

Workplace Wellness Playbook

A 5-step solution for HRs to
reduce absenteeism



Why you need this guide

Like printer jams, train delays, and coffee machine breakdowns, **absenteeism is an unavoidable part of working life.**

If you dive into the numbers, you'll find the cost of absence not only includes the cost of replacing the absent worker, but also **productivity loss due to this replacement**, co-worker productivity loss, and supervisor productivity loss.

With this guide, we give you **a proactive approach to reducing absenteeism.**

- Investing in the health and well-being of employees can help see financial savings through a reduction in unauthorized absences, and fewer repeated or prolonged periods of sick leave through either work-related stress or workplace avoidance.
- Happy and healthy employees create a positive work environment where each and every employee feels appreciated and valued resulting in higher engagement and productivity.

What you can do to reduce absenteeism

1. Record and analyze patterns of absences pg 4
2. Focus on preventive care: a journey from illness to wellness pg 9
3. Rebrand sick leave to wellness leave pg 12
4. Encourage a sensible work-life balance pg 15
5. Reduce absences through group health insurance & wellness programs pg 21

1:

Record and analyze patterns of absences

You must record and file all absences. This **gives you concrete evidence** for an employee's absences if at some point they begin to become a concern.

Beyond this, maintaining a good record helps you **analyze the pattern of absences**. You have a better understanding of when and why employees are more likely to be absent. You'll be able to notice patterns **and nip any potential problems in the bud** before they get out of hand.

Absences not only affect the business but other employees as well. If team members have to **cover the additional workload**, they may feel unhappy or stressed - a classic recipe for declining engagement and productivity.

Clearly, recording, analyzing, and monitoring absences makes a lot of **business sense**.

The Bradford Factor is a useful way to detect patterns of absence, useful for identifying absenteeism.

In a nutshell, the Bradford Factor is a mathematical formula that gives you **a score based on an individual's pattern of absence**. The higher the score, the bigger the problems.

How does it work?

Person		Instances		Instances		Total days		Bradford score
A	x	1	x	1	x	10	=	10
B	x	3	x	3	x	10	=	90
C	x	7	x	7	x	10	=	490
D	x	10	x	10	x	10	=	1,000

The Bradford Formula:

$$S \times S \times D = \text{Bradford Factor score}$$

S - the total number of separate absences by a person over a given timeframe (usually 1 year)

D - the total number of days of absence of that person over that same timeframe.

B - Is the Bradford Factor score

Let's help you understand with an example.

For instance, employee **X** filed for six days off in a row because of a fever.

Employee **Y** filed for one day sick per month for six months because of a known medical condition.

The first one will have a higher Bradford Factor score even though both employees consumed the same number of leave. Here's a computation to show the difference in scores of the two employees:

Employee X: $1 \times 1 \times 6 = 6$ (low score)

Employee Y: $6 \times 6 \times 6 = 216$ (high score)

To give you an idea, here's a standard scale many organizations use:

- 0 - 50 points** = no concern about your employee.
- 51 - 200 points** = informal verbal warning with notes on suggested improvement.
- 201 - 400 points** = written warning.
- 401 - 600 points** = final written warning.
- > 601 points** = enough cause for dismissal after continued absenteeism and due warnings.

With the above in mind, is the Bradford Factor effective?

There are **Bradford Factor pros and cons**. Where would we be without at least two sides to every story?

Advantage - It's a mathematical system. You work out scores using the formula and it gives you clear data set that they **can use for the assessment of sickness**.

Disadvantage - Indirect discrimination. While treating all staff the same sounds like an ideal setup, **no two of your staff are the same**.

You can understand this better from the example mentioned above. Employee X's score is 6 while employee Y's score is 216. Based on the point system employee Y's absence pattern **may lead to a written warning**.

However, employees with mental health issues, disabilities, medical conditions, etc. will need more time off than the average employee. For this reason, **adjusting the trigger points for employees with known circumstances** can help both them and you. This way, your treatment is fairer, and you show that you're a boss who listens and cares about your staff.

Ultimately, this system **gives HRs data-driven evaluations for a better feedback Amzo** vs outlining or reprimanding off-the-cuff.

That being said, no matter what system you use, think of them as **guidelines rather than something that's set in stone**. Having a blanket policy to penalize your staff doesn't work. Rather, you should carefully treat each case separately. After all, you're working with people **trying to find a work/life balance**, not robots.



2:

Focus on preventive care: a journey from illness to wellness

Of course, you want your workforce to be healthy - mentally and physically - but when you have deadlines to meet, **absences can be frustrating.**

As per the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), **6 in 10 people have one chronic health condition**, and 1 in 4 adults has two or more chronic health conditions. These chronic conditions and diseases include arthritis, obesity, heart disease, diabetes, etc. Not only do these chronic diseases and conditions slow down a workforce, but they're also extremely costly too.

