



April 2020

What must employers now consider when creating effective health and wellness programs for their employees – programs that work for everyday work-life and also in times of emergency?

[www.thefitsummit.com](http://www.thefitsummit.com)



**Francesco Lagutaine**, Chief Marketing and Experience Design Officer,  
**Manulife Asia**

At Manulife, the health and wellness of our employees and customers is a top priority, which is why we're executing a holistic health strategy to encourage people to be active. We organize world-class marathons in Boston, Da Nang and Siem Reap, and hundreds of our employees and customers from around the world take part in them every year. While these initiatives are global, physical limits mean only a relatively small group can take part. Importantly, Covid-19 has also altered traditional approaches of bringing people together. Gyms are closed and access to recreation centres remains curtailed. Yet people are keener than ever to lead healthy lifestyles. As an insurer, how do we meet that demand? The answer is through culture – through letting everyone know that we support better health and that we're a trusted health partner. Our success relies on leveraging the power of digital, but with a distinctly human-centered approach. We're giving customers effective digital tools to make their lives easier and better every day, from the ability to make claims on smartphones to encouraging healthy habits and home exercise through our ManulifeMOVE app. We're also enabling our employees and agents to work remotely with the same access and tools they'd have in the office. This is just the beginning for us. In a post-Covid-19 world, the winners will be those quick to respond to new digital realities, invest intelligently in technology, and grasp opportunities to forge closer communities and make lives better.

[www.manulife.com](http://www.manulife.com)



**Lynette Oat**, Chief Growth Officer, **Optum International**

Regardless of breaking news in the community or world at large, stress management and mental health are always key considerations for employer wellness programmes. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19 upped the global ante on stress, employees in many parts of the world were at risk for developing stress-related health concerns because of overwork or prolonged periods of economic uncertainty. Anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues are associated with ongoing stress. Fortunately, employers are recognizing the need. In 2019, Optum surveyed 303 large employers (3000+ employees) located in Asia-Pacific (APAC), Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East to identify trends in health and wellness programmes. Results from the Optum 2019 International Wellness in the Workplace Benchmark Study (IWIW) showed 30% more employers are now offering stress reduction activities than in previous years. Compared to other regions, APAC has the highest employee participation rate in stress programs at 37%. Employee assistance programmes (EAPs) are among the top four most popular programmes, and almost 50% of APAC companies offer them. Also, in APAC, the number of employers including EAP counseling in their onsite wellness strategy has risen by 67% since 2018. Another important consideration for employers is how best to engage employees in personal health and wellness now that millennials comprise the largest demographic in the workforce. More employers are applying digital technologies and are identified in the IWIW study as the most effective means of driving employee engagement in four of six corporate environments. This makes even more sense during times of emergency.

[www.optum.com](http://www.optum.com)



**Sudhanshu Tewari**, Co-Founder & CEO, **Rewardz**

The use of wearable devices and plug-and-play wellness apps has ensured that physical activities and sleep patterns can be tracked anywhere, anytime. Wellness technology is future proofed and can continue to enable the tracking of corporate wellness programs even among remote workers. However, organisations need to future-proof the delivery of their wellness programs to be more resilient to any changes in operating practises, whether temporary or permanent. While the immediate reaction to an emergency may be to cancel any upcoming fitness events, this would hamper the intended goals of the wellness program. Instead, organisations should adapt their delivery format from offline to online channels. Virtual workshops, Zumba sessions and the like are critical at such times, in reducing stress and promoting general well-being. Moreover, be it through fitness videos, exercise plans, meal plans, or tips, it is crucial to curate personalised content, in keeping with the circumstances. In terms of scope, organisations must support not just physical but also mental/psychological programs. This needs to be reflected both in the organisational policy (e.g. subsidising psychotherapy/psychiatry, cultivating relevant talks/seminars) and in organisational culture (i.e. one of acceptance without judgement). It is essential that this be considered an ongoing benefit and not an ad-hoc emergency measure. In summary, the delivery and scope of traditional wellness programs must adapt to the shift in the modus operandi of business from office to home. Organisations must look at new ways to engage its employees both as individuals and as teams, digitally and in real-time.

