

# WorkWell

A Deloitte podcast series to empower your well-being



## Designing work for well-being

**Jen Fisher (Jen):** Well-being has become top of mind for many organizations in light of the ongoing global pandemic but, leaders and employees alike still struggle with how to move beyond health and wellness programs to truly making well-being a part of the employee experience. Deloitte surveyed 6000 professionals across the globe for its 2021 Global Human Capital Trends Report to find out how organizations can position themselves to thrive moving forward. One important trend that emerged is that integrating well-being into the flow of work will be vital in a post-COVID world. This is the work podcast series.

Hi, I'm Jen Fisher, Chief Well-being Officer for Deloitte and I'm so pleased to be here with you today to talk about all things well-being.

I'm here with Erica Volini, Deloitte's Global Human Capital leader and Colleen Reilly, a PhD candidate and teaching professor at the University of Denver with over 20 years' experience, serving as a catalyst for positive change for individuals and organizations. Thanks, Erica, for joining us today.

**Erica Volini (Erica):** Thanks for having me, Jen. I am very excited about the discussion.

**Jen:** So, for this episode we're going to do something a little bit different. Erica and I are going to be sharing some of our findings and insights on well-being from Deloitte's 2021 Human Capital Trends Report, and I'm handing over the reins of hosting to Colleen today, so that she can lead us through the discussion. Thank you, Colleen, for joining us and of course, for being our special guest host. I guess with that I'm going to turn it over to you.

**Colleen Reilly (Colleen):** Thank you, Jen. I'm just really honored to be here speaking with you both and really looking forward to unpacking some of the key findings from the human capital trends, specifically "Designing Work for Well-being". Honestly, that title just even makes my heart sing. I've been in this industry for over 20 years and it's always felt like organizations said well-being was a priority, but once you got in there it really wasn't. It just felt like rolling the rock uphill and just when you believe you've made it, the rock rolls back downhill, like the old tale of Sisyphus from Greek mythology. I would love to just start with a big broad question, has well-being adoption within the workplace finally arrived? Is it really going to be a strategic priority?

**Jen:** So, Erica, I'm going to let you start with that question because I probably have a biased answer.

**Erica:** I think that the answer is unequivocally yes. With our 2020 Global Human Capital Trends Report, well-being came out as the number two trend only following belonging, which to me is inextricably linked to well-being. 80% of our respondents said it was important or very important to their success moving forward. I think even more, the pandemic has put this issue front and center and we continue to hear stories, unfortunately, about a deterioration and the mental well-being of the workforce. I think it's really forcing organizations and executives to take a look and say, "How can we address this moving forward? How can we start to fix this issue in a more meaningful way?" One other thing that's happened, underlying all of this, is that for the past three years in earnest, we have seen a major transformation of organizations operating from being traditional business and enterprises; insular in nature, very siloed in their focus to what we call social enterprises, where they're recognizing the need to really meet the needs of a broader set of stakeholders both inside and outside their organization. I think these three factors are really coming together to say that we have well-being challenges. Mental health, it is front and center and not only in the workplace, but in society. The role of organizations is expanding from traditional business enterprises to social enterprises and executives need to think more about the needs of the stakeholders, employees being paramount in there. Then the pandemic exposing this well-being and mental health challenge at an unprecedented level. So, that's a long answer to your question Colleen to say yes, emphatically and now we really need to do something.

**Jen:** Obviously music to my ears, Colleen. I completely agree with Erica and I don't think the issues that we're seeing in particular around mental health and well-being societally, which obviously impacts the workplace in large part due to the pandemic, but in my mind was kind of bubbling under the surface and the pandemic really brought it to life. It has the attention of executives across the globe in all of the right ways, which is really encouraging. There is a real, authentic, and vulnerable interest and concern for workplace and humanity, the humans in our workplace and how do we move beyond just what I would say, "table stakes", you know, health and safety. Of course, that's important but really looking at our employees, our workforce as the whole person, which in my mind is new but a light has been really shown on it because of the pandemic. Perhaps that's a silver lining, but music to my ears for sure.

