



Joe De Sena

Corporate Wellness

A LEADERS ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

With Joe De Sena, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, SPARTAN and other prominent wellness executives

David Schner, President, LEADERS Magazine: Business leaders have increasingly been grappling with the issue of corporate wellness in their organizations and the impact of employee health on employee engagement, retaining talent and business outcomes. Many companies are looking at how to most effectively deal with the issues around creating a healthy workforce and corporate wellness. During a recent interview for LEADERS with Joe De Sena, CEO and Co-Founder of SPARTAN, we discussed SPARTAN's focus on thought leadership and commitment to leading beyond SPARTAN races and in the area of corporate wellness. We decided to bring together a group of executives to discuss issues impacting corporate wellness and to share best practices from leading organizations focused on building a healthier workforce.

Following is the discussion:



Richard Baker: I am the Chairman of the Hudson Bay Company, which is in the real estate and the retail business. We own brands such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Lord & Taylor, the Hudson Bay Company in Canada, Galeria Kaufhof in Germany, as well as Karstadt in Germany. We are also in Belgium and the Netherlands. We run these operating companies, and then we own a large portfolio of real estate in which those operating companies perform.

I am happy to be here to discuss issues around corporate wellness. It is a very complex problem that we are addressing today, especially in our business where, rather than building a company from scratch, we have acquired a lot of older brands and companies that are looking to change and reposition themselves. Additionally, being a global business, the medical health varies greatly from Canada to the U.S. to Germany, for example, so it requires very different thinking.



Heida Tinoco: I am the Karma Leader at Rakuten Marketing. What is a Karma leader, you may ask? As a Karma leader, I coordinate events for the employees and charity work at the company, among other things. This is a great platform to promote wellness within the company.

Rakuten is the exclusive Global Innovation Partner and "Powered by" partner of SPARTAN. Our company is well known in Japan, and is investing in elevating brand awareness in the U.S. Our partnership with SPARTAN is a strategic part of that investment. Most importantly, Spartan is a partner that reflects important aspects of our company culture. Regarding the subject of empowering others, the heart of the Rakuten mission statement is to, "Contribute to society by creating value through innovation and entrepreneurship." My role is to make this a reality for the employees at Rakuten Marketing. We are making many changes in the company relating to wellness, and I look forward to hearing what other companies are doing in this area as well.



Eric Sekler: I am the Executive Director of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton, & Garrison, a global law firm headquartered in New York. We have three offices in the U.S., an office in Canada, an office in Europe, and three offices in Asia.

We are in the early stages of addressing mental health issues, well-being, physical health and related topics. The legal industry is a highly stressful environment and with over 1,000 lawyers in our firm, including 160 partners, we are constantly thinking about ways to create programs that will make the experiences for our lawyers and staff as successful as possible. I am here to learn and hope that we will be able to share ideas that we can all take back to our respective teams.



Ruth Ann Wynter: I am the Senior Human Resources Business Partner with United Talent Agency (UTA). I head human resources for New York, London and Sweden. Over the past few years, we have taken a very intentional approach to moving beyond normal benefits – health and welfare benefits – and really branching out with new programs and benefits focused on wellness. We actually approach wellness now in three ways – financial wellness, mental wellness and physical wellness. It has really been an exciting process and we have seen employees respond in a great way.

We are looking to continue to grow our efforts in this area and I am excited to learn more from each of you today on your efforts around wellness.



Brad Shipp: I am the Director of Strategic Alliances for VARIDESK. We are the inventors of an affordable, height-adjustable desk solution that has been adopted worldwide. We sell direct to the U.S., Canada and Australia and work with over 98 percent of the Fortune 500 companies on height-adjustable desk solutions. We have also pioneered active office furniture solutions that not only adjust and flex to the individual, but also adjust and flex to the organization. While we do believe corporate wellness is a complex problem, we believe there are some simple solutions that can drive some very

important progress for an organization.



During the past ten years, working with over five million SPARTANs, we've learned a great deal about staying healthy and fit. We are now incorporating that knowledge into new cutting-edge offerings designed to build better employee health, workplace engagement, teamwork and reduced turnover.

- Joe De Sena, SPARTAN



Joe Moscola: I am Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer at Northwell Health.

Northwell Health is a fully-integrated healthcare system within the New York metro area. While we have 23 hospitals, over 700 physician practices, and 4,000 employed physicians, we do much more, whether it be for health, preventative medicine, integrative medicine, post-acute services and things of that sort. We have also been in the insurance, care management and other related businesses.

