

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WELLBEING ACTIVITIES IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF EMPLOYEES

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this document is to present the partial results of the research carried out by increasing wellbeing activities in Świętokrzyskie province companies and to evaluate their perception and importance by employees – the young engineers (24-35 years) the most desirable on the local, national and international labour market professions such as Informatics, Programming, Automatics and Robotics, Data engineering, Production Support and other based Wellness ‘can be defined as the state of an individual or group characterized by health, happiness and prosperity and wellness is at the heart of an organization’s responsibility towards its employees. It is believed and proven that healthy employees have a positive impact on their organizations and societies when they engage in meaningful activities for the greater good’. This is therefore crucial for companies and employees to undertake the activities that have the greatest influence on the wellbeing of general employees and on the balance and effectiveness of the company. The survey was conducted between January 2021 and April 2023 (and is still being conducted) using the CAPI online questionnaire. The main research questions referred to the awareness of employees of employers’ activities and the individual evaluation of the perception and importance of social activities carried out in the company and their relations to the level of personal commitment (no later stage). The results allow us to conclude that in some cases the wellbeing solutions and implemented activities are rather time and money consumers and are then linked to real and desirable needs of employees.

**Key words:** activities, importance rate, recognitions rate, policy of wellbeing, wellbeing

### Introduction – Wellbeing Importance and Implementation in Surveys

Since 2018, the concept of wellbeing has been reported as the most important trend in human resources management. It is declared to be the most powerful factor of employee effectiveness and the most important factor in the engagement and professional experience of employees, ‘As the line between work and private life blurs, employees expect companies to expand their benefits offering with a range of programmes for mental health, physical health, spiritual development and financial wellbeing. To meet these expectations, employers invest in employee programs, which are also part of a corporate social responsibility and talent development strategy’ (Raport Trendy HR 2018). In 2019, the tendency to focus on the wellbeing of employees was still discussed as a need to build and improve the quality of employees’ experiences based on the sense of the meaning of the work that was done (Raport Trendy HR 2019). Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, welfare activities have gained maximum importance as new working conditions have emerged. The most commonly observed costs of pandemics are:

- a significant proportion (78%) of respondents admit that the outbreak caused employees in their organizations to temporarily or completely switch to remote work,
- one-quarter of respondents indicated that their companies had reduced their salaries,
- revenue reduction, delay in contract implementation, disruption of supply chain
- the fourth respondent doesn't know what to expect with regard to his or her work by the end of the year (Badania Report: Jak radziły sobie firmy w pandemii i czego obawiają się pracownicy),
- ‘stress epidemic’ - the most important risk factors affecting the performance of companies around the world are emotional well
- growing awareness of the importance and sense of wellbeing and mental wellbeing, determined as a subjective feeling of the function of the unit, the perception and balance of life (Keyes, 2006). This feeling is demonstrated in two main ways: to enjoy and use your potential (Raport: Wellbeing mentalny pracowników w Polsce, Mindy 2021).



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In 2018, 63% of respondents defined the level of programmes to support the construction of wellbeing provided by Polish companies as only basic. If companies seek more advanced solutions, they usually give employees the opportunity to work at a remote location (43%), offer flexible working hours (54%), and often declare fitness costs (65%) reimbursements (Raport: Trendy HR 2018). Despite the great interest and many statements made by employers and experts in the area that support wellbeing employees, 47.9 per cent of respondents said that the approach of employers to health and wellbeing problems has not changed, and 19.3 per cent did not in this area. According to 1200 employees of Polish companies in 2020, attitudes and participation of employers in the wellbeing activities have been deemed to be the most important areas of health and security (more than 40% of respondents), and the lowest participation of employers is in relation to physical activity, personal development, social relationships and financial security (less than 20% of respondents). However, the most average percent of respondents indicated that employers were neutral or had undertaken only a few individual actions in terms of health protection, physical activities, fine fettle, sense of security, personal development, social relations, financial security, mental state, ergonomics. Finally, the final note was 3,3 points on 5 (maximum) for the employer's approach to employees' health and wellbeing (at the beginning of the new COVID-19 pandemic situation).