**Colleen:** It's hard to say this, but maybe something good came out of COVID-19, right? Maybe now we have taken off the glasses and we're realizing that yes, absolutely well-being needs to be focused on a macro level as well as on micro level. So, with that and focusing on mental health, of course in society, but let's focus it back to the organization and it has to be more than just table stakes. It has to be more than the health and safety; it has to be more than just an EAP program. People are just surviving. In the report, it talks about this 'thriving mindset', so how do we do that cross walk with organizations? They understand it's more than a call line on the EAP and it's more than just getting up and surviving the day and the week. It is really about adopting this new mindset for thriving. Where do organizations even start or what have you seen?

**Erica:** I mean, from my perspective, start with listening, right? I don't mean listening in terms of employee exit surveys. I mean listening in real time to what your employees are saying, not only what they're saying, but how they're acting.

**Colleen:** You are almost talking about taking a pause and truly authentically listening to employees with a real intent to understand, having empathy and connecting with them as a human being. How do you get leaders to understand and slow down? How do they build this

skill set? Because you know, in corporate America for so long, it's always been about just getting things done and almost kind of cogs in a wheel. So, how does this transformation really start to happen and get adopted? Not just within very forward-thinking organizations like Deloitte, but in middle America or midsize organizations, even small.

**Erica:** Yeah, I think part of it is we have to elevate the role of the team leader. We often think about leadership as sort of top of the house. I think what we found, especially during the pandemic, was that the team leader had the best pulse on what was happening with their employees. Especially in a world where people were at home, you couldn't see them, you couldn't see what challenges they were dealing with. A team leader's ability to reach out to listen, to have empathy, to probe, to understand, became incredibly important. So, part of it is elevating that role and then part of it is shifting the culture. There needs to be a view that a culture of transparency is okay. If I take a page out of the digital playbook, that failing or needing help in particular does not mean that you have not succeeded. That's a sign of courage that you're asking for help and that you're being more transparent around what is going on with you. That needs to start at the top because it's a culture change. We need to give employees permission and say not only is it okay, but we expect you to tell us so that we can help you. Then we can continue to help empower you to make the changes that you need to put well-being front and center. That's really the shift, I think, that we also need to make. Well-being, and this is the whole theme of what we wrote about in the trends, it can't be something that's treated on the side. So, you're talking about how do we make it a priority? That's part of the equation. The other part of the equation is how do we make it integrative? How do we make sure that it's not just a set of programs as good as they are, but it is really embedded into the way the work happens? That you feel as though you have the ability to say, "You know what? I can't be on video right now."

**Jen:** Yeah, I completely agree. I think we need to redefine what leader means like Erica said, right? Because all of us are leaders in some way or colleagues. Getting comfortable with perhaps being uncomfortable and talking about things that maybe we didn't talk about in the workplace before or didn't think that it belonged in the workplace before. That doesn't mean that you have to come forward with your entire life story. Everybody is going to have a different comfort level but being open, being visible, especially at the leadership level about what your own challenges are, but I've also found what are your solutions, right? People sharing how we all cope, sharing how we deal with it, sharing the challenges that we've had and the things that work for us, not only gives other people solutions, but just empowers them or gives them permission. I think, what is huge when it comes to culture and it seems funny that people would need permission, but they need permission. I think that comes through loud and clear when you do listen to your employees, they want to know that if they do these things that it's going to be supported and it's not going to be viewed in a negative way. The more that we can all do it, and the more that we can all support each other and share our own solutions, the more powerful it becomes, and then it's a great cycle, right? Because it's positive reinforcement. When you think about what Erica said related to listening to your employees, if you listen to them and something positive happens, then they're going to share more. It just becomes the culture of the way that you work.

**Colleen:** I couldn't agree with you more. I can see how leadership would have that understanding of how important psychological safety is and really to create that environment where people can be vulnerable and comfortable to talk and have that mindset. In my experience, and I'm really curious for both of you to answer this question, I

get it from leadership, but how do you get middle management to really embody this? It's been my experience that leadership definitely can see the big picture. They can adopt these transformational types of behaviors, but middle managers are often the most influential on their teams. What they are signaling and what they are modeling often gets embodied by the employee. So, how do we really start to get that whole process cascaded?