We are the largest private employer in New York State. We have 70,000 employees for which we are responsible, but we view our responsibility as being to their significant others as well – so, the entire family. With that, it brings us to about 140,000 lives for which we view ourselves responsible for their total well-being. I'm excited for the conversation today and to hear the various perspectives.



Dave Milani: I am Vice President, On-Site Services at Optum, which is a very large company in the healthcare space. We are part of UnitedHealth Group, so UnitedHealthcare is our sister company.

What our team does within Optum is to serve as the on-site services modality of the prevention and well-being team within Optum. In the employer space, prevention and well-being is responsible for all things wellness, from biometrics to all the other many things we do. We come on site and help employers' teams move more, eat better, be safer and be more mindful by changing

their behaviors. We do this through health promotion, fitness and nutrition programming as well as coaching and ergonomics interventions. We are actually a consumer and recommender of the products represented around this table in many cases.

We are doing some exciting things with SPARTAN on the resiliency front because that is really where employee wellness is going. It is not really going to be employee wellness anymore. It is going to be organizational performance in the future, and we think that being on site, in people's faces, is really the only way to generate those changes.



Dr. Lara Pence: I serve as the Chief Wellness Specialist for Spartan and hosts Spartan Mind, a weekly podcast. I hail from New Hampshire but currently reside in the much warmer climate of Dallas. As a Licensed Clinical Psychologist, I have spent the last decade working with individuals as they peel back the layers of their outer shell, cast aside the unhealthy patterns that are keeping them stuck and unfulfilled, and begin to build a new, more resilient and adventurous sense of self. I have worked with Olympic level athletes, successful business owners, and entrepreneurs and have

helped them move away from comparison and self-loathing and towards connection, self-investment and ultimately, success. I look forward to being a part of this important discussion.

Joe, SPARTAN: I would like to take a minute to introduce Shaun T. You may remember Shaun T from Insanity Workouts which have been all over TV. I figured since he was here, I would ask him to say a few words and we should send him into all your companies. Shaun T, will you share some advice on how to get the workplace healthier?

Shaun T: This is very interesting, because my first career out of college was in corporate health with the company MedFit.

It is interesting that now, after having a career in fitness and understanding more of what fitness is – that it is about more than just the body; it is about internal health – one of the things that is actually really important to me is trying to get back into corporate health and what people do every day.

I think the most important thing to recognize is that fitness doesn't have a size; it has a mentality and it has a feeling. I think far too much of fitness is focused on the before and after and a number. While that is the tangible look and feeling of what it is, at the end of the day, it is the feeling on the inside that matters. I think that whatever you are doing to motivate and inspire people should be connected to a tangible feeling and a tangible result at the same time. If you lose weight, you're going to feel good. It is connected to confidence.

People want to be winners. So what are they winning? Yes, there is a weight loss component to it but, at the same time, what confidence are you building? There should be a focus on the victories that happen as you are conducting these different programs for people.

David, LEADERS: I want to turn it over to Lara. Lara is an expert in the areas of wellness, so she lives this and thinks about it all the time. Lara, will you discuss the climate around corporate wellness today?

Lara, SPARTAN: From my perspective, the outside things in our working society are looking good. We are valuing creativity and quality, not just experience and loyalty. We are hiring thought leaders and game-changers, not just degree-holders. I think we are offering greater flexibility through remote work and telecommunication, which gives our employees more independence and, hopefully, moves us further away from time clocks and exhausting commutes.

The struggle is – and I have seen this for 10 years in my private practice working with entrepreneurs and individuals who are employed in a wide variety of organizations – that America is still really sick and that, underneath all this creativity, this innovation, this flexibility and technological advancement, America is struggling.

The statistics are pretty clear: Four out of 10 adult Americans are obese. Heart disease is still the leading cause of death. One out of five Americans struggle with a mental illness, and one out of six Americans are on an antidepressant. We have an issue here.

I think one of the most startling statistics is that more than 50 percent of adult Americans report significant feelings of loneliness. We are physically ill, we are not mentally well, and we are not connected, and this is costing us. It is costing us on the front lines of our businesses, but it is also costing us on the bottom lines of our businesses.

The American Diabetic Association reports that the cost of diabetes is \$327 billion, and chronic illness is costing businesses \$1 trillion in lost productivity. The leading causes of the increase in healthcare are depression and obesity. Those are the statistics, but let's just talk for a minute



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- Lara, SPARTAN

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about the values. As organizations, no matter how small or large, we care about our business and keeping our businesses moving forward but, in order to do that, we have to care about our employees. We have to invest in our employees.

