

## Using wellness coaching as a talent management tool

IT'S COMMON IN coaching engagements to hear perceptions of work/family balance challenges and stressors. Perceptions of stress are often quite high with 40 per cent to 60 per cent of all coachees reporting very high levels caused by both family challenges (Nowack, 2006).

It can be argued that helping employees deal more effectively with work and life balance, coping with stress, and facilitating psychological well-being can be a major focus across executive, life, career or health coaching (McCunney, 2001). Improving the total health of the workforce through formal wellness programmes including coaching would appear to be important strategies for increasing productivity and cost savings (e.g. Musich *et al.*, 2006).

### Wellness coaching using StressScan and Talent Accelerator

A personal stress and health risk appraisal called StressScan was designed to be an assessment in a coach's 'tool box' to promote wellness (Figure 1). Together with an integrated online developmental planning and reminder system called Talent Accelerator, the coach can help facilitate health promoting behaviours that result in increased productivity and well-being.

The goal of StressScan is to facilitate coachee awareness of lifestyle risks and resources whereas the goal of Talent Accelerator is to enable successful behaviour change. The design of Talent Accelerator is based on applied theories of individual behaviour change including the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), self-efficacy and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977), the Health Belief Model (Becker, 1974), and the Transtheoretical Model of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1982).

### The development of StressScan

The development of StressScan began in the early 1990s and has been described in detail in several previous publications (Nowack, 1990, 1999). The questionnaire consists of 123-items

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and aims to measure important psychosocial factors based on the cognitive-transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and results in a feedback report providing an overview of the 14 major scales and a summary of health risks/resources.

The tool has been associated with diverse health and productivity outcomes in cross-sectional and longitudinal in published studies including immune response, job burnout, depression, absenteeism, physical illness, anxiety, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and performance (c.f. Giesser *et al.*, 2005; Beasley *et al.*, 2003; Winefield *et al.*, 1999; Greene & Nowack, 1991, 1996; Nowack, 1994).

### Using the Wellness Coaching Model with coachees

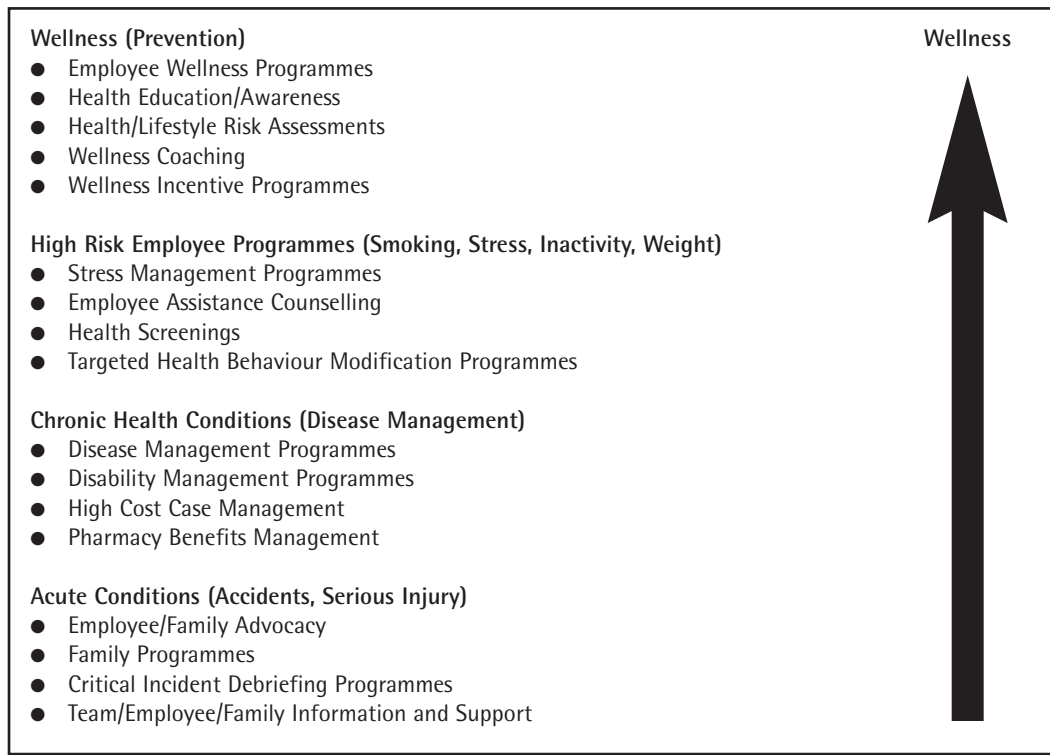
Wellness coaching can be conceptualised as a series of three related stages that help facilitate successful change integrated within current health promotion programmes or external to them. These three stages are consistent with the current movement of positive psychology that focus on individual strength and use personal setbacks as growth opportunities to enhance lifestyle behaviour change.

