take part.

The evidence points toward a model that pairs the reach and ease of technology with relevant choices, steady communication, social connection and real human support.

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Meeting Employees Where They Are

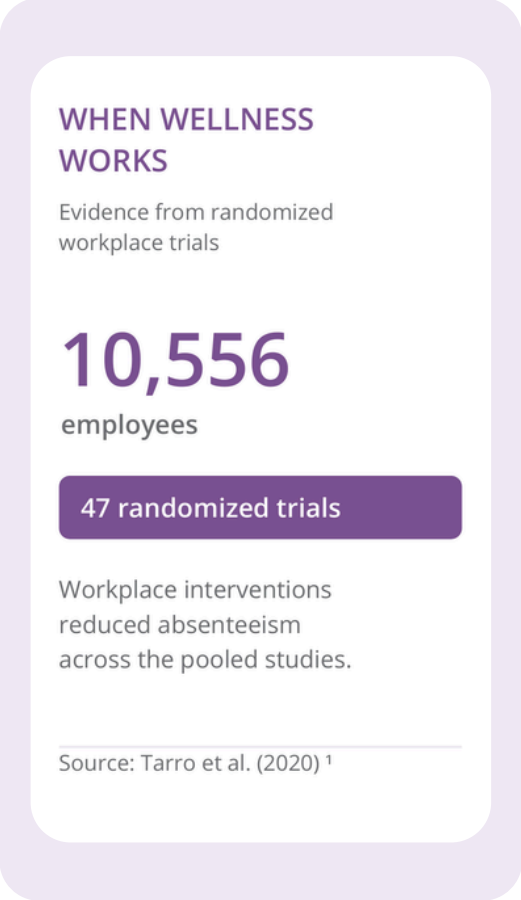
Meeting employees where they are is about far more than geography. People come to wellness with different schedules, job demands, abilities, interests, goals and levels of readiness.
Someone who spends a shift on their feet has different needs from someone who works eight hours at a home-office desk. An active employee may enjoy a fitness challenge. Someone who has not exercised in years may need another way in.

Meeting Employees Where They Are *cont...*

The opportunity is to offer multiple paths into wellbeing. One person may start with a walking challenge. Another joins an onsite class. Someone else watches a short program at home or talks privately with a coach about sleep, stress or exercise.

All of these are valid ways to participate. Digital programs can also link those separate paths: a remote employee and an onsite colleague can work toward the same team goal, appear on the same leaderboard or encourage one another without ever sharing a building.

The goal is not to get everyone doing the same thing. It is to create enough relevant opportunities that more employees find a place to begin, while giving them ways to feel connected to something beyond their own activity.



When Wellness Works, Work Benefits

Employee wellbeing and work performance do not exist in separate worlds. Health affects attendance, energy, focus and a person's ability to handle the physical and mental demands of a job.

A systematic review of 47 randomized workplace trials involving 10,556 employees found that workplace interventions reduced absenteeism. Individualized and counseling-based programs with fewer than 10 sessions performed best.[1]

Other reviews have found that some workplace health programs improve work ability, performance, presenteeism and productivity, although results vary from program to program.[2,3]

That evidence does not mean that offering a wellness program automatically makes employees more productive. The more useful conclusion is this:

Well-designed wellness programs can improve work-related outcomes, but only when employees engage.

Engagement, then, is not simply a participation statistic. It is the link between offering wellness and realizing its value.

Digital Wellness Has Expanded the Opportunity

Digital technology has greatly widened the scope of workplace wellness. Employees can access education, exercise programs, live and recorded sessions, challenges, tracking tools and other resources across locations and schedules. Team challenges, progress tracking and leaderboards can also create common ground for a workforce that rarely gathers in one place.

