

Pulse Survey

CEOs and Leaders'
Well-Being

July 2021





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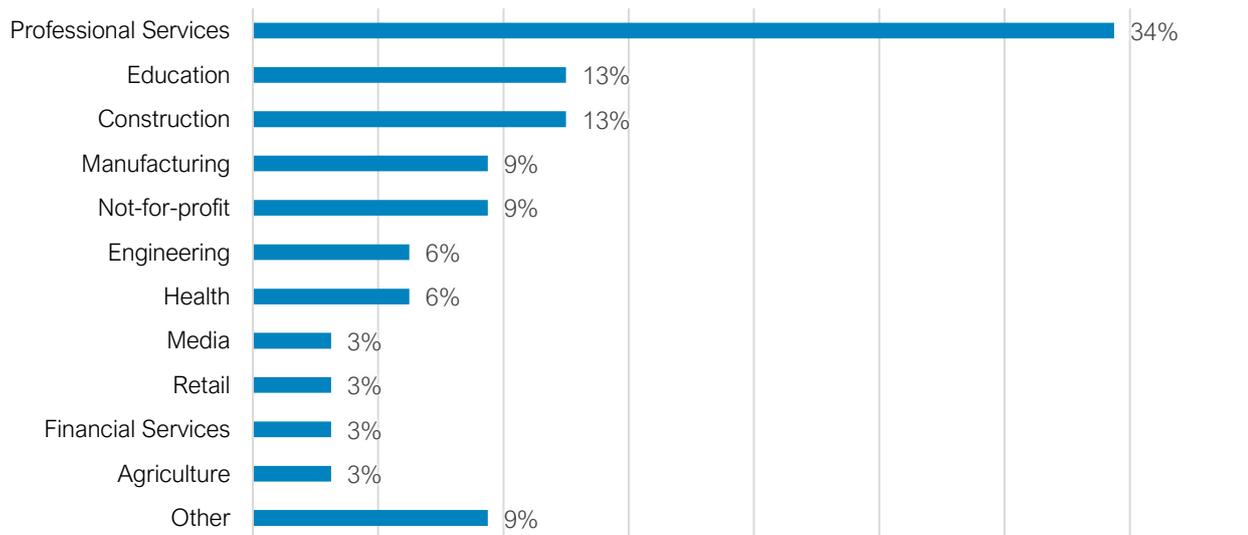
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Introduction

In early July 2021 Karen Luu raised the topic of CEO and Leader well-being during a Friday Workplace Briefing. As the people charged with leading organisations through continuous change, and whose roles were made further challenging by the turbulence of COVID, how is it that leaders ensure their own well-being needs are achieved to enable optimal work performance?

With little information found on this topic, Found Consulting conducted a pulse survey of local and national CEOs and Leaders to achieve insight into this topic. Respondents worked in senior leadership roles, across the following industries:



Other: Wholesale trade, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, Procurement

We hope the findings are interesting and useful to help you understand and better support leaders at the workplace.



What does well-being success mean to you as a leader?

Motivation, a happy and healthy team (physical and mental) emerged as markers of successful well-being. Respondents also reported developing connections with staff and each other is essential for building team and individual resilience to 'cope' and remain calm in stressful situations. Other themes of increased team capability to perform at capacity, identifying and communicating when the team are feeling overloaded with work came through as indicators of well-being success. Overall, responses were overwhelmingly selfless and focused at a team and organisational level, rather than on the leaders themselves. This is indicative of generous and authentic leaders.

Survey responses

- Feeling motivated for work and family and finding the balance where you feel that each are receiving their fair share.
- Healthy and happy team that is motivated.
- Personally, being in a healthy enough position to make good decisions.
- That the team are in a space where they attend work, are engaged, productive and able to communicate and work well together.
- Balancing all the different needs and pressures in my life, both professional and personal, measured by feeling calm and controlled.
- A happy, cohesive, and productive team.
- Not feeling overwhelmed by work. That my tank is not always running empty. That my team is not showing signs of bad stress.
- Having the will, energy, optimism to inspire oneself and people to achieve goals - team, organisational, relationships.
- A system of understanding the mental, psychosocial, and environmental health risks within a business and creating a well-resourced and clever system to mitigate those risks and create wellness, personal and business opportunity, and happiness
- Our people enjoy and grow by working in the business and are not harmed by doing so. We are the employer of choice in our industry.