The solution to delivering projects on deadlines as well as helping employees effectively manage illnesses is simpler than you think: **preventive care.**

If everyone receives the recommended preventive care, **it can save over 100,000 lives yearly!**

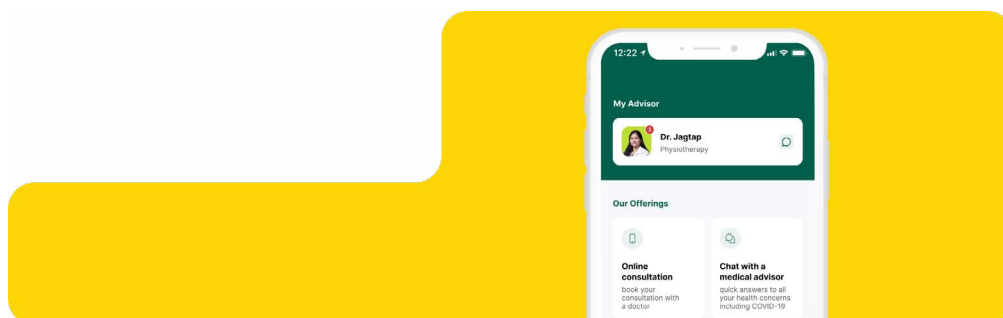
Not only does preventive care save employees' lives and **save them money** in the long run, but it also **saves your business money** and improves productivity.

While the good news is that the **power of prevention helps you live a healthier lifestyle to combat these risks**, the bad news is that several adults don't practice preventive behaviors to help lower their risk for these diseases.

What's the solution?

The answer is **developing a workplace wellness program** that focuses on prevention.

Through your **group health insurance plan with Amzo**, preventive service is a free and easy way for your employees to get answers to their health questions and complete lab tests with services received from an in-house provider.



Employees just need to **log in to the Amzo app and schedule their appointment**. They have the support of a dedicated medical advisor to help in their everyday healthcare journey. They're **available on chat 24X7** and reply nearly as quick as chatbot!

For more serious concerns, you can schedule a virtual appointment with specialist doctors who will help you solve any issues. Without stepping out of your home or standing in queues, you have **expert help from a medical practitioner** who's like your family doctor!

Along with this, Amzo has plans that include wellness sessions. These sessions include **incentives to help employees remain productive** by improving good health behavior, managing stress, reducing weight and improving fitness, and regulating blood pressure, cholesterol, and glucose, just to name a few.

Not to mention, this means no questions about copays, deductibles, or coinsurance.

According to ASSOCHAM, for every dirham spent on employee wellness, employers get a saving of AED 132.33 on absenteeism costs on reduced healthcare costs.

Encouraging preventive services will educate employees on how to reduce their risk for these serious health problems before it's too late. It also keeps your employees happy, healthy, and productive when they are in the office — **helping move your business forward**. Let's not forget, it helps reduce costs too! In the long run, a comprehensive approach to wellness produces a compounded effect of better health, vitality, productivity, and longevity.

With the help of preventive healthcare, organizations can **promise good health to their workforce** and in return get highly productive employees. After all, healthy employees make a healthy business!

3:

Rebrand sick leave to wellness leave

The onset of the pandemic led to Zoom fatigue, being cooped up indoors between four walls, no socializing, stress, and **a blur between personal and professional life**. After what feels like a million days of the pandemic, things are starting to look up.

While you may feel physically okay, there's no shortage of reasons why you may feel mentally drained. **So, if you're physically sick, is it okay to take a sick day?**

From some research, we concluded that countless employees don't feel so! There are a few reasons.

First, when you're sick, it feels like you need tangible symptoms such as a fever or headache. With no tangible symptoms, it doesn't feel right to take a day off to nurse burnout. Instead, you just resort to **"powering through."**



Second, sick days have a negative connotation. With everyone **trying to look like a strong member** of the team, taking a sick day seems like a sign of weakness.

So, how can employees strike a balance between work and rest, in order to support the company's success?

Rebranding “Sick Days” as “Wellness Days”

Day in and day out employees push themselves too hard at work, sometimes **even while feeling physically or mentally drained**, with a notion that they're finishing more tasks. In reality, overworked employees are detrimental to the organization and their submitted work may be mediocre or rushed. Plus, **a lot of exertion may lead to burnout.**

Thus, the emergence of wellness days - designated time-off to recuperate, recharge, and disconnect, in a way that works for you to put yourself in the right headspace for your job.

