

exos

**Cultivating a
healthier, happier,
more connected
workforce**





Introduction

While pre-COVID life had its own challenges, the pandemic dispersed us. And it's given us the opportunity to readdress the real challenges that were already brewing: Employees were on the brink of burnout and disconnection from their employer.

This white paper shares Exos' view on how building a strong workplace community among in-person, remote, and hybrid employees cultivates a healthier, happier, more connected workforce with higher retention.



THE STATE OF AFFAIRS FOR CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICERS

We're just recovering and lifting out of a disruption of our lives and basic needs. The last two years have exposed that the foundational components of meeting employees' and employers' needs were shaky at best.

Human capital is stretched and stressed to a breaking point,^{2,6,8,9,10,11} yet it's critical to the recovery of company culture and performance.

Addressing the needs for a dispersed workforce

Chief human resources officers are facing a workforce that's more dispersed than ever. And in the face of the challenges that creates, they're trying to figure out how to:

- address employee stress and burnout
- establish community and connection among employees
- create a thriving workplace culture to attract and retain talent

Chief human resources officers and their organizations have been let down by the promise of wellness programs that realistically only focus on a fraction of the company's pain points.

We have an obligation and an opportunity to think differently, design solutions to address these challenges, and deliver a well-being benefit that's equally accessible for remote, hybrid, and on-site employees.



THE COST OF THE PROBLEM

The fast-paced, demanding corporate world is often plagued with high turnover and burnout. And turnover isn't cheap or healthy for individuals.

The great resignation

4.4 million

number of Americans who resigned in September 2021⁸

66 - 80%

American workers who are not engaged or actively disengaged in 2021²

48%

American workers actively job searching or watching for opportunities²

\$223 billion

estimated cost to companies of the 1 in 5 American workers who left jobs between 2014 and 2019⁶

33%

direct cost of a leaving employee's annual salary to the company²

200%

indirect cost of a leaving senior executive's annual salary to the company²

Stress in the workplace

1 in 5

American workers who left a job in the last five years due to bad company culture⁶

54%

Employees reporting prevalent negative stress in their workplaces⁶

Anxiety, depression, digestive problems, headaches, muscle tension and pain, heart-related events, sleep problems, weight gain, and memory and concentration impairment — **health problems increased by long-term stress**



INADEQUATE SOLUTIONS



Well-being program providers are abundant. With buzzwords that mean different things to different providers and consumers, the market is confused.

So companies often try to solve these challenges with disparate programs that don't speak the same language, resulting in limited success, low employee engagement, and high costs. Additionally, those programs are disconnected from the larger company and miss out on a key opportunity to promote the company's culture and values.

Moreover, the race for employers to outdo their competitors by providing all the trendy fitness offerings is leading to hasty decisions without a thoughtful approach to how these individual elements actually fit together.

Without a clear model of how humans perform, health and wellness programs are simply a collection of random things to do. The result: poor outcomes for employees and no clear path to how these solutions improve the team and company culture.



EXOS' HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH

Exos' human performance-centered approach takes a different tactic. We believe that driving outcomes for the employee is the foundation of true engagement and that the needs of the individual and the company are highly complementary.

Exos has been the architect and the owner of the human performance industry, standing side by side with those driven to rise higher in work and life. We have over 20 years of experience empowering corporate employees — including over 25% of the Fortune 100 — elite athletes, and many others looking to show up as their best self.

Exos' world-class team of coaches and practitioners personalize an integrated approach across the pillars of mindset, nutrition, movement, and recovery to empower anyone to perform at their highest level.

We know that programs that focus on the needs of the individual are meaningful and highly valued resources that make the company providing them more attractive to talent.

Designing these programs to bring employees together and facilitate group flow state — a state of mind (and body) in which a person is fully immersed in a task, place, or situation — is the purest path to community and connection.



A BETTER SOLUTION: WELL-BEING REPOSITIONED

Driving well-being via human performance requires a clear methodology around how humans adapt and perform on a daily basis.

