

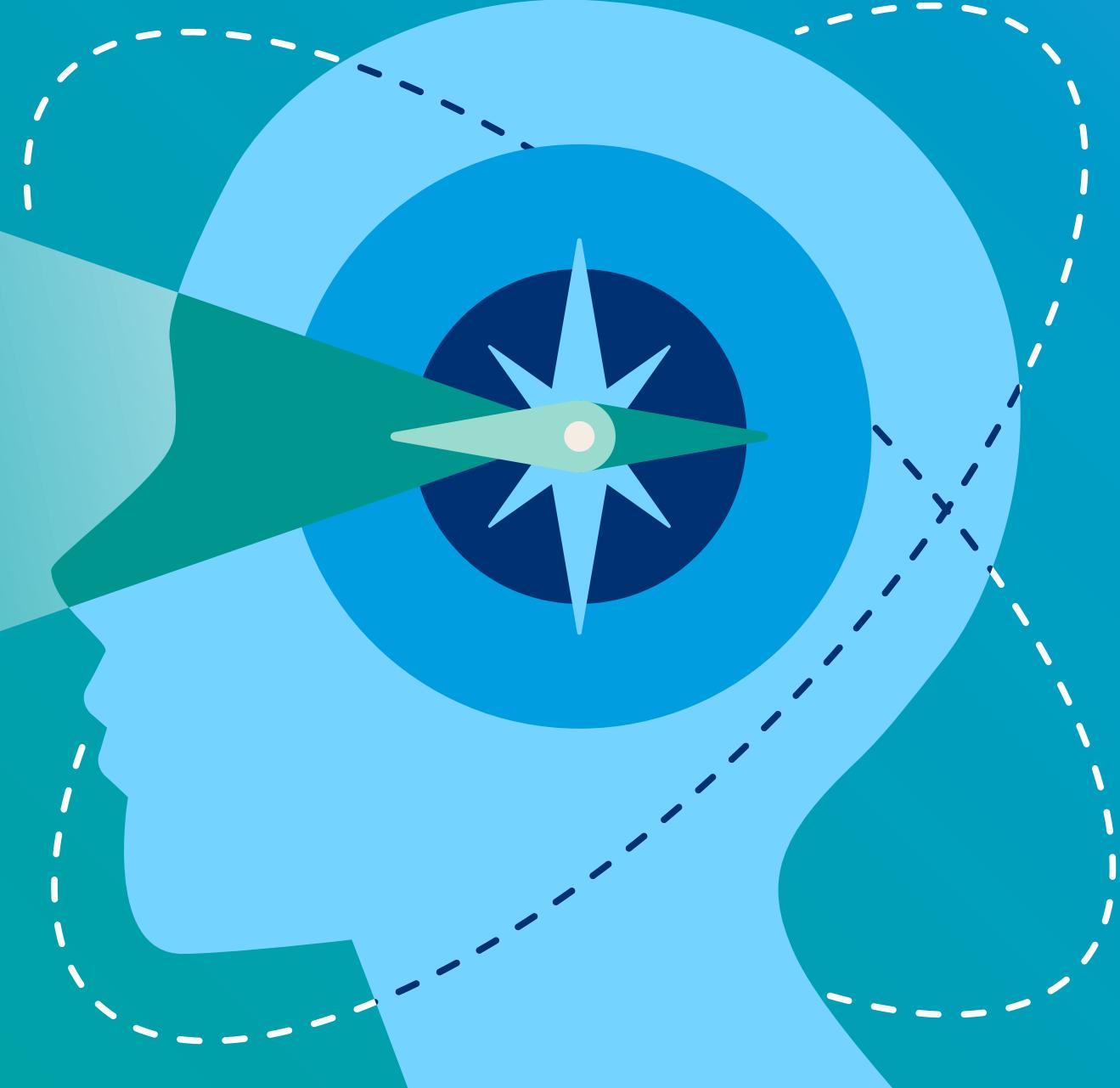


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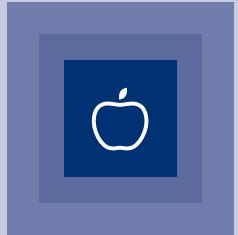
Designing What's Next

The future of
employee well-being

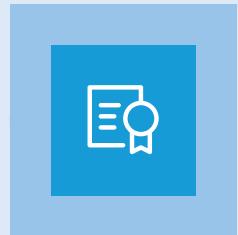
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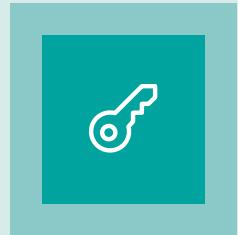
Integrated well-being programs improve:



Most valuable unmet resources are:



Key obstacles:



Executive summary

Now more than ever, employers recognize that physical, mental, and financial health are closely connected—and that true well-being comes from bringing these areas together. According to our latest survey, conducted with PLANSPONSOR and involving 1,200 employer groups, well-being programs that connect these areas can provide meaningful value to employees. Still, many organizations are working toward full adoption.

