

Case Study

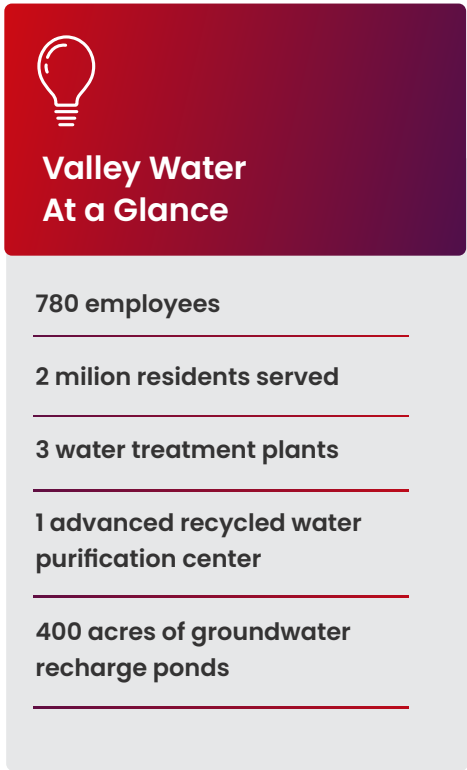
How to Build a Culture of Wellbeing and Become an Award-Winning Workplace



Valley Water provides safe, clean water to the residents of California's Silicon Valley, manages flood protection infrastructure and stewards more than 275 miles of local streams.

They also reduce waterway contaminants, protect the water supply from natural disasters, restore wildlife habitat and provide flood protection.

Essentially, they are water wellness experts. And as a recent winner of the Healthiest Employer in the Bay Area award, they're experts at keeping their employees well, too. But it wasn't always this way. Five and a half years ago, Valley Water and their benefits consultant, McGriff Insurance Services (formerly known as BB&T), introduced a simple wellness program to augment their employee benefits. It involved occasional lunch 'n' learns and a basic wellness portal. Although it took time to gain traction, these efforts sparked interest and excitement within the workforce. Thanks to the successful partnership, Valley Water has grown its program to the innovative, award-winning wellbeing program that it has today.



The infographic features a red-to-purple gradient header with a lightbulb icon. Below the header, a list of key metrics is presented in a light gray box, with each item separated by a horizontal line.

- Valley Water At a Glance**
- 780 employees
- 2 million residents served
- 3 water treatment plants
- 1 advanced recycled water purification center
- 400 acres of groundwater recharge ponds

Why Focus on Wellbeing?

To Valley Water, the business case for wellbeing at work is clear. Healthier, happier employees are more productive, engaged and committed to their organization. As health awareness and outcomes improve, so does an employer's bottom line.

But, wellbeing is — and should be — different at every organization. For a program to be successful, it has to be tailored to the specific needs of the people who will be using it. In collaboration with McGriff Insurance Services, Valley Water worked to identify key objectives for their wellbeing program:



Connect a dispersed workforce.

Valley Water's workforce includes shift workers as well as employees that are spread out across multiple locations or are out in the field. This made it challenging for employees to feel connected and engaged.



Compete for top talent.

Being in the highly competitive Silicon Valley market, they needed a competitive edge for hiring and retaining top talent.



Boost employee engagement and culture.

While a handful of employees prioritized their individual health goals, there wasn't a collective culture of wellbeing.



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We took a major step forward with the launch of Virgin Pulse in 2016. It takes time, budget and expertise to grow a program, but bringing in a more progressive and innovative platform like Virgin Pulse allowed us to expand our wellbeing offerings faster and more effectively.”

Michal Rinkevich
Director of Wellness Services,
McGriff Insurance Services

Why Virgin Pulse

Valley Water wanted to find a partner that would help take their wellbeing program to the next level.

With a focus on engaging shift workers and field employees, Valley Water was drawn to Virgin Pulse's integrated wellbeing platform as a means to communicate with employees wherever they were, but also to help them stay connected to the organization and one another.

Having access to robust, on-demand analytics was also a priority. Being able to measure the success of their wellbeing initiatives in real time was key to the type of growth they were hoping to achieve.

"It goes back to the philosophy that, no matter how good of a tool you have, it only goes so far unless you're able to measure and evaluate your efforts and then respond," says Michal Rinkevich, Director of Wellness Services, McGriff Insurance Services.

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We are thrilled that our wellbeing program has grown to become the leading, innovative program that it is today, making a real difference in employees' lives. We are committed to making our employees' health and wellness a priority.”

Norma Camacho
CEO, Valley Water



The Results

Not only do people feel better now, they are better! The wellbeing program has improved employee health risk factors so much that Valley Water saved \$1.2 million on insurance carrier rates in the last two years.

Wellbeing is now also embedded into Valley Water's culture, recruitment and retention strategy, and 90% of employees think the wellbeing program makes Valley Water a better place to work.

Valley Water's commitment to wellbeing has also earned them regional and national recognition. Last year, they won 1st place as the healthiest employer in the bay area (500-1999 employees), landed on the list of 100 healthiest workplaces in America and received the Western Region IPMA-HR Agency Award of Excellence.

76%

Employees participating in wellbeing program

\$600K

Saved annually on insurance carrier rates

94%

Members say the program changed their lives for the better

81%

Employees are prouder of Valley Water's culture

“

At Valley Water, we strive to create and foster an environment that supports employees to be their best. With 76% percent of employees participating in our award-winning wellbeing program, not only do we transform employees' health, but also our organization as a whole.”

Anna Noriega
Chief People Officer, Valley Water



To achieve results and drive real change with your wellbeing program, Rinkevich recommends the following key takeaways and best practices

7 Expert Tips to Build a Culture of Wellbeing



Think of your wellbeing program as an asset.

Wellbeing goes far beyond healthcare costs; it affects company culture, pride, engagement and retention, especially in highly competitive markets.



Be strategic. Having a strategy helps you build the right wellbeing program for your company.

Think about why you're pursuing wellbeing for your employees, how it will be supported, and how people will find out about it, participate in it and give their feedback to make it better.



Put your people first. Build your program based on what your people need and how they work.

"Wellbeing doesn't mean the same thing to everyone. People have different goals, interests and needs so our goal is to make everyone feel included and cared for. We measure results, listen to feedback, respond to it and grow the program accordingly," says Rinkevich.



Get support from the main players. Visible support from influencers across the organization – leadership, management and the unions – is essential for a successful, results-oriented program.



Have dedicated, onsite resources. The Valley Water program has grown from no dedicated wellness personnel, to a part-time contractor, to a full-time Wellness and Benefits Analyst. As you start out small, dedicated wellness resources might not be attainable or even necessary. But, as you grow the program, having staff dedicated to your wellbeing efforts, even on a part-time basis, will dramatically improve your results.



Don't forget the full picture. Valley Water uses the Virgin Pulse platform as a centralized hub for all wellbeing offerings, resources and activities, but it's just one part of their wellbeing offerings. According to Rinkevich, "the platform is heavily integrated into our program and we use it extensively in a lot of different ways. However, we make sure that the program goes beyond the platform so we can diversify our offerings and engage with our employees in new and meaningful ways."



Communicate, communicate, communicate. Creating a communication strategy that works is essential. Learn the best ways to reach your employees, including online and offline channels, champions network and management. But remember that communication is a 2-way street so always look for ways to listen.



Ready to take your employee wellbeing program to the next level? Talk to an expert at Virgin Pulse to get started.

Learn more at virginpulse.com

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