



2022 Wellbeing Predictions

Industry Predictions from Health and Wellbeing Experts

Employers spent most of 2020 reacting rather than planning. In 2021, workplace leaders sought to tackle the critical health and wellbeing issues that emerged. What does 2022 hold for the world of work and wellbeing? Read on to learn what the experts expect for the year ahead.





It's fair to say that 2021 didn't quite live up to expectations. Despite hopes of eradicating COVID-19, fully reopening workplaces, and taking our learnings from the pandemic to move forward stronger than before, many are now expecting the unexpected as we head into the new year.

The ongoing and unprecedented changes we continue to face in all areas of work and life are teaching organizational leaders critical lessons about the employee experience. The lines between work and personal life have dissipated as remote and hybrid working become the norm, elevating the role of employee wellbeing initiatives to a level we've never seen before.

As the inherent link between employee wellbeing and community health outcomes becomes more apparent, organizations are tasked with prioritizing meaningful and thoughtful action. From the Great

Resignation to rising healthcare costs to employee burnout, it's clear that a new approach is needed.

2021 wasn't the comeback year many had hoped for, but it has opened up a world of new opportunities and positive change for 2022. Discover what the experts—including members of our leadership teams, Science Advisory Board, THRIVEx 2021 keynote speakers, and VP+ partners—envision for the world of work, wellbeing, and health in the coming year.





Chris Michalak

Chief Executive Officer, Virgin Pulse

More than any other time in recent history, CEOs and C-suite leaders are turning their attention to the health and wellbeing of the workforce. This new focus has been prompted by four fundamental changes affecting the world around us and the businesses we lead:

- the global pandemic,
- social injustice challenges,
- new ways of working and,
- the newfound power of workers in a highly dynamic employment market.

The CEOs that are making health and wellbeing a top priority are focusing on three actions:

- Delivering the message from the top
- Ensuring the company has a health and wellbeing strategy
- Providing a comprehensive set of wellbeing programs to address the needs of the workforce

These actions are designed to address the whole self, meet employees where they are, and provide all the tools and resources necessary to help employees maximize their engagement and contribution.

However, the rapid expansion of digital health offerings over the last two years has overwhelmed employers with the many point solutions on the market. Organizations that invest in a unified solution that offers a highly personalized, data-driven user experience will be empowered to engage employees in wellbeing initiatives to drive business outcomes successfully. By amplifying wellbeing through activation, employees will be presented with the right interventions at the right time, resulting in a more productive, motivated, and healthier workforce.

In 2022, organizations that provide better experiences for their employees will ultimately lower overall costs associated with turnover and productivity obstacles due to current challenges both inside and outside the workplace.



Richard Branson

Founder, Virgin Group

Supporting the mental health of employees, customers, and the wider community should already be a major priority for companies around the world. In the year ahead, as working from home becomes more common and our lives grow more interconnected than ever, there will be even greater focus upon mental health alongside physical health and wellbeing. This should have a positive impact on individuals, businesses, and communities.





Marlette Jackson, PhD

Director of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Virgin Pulse

As we enter the “golden age for borderless, global teams,” the way we approach justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) will become increasingly critical. More and more companies are beginning to see JEDI as foundational to the business and people strategy.

This is especially important for global companies, who need to leverage an evidence-based, people-centric, and globally appropriate framework to maximize growth and minimize attrition. We know that BIPOC employees, employees with disabilities, and employees born outside the US are the most likely to perceive bias at work. Given the intricate tie between bias, inclusion, retention, and wellbeing, it's imperative we ensure our minoritized employees do not feel excluded. Why? Because employees who feel included are 28% more engaged at work, have 19% greater wellbeing, and typically intend to stay with their company 3x longer.

As we become increasingly borderless, we must find ways to leverage our differences that benefit the collective, so everyone feels empowered to be their best self. It's imperative we equip our employees with the skills they need to navigate various cultural nuances and geographic idiosyncrasies. Indeed, employees from a [recent survey](#) reported team diversity as the top benefit of working on global teams. In this way, JEDI efforts need to be woven into our organizational fabric and embedded into our global wellbeing strategies.