This report, "Designing What's Next: The Future of Employee Well-Being," builds on insights from our earlier studies—"Thriving Together," "Building the Bridge," and "Results That Matter." It explores where organizations stand today and where they're headed next.

The data shows broad agreement that integrated well-being programs improve employee satisfaction (67%), retention (17%), and productivity (6%). However, many organizations face challenges such as internal hurdles, budget limits, and cultural resistance that slow progress. A notable gap exists between the ideal of integrated well-being and current practice, driven by changing employee expectations. Survey respondents highlight financial coaching (45%) and on-demand education (27%) as the most valuable unmet resources. Key obstacles include financial cost (46%) and strain on internal resources (45%), highlighting the need for thoughtful investment to address these challenges.

Looking ahead, personalization, technology, communication, and measurement are expected to shape the future of well-being. From predictive analytics and AI-powered tools to stronger partnerships and ways to keep employees involved, you'll get the most value when you treat employee well-being as a strategic investment—not just a separate program.

This report offers practical steps to help you overcome barriers and build well-being programs that connect people, benefits, and purpose—supporting both your employees and organization. Use it as a guide to develop well-being initiatives that meet the needs of today's workforce and strengthen your recruiting efforts.

Introduction

Well-being programs are changing to meet new employee expectations. Today, employees want benefits that support their physical, mental, and financial health. Many organizations are starting to connect these benefits to offer more complete support for their teams.



To understand where organizations stand and what's coming next, we surveyed 1,200 retirement plan sponsors in partnership with PLANSPONSOR. Our research shows that while most recognize the value of combining health and financial benefits, many are still in the early stages—often offering separate programs instead of connected ones. This gap between understanding and action creates an opportunity: by linking health and financial support, you can build programs that better meet your employees' needs and deliver meaningful results.



Drawing on insights from "Thriving Together," "Building the Bridge," and "Results That Matter," this report explores what the future of well-being programs could look like. It covers how to anticipate employee needs and how to overcome common challenges—both structural and cultural. Use this guide to evolve your programs and provide stronger support for your employees' well-being.

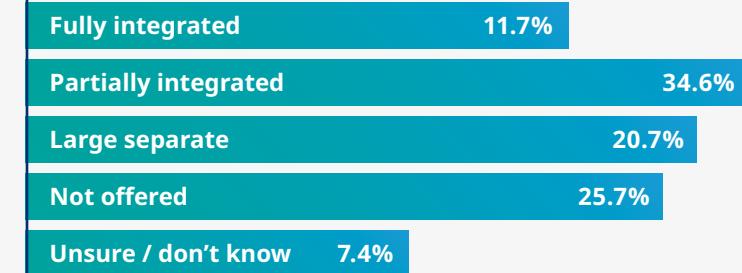
Current state of integrated well-being

Survey insights: adoption and awareness

According to our survey, most plan sponsors believe well-being programs that connect physical, mental, and financial benefits can boost employee satisfaction and retention. However, only 12% say they currently have a fully integrated program. Many organizations still run programs that are only partly connected or mostly separate. This gap suggests that while there's agreement on why integration matters, many organizations find it challenging to put that belief into practice.



What best describes the current state of integration between wellness programs at your organization?



Employee expectations driving change

Employees see well-being as a whole, expecting benefits that support their physical, mental, and financial health. Programs that don't offer this kind of connected support may leave employees feeling unprepared for everyday stress and financial challenges. For employers, this means it's important to move beyond separate, traditional benefits and create a more unified approach that truly meets employee needs.

Drivers for integrated wellness programs



Attracting and retaining employees tops the list of program drivers (31%).



More employees are requesting and expecting wellness benefits (18%).