#### Stage 1: Enlighten

The 'What's in it for me' (WIFM) is a critical leverage point for coaches to be successful in lifestyle modification and wellness coaching. Helping clients to become more aware of areas of risk and resources can be useful to help increase readiness for behaviour change as well as being an important step in successfully setting specific goals.

The use of a personal stress and health assessment can be invaluable at this step for coaches to

Figure 1: Wellness Coaching Model.



utilise to facilitate awareness and motivation to change behaviour. Such assessments help clarify lifestyle assets and risks that are associated with health, well-being and productivity. Emphasising the coachee's intrinsic reasons for changing and utilising motivational interviewing strategies to match their readiness to change are effective wellness coaching techniques.

**Stage 2: Encourage**

The coach's role in this stage is to ensure the lifestyle modification plan is realistic, specific, and measurable. This is the stage where coaches begin to actually help the client acquire new knowledge and practice new skills to initiate and maintain important lifestyle practices and behaviours. Asking the coachee to report their own behaviour and feelings through journaling and defining incentives around desired behaviour change are all sound strategies for enhancing efficacy and confidence to succeed. Identifying the deeper intrinsic motivations and values that underlie the motivation for change can become a long term focus of the wellness coaching effort.

**Stage 3: Enable**

This third stage is critical for long-term success of lifestyle modification programmes and is often overlooked by many coaches. The coach's role is to assist the client with re-evaluating the importance of the wellness goals and exploring some relapse prevention strategies to prepare the client for the inevitable lapses that accompany any behaviour change effort. Coaches should also plan with the coachee how to create a social support structure for the new behaviour change effort.

The coach and client should mutually define ways to track, monitor and evaluate progress on the specific lifestyle goals that were set. Ideally, continuous reminders can be sent to the client to highlight progress and successful performance towards his/her lifestyle modification plan. Finally, reassessment of biometric and psychological outcomes can help demonstrate success of the wellness coaching process.

Figure 2: Wellness Coaching using StressScan and Talent Accelerator.

StressScan Scales	Talent Accelerator Features
Stress	Behaviour Change Theory Based
Overall Lifestyle Habits	Developmental Planning System
● Physical Activity/Exercise	Automated Reminders
● Eating/Nutrition	Stress/Wellness Library
● Sleep/Rest	Structured Online Exercises
● Smoking	Participant Journal
● Preventive Habits	Coaching Website to Track Progress
● Substance Use	StressScan Health Alerts/Resources
Social Support Network	Electronic Copy of StressScan Report
Type A Behaviour	Regular Updates of the Library
Cognitive Hardiness	
Coping Style	
● Positive Appraisal	
● Negative Appraisal	
● Threat Minimisation	
● Problem Focused Coping	
Psychological Well-Being	
Response Distortion	
Health Alerts	
Health Resources	

## Conclusion

A focus on wellness coaching can become a competitive advantage to organisations with an emphasis on reducing employee stress and focusing on optimising wellness in the workplace. Successful lifestyle modification can be facilitated by coaches using structured engagements to assist employees to increase awareness, set behavioural goals and develop effective stress and health management coping skills.

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