**Jen:** This is about putting the human at the center and if you get this right, this is a positive for everyone, right? Designing well-being into work... in a lot of ways, the whole thinking behind it and the research behind it is so that it's part of what we do. It's not left up to the leader or the middle manager or the employee or anyone. It's designed into the work itself and while that might look different for different people, in terms of what their needs are, the experience should be somewhat consistent. It's not if I have a manager that believes in it or understands it, right? It just is right. Of course, that's the long-term end goal but how do you get there? You have to change the mindset. This isn't just about minds; this is about heart too and that's not always something that we have tried to win in the workplace overtime. It's a fairly new concept around winning the hearts. This is a head issue and a heart issue, and I think that's how you get to middle managers and to everyone quite frankly. They're human, they have needs and they're feeling it too. Not only are they seeing it in the teams that they lead and understanding that something needs to change, something needs to be different but I'm hearing the drum beat loud and clear from all levels of the organization. Everybody is feeling it. Maybe in a way the pandemic has been a great equalizer. Some of our prior ways of coping or working changed so drastically that it put us all on a level playing field so that we could be authentic, vulnerable and look at things in a different way. But everybody is feeling it and I think we need to appeal not to just changing the minds, but changing the hearts which feels a little esoteric, I understand, but it's true.

**Colleen:** I think that you just contextualized it really well and the takeaway for all the listeners is really putting the human first.

**Erica:** Put it in performance management, tie rewards and recognition to it, make succession planning criteria have this as a part of that. I mean that's the way to help managers and team leaders understand this is a priority and it's going to be taken seriously. When it's a category in your performance management reviews, when recognition is provided for those individuals who are really modeling it and those people get either recognized by leadership or some type of monetary reward. Making sure that when you think about who are going to become your next leaders in the path forward, this has to be part of the criteria. Those are some of the best ways to affect change at that level. By the way, I think a lot of team leaders really want to do this because they're seeing the impact of these challenges on their ability to get work done. I think we are seeing the team leader embracing this need to focus on this issue. If we get down to brass tacks, the way you're rewarded and your ability to continue to accelerate in the organization are always great motivators for any kind of behavioral change that needs to be driven.

**Colleen:** I mean you guys are like a dynamic duo. You're so powerful with your thoughts and with your words. The fact that no matter what level you're at, you are a human being. When we all put the human first it is about winning the hearts and minds of our people so we all can do great work and designing it into the work itself. Thank you for that. That was really kind of inspiring and it also just then leads to another question for me. As you're doing this and you're putting the human first, really focusing on winning the hearts and minds of your people. I also look at one of the titles in the report and it says, "The End of

Work Life Balance". Everybody's been so excited to try to achieve work life balance, which is nearly impossible. So, how does that fit in and unpack what that really means?

**Jen:** Yeah, well I'm happy to start with this and then Erica you can add on because this has been my Achilles heel for quite a while. What I always struggled with was...it was never balanced. There perhaps shouldn't be the expectation that it should be balanced. Perhaps my definition was always very literal about work life balance, but having it never feel balanced also felt like I was doing something wrong or I was failing. I learned differently for myself around work life integration and I think designing work for well-being is even a further evolution of work life integration. Saying, "You know what? Sometimes I'm going to be giving more to work and sometimes I'm going to be giving more to my personal life." Overtime, that's a rhythm and that's okay. I have to give myself permission to be okay with that and not feel like I'm doing something wrong because it's not equally balanced all of the time. The language around work life balance, it just never really worked for me. Now with the pandemic, working from home, working in different ways, wherever that goes in the future, I think this notion of integration...I actually think right now in the middle of the pandemic it's not even work life integration, it's work and life just sitting on top of each other. We've all had to peel back and say, "Okay. What's going to work for me and how can I work in a different way? What is my own personal work style versus those of the people on my team? How do we set behaviors? How do we agree to behaviors and norms of the way that we're going to work, so that you're not online 24 hours a day and you don't feel like you have to be online 24 hours a day?" You know what the expectations are of you and you're having really good healthy dialogue about it as colleagues, as teams, as an organization. I just think this notion of balance, prior to the pandemic but even now, it needs to go away altogether because it's just not reality.