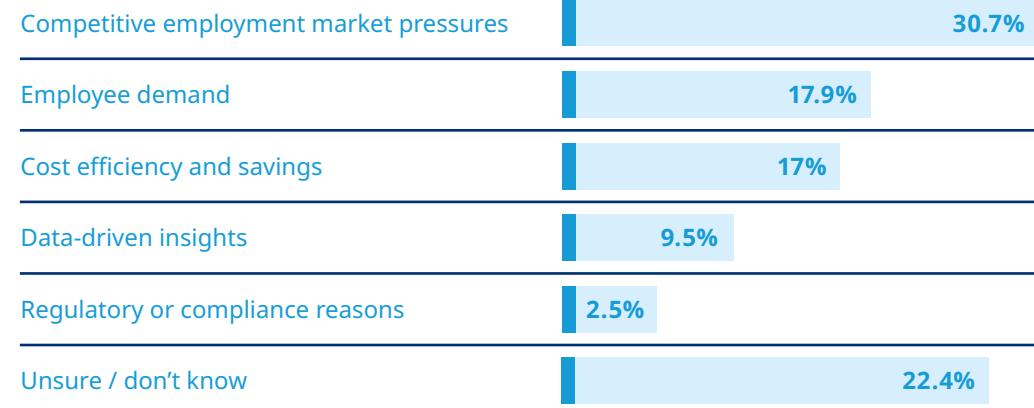
Cost savings to the organization in the long run due partially to illness and lost productivity is also driving integration (17%).



Nearly 1/4 of plan sponsors don't know why they are considering or should consider an integrated wellness program, once again opening the door for education and partnership.



What is the biggest driver/reason for your organization to consider integrated wellness programs?





The gap between belief and action

Our survey shows a difference between what plan sponsors view as ideal and what they have actually put into practice. Budget limits, limited HR time, and compliance concerns often lead to only partial adoption. Cultural challenges—such as encouraging employee participation, improving communication, and gaining executive support—can also slow progress. Overcoming these obstacles can help your organization make the most of integrated programs.



Key takeaway

Integration is often recognized as a goal for supporting employees and improving organizational results. However, many organizations still face challenges in adopting it fully. By understanding the barriers and opportunities identified in this survey, you can begin designing well-being programs that align with the future of work, meet employee expectations, and deliver measurable results.

The benefits of fully integrated programs

Integration changes how employees experience benefits by bringing together physical, mental, and financial well-being into a single, connected approach. When done well, these programs go beyond basic offerings and become part of your organization's culture—helping employees feel supported as whole people, not just workers.



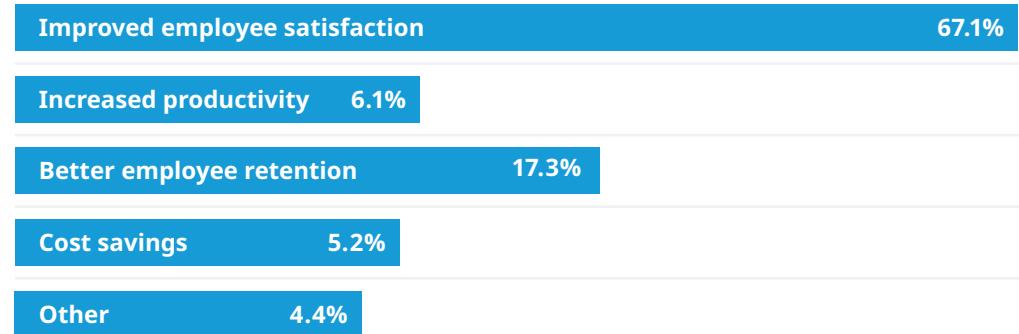
Survey response

"Well-being is holistic, and our health is impacted by all the aspects of our life, including financial, community, and career, in addition to physical and mental health."

Our survey shows that plan sponsors largely agree: integrated well-being programs can create a more meaningful employee experience. In fact, 90% of respondents say these programs positively impact satisfaction, productivity, and retention. One respondent described the benefits as "higher productivity, quality of life, job satisfaction, retention and financial confidence; less stress."

By linking health, finances, and mental support, integration helps employees understand how these areas connect, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and purpose at work.

○○○ **Which primary benefit do you see from converging physical, mental, and financial wellness programs?**





Connecting health and financial security

A key part of many successful integrated programs is the connection between healthcare and financial security. Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), for example, serve a dual purpose: helping employees cover immediate health costs while also building savings for retirement. When employees see how these benefits work together, they can make better decisions to protect their well-being today and in the future.