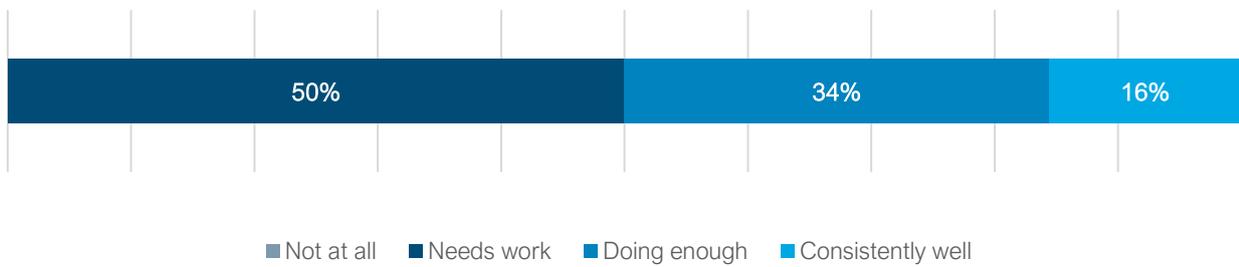
- Strong mental and physical health. Energy. Ability to cope and remain calm in stressful situations. Good work life balance.
- Regular contact with each employee one on one when they are working remotely. Regular group sessions with all staff - Virtual drinks on Friday etc. While inevitably there are work discussions more importantly there are as many insights into what challenges are being faced working from home and balancing family etc.
- That I am fully able to focus on the work for which I am responsible. And, as a leader, that each member of the staff is supported to the point that they can bring focus to their work because our priority is the optimal progress and safety of each and every one of our students.
- Happiness, health, contentment, a good night's sleep.
- Maintaining, and indeed growing, a mentally and physically well and connected workforce who are motivated to improve their own being as well as that of other stakeholders we interact with.
- Positive and collaborative teamwork.
- To build a community where there are clear signposts that students and staff have sense of purpose and meaning, achievement, strong relationships, resilience, sustainability, and positive experiences.
- Staff report they feel heard and valued and have access and use appropriate preventative and treatment supports in place.
- Being in control of information and communication and having a reciprocal approach from my direct reports.
- Enjoying coming to work and working as part of a holistic healthy team. A place where everybody is happy to contribute.
- Ability to think clearly and feel good physically and mentally.
- Being healthy, happy, and enjoying challenges with a successful outcome.
- Ensuring that I can balance work and life pressures and have someone that I can be honest with.
- Empowering managers and staff to have the confidence to speak openly in forums or individually about the achievements or stresses felt in meeting the day-to-day obligations.
- Being well to lead and leading others to be well.
- A workforce that has systems and support methodologies to support employee well-being. An organisation that is comfortable and able to discuss well-being and can ask others "are you ok".
- It would mean being confident and comfortable with the strategies that I have in place to develop and grow the business, whilst at the same time being able to take time away from the business to devote to myself and my family.
- An engaged culture that has a focus on the health and well-being of its people as it's centre. This in turn means our people know they are valued and supported and that I am doing everything possible to increase their sense of well-being (adding value is important to me as a leader).
- Low absenteeism, high engagement, low staff turnover.
- Considering all aspects of employment conditions for team members - coordinating joint solutions where possible - ensuring team members are not overloaded with work and that they are able to approach myself if workload becomes too great
- Myself and my team can function at optimum capacity.
- Delivering outcomes while maintaining energy and positivity.



Currently, how well are you looking after your well-being?

Whilst half of respondents recognised the need to invest more into their personal well-being, it is encouraging to find that all leaders are actively doing something, even though it is not as enough as they would like or feel that they need.

Survey responses





How have the challenges of COVID-19 impacted the way you lead?

There is a notable shift with leaders to be more visible and empathetic to employees' situational needs. Approximately half of responses revealed leaders responded to the crisis by communicating more which has involved listening and being attuned to what staff are thinking and feeling. Leaders now have greater visibility about the 'whole person'.