I always say that the greatest respect you can show somebody who invests in you is to invest back in them. Employees spend a lot of time at their jobs – 40 hours, 50 hours, 60 hours or sometimes even 120 hours – it is an enormous amount of time. This means it is important for us really to think about how we create a container that implements wellness. How do we move to help our employees become more physically well, mentally well and more connected? All of us around this table and out there in industry are smart enough to know that if our employees and staff are not prioritizing physical health, mental health and connectivity, then they are not going to show up for work in the way that we want them to. They may not even show up at all.

At SPARTAN, we absolutely want people out there, running our races, climbing up ropes, and crawling underneath the barbed wire, but we are more than just building bruises and scars, although we are really good at that. We want to build better humans, so we believe we must invest in our employees and look hard at corporate wellness. Perhaps this should even extend beyond corporate wellness and into corporate culture. We should look at how we meld wellness into the DNA of our corporations and organizations, so that these conversations aren't an anomaly, but are just what we are talking about all the time. We are here today to really begin this conversation and, hopefully, to take what we learn out with us and begin to make some changes.

Joe, SPARTAN: At SPARTAN, we are all in on corporate wellness because the need is particularly acute. A recent study reports that lost productivity due to poor health costs U.S. companies over \$500 billion annually. During the past ten years, working with over five million SPARTANS, we've learned a great deal about staying healthy and fit. We are now incorporating that knowledge into new cutting-edge offerings designed to build better employee health, workplace engagement, teamwork and reduced turnover. Our suite of corporate wellness services includes, among others, corporate team participation in our races, SPARTAN X

Leadership Forums, and our new SPARTAN Challenge app, an easy to use mobile option that builds employee health, productivity and teamwork through a variety of themed in-company 30-day challenges. Our proven philosophy is that businesses need to build teams that do hard things together. Millions around the world have run our races and grown stronger by learning how to navigate obstacles both on and off the field.

Brad, VARIDESK: The way we look at it at VARIDESK is that you have to put interventions in place to get people moving. *The New York Times* recently ran an article that said if you take fewer than 4,000 steps a day, exercise still may not benefit you and may not be helpful in stemming diabetes, heart disease and other health issues. The research was done at the University of Texas at Austin.

How do you begin to provide interventions? We do some really simple things. Our headquarters has nearly 300 people in it with 7,500 square feet. There are only 10 trash cans. No one has a trash can at their desk. We just don't do it. If you want to throw something away, you have to get up. You have to get up and move. There is only one place in the entire office to get coffee and it is a central location. We have water stops throughout the entire office. There are probably 10 or 15 water stations throughout the entire office. There are two restrooms.

Again, you have to encourage and engage people to get them to move. You have to give them reasons to move. We do this naturally because of our products and we know how to do it – we move the office a lot. We change the infrastructure of the office and how it looks so you don't get into a pattern of walking the same way every day. We also highly encourage people to utilize conference rooms on the other side of the building.

You have to engage and build this need for movement throughout the day. We have an on-site gym. We have a corporate trainer, but it is more than just that. It is the daily infrastructure and the daily breaks that you give people. Everyone at our office has a height-adjustable desk. Some people use them. Some people don't use them. You are encouraged to use them, but it is certainly not mandatory – but we know that if people use a height-adjustable desk, they stand up more, they move more, they move throughout the office more, so they see more people, they have more collaboration and they are more creative. That is supported by data. These are just some of the really simple things that we do that make a difference.

Joe, SPARTAN: Brad, what about food? I was at the headquarters of Google and Facebook, and I was disappointed by the amount of junk food that was offered.

Brad, VARIDESK: We have food at our office, as well. We have one location at the office where you can get food. We subsidize healthy food. You do have to pay for the food, but the healthy food such as carrot sticks or a healthy salad for lunch is sold to the employees at cost.

Joe, SPARTAN: That's interesting. You could almost have two kitchens, one where the healthy food is free and one where it is more expensive to not eat healthy.

Brad, VARIDESK: Actually, you can get a candy bar at our office, but it is hidden. They are behind doors but if you want one, you can find it, but there is a surcharge for it. We up charge those. So all food is there, but only healthy food is subsidized. All junk food – and there is not a lot of junk food – carries a surcharge.

Lara, SPARTAN: One of the things you said, Brad, that I loved, is that getting up and moving around gets people talking and connected. If they are just sitting down in their cubicles with walls around them, there is less of an opportunity for connection.

Connection is the fiber of our beings as human beings. Even if we are introverts, human connection is still much of what drives us. I would love to hear from other leaders in the room about how you facilitate that connection, especially when we are as a society moving much more towards remote work and maybe aren't necessarily in an office or quite as geographically connected.