As one survey respondent shared, "Well-being is holistic, and our health is impacted by all the aspects of our life, including financial, community, and career, in addition to physical and mental health."

Building a stronger organizational culture

One of the most meaningful benefits of integration is how it shapes your organization's culture. A well-being strategy that links physical, mental, and financial health shows that you value your people beyond their work output. This approach builds trust, loyalty, and a sense of community—qualities that matter even more in today's hybrid, post-pandemic workplace.

Barriers to adoption

Although the benefits of integrated well-being programs are clear, many organizations still face challenges in fully adopting them. Our survey shows that most plan sponsors see the potential of these programs to improve employee health, reduce stress, and strengthen financial security. Yet structural, financial, and cultural obstacles often slow progress. Recognizing these barriers is the first step toward overcoming them and turning integration from a goal into reality.

Survey insights: obstacles to integration

 We asked, "What obstacles does your organization face in providing wellness programs to your employees?"

46%

of respondents identified budget constraints as a main challenge.

45%

pointed to a lack of internal resources to provide support.

These results reveal that although awareness and intent are strong, putting programs into action remains complex. Many employers struggle with aligning fragmented systems, securing ongoing investment, and helping employees understand and engage with the programs available to them.



Structural and administrative challenges

Many organizations find it difficult to integrate well-being benefits that have traditionally operated separately. Health plans, retirement accounts, and wellness initiatives often belong to different departments or vendors, creating operational silos that hinder collaboration. Managing multiple vendors and maintaining data privacy across platforms also adds administrative pressure. Without the proper infrastructure, even well-planned integration efforts can struggle under the weight of complexity and compliance demands.

Budget constraints and ROI concerns

Financial challenges, especially uncertainty about return on investment, are a key barrier for many organizations. Employers often wonder how to measure success beyond participation rates and worry whether the upfront costs of integration will lead to long-term savings. While research—including our “Results That Matter” report—shows that well-being programs can provide meaningful Value on investment (VOI), these benefits may take time to appear. Because of this, some organizations hesitate to commit resources without clear short-term results.

Cultural and behavioral barriers

Some of the toughest challenges are cultural. Moving to a unified well-being approach needs both leadership support and employee engagement. In some organizations, employees may be unaware of or unsure about their well-being programs, which limits participation and impact. Others face resistance from leaders who still see health and financial benefits as separate—or not central to their benefits strategy.

Overcoming these barriers means shifting the mindset to see well-being not as a “perk” or optional add-on, but as a key part of driving performance and supporting organizational health.

Tools and strategies for future integration

As organizations begin work to close the gap between intent and action, technology, education, and communication will play a key role in shaping the next generation of integrated well-being programs. The future of employee well-being depends not just on the benefits offered, but on how effectively employers use tools, data, and partnerships to create a seamless employee experience.



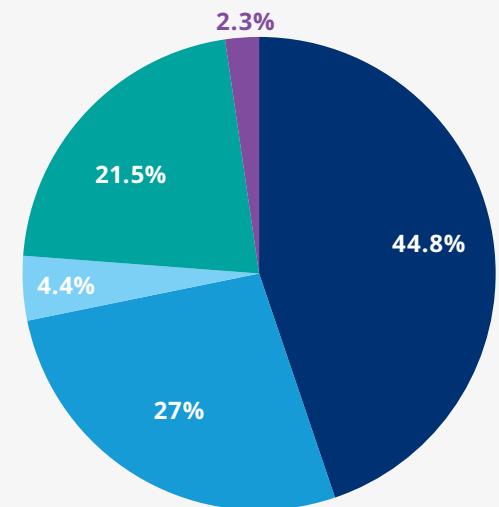
What do you consider the most valuable resource in a financial wellness program?

- Access to financial coaches
- On-demand content and education
- Push notifications and content
- Self-service participant portal
- Other

Survey insights: what matters most

We asked, “What do you consider the most valuable resource in a financial wellness program?”

More than half of respondents identified access to financial coaches and on-demand content and education as the most valuable resources.



Using technology for a seamless experience

Modern technology platforms are changing how organizations deliver and manage benefits. Integrated HR and benefits systems let employers bring together data from healthcare, retirement, and wellness programs into one easy-to-use platform. Employees can access a personalized dashboard showing everything from HSA contributions to mental health resources, helping them make informed decisions in real time. Predictive analytics also help HR leaders spot engagement trends and tailor communications to boost participation and results.

