

# Wellness: Addressing the "Whole" Person

By W. MATHEW JUECHTER  
and  
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Society in recent years has assimilated repeated reminders of the first principle of ecology: that everything affects everything else. Mind, body, spirit; work, home, play; individual, organization, society; earth, air, water, energy, economy—all are interdependent in ways we are only beginning to understand. How has this growing understanding shaped the practical and strategic decisions we make in training and development?

For one, organizational training is increasingly challenged to expand its sights to include what was—until the industrial revolution—the traditional function of education: the development of the "whole person."

Of course, with the whole person on the training agenda, many are concerned that a new and foreign expertise is called for, one distinct from current standards of scientific rigor (not to mention accreditation). We prefer to start with the shared assumption that the whole person is indeed worth pursuing.

Over the past few years Wilson Learning Corp. has explored a number of training and non-training strategies aimed at the whole person. The best known among these are our "wellness" and "self-management" pro-

grams. Working in these areas and moving closer toward a fuller understanding of people has been a fascinating education for us. Perhaps most gratifying, we've gleaned insights into fundamental training issues faced by our company and others.

Issues such as motivation and fear, willingness to learn and versatility tend to be elusive and somehow separate from training,

to perform such management essentials as salary reviews and correcting below-standard performance.

With health promotion, we found that the basic problem was no different, except some of the examples were even more graphic and quixotic: people, even when their lives depend on it, commonly will *not* do what they think they should do and

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**Issues fundamental to yet traditionally viewed as elusive to training—such as fear and motivation, receptivity to learning and the willingness to do what is in one's best interests—are seen in new light when the learner is addressed as a "whole person."**

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yet they ultimately determine the practical success of any training program.

Wilson Learning, initially a sales training company, first experienced this with "call reluctance." As everyone involved in selling has observed, people well-trained in sales skills and seemingly committed to selling often become paralyzed with anxiety when contemplating a face-to-face call with a prospect.

After moving into other forms of organizational training, we discovered what might be called "manager reluctance": the unwillingness of managers seemingly fully committed to their jobs,

claim they want to do. They know what to do; they just don't do it.

"Body, mind and soul are inextricably woven together," noted the late cardiologist-to-presidents, Paul Dudley White, "and whatever helps or hurts one of these three sides of the whole man helps or hurts the other two." Unfortunately, partial solutions—trying to help the body, for example, without engaging the mind—are rarely sufficient.

The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports implies in its advertising that nearly any kind of health promotion,

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fitness or exercise program will pay for itself, and that may well be true. However, without the individual's deep commitment and active involvement—both matters of attitude—recidivism in such programs as fitness, weight loss and smoking cessation will continue to be high and return on investment, low. (The most fertile market for smoking and weight loss programs, incidentally, are graduates of other smoking and weight loss programs.)

Why do people buy running shoes that stay in the closet? Lose weight, then put it back on? Quit smoking, then start again? Choose selling or management careers, then balk at performing tasks essential to the job?

The basic question behind all of these may be stated as follows:

*Why don't people do what they know to be in their best interests?* This is the question we've sought to answer at Wilson Learning, whether the issue is called reluctance or weight loss. Where we've looked, and where our tentative answers are, is in the direction of the "whole person." That's not to suggest fitness training as antidote to manager reluctance (which probably wouldn't be a bad idea). Rather, we look to such areas as the individual in relation to his or her immediate culture, core attitudes about self and life which consequently influence all decisions and the capacity to experience connection beyond the self. The common denominator is that any door will do if it leads to empowering the individual with the sense of responsibility to actually *do* what is in his or her best interests. Wellness is an arena in which the individual is full partner and participant with us in seeking such a door.

### Addressing the whole

A number of obstacles exist between the individual who is aware of sound health information, whose spirit seems willing, and actual change.

One is the individual's self-

esteem. Many of us will do anything, no matter how self-destructive, to prove that our opinion of ourself is right. Fortunately, more and more training is sensitive to this issue, and a library of ways has emerged to help people in the classroom experience self-acceptance and the skills to maintain it.

Another is the "lens," or framework of beliefs, through which the individual sees and interprets the world. A great body of research now ties certain attitudes to health and stress management. The University of Chicago's Salvatore Maddi and Suzanne C. Kobasa cite what they call "commitment" (highly engaged; the opposite of alienation), "challenge" (openness to change; viewing change as opportunity rather than threat) and "control" (sense of personal impact; the opposite of powerlessness) as three attitudes that characterize those least prone to stress and illness. It requires little imagination to recognize the value of such attitudes to an organization.