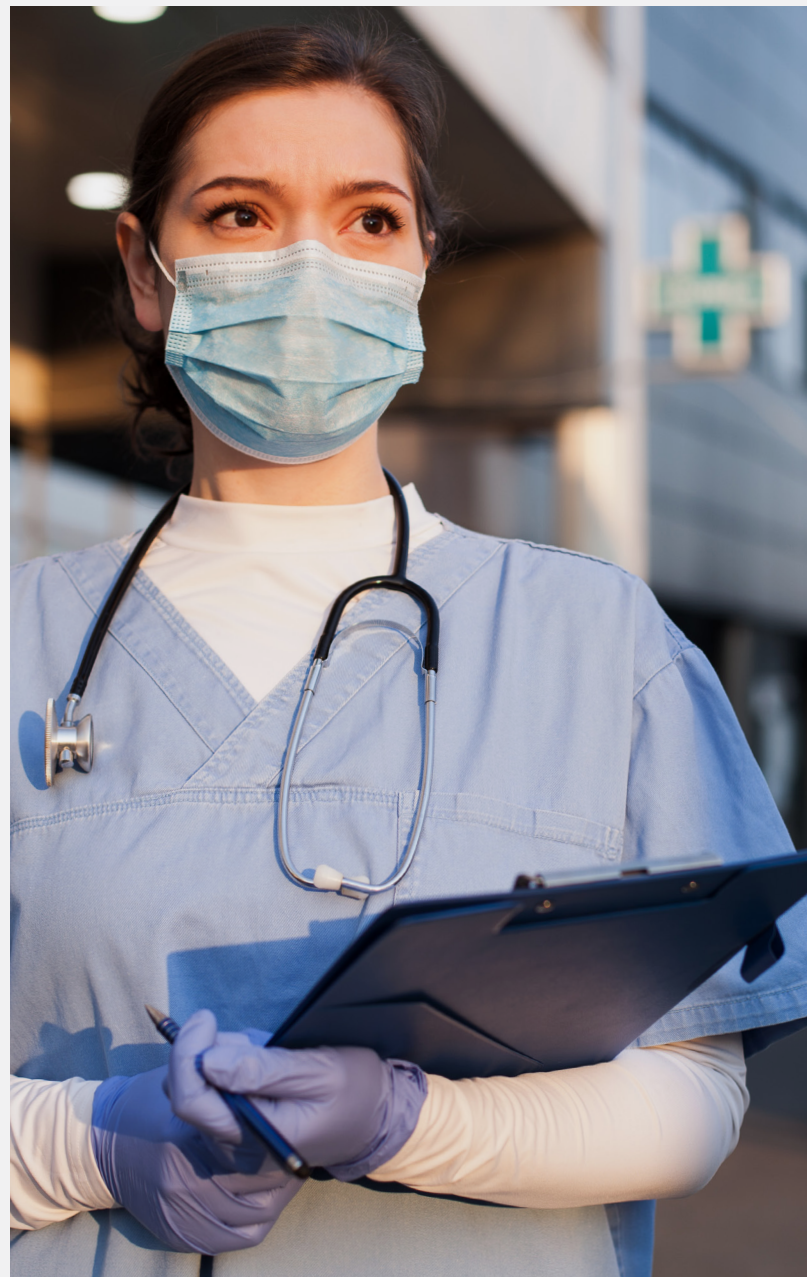
Dr. David Batman, MSC, MB.CHB. FFOM

Specialist Consultant in Occupational Health Medicine
Virgin Pulse Institute

I predict that we will look back on 2022 as the year the delivery of medicine really changed and will embrace learnings from the pandemic.

The last two years have been full of disruption, challenges, fear, uncertainty, and an overwhelming amount of negativity. Besieged by unprecedented illness and deaths from COVID-19, reduced healthcare, and disruption to the traditional delivery of medicine in ways we could not predict, healthcare was not prepared for the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Traditional barriers to cooperation, collaboration, and innovation were broken, opening the door for new possibilities. mRNA vaccine technology offers hope of revolutionary treatments for existing diseases beyond COVID-19. The world of telemedicine and digital therapeutics continues to grow. Personalized medicine will enhance treatment and early detection; as a result, targeted medical and lifestyle interventions will be embraced. Public health services and lifestyle interventions will be recognized, funded, and increased to reduce long-term risks. Mental health for all—not just the few high-cost and profile cases—will become the new norm, central to business and employee needs with preventative recognition and widespread interventions via lifestyle changes.







Amanda Graham, PhD

Chief of Innovations, EX Program by Truth Initiative
VP+ partner

Not only has the global pandemic accelerated the uptake of digital tools and solutions among end users, it has also resulted in blockbuster funding for digital health in 2021.

