

#13 - WELLBEING

SPOTLIGHT

Is there an Employee Assistance Programme on your wellbeing menu?

More and more organisations provide their employees and their families with an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). Never heard of it? An EAP is a service that supports employees and managers in their mental, emotional, physical and practical wellbeing. By doing so, you show as an organisation that your employees' wellbeing really matters. Throughout the year, employees can contact a team of professionals, around the clock and free of charge, for a listening ear or a helping hand. The support is both curative and preventive, and deals with work-related problems, stress management, healthy nutrition and also provides support if you are worried about your children or your partner, who can also contact the EAP themselves. This way, the EAP relieves at the same time the HR team and the internal service that cannot be available 24/7.

Making employees happier, healthier and more productive at work and in their lives in general, this is what Workplace Options stands for, according to Anna Smets, Business Solutions Director. She invited three clients to exchange ideas, experiences and tips about wellbeing at work. What is on the wellbeing menu? How do they strategically position wellbeing on their organisation's menu? And what is the role of the Employee Assistance Programme in this respect?

On the following pages, we will learn about their insights and concrete advices. This virtual round table brings together Carla De Schepper (Animalcare), Syl Arnols (Ethias) and Vincent Delbaere (Euroclear) with Anna Smets.

Wellbeing in the workplace

Is there an Employee Assistance Programme on your wellbeing menu?



Prevention is better than cure. That certainly applies not only to physical suffering, but also to mental and emotional concerns. The rising absenteeism figures show unequivocally that there is a lack of balance between workload and capacity. (Pro)actively addressing wellness makes employees more resilient. And this has a strong positive impact on productivity, engagement and employer brand. Taking care of employees is therefore not a nice-to-have, but an essential key to success. The corona crisis makes it even clearer. But how do you increase wellbeing? Three experienced HR professionals provide a - concrete - answer.

TEXT LESLEY ARENS PHOTOGRAPHY CAROLINE DUPONT

WHO SITS AROUND THE TABLE?

- **CARLA DE SCHEPPER** is Head of HR at the European animal health company Animalcare. When she started 19 years ago, the company had 25 employees, today there are 240 employees spread over seven countries.
- **SYL ARNOLS** is Head of HR at the insurance group Ethias. For the last 14 years, she worked in different services and ended up in HR, first as corporate lawyer, since 2016 as Head of HR in Hasselt and since recently as Head of HR nationwide.
- **VINCENT DELBAERE** is HR Director at the financial services provider Euroclear Group, with its head office in Brussels and 4.000 employees spread over 14 locations worldwide. He has been with Euroclear for 14 years and is responsible for the group and support divisions.

WELLBEING AT THE WORKPLACE: THE OLYMPIC MINIMUM?

Employers are required by law to ensure the wellbeing of their employees, also for the psychosocial aspects. As we strive to maintain the wellbeing of all employees at its best, it is, of course, not enough to do only what is required by law. What do Animalcare, Ethias and Euroclear do when it comes to wellbeing?



“People who feel good also radiate that feeling on customers and potential customers.”

SYL ARNOLS

Head of HR with Ethias

CARLA DE SCHEPPER (Animalcare):

“We provide a lot of knowledge and tools, both to managers and employees, to help optimise health, motivation and talent. Important levers for this are open and transparent communication and ... vulnerability. Why? Motivated, healthy and talented employees convey enthusiasm to the outside world, so that wellbeing does not only have a positive impact internally (engagement and productivity), but also externally (strong employer brand). Wellbeing? That means consciously managing and developing the potential of employees, so that you have fit, talented and committed employees who are resilient in unexpected situations and who contribute to the growth of the company.”

SYL ARNOLS (Ethias):

“The HR mission in Ethias is to create the right conditions, so that people can give their best, develop themselves and be able to work in good conditions. It is about ergonomic office chairs, but it is also about daring to name things (so to speak *psychological safety*). People who feel good also radiate that feeling to customers and potential customers.”

VINCENT DELBAERE (Euroclear):

“To describe wellbeing at work we base ourselves on the World Health Organisation’ definition of physical, mental and social wellbeing. We want to offer support, so that employees feel healthy, engaged, happy and connected. These are the foundations of our wellbeing policy. In addition, we have set up an *agile wellbeing squad* with the following pillars: 1) *health & safety*; 2) connection with the organisation and focus on values, purpose, sense of belonging and connection with the company; 3) human experience, everything that relates to leadership and people management; 4) engagement and personal development, social interaction and learning opportunities; and finally: *Joy@Work*. We talk about *joy* instead of *happiness*. Our wellbeing programme *Joy@Work* was created by a number of employees outside of HR.”