The most common and important barriers to the implementation of wellbeing activities and the low effectiveness of welfare actions caused by experts are mainly:

1. Unfair working culture and lack of leadership participation
2. The lack of transparency and accountability
3. Limited resources for mental health
4. Sub-standard quality of third-party resources and poor implementation
5. Insufficient involvement and knowledge among the support teams (Na zdrowie, Jak zadbać o kondycję zdrowotną pracowników, Well HR report, PWC).

An organizational culture that promotes the wellbeing of employees is a source of benefit for the company. Firstly, they allow you to reduce the absences of illness, presentations and fluctuations affecting costs in each organization. Other employers; benefits are:

1. The opportunity to hire a valuable candidate,
2. Lower cost of recruitment and selection process,
3. Increased effectiveness and performance,
4. More attractive image of the employer,
5. Higher levels of employees' satisfaction and engagement.

Due to experts' conclusion implementation of wellbeing program results the 25% lower absence and 2.5 times return on investment of companies investing in employees' health. What is more important almost 80% of job candidates pay attention whether employer implemented wellbeing strategy or not (Na zdrowie, Jak zadbać o kondycję zdrowotną pracowników, Well HR Report, PWC). The AON report published in cooperation with IPSOS confirms the link between wellbeing and company performance. The 2021 Global Wellbeing Survey found that improving employee wellbeing has an impact on customer satisfaction and retention (Table 1). It turns out, however, that single and unrelated initiatives give negligible results - it is crucial to develop a wellbeing strategy that allows for synergy between individual elements.

**Table 1. Relationship between wellbeing and business outcomes (Raport Global Wellbeing 2021)**

Business area	Increase in wellbeing results	Increased business results
Customer satisfaction and retention	3%	1%
Employee satisfaction	3,5%	1%
Customer acquisition	4%	1%
Company profit	4%	1%
Commitment to innovation	5%	1%
Net Promoter Score (NPS)	5%	1%
Employee engagement	5%	1%
Decrease in employee turnover	4%	1%

Source: Raport Global Wellbeing 2021, <https://www.aon.com/poland/risk/publikacje/raport-global-wellbeing-2021.jsp>

Globally, 82 per cent of companies surveyed said employee wellbeing is important, 87 per cent had at least one initiative, but only 55 per cent had a strategy, and only 24 per cent fully integrated wellbeing into their business and talent strategy (Raport Global Wellbeing 2021).

## The Survey Results

As well as the widespread discussion, research and implementation of wellbeing activities and strategies as a result of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the question arises as to the extent to which they are recognized and important for a relatively specific category of employees - young engineers working in the IT sector as the most employable and desirable group of employees in the modern labour market. The study was launched in 2021 and is still underway, but the preliminary results should be discussed. The main research interests focus on two issues:

1. recognition of wellbeing activities performed by employers,
2. recognition of the importance of employee wellbeing activities.

The wellbeing activities have been defined on the basis of the most frequently summoned wellbeing dimensions and factors that compose the general sense of wellbeing of employees. The study was based on an online questionnaire. The presentation describes the results obtained during the research period from January 2021 to April 2023. The innovative nature of the research is related to the perspective adopted by the surveyed employees (bottom-up methodology) and results from a deviation from the traditionally conducted research on the field of wellbeing - focusing on the analysis of the needs of employees or the analysis of wellbeing activities carried out by employers. The result of this approach is the achievement of results showing to what extent the company's activities in the field of general wellbeing are first noticed (effectiveness of organizational communication, ability to promote the employer's brand and image), and then how important they are in relation to the employee categories studied. This research method allows the evaluation of:

- the effectiveness, relevance, appropriateness and importance of the actions taken
- in addition, it is possible to define and specify a welfare strategy and the implementation of such measures, which, at least in principle, are considered important and potentially effective. The first part of the survey was about general wellbeing activities defined as clear and fair employment regulations (Table 2).