Dave, Optum: I can talk a little bit about that. When we go on site, we view ourselves as a hospitality business that happens to focus on wellness, because our biggest job is really to create that social DNA of wellness like you talked about – that social fabric of connectivity within an employer. If you don't do that – if you can't get that infused into the culture – you are going to fight a losing battle from day one.

We are kind of at this advent, this moment when everybody is realizing that you can't really separate physical well-being from spiritual well-being from mental well-being. There are forward-thinking companies that are taking a much more holistic approach to this. The Medicare doctors will now tell you that they would rather see patients get out and smoke with friends than stay home alone and not smoke because that is how strong that social connectivity aspect is to wellness.

I think the more forward-thinking employers are now saying, "well, we have tried all these digital things that get to people but have these really low adoption and engagement rates. How can we really infuse this culture of wellness?" We just think that changing behavior is really, really hard to do without some level of personal interaction. When that happens, then you create that social fabric where you have a front door, a trusted resource who maybe becomes the mayor of your campus and can start to influence food choices and really think about the workplace holistically. Then you can really create some action to drive participation in all the things you offer.

Eric, Paul, Weiss: The whole concept of remote access and flexible work schedules is something that the legal profession is struggling with because our entire environment is built around collaboration. In particular, associates need mentors and sponsors; the only way that can happen over time is to personally work with people on a regular basis. Working from home makes it extraordinarily difficult to develop the necessary attributes to ultimately become a partner of a firm like ours or to work as general counsel of a company.

To a certain extent, the points that you are making about remote access and flextime are very interesting. Loneliness is probably the most significant issue that our industry is facing right now. That is adding to issues relating to substance abuse, stress and anxiety. So the real question that we need to think about as an organization and as a profession is how we strike the right balance between allowing people to work from home on an intermittent basis, and at the same time reduce the issues relating to loneliness that our profession is struggling with right now.

Ruth, UTA: There is one thing I tell all employers. We tend to think in "programs," and I think we should be more comfortable in the space of "pilots." Everything doesn't have to be a big, corporate program. Let it start to develop organically. We actually had the leader of a department say, "I want to give my employees one hour every week that I pay for, where they get to pick what they want to do. They could build a class or do whatever." We said, "Go ahead. Try it. See what comes out of that." We ended up with a number of people taking exercise classes or doing other healthy activities. Giving people the opportunity and freedom to try something, even if it doesn't work, at least allows us to respond to what employees actually want.

Geographically, there are also natural differences in focus. For our London office right now, mental health is huge because the royal family has taken this on. It is a big challenge. That office didn't want to focus on physical wellness first. They wanted to talk about yoga, mindfulness, and meditation. It is okay to let that be what you charge ahead with in London, even if LA is charging ahead with something else.

So I think companies should start small and not force themselves into the huge program mentality. Organic response is probably going to last a lot longer, because it is coming from the heart of the people and addresses the issues that they bring to the table. You don't have to be brilliant. You can literally just respond to what people are asking for, and the more they're crying out for it, the more you can be responsive, even if you don't have the full-on plan and mission.

Using this approach, we now have an ERG focused on wellness that was started within the last six months. It turned out that this was a bubbling issue. It is what people wanted to talk about, and there is an entire community for which wellness is their passion. They were able to set the program for the rest of the company. HR can support employee ideas, but we don't have to come up with them all on our own. Listen to your employees. They're talking. They know what they are struggling with.

Heida, Rakuten: At Rakuten we have the Karma Team, which was created to generate a positive atmosphere, boost morale, facilitate team building and build cross-functional relationships among all Rakuten Marketing offices. It started off with small teams and a limited budget about 6 years ago. We have gone a long way since then by creating amazing karma teams throughout thirteen offices. We have captains in each of our different offices who localize Karma projects based on the unique culture of each office. We create opportunities for employees to connect by having quarterly parties throughout the year. These events are led by the captains who have been able to gather 20 to 60 employees on their teams who volunteer to coordinate events for the employees. These events are based on the employees' feedback. They may want to sing karaoke at a bar, participate on a corporate sports team, have competitions (such as office Olympics), or coordinate a Spartan Race and then go to a suite with food and drinks afterwards.

Secondly and most importantly, we connect the employees through charity work. Providing office charity drives, raising funds for a great cause, volunteering at an organization that gives back to the community, connects us as a company.

Across our international offices, we have employees who work remotely. One of our challenges is to keep those employees engaged, as well as those that work in our offices. We are experimenting with a wellness app designed to connect our employees. This will be great for those employees who work remotely. They will be able to connect through the wellness app and still feel involved with the other employees.