No, burnout isn't a good thing, but taking the time to bounce back from it, is.

How to implement wellness days?

- Wellness days are a wonderful way to boost both employee welfare and productivity. But **there's no one-size-fits-all approach** when it comes to offering well-being days.
- Always put in clear **guidelines on how one should request wellness days so it doesn't disrupt work.** Remember, 'health' means different things to different people so try not to be too prescriptive on how employees must use it.
- **Don't be too worried about anyone taking undue advantage.** If you know your team works hard and you can see it in the results of their work, then you know it's all going in the right direction. That being said, you must monitor how often (or how little) they're being used.
- While wellness days sound like a small change, it's a significant decision to **remove the stigma of sickness that discourages people from taking leave** for things like mental health. Given the current times, where people are working from home, it is essential for folks to take leaves and breaks that help them manage burnout and stress.
- With careful planning and a clear focus on the **'care of' rather than 'performance of' employees,** a policy on wellness days can be a positive change for your organization.

4:

Encourage a sensible work-life balance

Mohadeseh Ganji, the recipient of the Women Leading Tech Award for Data Science in 2020 was and is aware of the nature of her job - **spending a lot of time in front of the computer.**

To counter being continually indoors, she makes an effort to visit the outdoors often, even if it's for a short time. **She sets boundaries around her working hours and makes time for getting out.** Admittedly, sometimes she cannot maintain these boundaries, but she is aware of this and is always actively working to reinforce them.

Over the past 20 years, the nature of work has changed. **It's not easy anymore to simply leave work behind when you clock out.** During weekends and days off, people are more likely to take work home or check emails. With work blending into personal life, burnout and stress, it's crucial to have a good work-life balance plus. Not just for employees but it's beneficial to employers too.

When employees feel like their **life outside of work is fulfilling**, it shows in their work. They don't think of work as a 'necessary evil' that they have to 'put up with' and are instead satisfied with their role and

work. This improves productivity and boosts the organization's bottom line.

Happy staff work harder, perform better, make fewer mistakes and **create an excellent 'united front'** for your firm.

A company that encourages a healthy work-life balance naturally becomes **an attractive place to work**, especially in the post 'lockdown' world. A positive work environment not only attracts new talent but also helps retain the good ones.

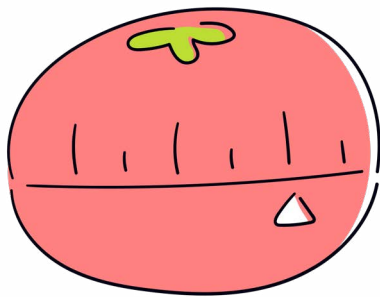
One common and popular method that employers are utilizing to achieve work-life balance is **flexible schedules. Rather than a strict 9 am to 5 pm workday**, employees are given the liberty to have a flexible schedule - perhaps 7 am to 3 pm or 10 am to 6 pm. Some argue that merely shifting time schedules doesn't address a deeper need for quality time. There's a way to make this work - by utilizing the hours you have productively so your mind doesn't wander when you're away.



A proven technique that helps with better utilization of your time is the **Pomodoro technique**.

What's the secret sauce? Thinking in tomatoes rather than hours!

Don't brush it off as silly immediately, hear us out and also **trust the millions of people who swear by this** technique and find it extremely useful.



The Pomodoro Technique

Pomodoro, Italian for tomato, is **a popular time management method**. It encourages you to work within the time you have, rather than struggle against it. This technique, **helps you alternate between focused work sessions with frequent short breaks**.

You will finish each day with a sense of accomplishment by doing nothing more than **working in 25-minute blocks (called Pomodoro sessions)**, followed by 5-minute breaks.

This way, even if employees are taking time off, while they're at work, **they're making the best use of their time** during work hours.

How does the Pomodoro technique work?

The Pomodoro technique is **simple, yet very effective**.

- Step 1: **Choose a task** - You know that task you have been trying to tackle for ages? Let's do that.
- Step 2: **FOCUS** - Minimize distractions. Close the door, put your phone on DND, log out of social media, close emails or do what it takes for you to focus. Learning to manage distractions is one of the key skills the Pomodoro technique will teach you, it is only 25 minutes after all.
- Step 3: **Work** - Pick your task, start a timer for 25-minutes and get to work. During this time, this technique tells you to stick to the chosen task for the entire duration. There's no concept of pause. Note down any distractions that appear and come back to them.
- Step 4: **Break** - Well done. Session complete. Step away from your desk for five minutes, clear your mind, stretch your legs or grab a refreshment.
- Step 5: **Repeat** - Time to hit the timer again for the next session.
- Step 6: **Long break** - After your fourth session, take a 20-minute break and come back completely refreshed.