Survey responses

- On one hand it has provided a crisis to respond to but on the other hand, it has limited the ability to build relationships with staff and stakeholders in person. – limited ability to build relationships.
- Embraced flexible working and tried to focus on the big issues and not sweat the small stuff – embraced flexible work – instilling trust in people.
- Focus on more regular communication -minimal office and travel time. Focus on mental health and ensuring people have breaks. embraced flexible work – instilling trust in people.
- Increased the amount of time checking in on the team as their ability to manage their well-being is changing more than ever. Increased communication.
- I have softened a touch and am spending more time talking to staff about their needs, fears, successes, etc to ensure that I have my fingers on the pulse regarding where they are mentally. – Increased empathy and communication (getting to know their people).
- I am a people person and better when I'm with people in person - especially around motivation, emotional intelligence, managing issues etc. Remote leadership isn't easy, though lucky we have a great team.
- I have had to be more visible - especially in the media. However, I have also been able to show my vulnerability too.
- It forced me to think and act differently for better results. It also revealed a wider view of people's lives, their stresses and struggles, and the need to engage frequently and support appropriately.
- it has placed pressure on me to find innovative ways to engage and support employees. We have had to go back to careful and regular risk reviews of employees' home-work space and how they are coping.
- Driven a constant effort to engage and connect with staff. More deliberate and planned conversations (lack of ad hoc). Leaving space for personal conversations and allowing frustrations, concerns, and tensions to be aired.
- COVID is a massive distraction from running the business as we constantly have to pivot to the changing conditions etc. It makes planning hard, so you have to be very agile (and calm!). Also, we



people working from home, it is difficult to maintain the strong connections between people and our leaders and people.

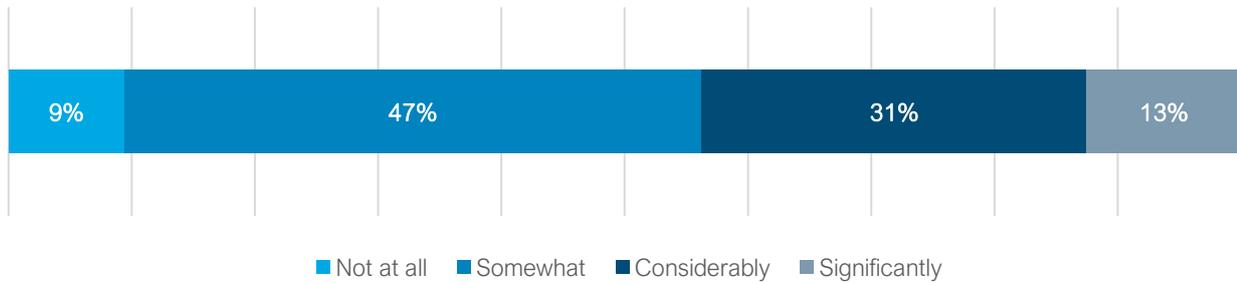
- There is more requirement to visibly lead the organisation that about the business and significant wins and challenges. I have found that anxiety among staff has significantly increased as employees worry about how stable the workflow is and if this will have an impact on their employment.
- Perhaps I have learned to pay closer attention to what is being communicated when people share thoughts, ideas, concerns.
- It's been largely a positive for us as we are in the digital space and have had success during COVID. One thing we have had to do is balance the need for flexibility and support for our staff with the need to appease shareholders with positive growth.
- Working remotely has certainly required more "communications coaching" to maintain the sense of team and caring for each other that is vital to our business. Greater understanding of employee home environments has been necessary
- Unable to engage as freely or as often.
- During the challenge of 2020 not having a predefined response plan but behaviours and mindsets that could prevent our community from overreacting to yesterday's developments and help them to look ahead. Constantly looking at new avenues for congregation and communication.
- More empathy, innovation, and compassion.
- I have had to take control of coordinating the communication on Covid and to be across the changing rules daily as they apply locally, State wide and Nationally - it has been relentless and at times draining.
- Very challenging. In many ways Covid has changed worker expectations and priorities, yet the business models we have remain then same.
- Recognize more than normal that there are additional strains on people and the team in general. Particularly impacting the quality and quantity of my communications.
- More time is needed when speaking with people to get through the COVID drag.
- I have become more aware of the outside stresses that staff face.
- I have needed to be a better listener, to check in more often than perhaps I normally would, and bolstered well-being approaches for my team. I have had to rethink business development (from face to face) and have had to lead new initiatives that could reach our clients without the need for a face-to-face offering.
- Increased awareness regarding the perception of a leader's actions and has facilitated a greater awareness of emotional and physical health and well-being of staff.
- Unfortunately, the constant supply chain disruptions, HR challenges (staff isolation, COVID tests, etc.) have made my leadership more tactical and less strategic than it perhaps was prior to the pandemic. The increased uncertainty has made life rather more stressful.
- COVID had a significant effect on our culture/well-being I had to ensure the business remained focussed on its people throughout the various lockdowns and I had to be more aware, positive to keep our people engaged and develop different communication strategies as we adapted to the isolation.
- Higher focus on communications, more conscious of mental health.
- Not overly other than being receptive to team members flexibility of working conditions.
- More tolerance to team absences from office for any reason, and greater use of video meetings, but value opportunities to meet face to face more than in the past.
- Fatigue, extra work required to cope with COVID changes, extra work to stay connected.