Still another obstacle is the "culture" or cultures which influence the individual. The influence of norms, the power in numbers of the old over the new, is especially oppressive when trying to establish constructive new habits. Unfortunately, our culture, in its informal norms and values, does not yet support healthy lifestyle behavior. Much of our best brainpower, for instance, goes to marketing smoking, alcohol and spectatorship as opposed to participation and proper nutrition.

At every level of society, from scholars to politicians to entertainers to saloon wiseacres to the workers on the assembly line to members of our own families, are opinion-makers highly suspicious of anything "wholesome" or "too" healthy. "Health takes the fun out of life" is an insidious but strangely long-lived, popular notion. A few condescending comments or glances can dull one's enthusiasm for change.

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# Interviewing & Selection Skills: Some Fundamental Questions...

**Q.** Why the emphasis on skills training?

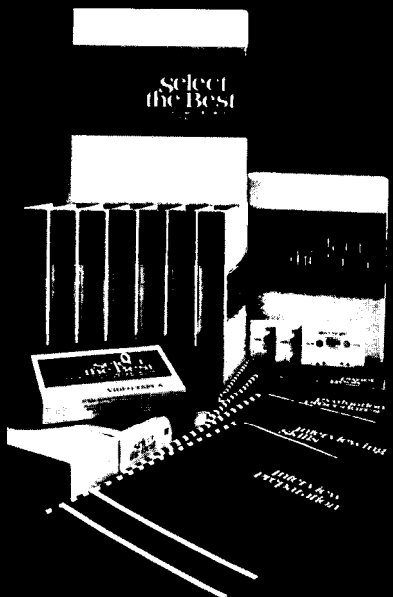
**A.** Selection is more than theory. Many managers and supervisors are not really sure how an applicant will do on the job, or even if the interview met EEO Guidelines.

**Q.** What is the financial impact?

**A.** Today's climate demands more from each hiring decision, at every level. Consider the cost of improper selection, of opportunity missed.

**Q.** Which program is best?

**A.** It should not be a difficult decision. Many companies have found the criteria-based SELECT THE BEST program, administered in-house, meets their needs. You be the judge.



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because it is within those smaller cultures—the family, workplace and neighborhood—that one by one, norms change. Cultural support for one another's efforts to become more whole or more healthy—or to move in any other constructive direction—exists in some organizations, neighbor-

hoods and families. Such significant cultural change is almost always bottoms-up; when people learn they can and *must* make a difference, they *do*. Norms will not stop them. In other words, only through taking individual responsibility are such cultural obstacles surmountable—a self-

evident fact, actually, but widely and blindly ignored.

In our own wellness program, we pay heed to it.

Given the facts about the relationship between lifestyle and health, including computerized personal information about their physical conditions in all key measures, *and* given an awareness of the cultural influences on their health-related behavior, *and* given the knowledge that they alone are ultimately responsible for their own health, *and* given, for a few days, a classroom atmosphere of fun and community in which new norms, supporting one another's health, are created—most people are ready, willing and able to make significant life-enhancing, lifestyle changes. They *want* to! They may not have known it on the way in, but we try to make it possible for them to find out.

Most will even establish their own follow-up support apparatus. The 90 Wilson Learning employees who have participated in our wellness program have established half a dozen of their own support groups, without the prodding or major financial involvement of management, and they have been joined in their activities by scores more.

The informal norms, which are ultimately the only important ones, now support wellness within our organization. Of course, without formal support and approval, little change could be expected. But the compelling power of formal policy, of official top-down "task forces," even of million dollar exercise facilities, is very limited.

The result is the "win-win" implication for management: effective reinforcement for lifestyle changes need not require massive, expensive, *quantitative* solutions. We can in fact get by, even thrive, inexpensively with *qualitative* solutions: by affirming and reaffirming our support, by encouraging those who take initiative or informal leadership positions supporting wellness, by providing showers or bike racks or whatever kinds of access are

required for employees to get the exercise or good nutrition they seek and perhaps by staying out of their way on the running track.

### Emotional and spiritual well-being

While attitude and personal responsibility are key factors in any of the lifestyle changes that enhance health and longevity, and therefore, reduce illness costs, these are just a beginning. Anyone whose attitude changes to the extent of making a commitment to healthier living, deciding to take more personal responsibility for his or her own well-being and for helping establish more constructive norms, has already made a significant, qualitative change in world view, an expansion of personal integrity and standards that will show up in other areas—including worker responsibility and quality of performance.

