

# Health, Pace, Fun, and Joy: The Role of Well-Being in Engagement

By Fred Jewell and Tracy Reznik



*In this sixth piece of a nine-part series, we look at the next section of the Jabian Engagement Framework: How well-being is a critical component to employee engagement.*

Well-being includes our physical and psychological health. If we are injured or psychologically unhealthy, it is challenging to be engaged in our work, and even our lives. Well-being, like the other drivers, is difficult to measure and sometimes difficult to control, but it is often one of the first to be noticed when it's out of balance. When we don't feel good, we aren't engaged with what we're doing or who we're with. How we feel physically, our pace, our moods, and the "fun factor" all play into well-being.

Originally, we called this driver "wellness." After all, many organizations have embraced "wellness" programs, recognizing that a healthy workforce is more engaged and productive. Wellness, however, seemed to encompass too narrow a scope for this driver. When one of our colleagues was reviewing the model with us, he remarked: "I'm not sure wellness is the right word here. If I have a great week at work, pick up a bag of potato chips and a six pack of beer, and sit on the couch watching football all day, I wouldn't call that wellness. Well-being maybe, but not wellness." So, there you have it. We renamed the driver "well-being."

When we feel bad, we can become distracted and hobbled by that pain or distress. Of course, that pain or distress might be caused by other engagement drivers, such as something unfair, or a conflict in a relationship. The engagement drivers

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in our model are not mutually exclusive. Physical and psychological pain, however, are inherent in the human condition; they can't be touched directly but can be influenced by the levers in our framework—which is why well-being earned a spot as an engagement driver.

Another reason we include well-being as a driver came from a discussion we had with one of our colleagues on an early version of the framework. As a business owner, he was confused as to how money, or compensation, could not be a driver of engagement. We're jumping ahead a bit because we consider "money" to be a lever, not a driver, and we will discuss that in further detail in future *Jabian Journal* issues. It's what you do with the money that drives engagement, such as saving for the future (security), paying off debt (autonomy), spending it on someone you love (relationships), righting a wrong (fairness),

or achieving a new personal best (growth). But what if you just take that money and go get a massage, or get a joint replacement to eliminate pain, or buy that bag of potato chips and a beer? That's using the money for well-being.

Health is a key underpinning of well-being. Many organizations now offer health or fitness programs as an employee benefit. However, the definition of health varies for each individual. While one employee may define health as a vegan lifestyle with multiple workout sessions per week, another may define health as "free from pain." Flexibility in the application of health programs is important. If you offer your employees wellness dollars to apply to a fitness club, it's wise to include options like a massage to cover those employees less able to (or prone to) work out. That way, with either option, you're addressing their definitions of well-being.



Pace is another factor in well-being. It's the speed and intensity at which we are working. Is it steady? Or are there peaks and valleys of activity? Are we working so fast that we don't have time to think? Is the pace so intense that we are burning out or making ourselves sick? Is the pace so slow that we're not seeing enough progress and becoming bored? Again, finding that sweet spot for each individual is important, and tailoring that pace can fuel the well-being engagement driver.

The idea of "fun" is also an important element of well-being. Although one can argue that we're not at work to have fun, fun is a critical part of employee engagement. Since we spend most of our waking time Monday through Friday at the office, "fun" keeps us entertained, less stressed, and ultimately engaged. Be forewarned that "fun" events like mandatory happy hours, team-building activities, and other outings can backfire and have the opposite effect on engagement. Individuals must decide for themselves how much fun, and what kind of fun, they want to have at work to remain balanced.

Lastly, the idea of enjoyment plays a part. Like fun, enjoyment as a dimension of well-being aligns more with purpose and joy. Do you find enjoyment in what you are doing? Are you deriving positive energy from your work? Do you understand how what you are doing relates to a bigger purpose in your life? Ultimately, does what you do bring you joy? That's the core of enjoyment, a major part of the well-being driver.

IT'S USUALLY PRETTY EASY TO NOTICE WHEN WELL-BEING IS OUT OF WHACK. WE HURT, WE'RE SAD, WE'RE OVERWHELMED, AND WE FIND OURSELVES IN A BAD MOOD. WHEN THAT'S THE CASE, THERE ARE A VARIETY OF LEVERS WE CAN PULL TO ALTER OUR WELL-BEING DRIVER AND INCREASE ENGAGEMENT:

We can anchor back to purpose and look at whether the time we're spending at work and in our personal lives aligns with our own purpose and the things we find meaningful.



We can say no and control how much we take on. We'll often find that when we feel overwhelmed, we've overcommitted ourselves and are lacking the resources to feel good about the quality of work we can do in various aspects of our lives.



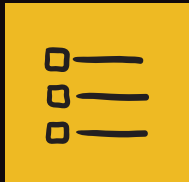
Medical technology, in the form of drugs, therapies, and surgeries, can help us alleviate or manage pain or illness.



The way we communicate can also bring us a sense of well-being. Chick-fil-A employees always respond to a thank-you with, "My pleasure." Phrases like "no problem" or "no worries" can imply that maybe it was a problem or caused me some worry. Positive language itself can create a sense of well-being.



We can put policies and rules in place, even personally, to make sure we stay healthy. Creating an identity for ourselves, for example, by being “the kind of person who works out almost every day,” or “the kind of person who doesn’t eat sweets,” or “the kind of person who always tries to have fun” can go a long way to promoting a sense of health and well-being.



Decorating spaces with fun or funny things can bring a smile to your colleagues’ faces. Jabian decorates the halls with photographs taken by Jabian employees, which always brings a smile to our team and visiting clients.



New technologies, especially wearables and mobile apps, can help us better track and monitor our well-being goals.



Taking the time to look back and reflect, through journaling, meditation, or even a meeting debrief, can influence well-being. Reflecting on the good things that happened and adjusting for the things that could have gone better inevitably create a sense of health and well-being.



Well-being, like the other engagement drivers, is deeply personal and varies from individual to individual. Teams, however, can take on common well-being practices. Organizations emphasize and cater to well-being differently and can create a culture that overvalues (or undervalues) well-being. Like all of the engagement drivers, aligning personal needs with the needs of the team and the needs of the organization will create the highest levels of engagement.

This article wraps up our discussion of the engagement drivers. The six engagement drivers of growth, relationships, security, autonomy, fairness, and well-being are amorphous and beyond our direct grasp. The levers, which we’ll cover next, make up the collection of things we as leaders can do to influence the engagement drivers and ultimately drive engagement. ■

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