Exos believes that health and well-being is achieved by focusing on appropriately managing the stress, or load, on individuals through three programmatic principles:

1. Improved capacity and recovery

Too often the focus is on reducing stress as a path to well-being. But fully removing stress isn't realistic and stress can actually drive meaningful adaptation and growth.

A more effective approach is improving overall capacity — which represents your capabilities to perform and is organized across mindset, nutrition, movement, and recovery — and meeting stress with appropriate recovery strategies to make the stress more tolerable and reduce impact on the individual.

Coupling this increased capacity with recovery strategies specific to the type of stress incurred increases resilience and the ability to thrive, while reducing risk of burnout.

2. Aligned values

Another factor that plays a role in how well (or poorly) stress can be managed is the alignment of work to an individual's core values and motivation as well as the alignment of the values and motivations of the individual to those of the company.

When work is aligned to the individual's core principles, it stops being a chore and starts becoming something that they value.

3. Addressed subclinical mental health

Exos approaches subclinical mental health needs — those that don't rise to the level of clinical diagnosis — through a holistic brain-body approach. Addressing subclinical needs from both angles of the mind and body sets the stage for employees to address factors that might be disrupting energy, focus, and motivation.

Some of the most powerful levers that can be pulled to support mental health are regulation of the autonomic nervous system, improved movement and nutritional strategies, reducing pain, and improving sleep.

Using these allows employees to trigger flow state more often, which is a direct pathway for them to be more joyful and fulfilled¹² and is also a central concept in the creation of strong community and connection.



FLOW STATE FOR COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION



Flow state is a state of mind (and body) in which a person is fully immersed in a task, place, or situation and experiences energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process.¹

The concept of flow state was pioneered by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a positive psychologist, and his pioneering work around flow started as a global happiness study.

He studied when people are at their most joyful, happy self, and found there were key shared elements in their lived experiences in those moments. He identified characteristics such as deep focus or concentration, clarity of goals, a sense of effortlessness and calm, and frequent time warps.¹

It's in these moments that humans are tapping into a flow state. Simply put, it's the moments when they feel their best and perform at their best. Outcomes of flow state include decreased stress, increased engagement, increased creativity, and ultimately increased impact.¹



FLOW STATE FOR THE INDIVIDUAL



There are many triggers that set the stage for flow state. But two at the top of the list are clear goals and challenges, specifically a challenge that is just right for an individual based on their skill.

If a challenge is far too hard for an individual's skill level, this doesn't drive flow but rather leads to anxiety³ and, in time, burnout. Rather than modulating the challenge down, the focus should be placed on improving the capacity, or skill, of the individual.

If a challenge is far too easy compared to an individual's skill level, this also doesn't drive flow but rather leads to boredom³ and, in time, resignation as one pursues more meaningful challenges.

There's a perfect channel between challenge and skill that leads to a flow state. Flow state is the antidote for languishing,⁴ a key to optimizing subclinical mental health, and something that can be engineered through meaningful programming and space design (in both brick-and-mortar and virtual environments).¹²



FLOW STATE FOR THE GROUP



Aside from the benefits above, another notable result of flow state is that ego and sense of self disappear.⁵ Individuals connect with space and with others.

Among other neurochemicals present in the brain during flow state, oxytocin presents when people experience flow state together.⁷ Oxytocin is often referred to as the love hormone because it's present when people socially bond.

As a group solves problems together in service of a clear unified goal, this social bond becomes palpable, and the many become one — a community.

This creation of a connected community results in the alignment of shared values and motivations, solidifying company culture and promoting the health and well-being of the individuals it is composed of.



HOW TO FACILITATE FLOW STATE

Step 1: Prioritize recovery

The energy of individuals is critical, which impacts the energy of the community. Energy isn't endless. Flow requires recovery.

One of the surest ways of blocking individuals or communities out of flow is by not allowing an environment that promotes recovery.

As individuals optimize their performance capacity across mindset, nutrition, movement, and recovery, their energy becomes a sustainable fuel to be able to tap into flow state.

And this is where the conversation of employee health and well-being and the value of connection and community come full circle.