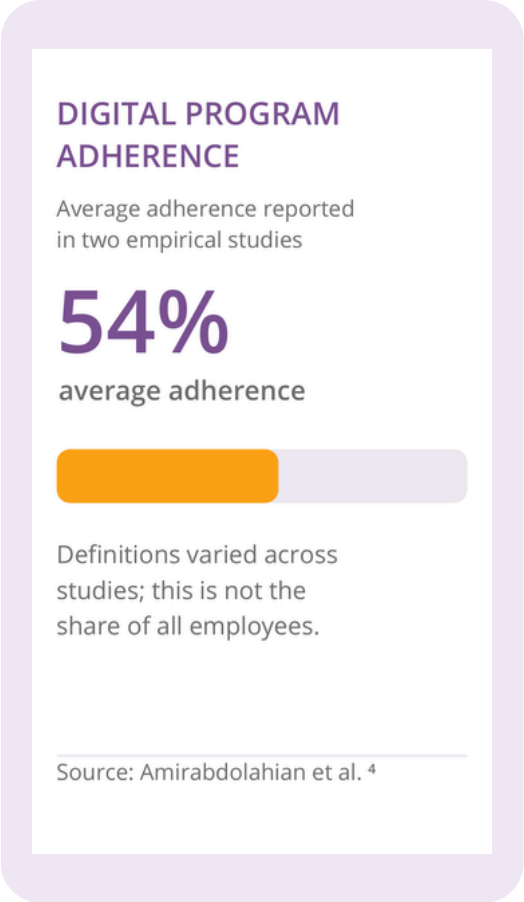
Digital wellness can produce benefits on its own. A 2025 meta-review of 29 reviews of employer digital wellness programs found evidence of benefits for mental health, physical activity, weight management, unhealthy behaviors and sleep.[4]

But the same research highlights a basic problem: access does not necessarily create engagement.

In the few studies that measured initial uptake of digital workplace mental health programs, an average of only 11% of targeted employees actually started. Average adherence, where reported, was 54%.[4]

Those figures need to be read with care. Each came from only two studies, and researchers found wide variation in how engagement was defined and measured. Even so, they illustrate the larger challenge.

A platform can place hundreds of resources within an employee's reach. It cannot make that employee use them.



Relevance Gives Employees a Reason to Begin

The answer is not less technology. It is technology used to help each employee find something that matters to them. One person is interested in exercise. Another wants to sleep better, manage stress or simply have more energy. Real personalization goes beyond an algorithm suggesting content. It considers schedule, role, ability, interests, location and readiness for change.

Challenge: Digital Acess Is Not Uptake

Relevance Gives Employees a Reason to Begin cont.

Someone who is not ready to overhaul a lifestyle may be ready for a 10-minute walk. Someone with no interest in a group class may be willing to ask a coach a question. Technology makes those choices possible at scale. Then comes the harder task: helping people stay involved after they begin.

Human Connection Turns Access Into Engagement

Technology excels at making resources available. A coach makes them personal. That matters most when early enthusiasm runs into everyday life. A workout gets missed. A goal proves unrealistic. A stressful week breaks a new routine. Progress stalls.

An app can send another notification. A human coach can ask, "What's getting in the way?" A 2025 systematic review of digital health coaching found that human coaches played key roles in engagement, motivation, adherence, behavior change and personalization.[5]

One study in that review offers a striking example. Participants who completed the coaching component were nearly twice as likely to complete at least three digital modules (82% vs. 43%), and they spent more than twice as long on the platform (about 175 minutes vs. 78).[5]

This does not prove that coaching alone produced the difference; people who completed coaching may already have been more motivated.



But it points to an important relationship: human engagement and digital engagement don't have to compete. They can reinforce each other.

Other programs in the same review show similar potential. In one, 79% of participants checked the app daily, 93% completed all five coaching calls and 87% stayed in the program.[5]

The evidence is still developing, and the programs studied differ widely. But the direction is clear: don't ask technology to replace human connection. Use technology to extend it.

The Power of Supportive Accountability

Research on digital behavior change offers a useful concept for understanding the value of human support: supportive accountability.[6] The idea is straightforward. People are more likely to stay engaged when a trusted person knows what they are trying to accomplish, follows their progress and is available when they need help.

The key word is supportive. A wellness coach is not there to police an employee's choices. The coach encourages progress, provides accountability when motivation fades and helps change the plan when life changes.

A coach also understands context: the person who works nights; the employee who wants more energy but has no interest in weight loss; someone who needs an exercise adapted; the person who has opened the wellness app three times and still does not know where to start. Those details make the difference between a resource that is merely available and one that feels relevant.

From Individual Support to Shared Experience

Human connection in a wellness program can extend beyond the relationship between employee and coach. A well-designed platform also connects employees to one another, which matters most when coworkers no longer share a workplace every day. Remote and onsite employees can join the same challenge, see progress on the same leaderboard and turn separate efforts into a shared achievement.