I believe wellness is not only physical; it is also financial and mental, therefore we are focusing on those areas too.


Eric, Paul, Weiss: Can I address the issue you had raised in terms of going out for a SPARTAN Race and then having drinks? In this sphere of wellness, we are all struggling with expectations regarding alcohol and how organizations are dealing with it. There are constantly internal and client events where this is an issue. How are people dealing with the whole issue regarding alcohol as it relates to this new dynamic that we are facing related to mental health and well-being?



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Joe, SPARTAN: Before SPARTAN, I had a financial firm that was a much smaller firm than any represented here. In the 1970s, my mother was into yoga meditation, which was considered really wacky at the time and not accepted. However, in the '90s and early 2000s, it was a little more accepted so rather than doing the dinners and the alcohol, which we were doing a lot of as we entertained clients to get business, I took some of my mother's philosophy and we switched to entertaining and doing yoga together, or entertaining and doing a race together, and business went through the roof.

If you take customers or employees out to do those things – fight together and bleed together – it is a complete game-changer, but there has to be someone to champion this. I happened to be the CEO so it was a little easier for me to champion it. Change is the game, but you have to find somebody who is going to push this. You'll do three times as much business.

Dave, Optum: I really like a lot of what I'm hearing here for a couple of reasons. Number one, I think the community aspect really is the most important thing. My biggest disappointment is when I walk into a room with a potential client or prospect and they immediately ask about the outcomes data and how much money they are going to save on health-care. They are looking at it the wrong way. This is about engagement. It is about creating that level of engagement with your employees.

When it comes to the outcomes conversation, I am a representative of the outcome. I joined the workforce in 1997 and, by 2008, I was up to 210 pounds and hadn't really moved in probably 10 years. I joined a company that had a focus on health and became healthy. On a personal note, over the past three years, I've been divorced, moved twice, had one parent almost die of lung cancer and another parent that did die of lung cancer. This is representative of your employees. These types of

issues are what your people are dealing with. How do you make them feel supported so that, in the midst of all this, they see work as the place they can come to get that sense of community, to get that level of support, and maybe a place where they can go think about something else for a little while?

Joe, Northwell: I have been digesting all these different comments and trying to overlay that on what our strategy is at Northwell. As a healthcare provider, I think that what we are really talking about is the behavior change of well-being. Why does someone join the gym, go for a couple months, and then stop? Why does boot camp work, versus SPARTAN, versus anything else as the stimulation for me? It is an individualized journey.

When it comes to engagement, our journey is really about getting our people talking about activity. Can we get you talking about walking? One of the ways we do that is through a company-wide walking challenge. We have a social media platform that we utilize to promote this and we have about 45,000 employees participating.

This last year we did a virtual walk to Dublin. Why? Our CEO is an Irish immigrant, so it seemed easy. Teams of 10 that could jointly get to the number of steps that it would take to get to Dublin would then be eligible to win prizes. We gave them Fitbits before they started so we could track their progress. The idea was not so much about whether anyone was going to lower their BMI as a result of walking to Dublin. However, the data from the Fitbits showed that the base level of activity before the walk to Dublin went way up during the walk and it only came about halfway down after the challenge was over. So we got increased activity and engagement – it got people talking and to open up about their health issues.

This can help us lead them, for instance, into our smoking cessation program. We have what has been clinically proven to be one of the best smoking cessation programs in the country. I'll put it up against any company. The point is meeting people where they are.

Ruth, UTA: I think the number one thing we have done at UTA is to set out to intentionally dispel the stigma against asking for help or needing to talk about a struggle with abuse or addiction. There are external platforms out there that we could have used to provide counseling sessions, but we had a high-ranking employee who offered to chair these sessions. She said, "I'm not a doctor, but I want people to be okay with coming in and talking." They are now seven sessions in. It is amazing to see the number of employees that have actually gone beyond the sessions and are now getting personal therapy.

Dave, Optum: When you meet people where they are, they feel trusted. They feel like they can trust you. It is different for everybody. Employers for a long time have really wanted to say, "let me just take care of this one issue that addresses my entire population. I can check this box and not think about it again." It is very clear that doesn't work, because as good as technology is, as good as all the tools are, they are tools – but it takes someone to meet you where you are and navigate you to the right tool. You're not a runner? Okay. You're 300 pounds, an accountant, and you don't ever move from your desk? Well, let's walk you through the cafe, and let's start with food. It is going to be different for everybody.