As a leader, how has COVID-19 impacted your stress levels?

Most leaders' stress levels were impacted, although not significantly. This could be related to leaders' natural conditioning to remain positive and calm in the face of adversity to achieve focussed outcomes.

Survey responses

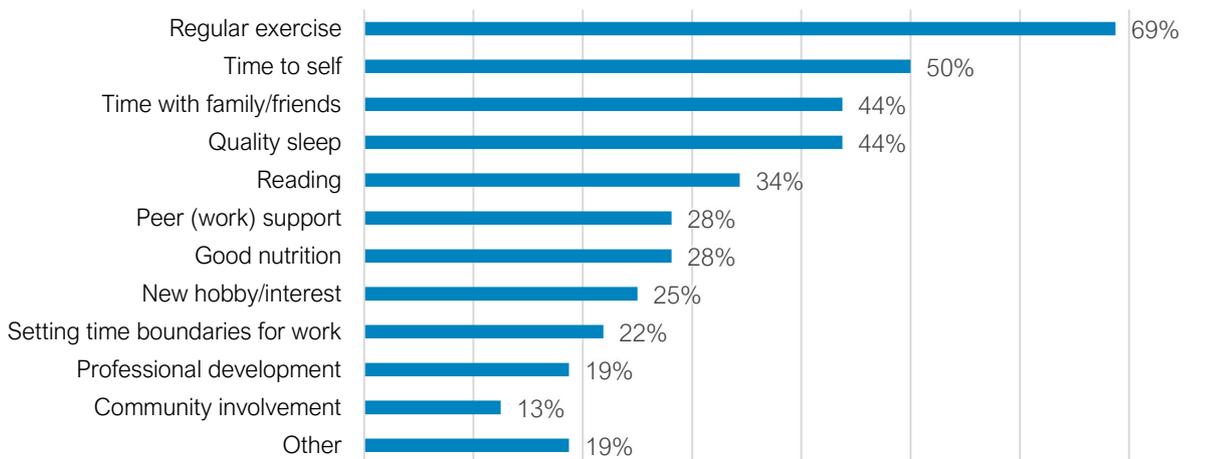




What strategies did you adopt to improve your well-being since COVID-19?

Regular exercise, solitary time, quality time with family/friends and sleep were main strategies leaders adopted to improve their well-being. The insight reinforces the need to dedicate time to maintain our physical health, cultivate positive relationships, secure time to think and reflect and the prioritise our sleep. This are the pillars of good health for everyone.

Survey responses

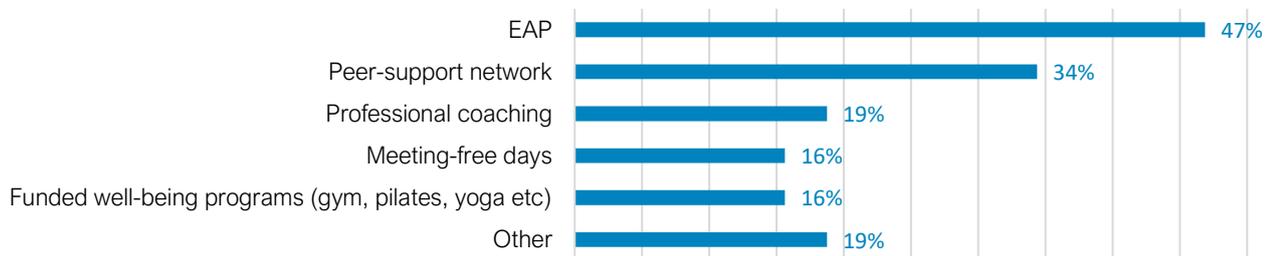




How does your organisation currently support leaders' well-being?