This momentum behind digital health means a plethora of solutions for employers and health plans to evaluate in helping employees and members better manage their health. But that diversity of choice brings an increased responsibility in sifting the wheat from the chaff. With many new entrants into the digital health space, buyers will need to be savvy to identify appealing, high-quality solutions. They'll need to dig into the science behind various programs to ensure claims of effectiveness are warranted and relevant for their population.

But simply selecting a digital health program is not sufficient to drive meaningful results. As overwhelming as the digital landscape is to buyers, it can be even more overwhelming to participants who are struggling with anxiety, depression, and substance use. Employers and health plans that want to get the greatest impact from their health and wellness offerings will simplify the process for their people to tackle thorny health issues. This means owning the process of selecting high-quality vendors rather than making employees sift

through multiple options; actively promoting programs on an ongoing basis in ways that are accessible and appealing to employees; pivoting away from promotion strategies that are ineffective; and relying on data to inform these efforts.





Zubin Damania, MD

Host of the ZDOGGMD Show, Internist and Entrepreneur, THRIVEx 2021 Keynote Speaker

I predict in 2022 we will finally start to wake up to the fact that our health and wellbeing depends on the mind as much as the physical body, on our social connections, on our communities. We will be less likely to reduce everything to pills and procedures, and more willing to treat health as the complex, holistic, connected endeavor that it is.





Mary Marzec, PhD

Senior Scientist, Virgin Pulse
Virgin Pulse Institute

The pandemic highlighted both the importance of reducing health risks and of wellbeing in general, especially emotional health. Many of us really reflected on what we want out of our careers and lives. People don't want to put things off to retirement years; they want to experience their lives now. That includes taking time to take care of ourselves and family.

For employees, leveraging technology and flexible working arrangements will continue to be priorities. Supporting employee wellbeing will continue as employer priority. Work environments, including remote work and arrangements supportive of wellbeing, will be prioritized by employees over compensation packages—especially in a tight job market. Employers determined to stay competitive will focus on supporting wellbeing and culture as differentiators for recruitment and retainment. Recurring organizational themes going into 2022 include Vision, Purpose, People—both for employees and employers.





David Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP, FACLM

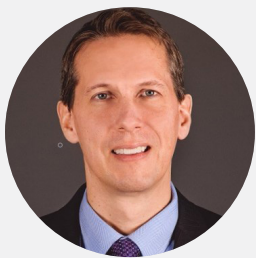
Founder and CEO, Diet ID
Virgin Pulse Institute

In the coming year, we either will or will not get better at giving audience to opinions we don't happen already to own—about nutrition, masking and vaccines, climate, refugees, elections, markets and governments, personal responsibilities, and shared obligations.

If we do, we invoke the superpower that is human ingenuity amplified by common cause on common ground—and all things are possible. If we do not, then we squander our power in abrading against one another until there is nothing useful left, and death by discord will prevail.

Perhaps it is time for us to stop offering hopeful predictions and embrace the more demanding reality: the future is a choice. The best way to predict the one we favor is to create it.





Sam Evans

VP Business Development, Enrich
VP+ partner

The 'Great Resignation' is sending shockwaves through the workforces of almost every corporation. Employees' financial stress has increased since the start of the pandemic, and the shedding of jobs in the healthcare, childcare, and service industries has only complicated their personal and financial lives.

Many of the workers we depend on - hourly and deskless employees - are more likely to be changing or quitting their jobs. Fear of COVID exposure, the allure of the Gig Economy, or plain burnout can all be factors.

Employers can help to stabilize their employees by giving them the support, encouragement, and tools they need to maximize the value of their wages and to live comfortably within their means. We see employers increasingly looking towards low-cost, highly valued perks as alternatives to traditional compensation increases. Companies also must manage their balance sheets, and more than ever they are demanding to see evidence of the efficacy of their programs. Providers need to demonstrate positive behavior changes and improved outcomes for employees.





Rachel Boyd

VP of Enterprise Marketing, Ovia Health
VP+ Partner

Ovia Health anticipates that 2022 will be the year the world digs into what it means to be inclusive for working families as employees juggle new challenges around caregiving, mental health, work-life balance, and physical wellbeing.

On top of all the usual pressures that accompany family life, parents in particular are burdened with making intense, fatiguing decisions daily to protect themselves and fill in the gaps. Employees also aren't solely caring for their children, too; they're juggling care for older parents, sick relatives, children with unique needs, and more. These responsibilities affect the mental health and wellbeing of every workforce, which impacts productivity, retention, and even health expenditure. Moreover, Ovia's research shows that employees will leave their role if they don't receive support, and fast.