When you identify what the issue is, then there are great tools like the Spartan app or some of the other programs that are out there that are backups to that personal interaction to keep somebody engaged. We have a great example. Our health promotion advocate and coach was at a meeting with a client when someone approached her and said, "My child is addicted to opiates and I don't know what to do." She immediately got this person connected to the employee assistance program for their client, then used that as an opportunity to create an entire program to address this issue proactively for that employer. We discovered that this was a pretty widespread issue and that it wasn't as readily apparent because it was most visible in the dependent population and not the worker population. To my point earlier, don't think that these people don't come in to work and only think about that issue all day. So, it is creating that safe environment with those personal interactions that then opens the doorway to all the other things that the well-being industry can do for your employees.

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Heida, Rakuten: I totally agree that tailoring programs to the unique needs and personalities of employees is a critical part of a successful wellness program. We do send a survey to the employees at the end of the year to obtain their feedback on our Karma initiatives. The feedback is mostly about more activities, therefore we work on incorporating more activities at our events. The activity is our focus. The food and drinks are a bonus. The activities consist of escape rooms, paint nights, casino nights, karaoke, top golf, bowling and any other themes that involve physical activity. It is not only about drinking and food. We are providing the employees with the events that they are asking for based on the survey feedback.

Brad, VARIDESK: What we are talking about is culture, at the end of the day. We are talking about building culture at the organization that supports these different initiatives. If you take a look at management research, it will tell you that people at work will typically do what they are encouraged to do or what they are rewarded to do. We have to begin to recognize and reward these behaviors and activities inside the workplace. Eric, you were talking about the problem with having remote workers. You have to reward people for coming to the office. Not only do you have to build an office that people want to come to, but you actually have to encourage them to do so and reward that behavior. Again, people do what they are rewarded to do. If they want to become a partner, how do they do that? They show up. They interact. That is basic management research that is pretty well understood.

As we take a look at it, building this culture of rewarding good behaviors, rewarding wellness, rewarding people to take the steps, rewarding people who come in and talk about their issues, leads to a whole culture change, and that is really at the heart of what we are doing.

Having been to SPARTAN's offices in Boston, there is a culture of leadership there that encourages someone who is going upstairs to grab one of the kettlebells and take it upstairs with them. I was terrified when I went there, because I wasn't sure I could make it up the stairs with a kettlebell, but you had a light one. So I appreciate that.

When we see leadership doing these things, when we reward those things for everyone else in the organization, we begin to see the culture change. It is the exact same thing with vacation time. If my CEO never takes a vacation, I'm never going to take a vacation. If my CEO says, you know what? I take all my vacation days and makes a point of discussing it, other people will take their vacation days too.

Eric, Paul, Weiss: How crazy is it that you have to force people to use their vacation days? Our attorneys have a significant number of vacation days but they don't use them. We need to do a better job encouraging our attorneys to disconnect from the office and technology. It is important for their mental health and well-being.

Ruth, UTA: The studies actually show that when you go from a fixed paid-time-off policy to a discretionary time-off policy, employees use less days. A responsible employer should find ways to encourage employees to take time off and achieve work/life balance. I think it goes back to the culture and what leadership models. For example, when we do open enrollment, your whole family can come. Open enrollment decisions should be made by the family, so we let the family come. Why shouldn't your partner be in the room to talk to the benefits person?

New York State has a law that says you must take a lunch break. Your hourly employees must take a lunch break. Employees will not take lunch if their boss doesn't take lunch. It is just how I think people are wired, and it is fascinating. When I started, I thought it was the law so it required compliance. Then I realized, "compliance what?" It is culture, and if there is a culture where we plan a meeting at lunchtime, then I'm telling you that this is a culture where we don't take lunch.

We must think about the messages we are sending and whether it is actually the message we want to send. Our CEO chose reading as a way to combat this. He said, "On your break, everybody read a book, and then e-mail me what the book was." Everyone was like, okay, we are going to read because it came from the top down.

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Dave, Optum: That's really important. I would say for anybody on this panel or in this room, if it is a personally important thing to you to make your workforce healthy, if your CEO doesn't believe in that, you need to leave and find another job because you won't succeed. You just won't. It must come from the top down.

David, LEADERS: Richard, you come from a different vantage point, where this isn't what you are focused on day-to-day in your role. Is this something on the forefront of your mind when you look at Hudson Bay as a whole and for the CEOs running the different brands? Do you see a growing recognition that this is something that is not only good for your employees and for retaining talent, but that it also has a positive impact on the bottom line?