**Table 2. The recognition of wellbeing activities implemented in the company**

Wellbeing activities	Yes		No		Do not know	
	N-121	%	N-121	%	N=121	%
counteracting discrimination and mobbing in the workplace, particular in:						
at the stage of recruiting employees	6	4,96	3	2,48	112	92,56
by creating a clear and transparent system of access to training	102	84,30	7	5,79	12	9,92
by creating a clear and transparent system of access to promotions	14	11,57	26	21,49	81	66,94
by creating a clear and transparent employee appraisal system	26	21,49	34	28,10	62	51,24
by creating a clear and transparent system of remuneration and rewards	23	19,01	34	28,10	64	52,89

Source: own survey

The results presented show that the most recognized activity involves access to the training system (102 responses; 84,30%), while the other activities are almost invisible to the respondents, or are indifferent. Such results mean that companies employing respondents do not know the importance of

these activities or that employers do not carry out conscious and integrated communication with employees, provided they recognize whether the company has applied certain standards or not. The following group of questions refers to employment conditions (Table 3).

**Table 3 The wellbeing activities in the field of health protection and improvement of employee wellbeing are implemented in the company**

Which of the following activities in the field of health protection and improvement of employee wellbeing are implemented in the company	Yes		No		Do not know	
	N=121	%	N=121	%	N=121	%
improvement of physical working conditions and workplace equipment (noise elimination, temperature, etc., ergonomic stations)	19	15,70	58	39,67	54	44,63
proper organization of work - adaptation of duties and work standards to the abilities of employees, precise definition of the scope of duties and working time	67	55,37	12	9,92	42	34,71
participatory management model - employee involvement in creating working conditions in the company	18	55,37	89	9,92	14	34,71
employee training in the field of improving interpersonal competences, e.g., coping with stress, communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, delegation of powers, assertiveness, psychological support	14	11,57	89	73,55	18	14,88
health protection programs (e.g., facilitation for employees returning after longer sick leave, subsidizing active and healthy free time spending, programs facilitating women's return after maternity leave, programs for people in the pre-retirement age)	0	0,00	114	94,21	7	5,79
Employees' integration	83	68,60	8	6,61	30	24,79
creating friendly support groups	5	4,13	79	65,29	37	30,58
compliance with labour law	119	98,35	1	0,83	1	0,83
co-financing for health / medical insurance of a family member or partner of the employee	29	23,97	76	62,81	16	13,22

Source: own survey

In determining the knowledge on activities aimed at promoting the health and wellbeing of employees, it can be concluded that, in this regard, the most important factor is the regulatory body of labour law (119 "yes" answers; 98,35%), followed by the integration of employees (83 "yes" answers; 68,60%) and the proper organization of work (67 "yes" answers; 55,37%). We can estimate the recognition rate (Table 4) by dividing the given "yes" answer in a given area by N=121, so its value ranges from 0 (minimum) to 1 (maximum), and the indifference rate by dividing the given "do not know" answer in a given area by N=121, so its value ranges from 0 (maximum) to 1 (maximum).

**Table 4 The Matrix of Importance and Indifference rates**

Rates	Low recognition (0,00-0,35)	Medium recognition importance (0,36-0,65)	High recognition (0,66-1,00)
Low indifference (0,00-0,35)	1. participatory management model - employee involvement in creating working conditions in the company 2. employee training in the field of improving interpersonal competences, e.g., coping with stress, communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, delegation of powers, assertiveness, psychological support	1. proper organization of work - adaptation of duties and work standards to the abilities of employees, precise definition of the scope of duties and working time 2. employees' integration	1. compliance with labour law