Step 2: Align on values, motivations and language

The next step to forming a strong community is aligning on shared values, motivations, and language.

Intention must be set through the delivery of clear and unambiguous goals. These clear goals provide a focus, and flow follows focus.

Step 3: Minimize distractions

The third step is to ensure that the physical environment that individuals work in minimizes distraction. So it's important that the external environment is explicitly designed to reduce distraction.

We live in a world, and function in workplaces, that are filled with entities and technologies competing for that focus. Distraction must be managed.



WHAT HAPPENS AT THE INTERSECTION OF INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING AND COMMUNITY?

The benefits of a human performance-centered well-being approach include protection from burnout and mental health issues. The result is a joyful, fulfilled, engaged employee who executes high-impact work. Here's what that looks like:



A healthy community

Inviting the individual into experiences that promote a group flow state creates a healthy community and connection that drives a positive company culture.

Increased engagement

As employees feel their needs align with the environment of the company, they're more likely to stay engaged with the company instead of looking for other opportunities.

Attraction of talent

Engaged employees have greater impact on the organization and enable a more attractive community and culture to draw in prospective employees, streamlining the recruiting process in a meaningful way.



REACHING THE ENTIRE EMPLOYEE POPULATION

The community that used to exist in a single building or across a campus has now scattered across town, across the country, and, in some cases, across the globe. Some have returned to the workplace, while others are fully remote. And a large population will be a combination of remote and in-person.

The well-being solutions of today need to reach all of those populations effectively. Remote workers interacting with the same programming, coaches, and guidance as hybrid and on-site employees facilitates the connectivity back to the organization and its culture. Hybrid workers can see the same faces virtually that they do in-person, extending the power of the in-person touchpoints.

This new way of engaging employees no matter where they are is critical to scaling effective solutions across a workforce with respect to both outcomes and community building.

"I can't express enough that the culture and environment these resources bring is invaluable."

-Employee at Exos-supported investment corporation

Exos' pivot into the digital space

At the onset of the pandemic, Exos took our in-person coaching experiences that focus on improving capacity across mindset, movement, nutrition, and recovery, and moved them to a digital solution. Over the last two years we've studied 7 million interactions among our clients' employees and have been learning, adjusting, and seeing the results.

97% of Exos survey respondents indicated that their well-being improved as a result of Exos services

83% of Exos survey respondents indicated that Exos programming positively impacted their mindset and emotional well-being

2/3 of Exos survey respondents indicated they're motivated by coach-guided sessions and quick, simple routines that can be performed on their own time.

70% of one company's workforce reported that the Exos programming and coaching increased their productivity, is one of their most valued benefits, and made them more loyal to their employer.



WHAT YOU SHOULD BE ASKING POTENTIAL PROVIDERS

In order to effectively solve the challenges facing human resource managers, critically evaluate current health and well-being providers and vendors to ensure they are working together to support the well-being, performance, and engagement of employees.

Start by asking these questions:

1. Describe your model of human performance. Specifically, how do you describe the capabilities and needs of the individual and assess their limiting factors? How do you engineer their ability to tolerate and thrive within the stress of their work and home life?
2. How do you think about the human at the center of your program with respect to the goals they want to achieve against the context of their stress in everyday life?
3. How do you empower employees to recover effectively from the stress of their job and home life?
4. How are the people leading my employees through these programs trained with respect to having a deeper understanding of what it takes to create both a thriving individual and community?
5. How does your program address multiple pain points that I may be having through the same engagement? How does the program impact it all — pain, burnout, connection, and subclinical mental health?
6. What are the long-term outcomes for the individual, and how do you measure it?
7. How does the program address the day-to-day needs of the individual to ensure they stay engaged in the process?
8. What is the methodology behind how the program drives connectivity in a meaningful way?
9. How does the program support on-site, remote, and hybrid employees?
10. How do you leverage intentional space design to amplify your programming and facilitate flow state?



For more on how Exos solutions can help build a healthy, happy community among your employees, contact us at sales@teamexos.com.

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