**Erica:** Yeah, I mean I couldn't agree more. The first thing I think of when someone says balance, and maybe it's because I have a 2-year-old son, is a seesaw. People sit on opposite sides and I think when we talked about integrating work for well-being, that's exactly what we tried to change. If we think about well-being sits on one side and works sits on the other, then think about how that works in the context of a day. You have a workday and it's super stressful and is super frustrating and you don't get a break. You're sitting at your desk the entire time, you're on meetings virtually and then pause and go back to your life. Actually, that's how I feel like I've been living to be honest with you and I've been working really hard against that. Right now, I'm in my office, it's closed, the door is closed. I've been here since 6:30 in the morning, call after call and honestly when the bells hit at 3:30 PM, my son's nanny is going to leave and I'm going to shift into life...that is just not reality. So, how do you find ways, as you're looking at the work, to give people breaks? It could be small things. It could be things like formalizing a policy where 30-minute meetings are set at 25 minutes and 60-minute meetings are set at 50 minutes, so that people just have natural breaks to get up. It could be about being more formal around when you have to be on video and when you don't. When I'm taking a phone call and I'm not on video, I could go outside and walk around. I could get a minute of fresh air. When you're on video, you have no ability to do that, and those are the simple ways in which it can be done. To me, that's full work life integration because it's recognizing that I need to get out of my chair. I need a minute to breathe fresh air and I need to do that in the context of the fact that I have five calls that I need to get done in the course of my day. Again, these are simple examples, but I think in this instance, let's not try to make this some grand program and transformation. That's why I say listening and empowering employees to help make these changes is almost the best way to do it, because we will find these examples and we

will find out what works. The team leaders, going back to that point, can model it and then we can figure out how to roll it out across the enterprise. I think it's okay for it to happen that way a little bit inorganically first and then formalize.

**Jen:** I love that! It's a micro step approach to transformation. Erica, that's a whole new thing.

**Colleen:** Now we're onto something, it's not black or white. Like you said, it's the integration and it's not putting these unrealistic expectations. I love the fact that, Erica, you talked about these natural breaks and then actually role modeling it by maybe not being on camera or going outside and getting that fresh air. I think it definitely speaks to role modeling and changing the mindset of how we can integrate and get through this and keep our sanity.

**Jen:** I think her description, I was tongue in cheek, but not really...the micro step approach. I mean what's beautiful about that and how it works in our own lives so we're trying to change behaviors and habits which are the same in work, is that if it doesn't work, it's not a big deal because we were just trying it. Especially on teams, you don't have to do it at an organization wide level yet, but what works on a team? Trying things and empowering people to try things and then getting back together and say, "hey, how do we feel about that? Did it work? Did it not work? Do we want to change it?" Actually, allows for the innovation process too. At the same time, let's try it, see how it goes and let's adjust or say that it didn't work and try something else.

**Erica:** One of the most exciting statistics in our 2021 Global Human Capital Trends Report was this data point, when we asked about work, we said, "How do you approach work prior to the pandemic?" Business executives said to us, we focus on work optimization. Reengineering, which to us is tweaking around the edges, bringing in some automation, not really changing the outcomes of work or really challenging how work gets done, but just making some tweaks. Post-pandemic, those same business executives...I mean literally nine months later, told us the vast majority of them are now focused on work reimagination. The business executives are telling us we're opening up the door to look at work differently. At the same time, we have this backdrop of well-being issues, mental health, real challenges that are out there. This is the moment and I think that's the other point is we're at a very unique moment in time. We should not let this time pass us by. I feel really strongly about that because I never seeing the door opened as wide in terms of how we view work, like I am right now.

**Colleen:** That's fantastic, how do we not let that door close? How do we get this socialized, outside of just some really open-minded innovative leaders and help it become the norm rather than the exception?

**Erica:** Yeah, I think that goes back to everything we talked about. I mean, let's start by looking at the data. Let's see what was put in place, what our employees are telling us. Let's take a look at the team leaders and find a couple who are bold and ask them to pilot and take this kind of micro based approach. Let's make sure that HR and IT and the business are all at the table together. That's the third point which we haven't talked about yet, which is that has to be done across the enterprise. If HR is in the driver seat, and you know I love HR?