Richard, Hudson Bay: This is very interesting and important. I'm listening. From where I sit, everything you are saying is perfectly logical. I get it, but it feels so aspirational and so hard to get there. We have 65,000 people in different countries under different banners. So imagine this: a large percentage of the workforce in Saks, Lord & Taylor, Saks on Fifth, or Hudson Bay, are hourly employees. They are part time, and the turnover is around 45 percent. This is daunting. For those who would get started in any of these programs, half of them may not be there in a year.

I appreciate everything being said, and maybe in our case we need to start with our corporate people who are looked at differently than the store associates. With healthcare costs going up so dramatically, we cut some things two years ago which was a mistake. We thought we were saving money, but it really hurt the basic services we were giving our corporate people. It is hard. It is a challenge. It is a real challenge.



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The problem that is overwhelming healthcare is that we haven't been successful at getting people healthy, getting them to lose weight, and then sustaining their well-being. These are very complex problems which will require unique and different partnerships that we haven't thought of before to address.

-Joe, Northwell

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Joe, Northwell: The problem that is overwhelming healthcare is that we haven't been successful at getting people healthy, getting them to lose weight, and then sustaining their well-being. Obviously, I'm a little biased here, but these are very complex problems which will require unique and different partnerships that we haven't thought of before to address. That is why you are seeing the articles come out almost on a weekly basis on Walmart partnering with Ochsners, and General Motors partnering with Henry Ford Clinics and many others. These joint ventures are intended to address these complex issues.

We just inked a partnership with Canyon Ranch to really focus on the burnout issue that we are experiencing within healthcare providers. We don't have all the answers in healthcare, I will tell you, but we have historically done a really good job of treating people when they are ill. The question now is how do we pivot toward getting the communities that we live in, work in, and that we support to be healthier by what we offer to the community? That is something that, unequivocally, we will have to do with partners.

When it comes to all of these different topics we've been talking about today, whether it is burnout, whether it is food and nutrition, whether it is ergonomics – and people's well-being is inclusive of all these topics – it will absolutely require partners. As different industries, we are just not equipped to handle all these things alone. So I think that's where we, as leaders, need to think differently about how we begin to approach this complex problem.

Dave, Optum: There's a thread there I just want to pull out a little bit, which is that I run a business. If I need to do some banking, I don't go in a conference room and figure out how to open a bank and then bank there. That's not what I do, right? But for some reason when it comes to wellness, every business thinks they can sit down in a room and figure out what wellness is. You can't. You need a partner. You need someone who can draw on the experience of having hundreds of wellness clients all having unique environments. It doesn't have to be Optum, but you have to find some help.

The problem with wellness over the last 20 years is that it has always been something that has been on the side of a few people's desks. It needs to be somebody's only job. In your environment, you have to hire

somebody, either through a partner or directly, who is going to design a wellness strategy that is going to involve a wellness champion network, that is going to have some regional support that can get out and actually drum up some support for your stores or offices. They will then need to get people engaged and motivated and find those champions in those remote workforces that can engage each of those places and start to drive them into community events at SPARTAN or other fitness events. You are not necessarily going to be able to have services on site per se, but you should have someone who can tell that population where to go for activities. It is remarkable to me, having been in professional services for so long and now, being in professional services in this space, that everybody thinks they can figure this out on their own. That would be very challenging.

Lara, SPARTAN: From my perspective, this just goes back to the overarching, larger issue of humanity's difficulty in ever asking for help. As human beings, it seems like we have a difficult time saying, "I don't know the answer," which is a really simple thing to say, but we have a hard time saying it. I think this is one of the reasons that SPARTAN has come out with this new app that touches on the five pillars of health because we feel, as the largest endurance company in the world, we have something to offer.

I think that if we open our eyes more to what we can gain from experts in the field, I think the solutions will be more easy than they are complex. Like Brad recommended – just the idea of not having a waste basket at every desk. When Brad said that to me earlier when we were starting, I thought, why have I not thought of that? That is such an easy solution to get people moving, but we are sometimes stuck in what we think most about and what we are most comfortable with. I do think as organizations, if you don't have the answer, it is worth opening up your eyes and looking for who you can go to that knows more than you, because there are those that do. We just have to acknowledge that we don't know everything.

Ruth, UTA: I would add to that, though, that I think for Richard and others from companies where it has to translate, you have to find a partner that is going to talk in a language that resonates with your community. There is absolutely a good business model to be found for it.

We did partner with an insurance company that gave our employees a financial reward for doing biometric screenings and other wellness checks. What did we find? That reward money funded most of their wellness and copays for the year, so there was a savings for the employee. We saw attendance increase and all of those tangible data numbers resonate in certain communities. Go for it, because the data is actually there.