We believe there's no reason to stop with physical health and personal responsibility. Each person's emotional and spiritual well-being are so closely wrapped in both that we pay them close attention in our wellness program.

As for the "spirit": business is the secular domain, and we think it should stay that way. The corporation, even a corporation-sponsored wellness program, is no place for religious ritual. It is symptomatic of our dualism that we tend to think of work as something that's done Monday through Friday, play in the evenings and on weekends and spirituality on Sunday mornings.

In our wellness program, we acknowledge that the spiritual aspect of life is interlinked and integral to our well-being. We also provide a brief period for our participants to discuss their own values in small groups.

We believe the essence of most spirituality deals with the questions: "Am I fully alive? Do I have a mission? A purpose? A

value as a human being?" Partly because of our leadership role in the secularization of society, we seem to have lost or are losing ground on these elements, ultimately costing us in worker cynicism, competitiveness, defensiveness and the energy lost on them. At the same time, we discovered at Wilson Learning long before wellness that these same questions can be answered in the course of the way we do business, both with our market and within the work place, as long as we make visible and genuine efforts to treat our customers and workers as human beings, not numbers or objects.

### Caution: Empowerment is explosive

Characteristic of wellness or the "whole" employee is the foresight, integrity, willingness

and ability to postpone short-term gratification for the long-term good. In contrast to Japan, for example, most long-term planning in America seldom exceeds the retirement age of the planner. Most of our comments have focused on the worker, but the CEO who hires the executive who promotes the manager who rewards the foreman who compels the men and women in his or her line to pull less scrap in order to keep the numbers high is as far from a "whole person" as anyone.

Be forewarned: The leader can and ought to set the pace for change, but in the future, his or her employees may not wait. A major constructive shift in values such as that spurred on by a wellness program may help employees become less alienated, gripe less behind management's back and take greater responsibility for and pride in the com-



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# Performance Appraisal: Some Fundamental Questions...

**Q.** What's the real purpose?

**A.** To improve performance. Traditionally, appraisals focused on the past. But they can become part of how people manage — achieving goals, solving problems, documenting what has and will occur.

**Q.** Does it work for all jobs?

**A.** Yes, when manager and employee know ahead of time what constitutes expected performance, and the right behavioral skills are used to guide the review. There's a way to appraise objectively, fairly, even those factors which can't be measured by numbers alone.

**Q.** How does this fit what we're doing now?

**A.** No need to change what's working well. But there may be a need for an easier, less time-consuming, more comfortable way of giving and receiving appraisals. The right training program can open communications, reduce defensiveness and resolve differences so everyone "wins".

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pany's success. It may also help them be more willing, as a function of their new sense of responsibility, to make a "nuisance" of themselves, to "intrude" where they were once not welcome—for "the company's sake" as well as for their own. As people get their own lives in order and begin experiencing the external as more personal, they develop a

deepened commitment to what surrounds them: loved ones, friends, neighbors, society, environment and "the company."

That, in any case, is the often-repeated, substantiated-by-anecdote-only, rationale/testimony of those who pursue wholeness/wellness/holistic health—much as "feeling good" is the universal reply to queries

about the benefit of exercise.

The impulse to swing out, to express in action one's commitment to the larger whole, to draw power from the old hierarchies back toward the individual, stems in part from a delayed response to our growing dependence on specialists and experts who, because of their degrees and their esteem in society, have assumed responsibilities formerly the province of each individual. Increasingly, people seek to regain some of that responsibility and power, to have greater say over the decisions affecting their own lives, to make their institutions less institutional, more human. Wellness certainly speaks to that desire—but also feeds it.

Of course, pragmatists have been inviting the decentralization impulse into the work place—witness the growth of quality of work life and quality circle movements.

On the surface, wellness programs offer a modest opportunity to begin spreading out some of the decisions that don't have to be made by top management. The best and ultimately the least expensive wellness program will certainly incorporate employee input in its design.

Which brings us to the last benefit of wellness, one we've only alluded to, but which is long term and offers perhaps the biggest pay-off of all: sustained worker morale and reduced turnover at all levels of an organization. Peter Drucker says that the business of business in the future will be to "sell careers." We're convinced that people will seek out employers who actively and visibly support the well-being of their work force—and that those people who *look* for quality will *give* it, even before the wellness program opens its doors.