If employers want to win the War on Talent by retaining top performers, they need to truly listen to their workforce's needs and quickly deliver flexible solutions that work. We expect to see an emphasis on digital health tools like Ovia to support health and wellbeing from the comfort and safety of their own home. We also anticipate concierge navigation to care becoming increasingly important to help people with a place to start to solve for their specific needs and backgrounds. Finally, we believe that solutions that weave psychosocial support in a constant, accessible manner will see more success, since employees are under immense mental health strain that permeates their health and wellbeing.

By leveraging digital-first solutions as a first line of defense, followed by culturally sensitive care navigation and empathetic support, employers can in effect tailor their benefits to the needs of each and every individual who uses them. With 2022 rapidly approaching and the pandemic pressure far from dissipating, it's critical that employers plan on delivering solutions to employees that are rooted in clinical evidence, equity, and compassion.



Angela Nelson

VP of Operations & Executive Director of Clinical Services for Whil, A Rethink Division
VP+ partner

The Covid-19 pandemic cast a bright light on one of the most highly stressed employee groups - parents. Many organizations had no choice but to pull out all the stops in attempts to support their parent employees - better work-life balance, work-from-home flexibility, and robust wellness benefits including parent-specific supports.

I predict that working parents (making up 60% of most companies) will continue to demand mental wellbeing benefits to help them and their children. This includes supporting parenting skills and stress management for all parents but especially for those raising children with developmental disabilities and other challenges. The organizations who want to attract and retain strong talent, and keep their employees motivated, will continue to think of innovative ways to make this happen.







Ron Z. Goetzel, PhD

Senior Scientist, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Virgin Pulse Institute

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the business community acutely aware of the inextricable ties between human health and business health. Never before had businesses experienced such catastrophic losses as a direct result of a public health crisis.

That crisis, along with its economic and social consequences, could have been mitigated had public and private policymakers been on the same page and acted decisively in response to emerging threats. There needs to be much greater cooperation between public health and business sectors to prevent future health, financial, and social disasters. This can only happen if business actively engages local public health departments, they both speak a common language, and decide to act based on evidence not political convenience. The health and wellbeing business community can and should take the lead in bringing business and public health principles together to fulfill a common cause - building and sustaining a healthy, productive, purposeful, happy, and committed workforce. Do your part!





Rajiv Kumar, MD

Virgin Pulse Institute

Employers, providers, and health plans will continue to increase their focus on eliminating disparities in healthcare access and outcomes by addressing the social determinants of health — specifically, poverty and racism.





Josh Bersin

Global Industry Analyst
THRIVEx 2021 Keynote Speaker

Wellbeing Goes Mainstream

After being treated as a “benefit” or a part of the company’s EAP program for years, corporate wellbeing has now become a business strategy. CEOs and business leaders at all levels now recognize that if people are not productive, energetic, rested, and safe – they simply will not perform.

So companies have pulled the wellbeing program out of the benefits department and are now embracing and training people about all aspects of wellbeing – including leaders, supervisors, and individuals. The “Definition” of wellbeing has also expanded – it goes beyond health and fitness to include mental and psychological health, resilience and self-awareness, and learning about how to design and manage the work environment to keep the organization healthy.



Andrew Reeves

Chief Revenue Officer, Virgin Pulse

Programs and tools that enable employees to manage their health virtually and at their own pace will be a critical part of all successful wellbeing programs.



Colonel Gregory Coleman, (USAF Ret), MBA

Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Sworkit
VP+ Partner

Corporate wellness will rapidly evolve to meet the unique challenges and opportunities hybrid and fully remote work have created. As a result, leaders have a unique opportunity to reimagine their legacy programs and deliver solutions that can be optimized and customized for individual employees while simultaneously creating omnichannel engagement and team-building opportunities.



Gary Smithson, MD, MBA

Virgin Pulse Medical Director
Virgin Pulse Institute

Spurred on by the success of digital therapeutics: to better address complex chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disorders, we will see comprehensive, holistic virtual care programs that integrate features focused on reducing barriers to improving physical health related to mental health and social determinants of health (SDOH).



Jason Von Bank

President & CEO, Wellbeats
VP+ Partner

The necessity of comprehensive wellness programs has never been so apparent. With the growth of employee empowerment and employers engaging in two-way conversations with them, employers have a better understanding of what their employees truly need from a wellness program.

Employees' empowerment to share their unique expectations around their wellbeing program needs will grow as will their comfort in talking about mental wellness as the subject continues to be normalized and humanized.