The results show that leaders take a multi-layered approach to support well-being with the most common offerings being EAP services (47%) and peer-support networks (34%). Some organisations have tailored well-being support programs for individual needs whilst others explore flexible work options such as days off and flexible start/finish times. It is important for organisations to seek feedback from employees on the effectiveness of well-being initiatives and to seek suggestions for improvement.

Survey responses



Other: Close contact and monitoring, customise our well-being approach to the individual, flexible working environments, flexibility to take time off whenever needed, or leave early or come late, Implemented Culture Amp to get feedback and coaching tools for managers.



What further organisational support would make a positive impact to your well-being?

Leaders overwhelmingly recognised the need for an overall well-being program to positively support their own and staff's well-being, together with a need to develop a framework and a structure establish what support is available, who is responsible operationalising it, and the tailoring of programs to suit different employee needs.

Survey responses

- A specific work well-being program would make a start
- Just ability to connect in person!
- A more structured well-being program across the workplace.
- An external lens on our growing business on how we can better manage our people, their well-being and development.
- A sabbatical.
- Introduce a paid well-being day for leaders, encourage self-strategy/review days for us to escape the noise, to reflect and think.
- More time and better data to design a better workplace and leadership model.
- Setting some clear goals, roles, and responsibilities across the management team around well-being.
- I feel quite supported!
- More time off.
- Returning too predictable and plannable work without fear of cancellation due to lockdown.
- I have been lucky that I have some incredible colleagues from outside education who provide great support.
- Strangely, probably setting some rules about free time, or meeting reduction or email etiquette (less white noise).
- Professional networks are good, though COVID challenged many of these. Perhaps also a way of managing employee conflict. A strong HR department.
- Internal conversations.
- Perhaps relevant training/webinars.



- Senior staff becoming more aware of options in maintaining contact with peers and organizing regular catch ups that does not include work discussions which can lead to a deeper understanding of fellow staff members.
- Have 'positive interaction days' when people all bring something positive to work, (no negative contributions and no mention of Covid). Practicing mindfulness daily as a business. Otherwise, holidays - getting away to somewhere warm. Seeing my family (still have not seen them in 19 months- they live in WA).
- Greater flexibility and an active strategy that encourages emotional health and well-being, a balance between work and family.
- I need to carve out more time for myself. Running an SME on a growth trajectory in a time of considerable national and international uncertainty makes that difficult.
- A more supportive peer group.
- Less interruptions on the weekend.
- Team to recognise that leaders also need comfort and support occasionally. Thankfully I am largely self-contained and happy.



Additional comments

Survey responses

- Timely survey during these challenging times, focusing on people's well-being - good job.
- Will be interested to learn what other leaders think and do to manage their well-being.
- Looking forward to the results
- Being a leader during this time hasn't been my hardest time as a leader, but it has been the most tiring. We had a vision for our business and it has been tampered with in a way that we could never have prepared for. I feel an incredible sense of loss in seeing that we have gone back in revenue growth by 3 years. The energy that takes to recover from this is great. And I am having to dig deeper than I ever have to get the energy to take it on. I call it a Covid Hangover, that won't go away.
- I am glad that after 2020 I have had a break in order to reenergise myself and get my own well-being on track
- This survey has inspired me to look after myself a little better
- Great topic. Well done.



Conclusion

This pulse survey revealed CEOs and leaders were focussed on their employees' well-being more heavily than their own.

Despite limited attention placed on CEO and leader well-being and support, our survey found that CEOs and leaders clearly understand what well-being success looks like and what strategies can be adopted to increase well-being.

There is healthy recognition by leaders, that more should be done for their own well-being needs, and this needs to be prioritised.

In closing, the insights are a timely reminder to organisations to invest in a well-being strategy, where critical risk profiles are identified, risk assessed and provided specific initiatives and resources to improve well-being outcomes for all employees, from the top to the frontline.

Contact

For a discussion about this pulse survey or to learn about our advisory services, please contact:

Karen Luu

Managing Principal, Found Consulting

E: karen.luu@foundconsulting.com.au

T: + 61 (0) 439 513 138

