

Impact of employees' health and wellbeing on your company's bottom line

By [Loshni Naidoo](#)

14 Aug 2020

Corporates are currently dealing with how to report company performance whilst navigating a myriad of uncertainties due to the outbreak of Covid-19. This includes ensuring that not just the financial information but the environmental, social and governance elements of the annual report are an accurate reflection of the company's response to this pandemic. Reporting on employee health has largely been neglected, even though the wellbeing of employees has a substantial impact on business success and sustainability. This element of reporting has never been more important than it is now.



[123rf.com](#)

The consequences of the pandemic such as the lockdown restrictions, retrenchments, working from home, and how a company is responding to these, impact the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of an employee. Ensuring the health and wellbeing of its employees is crucial for a company to be able to sustain itself both during and after lockdown.

The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group (HWAG) conducted a comprehensive [survey](#) during 2019 to understand where corporate SA is with regards to health and wellness reporting. The survey was completed by 172 companies. Of these companies, more than 50% are involved in the financial sector, and approximately 70% of them had less than 500 employees.

Some of the key findings of the survey include:

- The most successful programmes, policies and practices across the board are in the areas of occupational health and safety, medical benefits for full-time workers and smoke-free workplaces;
- The vast majority of large companies (78%) meet regulatory requirements for worker occupational safety and health;
- A slight majority of large companies (51%) have an annual budget or receive dedicated funds for health and wellbeing initiatives; and
- The majority of companies do not believe it is necessary to get involved in the following areas at the moment: incentives for a healthy lifestyle, physical exercise, reduction of alcohol consumption, tobacco use cessation, sleep management, health coaching, health risk assessment, and the extension of available programmes to family members and other dependants.

“Most successful and innovative organisations today make employee health and wellbeing a key focus of their business strategies. It is not something to which they simply pay lip-service: they spend a lot of time, energy and money in developing workplaces that enhance wellness and consider those to be a crucial component of their organisational business strategies,” said Freeman Nomvalo, Saica CEO.

Nomvalo added that “These companies would therefore probably be more resilient during this period, as employees are able to remain productive due to a supportive workplace environment.”

Reporting components

The HWAG believes that companies should report on the following components: Occupational health and safety; provision of medical benefits for full-time workers; a smoke-free workplace; Mental wellness programme (e.g. stress management, resiliency programmes, managing depression); employee assistance programme (EAP) access for counselling and intervention for those already at high risk (e.g. stress, depression); family-friendly policies (e.g. flexible work schedules or working remotely); access to healthy office design components based on special needs (e.g. sit-stand desks in case of back pain); communal spaces where employees can eat, relax, interact with co-workers, or hold private conversations; and assessments of the health and wellness of its employees, such as a health risk assessment (HRA) survey or biometrics screening assessment or the self-reported general health status of its employees using a confidential survey or assessment tool.

The onset of Covid-19 will pressure and require companies to prioritise and elevate a number of these components which previously may have only received passing attention as companies strive to ensure a safe and sustainable working environment for their employees. Integrating these practices into the business is vital for sustaining the company and its employees.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Loshni Naidoo is the Saica project director: integrated reporting

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>