Why does this technique work?

Sometimes, **it's hard to get started or maintain motivation** when you have a series of tasks or large tasks lined up. Sheer willpower isn't enough.

When you break it down into short intervals followed by breaks, **you make the tasks manageable**. So even if you're working shorter hours or missed work due to an illness, you put one foot in front of another rather than scrambling.

In the process, you also **train your brain to focus and despite the myriad of distractions**, you make progress.

This technique helps you:

- Improve low productivity
- Do away with distractions
- Ensure you focus
- Turn zero motivation into 100% motivation
- Makes you feel energetic and not exhausted
- Better utilization of working hours

Will the Pomodoro technique work for you?

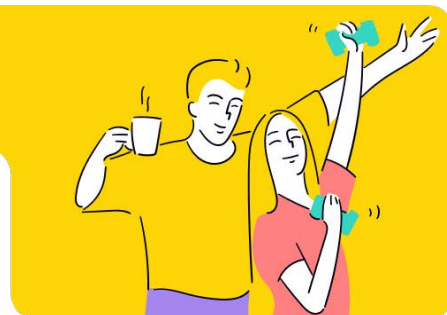
- Of course! It's an excellent technique if you **jump between countless tasks throughout the day**, have a long list of to-do's, or at the end of the day if you ask yourself "what did I accomplish today?" It's also great for large projects that neither have a beginning nor an end, so you can break it up and make constant progress.
- The best part about the technique is that it really helps you get started by **making big projects digestible**.
- To help you get started, your team members or colleagues can **write down weekly/monthly/quarterly goals** and plan the days to work toward them.
- Alternatively, you can **test out this technique among a few groups or a bunch of random employees and see how it works**. You can pick employees from different teams, star performers, juniors, those struggling with time management, or ones who take more leaves. This way, you'll understand how the Pomodoro technique works for your organization.
- Once you implement the technique, **compare and contrast productivity and absences** to get real insights for your company.
- Remember, you can **tweak this according to your needs**. You can make sessions longer or breaks longer. The idea is to break often so you have flow and focus, mental agility without facing burnout, and ensure you complete what you've set out to do.

5:

Reduce absences through group health insurance and wellness programs

One of the leading causes behind the high rate of absenteeism in the workplace is **work-related stress**. This can relate to multiple aspects - confrontation and conflict between co-workers or managers, the demand of the job, overload of pressure, or tight deadlines.

By adopting a proactive approach toward employee well-being and **providing potential solutions to alleviate any workplace pressures**, you can prevent stress in the workplace from escalating into a more chronic or serious condition. Furthermore, you can bring down the likelihood of recurring and prolonged absences caused due to any mental or physical illnesses. And also, reduce the occasions on which sick leaves are utilized due to tension in the workplace or unauthorized absences.



There are numerous methods to lower absenteeism and improve health and wellness among employees:



Support open communication - With open channels of communication, employees can **discuss their concerns and disclose any health and wellness issues**. This way, in the early stages you can intervene and preempt any potential absenteeism. Over and above this, you can also ensure employees take care of themselves before any chronic sickness arises.



Introduce a mental health day - We spoke of wellness days before, on the same lines, introduce **a mental health day which employees can take as a paid sick leave**, perhaps. This will help avoid employees being present at work but unfocused and disengaged or the instances of employees lying about another illness and taking unauthorized absences. Recognize mental health as a serious issue that can be spoken about.



Opt for group health insurance and wellness programs - When you offer group health insurance to your employees, which is also mandatory in UAE, along with wellness plans **you show your employees you care about their happiness and health**. This, in turn, leads to reduced absenteeism and increased engagement. The group health insurance gives employees protection from financial

worries arising out of health issues. And the wellness programs ensure your employees are healthy even before a health issue crops up i.e. preventive care. This can comprise of mental health training, lifestyle assessment days, wellbeing days at work, or bi-weekly wellness sessions like Zumba, pilates, nutrition sessions, etc.



Adopt a caring approach - A compassionate and caring approach to your employees is one of the best ways to approach those who take time off, especially during emergencies, prolonged absences, or unauthorized leaves. Caring shows them you understand, support & value their well-being which goes a long way!



Showcase flexibility - Whether it's flexible working schedules or working remotely, it helps exhibit you value their personal commitments and trust them during their working hours. In turn, this brings down stress related to work as well as a see risk through improved work-life balance.



Offer support during absences - When you support your employees during their time off whether it's due to bereavement, illness, or mental health, it not only alleviates employees' concerns but also encourages a speedy return. This, in itself, can also help to prevent repeated absenteeism.

Stay ahead of the
curve with modern
health benefit