	3.health protection programs (facilitation for employees returning after longer sick leave, subsidizing active and healthy free time spending, programs facilitating women's return after maternity leave, programs for people in the pre-retirement age) 4.co-financing for health / medical insurance of a family member or partner of the employee		
Medium indifference (0,36-0,65)	1.creating a clear and transparent employee appraisal system 2.creating a clear and transparent system of remuneration and rewards 3.improvement of physical working conditions and workplace equipment	1.creating friendly support groups,	-
High Indifference (0,67-1,00)	1.counteracting discrimination and mobbing in the workplace: -at the stage of recruiting employees -at the stage of creating a clear and transparent system of access to promotions	-	1.creating a clear and transparent system of access to training

Source: own survey

The results let us conclude on the level of communication between employers and employees where the employment and well-being standards are not the priority that the results that most respondents cannot even point to them (let us say that they are not in mind for both parts of employment relations). However, it can also be said that the high level of indifference indicates that the activities are not carried out or that the respondents are not interested in carrying out those activities or not. The evaluation of the level of indifference can be used to indicate to employers how the communication procedures and the communication context of accepted standards should be improved or, in some cases, implemented as a social welfare policy. The last part of the study is to assess the importance of employment regulation and conditions (Table 5).

**Table 5 The structure of importance rate of wellbeing activities in survey**

Employers' activities	Average per cent of responses
Very important	50,91
Important	24,85
Hard to say	18,51
Unimportant	3,80
Not at all important	1,93

Source: own survey

In general, the structure presented enables to determine that more than 50% of respondents think welfare activities are "very important" whether or not the company is implemented any, 24.85% of employees think they are important, 18.52% of employees have no clear view of welfare issues, 3.80% say the implementation of welfare standards is not important, and 1.93% say they are "nothing important at all".



In detailed results this part shows how important certain activities are for the young engineers who pay particular attention to the following: - establishment of a clear and transparent system of compensation and rewards - 76.03 % - improvement of physical working conditions and workplace equipment (noise removal, temperature, etc., ergonomic facilities) - 73.55% - compliance with labour law - 73.55% - creation of a clear and transparent system of access to training - 71,90% - combating discrimination and violence in the workplace - 61.98% and these activities. Next of importance activities are: clear and transparent system for gaining access to promotions – 61.16 per cent, clear and transparent employee evaluation system – 56.20 per cent, adequate work organization with respect to duties, work standards, working time – 56.68. Considered the least important, we can indicate activities such as: combating discrimination at the recruitment stage – 43,80%, creating friendly support groups – 42,98%, health co-financing – 35,94%, employee integration – 29,75%, management participation model – 28,10%, employee training in the field of interpersonal competence – 27,27%, health protection programmes – 23,14% of indicators.

## Discussion

In summary, the results can be assumed that the most important elements in the employees' survey category are the 'hard' elements of employment – training, promotion, reward and compliance with law; the least important components group includes most of the 'soft' elements – social relations, participation, integration and health aspects. The results of the survey are parallel and compatible to the assumptions of the two factors in Herzberg's theory - the external factors with the highest motivation clearly dominate in terms of importance, while the hygiene factors are considered to be the least important (Rymaniak, 2013; Kobyłka, 2016). The results obtained can also be directly related to the age of respondents beginning their professional careers, and only in the long term the factors mentioned in Seligman's theory of the welfare of the PERMA model, positive emotions, commitment, relationships, meaning, achievement/defense, become more important (Seligman, 2011a, 2011b). We can argue that the priority of company wellbeing and communication policies should be strengthened by a clear communication of existing standards, which are more accepted as silent assumptions, not as part of employee branding and the increasing attractiveness of employment. Not only is the most important indication of improving employee welfare policies, but it should first improve working conditions and employment conditions, focusing on creating motivational compensation and bonus systems, access to professional training and promotion, and then improving working conditions and creating a social working environment through integration, working in groups and the introduction of a model of participatory management, or combating discrimination, the last of the actions relates to employment "addresses" in the form of health promotion, soft skills training.

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