To support growing interest in wellbeing that is personal and personalized while being approachable and accessible, employers will increasingly embrace initiatives that recognize and celebrate the diversity of their workforce, while offering opportunities that appeal to employees of all ages, interests, needs, situations, and ability levels. By offering content and programming that is suitable to a diverse audience, employers can ensure that everyone finds their place in company-sponsored wellbeing initiatives.

Among the most significant changes will be the continued normalization of mental health issues. An opportunity exists to better support and create awareness around the tie between physical and mental health through comprehensive wellness programs. To be successful, mental wellness programs will need to be flexible, personal, accessible, and approachable to support the individual through what will continue to be an ever-evolving year.



Laura Walmsley

SVP Business Development, Virgin Pulse

2022 will be the year of Centralization and Personalization.

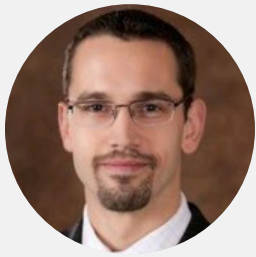
Since the dawning of the pandemic, we've seen heroic efforts by many individuals. Three groups that stick out to me are healthcare workers, teachers and school faculty, and Human Resources professionals. HR and Benefits Departments across the globe have been asked to create a core competency in infectious disease control, environmental safety, mental health safety nets, and much more. Each competency has been critical to the safety of their people and success of their organizations. Many demanded a policy, technology platform, and significant change management in a matter of days or weeks.

As we enter 2022, the incredible contributions of our HR and Benefits heroes are impressive but there is also detritus similar to the aftermath of a raucous house party. New point solutions engaged with quickly to address mental health, sets of supportive return to work videos, social connection and support groups are all strewn about without a cohesive entry way or combined understanding of impact.

2022 will, with any grace for the hard work already done, provide some space for HR and Benefits Leaders to take the great work done and organize it in a durable, sustainable, and long-lasting new experience for their people. The best will take this opportunity to redefine the experience employees have with their employers – inclusive of their whole selves, caring for the inter-stitched work and life realities, and devoted to supporting a path where each individual can find meaning and reward.

Key aspects of this solution are a highly personalized, flexible employee experience platform that can provide innate, daily value (such as social connection, personal achievement, daily wellbeing) and maximizes the ability for everyone to find what they need at key inflexion points in life (like a financial advisor, mental health therapist, or knee replacement rehabilitation). Finding a partner and location that can seamlessly connect the great tools and benefits invested in and maximizing employees' awareness and use of them will deliver the ideal equation of better employee experience and better cost control.





Andrew Jacobus

Research, Analytics, and Data Science Leader, Virgin Pulse

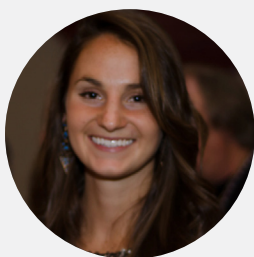
Mental health has come more squarely into focus as a top priority for organizations since the COVID pandemic started in 2020.

Research from the Virgin Pulse Institute has shown that potential and significant mental health risks like depression and anxiety are of wider concern, particularly for workers under the age of 30 - a demographic that is typically less likely to be seen as more at risk or to take advantage of wellness offerings than their older colleagues. However, many workers are reticent about sharing information related to their mental health, and so those identified at risk are likely only the tip of the iceberg.

Identifying and addressing hidden mental health risk needs will persist as significant challenges in 2022. Employers will need to try to surface and address these needs more directly, but without enough accessible information on the presence (and drivers of) mental health risks more widely across their workforce. Because trust and data privacy are critical, employers will still need to remove themselves from the access of private health information and delivery of these solutions and programs to employees and rely on trusted third party/direct-to-consumer solutions.

Organizations will need to invest more widely in holistic health and wellbeing programming to address their employees' mental health, which is influenced by a multitude of individual and environmental factors, and requires individualized interventions. This may be accomplished through a variety of channels, including employee and manager awareness and support training, better understanding and addressing social determinants of mental health, as well as by making a wider variety of resources available. However, because health, wellbeing and benefits offerings to employees have expanded and this variety can be too complex and overwhelming, these should be delivered in a consolidated way to employees. Efforts in 2022 should rely on health analytics built on rich consolidated data that will, to maintain trust and data privacy, feed personalized support and programming directly to individuals. Of course, this will take time, and employers should also expect that these challenges will persist well past 2022.