[www.rewardz.sg](http://www.rewardz.sg)



**Jessie Pavelka**, Global Wellness Expert and Co-Founder, **Pavelka Wellness**

What makes a health and wellness program robust is permission, inclusion and accessibility. You can have fantastic resources in your program but if, as an organization, you are not making it a priority - even during times of crisis - then you are not supporting its culture. Doing so requires both a top-down and bottom-up approach with awareness and ownership on all levels; the beliefs and behaviors of the organization, as well as the leaders, teams and individuals on the ground. A plan that lets each individual make sense of what health and wellness means to them – whatever that may be – lets employees take those guiding principles away with them. Whether at work, in their daily lives or in times of emergency when they may be home-based, it needs to be a wellness platform that comes with a strategy for personal accountability: to clearly point people on a pathway of making their own decisions and finding their own version of wellness.

[www.pavelka.co.uk](http://www.pavelka.co.uk)





**Stacey Riley**, Head, Business Development & Partnerships (Asia), **WellteQ**

The modern challenges that business leaders face provide a volatile, unpredictable new work environment that needs to be expertly navigated. Employees need flexible, practical and relevant measures to follow to protect their health and wellbeing. Short-term contingency planning, including (1) following the most stringent guidelines from global healthcare organisations such as WHO, CDC and local health authorities. (2) Communicate frequently and through the right channels, making sure employees that are affected directly receive more targeted support. (3) Benchmark your efforts with others in your industry. (4) Support your CEO with setting up a cross-functional response team that guarantees decisive action and a stable line of communication to reduce workforce anxiety. In terms of workplace wellness strategy, companies must (5) Evaluate – Evaluate your current situation including previously run programs, eNPS, budgets and leadership buy-in. Look at the current employee handbook on working practices, on-site protocols and office-based policies. (6) Employ – Whether investing in a new technology, the creation of a wellness committee or setting up a mini-site in the employees' portal, look to create a culture of wellness through each and every employee. (7) Engage – The key to engaging employees is consistency in frequency and tone of communications, resources provided and new technologies you invest in. Creating sustained behavioural change in your company culture stems from healthy habits at the core of your wellness strategy. (8) Expand – After the first 90 days, evaluate, adjust and expand across the organisation. The importance of this stage is to ensure lessons have been learnt from previous situations and the company is better prepared for what might come next.

[www.wellteq.co](http://www.wellteq.co)



**Dr. Debra Villar**, Director, **Complete Corporate Wellness**

Corporate health and wellness programs are becoming widely used by companies around the world. Research has shown that there are key elements that employers need to consider when investing in a corporate wellness program for their employees. (1) Leadership involvement: Wellness should come from inside out at an individual level, and from up down from an organisational level. Leadership approval and support is a key factor in the success of the program. Policies and procedures that encourage wellness participation will provide not only a return on investment but build the workplace wellness culture, essential for real results. (2) Participation rates: Programs should be fun, engaging and make sense for the people and culture of the company. High participation rates will allow individuals to benefit from health events and allow a higher return on investment at the organisational level. (3) Health data: Recording, analyzing and comparing health data is the source of the return on investment calculation. This can be done by health assessments, health risk questionnaires, participation rates, surveys and more. (4) Flexibility: Being able to change, adapt and restructure your business has shown us to be the key to survival especially in these trying times. During the Covid-19 pandemic companies have needed to shift their working environment and working from home has become the norm. Companies that had a work from home policy in place prior to the pandemic were quick to adapt and provide the infrastructure to continue working at a productive level. Flexible working conditions is a key factor in building a wellness culture. Building a wellness culture should be the key motivator in providing a health and wellness program to the workplace. Wellness is no longer a perk but an essential to decrease absenteeism, presenteeism and increase productivity.

