



Look beyond ROI to prove value in full-health programs.

THIS IS HOW™

Measuring the ROI of full-health programs can be challenging. Learn new ways to evaluate their impact. Start by reshaping your lens on success. Look for a mix of ROI and VOI.

33%

of employers are having difficulty in proving the return on their well-being strategies.¹

The cost of not treating workforce mental health.

One in five adults experience a diagnosable mental health condition in a given year and more than half go untreated.² Beyond the loss in quality of life for employees, this also comes at a cost for employers. In fact, due to mental health conditions and substance use disorders, employers lose more than 200 million workdays, and roughly \$16.8 billion in employee productivity each year.³ Still, with full-health programs—holistic programs that support employees’ behavioral and physical health—employers have difficulty proving the value of their investments. This can be even trickier with new, niche or more customized solutions like meditation, acupuncture or even financial education.

Re-evaluating benefit investment begins with reframing success.

A majority of companies already have well-being programs and/or EAPs in place. Many even want to innovate in this space. Still, employers are having difficulty in proving the return on their well-being strategies. However, a business leader we recently spoke with while conducting research on this topic commented about one of their wellness benefit offerings, “Unfortunately, we were unable to get the utilization and volume necessary to justify the expense.”⁴ This reveals that when relying too heavily on traditional metrics, companies may nix programs without understanding their true impact.

ROI or VOI? How about both?

To design more valuable employee well-being programs, employers need ways to evaluate the value of benefits in terms of what matters most to their workforce.

Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) and Population Health Alliance (PHA) offer some promising ways to measure the value of investment (VOI) beyond typically sought-after return on investment (ROI), including:

Participation: overall, as well as program eligibility, enrollment and actual engagement. **Satisfaction:** of both employees and employers in the programs and solutions offered.

Organizational support: this gets to how well overall the company is creating a culture of health across programs, policies and procedures and departments. **Productivity and performance:** focusing on how to connect health factors to employee absenteeism and job success.⁵

The reality is, the healthiest strategy is a mix of ROI and VOI. Nontraditional and more niche offerings—including anything from meditation to acupuncture therapy to financial stress support—may not lead as directly to healthcare cost savings. They are aimed at improving things like focus, rest, resilience, balance, stability and self-care. These, in turn, can lead to intangible value that impacts the health of the organization in other ways, like presenteeism, engagement and productivity.

4.5X

Companies with engaged employees can see as much as 4.5X more revenue growth than those with low engagement levels.⁶

Some employers have begun to use VOI to evaluate their employee wellness programs because it takes into account things like employee morale, decreased sick days, increased productivity and talent retention.⁷ This is when the question really gets to the approach your company is taking to workforce health and why. Think of it as the intention of your investment (IOI). Supporting employees in multiple ways that are relevant and responsive is even more needed as employers and employees are navigating the pressures of a global pandemic.

Looking for payoff, not just payback.

So, once you understand and embrace VOI in concert with ROI, where do you look and how do you assess the value of what you offer employees? Start with your intention. Why are you wanting to go beyond standard benefits? Why are you thinking of expanding or enhancing your EAP?

Why do you value supporting your workforce's physical and behavioral health? If you don't have clear answers to why you're making these choices, you won't have a clear picture of what success looks like.

THE PANDEMIC is influencing the way many companies are working, the pressures employees are working under and **behaviors that can impede workforce engagement**. Cultures of health built around nontraditional benefits are vital to adapting, so embracing VOI is critical.

One way to answer the why is to engage your workforce—survey them regularly in formal and informal ways to ask what they need, what they struggle with, where they want to improve and excel. This will help in implementing more relevant offerings. In our research with business leaders we found that, particularly with regard to smaller or more customized offerings, tracking not just enrollment but also things like satisfaction can be helpful. It also helps to get feedback on what can be improved—to iterate rather than just abandoning something that may have become more valuable with a slight tweak.

Where to go from here:

1. Begin by evaluating your approach. What's most relevant to your employees? What effect are the benefits you're offering designed to have, and how might that have an effect on the health and productivity of your workforce?
2. Where the approach you're taking and the benefits you're providing aren't aimed at direct cost-oriented impact, look for ways to evaluate the VOI you're aiming to achieve.
3. Consult with your health plan partner. They are not just developing and bringing together new solutions. They can work with you on ways to measure the true value of them.

1 NBGH and Fidelity Investments®, 11th Annual Employer-Sponsored Health and Well-being Survey, "The Employer Investment in Employee Well-being," 2020.

2 Center for Workplace Mental Health, "Making the Business Case," American Psychiatry Association Foundation, 2020.

3 Kelly Greenwood, Vivek Bapat, Mike Maughan, "Research: People Want Their Employers to Talk About Mental Health," Harvard Business Review, 2019.

4 BCBS Insights Xchange Community, Whole and Behavioral Health; Summary of Findings, June 2020.

5 Health Enhancement Research Organization (HERO) and Population Health Alliance (PHA), "Program Measurement and Evaluation Guide: Core Metrics for Employee Health Management," 2015.

6 Molly Delaney, Mark Royal, "Keeping employees engaged and positioned," Briefings Magazine/Korn Ferry Hay Group, June 2016.

7 Alan Kohll, "ROI Vs. VOI: Which Is Better for Evaluating Your Wellness Program?" HuffPost, December 6, 2017.