**Jen:** Thank you, Erica.

**Erica:** I mean many of the solutions that we're going to find are going to have everything to do with digital. We need the Chief Digital Officer, the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Technology officer. We need them at the table. This has to be integrated into the work and this has everything to do with the business and operations and they need to be at the table. So, I mean the last thing I would say is to put an infrastructure to actually make this more formal. Set up governance right now that involves those stakeholders working together. By the way, that's such a powerful message also, because now it's not an HR program that's off to the side. This is something that is now embedded and supported by a cross section of the leadership team, so that's the last point I would make on how to make this actually happen.

**Colleen:** That's fantastic. So, when you look at the chart in the trends report, figure 2 where workers are prioritized transforming work for well-being more highly than executives, do we still have some work to do to get those aligned?

**Jen:** Yeah, I think we absolutely do. I think that is shifting and will continue to shift. I think that much of what we've talked about in this conversation today is how we get them there, right? I mean what Erica just said about bringing a cross section of the executive team together to the table to get behind this starts to change their minds. Even the outset of this conversation, in a recent survey that Deloitte conducted with Fortune with CEO's, they found that 98% of the CEOs surveyed said that employee mental health is going to continue to be a priority long past COVID-19. I think depending on who you talk to and when you talk to them, isn't that true with every survey? You're seeing the mindset shift. I think what a lot of organizations and leaders are grappling with is how do I prioritize it on top of everything else that's going on? It goes back to also listening to your employees, right? If you're truly listening to your employees and their prioritizing it in one place, and you're prioritizing it in another, I think as a leader you have to step back and say, "Okay. Why are we prioritizing it differently and let me dig into that?" and understand that a little bit more. It might be different for every single...it will be different for every single organization.

**Colleen:** I think the biggest takeaway is the conversation has started and with your global trends report now, it's getting backed up by research. We're just at the beginning, but it's so exciting. I'd love to unpack what you have in your capital trends and how important the emerging priorities are in terms of the individual, the team, and the organization. For so long, it's always just been siloed, and everything has been a top down approach. Can you talk a little bit about how we can build well-being into all the actions, policies, mandates in all these different levels and what does that really look like? With your organization, a very large organization, it's going to look different than maybe an organization that just has a wellness coordinator level that wouldn't really even know where to start.

**Erica:** Colleen you hit on the main point, which is that this can't be done through one channel alone. It has to be done across different levels of the organization. It has to be done in different ways and that's what we tried to capture in the matrix that we created in the Global Human Capital Trends Report. We have to look at this from the technology standpoint, the organizational standpoint, the policy standpoint...we have to take a look at every potential lever that can be pulled. We have to stay away from trying to address this through programs alone, you know it's embedding into policy and embedding into formal processes. I mean, I talked about scheduling earlier. I think we have a great example on the trends report that we talk about from Starbucks, whereas they think about scheduling for their baristas. They consider distance and time to travel between the home and the location of the Starbucks that person needs to go to and making sure they have enough notice to plan that into their day, into their life. You know, that's a great example of

designing work for well-being. So, how do we make sure that we're looking under every rock and every process, every policy that impacts an employee; asking ourselves, are we doing this in a way that is allowing that employee to embed their well-being, to prioritize their well-being in the context of how this is done? That question can unlock some really powerful answers as a way to get started.

**Jen:** Yeah, that is a really powerful question. So, you have to have all three of those working together for this to work. An organization can do a lot but can only do so much. What happens at a team can make or break what is done and said and mandated at an organizational level, whether it comes to life. Ultimately, we're all responsible for our own personal well-being and what that looks like for us.

**Colleen:** Well, guys thank you so much and this has been such a wonderful, rich conversation. I really appreciate your time and thank you.

**Jen:** Thank you and thanks for being a great guest host and thanks again, Erica.

I'm so grateful Erica and Colleen could be with us today to talk about integrating well-being into the flow of work and thank you again to Colleen for being an amazing special guest host today. Thank you to our producers and our listeners. You can find the WorkWell podcast series on Deloitte.com or you can visit various podcatchers using the keyword WorkWell, all one word, to hear more. If you like the show, don't forget to subscribe so you get all of our future episodes. If you have a topic you would like to hear on the WorkWell podcast series or maybe a story you would like to share, please reach out to me on LinkedIn. My profile is under the name Jen Fisher, or on Twitter @jenfish23. We are always open to your recommendations and feedback. And of course, if you like what you hear, please share, post, and like this podcast. Thank you and be well.

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