[www.completecorporatewellness.com.au](http://www.completecorporatewellness.com.au)



**Dr. Sven Hansen, Founder, [Resilience Institute](https://www.resiliencei.com)**

Covid-19 is a Black Swan – an improbable event with massive consequences. Amid this chaos, focus on the centripetal forces that you can apply to maintain calm, control and connection. Maintain your physical health and support your mental and emotional wellbeing. Consider these ten key steps: (1) Discipline your attention; sip sparingly on information. (2) Reinforce your daily disciplines of self-care. (3) Exercise daily; get out in fresh air and sunshine. (4) Lock down your sleep discipline; stretch to 8 hours. (5) Eat fresh foods & eat sparingly. (6) Stay calm and relaxed; relax daily. (7) Be present and savour the moment; catch worry, focus on breath and body. (8) Stay connected to your family and friends. (9) Be positive and seek out optimistic positions: don't catastrophise. (10) Keep cash on hand and set yourself up for remote work. Focus on what you can control and change. Reduce inflammation, fatigue and poor health. Experts warn that that age, obesity, diabetes, smoking and chronic conditions increase risk of infection and consequences. Put in place a good daily discipline that nurtures fitness, sleep, relaxation and wellbeing. A fresh-food diet and relaxation will keep your gut bacteria healthy. Anxiety is a key risk. Uncertainty and risk trigger the emotion of fear. Fear will stir and stimulate futile loops of worry. It is essential to discipline your thinking. When you notice the discomfort of anxiety or loops of worry, breath out long and slow. Bring your attention forcefully to your breath, your body, and the feeling of being alive right now. As your attention learns to stay present on the unfolding moment, anxiety will dissipate. Hopelessness and depression must be countered. Humanity is brilliant at rapid bounce. We will find a way. Be active and practical. Do useful things at home or read a good novel. Be alert to rumination on losses and what could have been. Create a positive story out of your situation. Spend time with loved ones and help each other build optimism and hope. We will come out wiser and stronger. Reflect on what really matters. Let go of things that no longer matter. It is an opportunity to make needed change. Bounce, grow, connect and seek flow.

[www.resiliencei.com](https://www.resiliencei.com)



## A big thank you to this month's contributors



To be involved in future question's of the month please contact:

**Ross Campbell**

Founder and CEO

[ross@thefitsummit.com](mailto:ross@thefitsummit.com)

+65 8268 9834

**Daylin Limonte**

Head, Marketing &  
Communications

[day@thefitsummit.com](mailto:day@thefitsummit.com)

+65 8132 7534

[www.thefitsummit.com](http://www.thefitsummit.com)

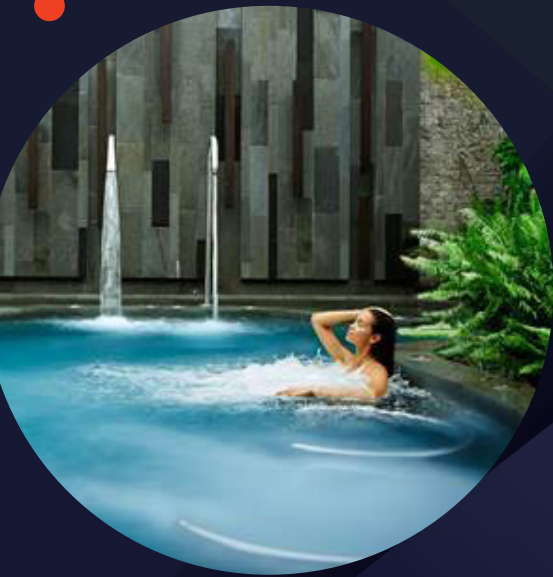




# World Fitness & Wellness Summit, Exhibition & Awards Dinner

**3 - 5 August 2020**  
Raffles City Convention Centre,  
Singapore

## Asia's Largest & Most Influential Fitness & Wellness Event



[www.thefitsummit.com](http://www.thefitsummit.com)