Kate Schlag, RD

Head Registered Dietitian, Foodsmart
VP+ Partner

With social determinants of health (SDOH) emerging as an increasingly critical factor to care, employers will prioritize and invest in strategies and technologies to screen, identify and support those employees most impacted by different SDOH factors with targeted interventions.

Because SDOH terminology is often recorded in free text fields in chart notes from providers, the macro-level data that could reveal critical barriers often goes uncaptured. However, with the rise of AI and natural language processing, technology can now help identify patients impacted by SDOH at scale, allowing providers to more easily connect patients to the services and resources they need to overcome barriers to care. Provider screening will be further integrated with vendors focused on SDOH to identify and create tailored solutions for employees.



As we enter 2022, employers will need to reimagine the employee experience and put their people first with a holistic approach to wellbeing.

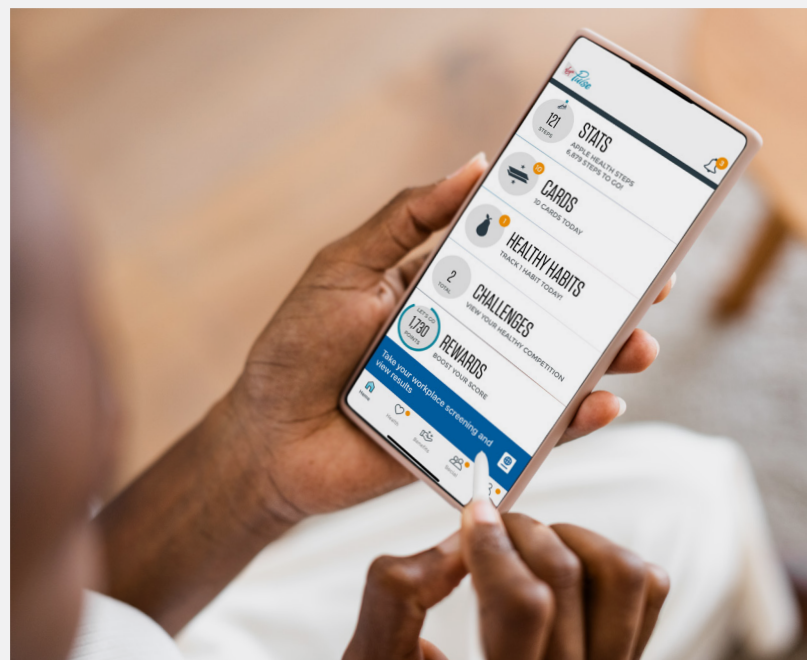
The events of the past two years have highlighted the importance of healthcare and wellness benefits that extend beyond the physical and virtual workplace. Organizations have the power—and an obligation—to address the social determinants of health that continue to fuel inequity in the larger community. Creating equitable opportunities for employees and their families is the first step in achieving optimal health for all.

Access to reliable health insurance and encouragement to be more physically active are imperative to improving health outcomes, but today's workforce needs more. Employees are seeking stability and safety. Feeling healthy, happy, and included at work matters because how they feel at work shapes their lived experience. Individualized mental health support, family care resources, opportunities for socialization, financial wellness tools, and the reassurance that their employer can keep them safe and healthy at work are indispensable.

Meeting the needs of your current and future workers will require a multi-faceted, individualized approach. And with locally and globally dispersed teams becoming standard, reliance on highly accessible, flexible, and adaptable digital health tools continues to grow. Employers need a solution that can deliver a comprehensive, personalized experience that supports all members of their diverse workforce on a global scale—all without additional administrative burden.

At Virgin Pulse, we're committed to Changing Lives for Good®. Our [Homebase for Health®](#) ecosystem unifies and simplifies the health and wellbeing experience. Our smart, AI-driven digital wellbeing platform with our high-touch live service features is designed to help members discover, understand, and utilize all of the tools available to them. By guiding them to the benefits they most need at any given time, we're making it easier for our members to reach their unique goals while helping our clients get the most out of their benefits investments.

Life is unpredictable. But with a little bit of expert guidance and the right tools in place, employers can successfully navigate whatever the new year brings. Set the foundation for a healthier, loyal, and more resilient workforce—[connect with a Virgin Pulse wellbeing expert](#) and start building your organization's Homebase for Health® today.



Support the full range of wellbeing needs of your entire workforce, all in one easy-to-access place. Request a demo and start building your Homebase for Health[®] today.

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CHANGING
LIVES *And* BUSINESSES
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