Research suggests this social layer can strengthen engagement. In a workplace physical activity program with 1,868 participants, employees who joined small teams were more likely to complete the six-week challenge than those who participated alone. After adjustment for other factors, team participants had 3.49 times the odds of completing the challenge and averaged 1,922 more steps per day.[7]

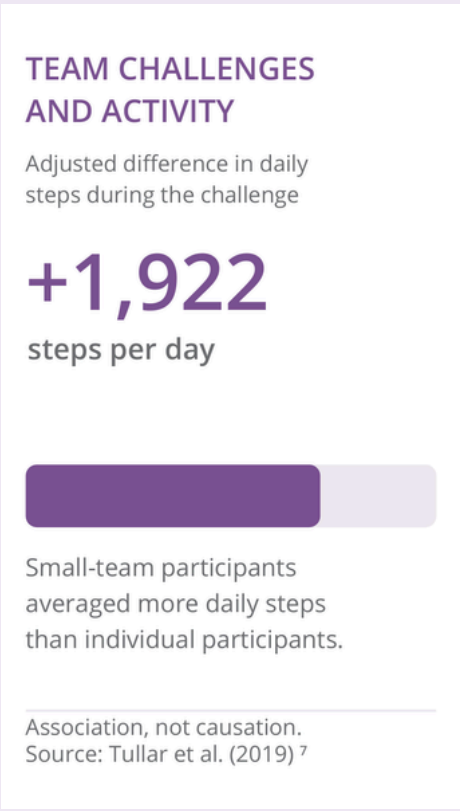
Participants chose whether to join a team, so the study cannot show that teamwork alone caused the difference. Still, the results support the role of social support, comparison and shared goals.

From Individual Support to Shared Experience cont.

A 2026 review of 18 studies of gamified digital workplace health programs likewise identified social features as one of four main approaches used to support participation and wellbeing.[8]

A coach can make these social tools more inclusive. A generic leaderboard naturally favors the most active employees. A coach can instead build challenges around consistency, participation, personal improvement or team progress, so employees with different abilities and starting points all have a realistic way to contribute.

The platform then does more than connect employees with wellness resources. It connects them to the coach, and to each other.



Human Support at Scale

Technology can serve thousands of employees at once. A single coach cannot. But employers do not have to choose between scale and human support.

Human coaching does not require a weekly hour-long private session with every employee. People can use digital resources independently while connecting with coaches through onsite visits, virtual sessions, group programs, messaging or targeted outreach. Some employees need very little individual help; others benefit from more.

Technology handles content, tracking, routine communication and the shared space for challenges, teams and recognition. Coaches spend their time where human judgment and connection matter most. In this model, the app is not the wellness program. It is the connective tissue of a broader wellness experience.

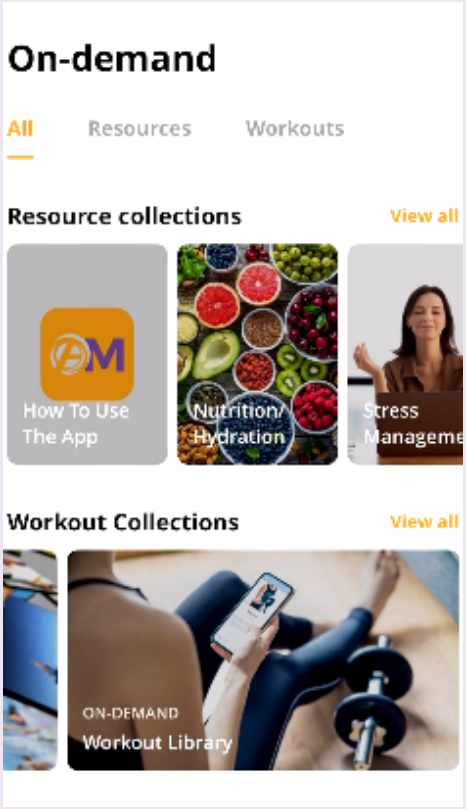
“Employers do not have to choose between scale and human support.”

Equitable Doesn't Have to Mean Identical

A connected wellness program does not need to give every employee the same experience. It needs to give every employee a meaningful chance to participate.

A remote employee cannot attend a lunchtime class hundreds of miles away. A shift worker may not be free for a scheduled webinar. An employee with limited mobility may need a different form of a fitness challenge.