WORKPLACE OPTIONS (WPO)

Workplace Options (WPO) is the world’s largest independent provider of integrated solutions for physical, mental, emotional and practical wellbeing of employees. WPO helps about 65 million employees worldwide and their families, who are working in over 10.000 organisations in more than 200 countries. Since 2001, WPO is active in Belgium with a national network of experienced and qualified psychologists and coaches.

WELLBEING AT WORK: WHO IS INVOLVED?

Wellbeing cannot and must not be the sole responsibility of HR. Employees also have a role, like so many others, including managers. All stakeholders should be involved. Moreover, wellbeing must be strategically integrated and be part of the general policy. How is that expressed?



“We support organisations and help build a contemporary wellbeing policy which focuses on human capital.”

ANNA SMETS

Business Solutions Director
at Workplace Options (WPO)

SYL ARNOLS (Ethias):

“We have a triangle that includes social and psychosocial support, supporting HR. First: Since 1959, a circle of friends takes on the social role for employees, retired employees and their family members. They mainly organise cultural and sports activities. Secondly: in 1997 we have set up a social cell where employees (social assistants and social workers) help colleagues, on top of their job in the company, with wellbeing related concerns, but e.g. also in case of reintegration. Thirdly: persons of confidence help with purely work-related problems and since last year, we have an advisor for psychosocial aspects, complementing our prevention advisors.

We also work together with Workplace Options. We do not have all the expertise in-house and cannot provide 24/7 support. This cooperation is part of the professionalisation of our wellbeing policy. In 2020 we have started a hotline for employees and managers, and have subsequently set up a full-scale EAP.”

CARLA DE SCHEPPER (Animalcare):

“Covid-19 has certainly brought some things to the surface. Last summer, for example, we have organised a Covid survey to sound out to what extent our employees feel supported, what their needs are in terms of wellbeing and happiness at work. The survey showed the need for more professional support with communication as the working point. We thought it was important to start quickly enough with an offer for employees and senior leaders. Therefore, we ended up with WPO. We want to evolve towards a culture of humanity and support, as well as support our managers in their development from their role as expert to their role as people manager.

In the meantime, we are preparing a global wellbeing policy, *Smile@Animalcare*, and we will work with Wellbeing Ambassadors. We work bottom up, so that everyone is included, across countries. Each month, the Ambassadors will meet with our Group HR Team to keep wellbeing on the agenda, to learn from each other's feedback and generate new ideas.

“Cares for dynamic, talented and engaged employees.”

CARLA DE SCHEPPER

Head of HR at Animalcare



To put our wellbeing offer in the spotlight, all our employees received a *wellbeing box*, to thank them for their commitment and resilience over the last months. This includes, for example, a timer to take regular breaks, an activity tracker with a pedometer, a plant and a bottle of cava to celebrate personal successes ...”

VINCENT DELBAERE (Euroclear):

“Euroclear works with 90 nationalities in Brussels alone; we have an internationally diverse community, also in terms of their need for wellbeing support. This is why we also have a comprehensive support model with our prevention service, social nurses and certified stress and career coaches, who take a neutral role and guide employees to the next steps of their career.



“We speak about *joy* instead of *happiness*.”

VINCENT DELBAERE

HR Directeur at Euroclear

In addition, the HR business partners, HR advisors and persons of confidence are our *feelers*, who offer a listening ear to colleagues. That internal support model is complemented by an external support via WPO. The menu is particularly extensive and was composed in consultation with prevention services and social partners.

Since the summer we have been working with an *agile wellbeing squad* to implement our global *We Care* programme. Wellbeing is our top priority. We focus in particular on the mental resilience of our employees and managers. This way, you work in a multidisciplinary way, so that the global *We Care* programme is supported by the entire organisation. This gives a boost to the resilience of our employees and our organisation for the future.”

CONCLUSION FOR HR

“Wellbeing is not an HR exclusivity”, notes Anna Smets. “Also managers and senior leadership play an important role in giving wellbeing the place it deserves. Provide the best possible conditions as an organisation, so that people can, will, may and dare give the best of themselves. HR can take the initiative and steer the process and onboard all stakeholders. Taking care of your employees means taking care of your business.”

> See also the #ZigZagHR Podcast with Anna Smets (on Spotify and YouTube).

WORKPLACE OPTIONS