Survey insights: technology and data

When asked about the role of technology and data analytics in supporting integrated wellness initiatives, respondents highlighted:

- 1 Accessibility and flexibility (engage anytime, anywhere)**

- 2 Personalization (tailored recommendations and progress tracking)**

- 3 Data analytics to measure outcomes and ROI**

- 4 Virtual convenience through apps and digital platforms**

As AI and automation become more common, personalization will continue to improve. Technology is making it easier to connect employees with the right resources at the right time, turning integrated well-being from a concept into an ongoing, practical experience.



Communication as a cornerstone of integration

Even the most advanced programs won't make an impact if employees don't understand or engage with them. Effective communication is key to turning awareness into action. Employers need to go beyond annual enrollment materials and build an ongoing story around well-being—one that educates, inspires, and shows how different benefits work together. Using clear, simple language and multiple channels like emails, intranet posts, videos, and peer stories helps employees connect the dots between physical health, financial security, and mental resilience.

Communication should also be a two-way street. Regular feedback through surveys and focus groups offers valuable insights into what employees value most and where confusion remains. Organizations that consistently track understanding and engagement can fine-tune their messaging over time, helping employees see their benefits as connected tools for living well—not just boxes to check during enrollment.

Partnerships that strengthen well-being programs

As integration grows more complex, partnering with experienced providers remains a key strategy for success. Benefits brokerages and consultants offer guidance to design, implement, and manage well-being strategies that work. They also assist in navigating regulatory and compliance requirements, helping programs keep pace with changing standards around privacy, reporting, and equity.

Survey insights: additional resources

When asked what additional resources or support would help you successfully implement integrated wellness programs, respondents highlighted:



Stronger vendor and consultant partnerships



More dedicated staff or teams focused on wellness



Peer benchmarking and sharing of best practices



Better integration and more user-friendly platforms

“These partnerships allow employers to focus on what matters most: building a culture that values and supports total employee well-being.”



Roadmap for next-generation well-being programs

Looking ahead, the next phase of employee well-being requires more than commitment—it calls for a clear strategy. Many organizations investing in health, financial, and mental wellness now face the challenge of bringing these efforts together into a cohesive, measurable, and sustainable model. Our survey shows that most plan sponsors believe integration can lead to stronger retention and higher employee satisfaction.

With fewer than 12% of respondents reporting their programs as “fully integrated,” here’s a roadmap to help you get there:

Step 1

Build an integration framework.

Start by assessing your current programs, identifying overlaps, and clarifying ownership across departments. A centralized well-being framework—led by HR and supported by leadership—aligns all programs under a shared mission and consistent outcomes. Clear governance streamlines decision-making and reduces duplication among health, wellness, and financial teams.

Step 2

Prioritize personalization through data.

As technology advances, personalization becomes increasingly important. Use aggregate data from benefits platforms, surveys, and engagement tools to understand your workforce’s needs and tailor offerings. Over time, this data-driven approach boosts participation, satisfaction, trust, and perceived value.

Step 3

Align well-being goals with business objectives.

Well-being programs have the greatest impact when tied directly to organizational goals. Identify the key outcomes—like retention, productivity, or culture—and set measurable metrics to track progress. This alignment turns well-being from an HR task into a strategic business priority.

Step 4**Strengthen partnerships and compliance.**

Next-generation well-being depends on strong partnerships with providers who understand both employee needs and regulatory requirements. Collaborate with benefits brokers, plan advisors, and compliance experts to keep programs legally sound, data-secure, and aligned with changing laws. These partnerships also offer benchmarking and best practices to help you learn and improve continually.

Step 5**Measure, communicate, and evolve.**

Continuous improvement is essential. Establish regular measurement cycles, review VOI data, and gather employee feedback. As new technologies, generational expectations, and workplace models emerge, your well-being programs should evolve to meet them.

**Conclusion: the path forward**

Employee well-being is at a turning point. Our survey shows that plan sponsors and HR leaders agree the future lies in integration—bringing physical, mental, and financial wellness together into one seamless experience. While many organizations recognize the value of this approach, few have fully put it into practice.

Looking ahead, the next generation of well-being programs will depend on personalization, integration, technology, and measurement. Employees will expect benefits that adapt to their individual needs, support their financial choices, and address their health as a whole. Employers who meet these expectations will not only improve the employee experience but also build a stronger culture and gain a competitive advantage.



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