Different paths can still lead toward the same goal. Digital resources, live and recorded programs, challenges, coaching and onsite opportunities let people take part in ways that fit their circumstances, and a coach helps each person find the combination that fits them.
The aim is equitable opportunity, not identical programming.



Communication Is Part of the Program

Even a strong wellness program can fade into the background if employees forget it is there. Communication should be built into the program, not limited to its launch. Employees need regular chances to encounter wellness through email, digital messages, managers, coaches, events and everyday workplace communication. And the message itself should evolve.
"Here is your wellness benefit" is an announcement. "Here is something useful you can do this week" is an invitation.

Research supports continued contact: added communication through channels such as email and text has been linked with stronger completion and engagement in some digital wellness programs.[4]
This reflects a basic truth about behavior change: readiness changes. Someone who ignores a fitness challenge today may care about sleep next month. An employee who is not ready to speak with a coach now may be ready later.
Communication keeps the door open.

Communication keeps the door open.

Measure Reach, and What Happens Next

Enrollment is easy to count, but it does not tell the whole story. If 1,000 employees have access to a wellness platform and 600 create accounts, the employer has learned something about adoption. It still does not know whether the program has become useful or meaningful.
A better measurement framework follows what happens next:

- **Reach:** How many eligible employees have access to the wellness program, and how many are taking advantage of available resources and opportunities?
- **Activation:** How many take a meaningful first step rather than simply register?
- **Repeat engagement:** How many return?
- **Depth:** How are employees using the resources available to them? Are they moving beyond occasional use toward training plans, customized tracking or nutrition plans?
- **Breadth:** Are different programs reaching different people, or is the same small group participating repeatedly?
- **Social engagement:** Are employees joining teams, challenges and other shared activities across locations?
- **Human engagement:** Are employees connecting with coaches and responding to outreach?
- **Employee sentiment:** Do employees find the program useful, relevant and easy to access? Does it help them feel connected to the wider workplace?
- **Outcomes:** Are appropriate health, wellbeing or work measures changing over time?

Together, these measures show something enrollment alone cannot: where employees fall out of the engagement journey.

Low activation may point to weak communication or lack of relevance. Strong early participation followed by a steep decline may reveal a retention problem. Uneven participation across locations or shifts may expose gaps in access or program design.

Measurement should not simply prove that a program exists. It should help make the program better, as part of a continuous cycle:

Listen. Offer. Engage. Connect. Measure. Adapt. Repeat.

Hybrid Wellness Program Planning Checklist

Before choosing or reviewing a workplace wellness program, ask:

Access and choice

- Can onsite, hybrid, remote and shift employees all participate in meaningful ways?
- Are there several entry points for different interests and levels of readiness?
- Does the program address several dimensions of wellbeing?
- Can activities be adapted for different ages, abilities and fitness levels?

Human support

- Can employees connect with a qualified human coach?
- Do coaches guide employees toward useful resources instead of leaving them alone with a content library?
- Does the program combine on-demand resources with live interaction?

Connection

- Can the platform connect employees across locations through team challenges, shared goals or other social features?
- Are challenges and incentives designed for broad participation rather than rewarding only top performers?
- Do digital, onsite, social and coaching services feel like parts of one program?

Communication

- Is communication ongoing rather than concentrated at launch?
- Are managers prepared to support participation?

Measurement and improvement

- Can the organization measure activation and repeat engagement, not simply registration?
- Can participation be viewed across locations, shifts and employee groups?
- Can the organization see where employees disengage?
- Is there a regular process for reviewing results and adapting programs to employee interests?

The more often the answer is yes, the more likely an organization is building a wellness ecosystem rather than simply buying a wellness product.

The Future of Workplace Wellness Is Connected

The future of workplace wellness is not simply digital. Nor is it a return to onsite programs alone. It is connected.

- Technology creates reach.
- Choice creates opportunity.
- Shared experience creates connection.
- Human coaching sustains engagement.
- Measurement turns engagement into learning.

Together, they create a stronger foundation for results.

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At AM Wellness Coaching, this philosophy shapes an approach that connects digital access with live and recorded programs, challenges, education, onsite opportunities and real wellness professionals. The goal is not simply to give every employee another wellness tool. It is to meet employees where they are, connect them wherever they work, and give them both a reason and the support to keep moving forward.

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