I think it is all about partnering with someone who is going to speak the language that resonates within your world. Although we are in entertainment, people always want to see the numbers, but it is amazing how when you sit down, examine them and see how they all link together, a strategy comes out of it.

A lot of employees are stressed out about finances, but when they leave you to go work somewhere else and get more money, they are still stressed about finances. If you start working on programs that will help address financial wellness, beyond a 401(k) savings plan, it can make a difference. This year, we began subsidizing student loans, which helped employees who don't earn a whole lot of money but have student loans weighing on their minds. These are the types of things where you can see an investment return and all of the data is there to support this. I think the right partner will help you see how that all works together.

Eric, Paul, Weiss: I think a very important aspect of this is education and training internally. The people who you work with for 12 to 14 hours every single day; in some cases, they may understand what the signs are and what the issues are with their coworkers, but they may not understand when it is necessary to elevate an issue.

We had a recent issue where somebody had an incident on the operations staff relating to alcohol abuse. We approached this individual's coworkers and said, "Were you aware of what was going on?" "Well, maybe. Wasn't too sure." But the biggest issue that they communicated to us was that they knew there was something wrong, but they didn't want to get their colleague in trouble. But that intervention could have been a very significant event for this individual who, unfortunately, was just unable to deal with particular aspects of their life without help.



Most companies bring in people periodically for the one-hour session and then kind of check the box. I think there needs to be more of an iterative process. Very frankly, even for someone who sits in my position, we are just starting this process. We are having people come in from the outside in the next month to give us training in this area.

I feel it is extraordinarily important for me to really understand what the warning signs are and to be able to deal with these particular issues going forward, and I wonder what others are doing. Joe had mentioned Canyon Ranch and other things were brought up, but are there things that organizations are doing internally to keep this top-of-mind as it relates to training and education?

Dave, Optum: I don't think organizations are doing enough. This is a hard thing to change culturally. I think the smarter organizations are doing some of the things we have discussed here to create a place and a culture where it is okay to have those conversations. It is okay to be an attorney and talk about work/life balance. It is okay to be an attorney and talk about the fact that I don't feel like having a drink tonight, even though we have a cocktail party or client engagement.

We have to create that culture where it is okay to challenge the status quo. Then you can start to create some programming that can actually be valuable. But if you put in the programming and don't create that culture, nobody will access the program, because nobody wants to be seen going down that hallway. This requires that you fix the culture first. Then, to your point, you have to find partners who don't come in with a cookie-cutter approach, but who can come in with an approach to understand your unique workforce and how specifically to help you.

We have clients, for example, that are banks, that are technology firms, that are in the entertainment industry, and that are law firms and hedge funds. The way I think about it is that we have a set of capabilities. The ingredients are almost always the same, or more-or-less the same, but sometimes we make meatballs and sometimes we make meatloaf and the presentation of the ingredients is different. The program that exists at our largest technology client and our largest banking client is essentially the same, but at my technology client it is being delivered by people with gauges in their ears and tattoos up their arms. In our financial client, people are at the front desk wearing blue button-downs, so they exist in very different environments. The internal marketing is very different. That's the most important thing – whether you do it on your own or find partners, you have to talk your employees' language.

Joe, Northwell: We haven't spent a lot of time talking about food and nutrition, but we believe it is the beginning, the middle and the end of any good well-being program. We have close to 28 teaching kitchens around our organization at various facilities. Everyone is always in a rush, but they need help to know how to cook healthy, whether or not to count calories, and how to create a healthy pantry. Giving people real life tools that they can take with them makes those teaching kitchens valuable tools. We're creating an area where people come together either after work or sometimes during work.

Joe, SPARTAN: How are you able to build the kitchens in the facilities?

Joe, Northwell: We have a large kitchen in every hospital. In some places, we are able to utilize those kitchens in certain times of the day. We actually have a Michelin-graded chef who oversees all our chefs and we change the menus at our hospitals. The food is dramatically different at Northwell than at any other hospital experience, because we believe that actual chicken broth should be real chicken broth, not something that comes in a plastic bag, and it should be made with chicken.

The point being, we use our kitchens in our hospitals, but we have also built standalone kitchens in our corporate areas. We have built them in physician practices where we are also trying to teach our patients how to deal with severe diabetes, obesity, etc. So we are a little bit different in that sense, in that we have a need for these kitchens no matter what, but then putting them in the right places so that people can actually access them and giving them time to do so, makes a great difference. It just takes that leadership to put the money where you need it.

Heida, Rakuten: I would like to add that there are also free services available that we can partner to provide to the employees. For example, we coordinate one to two free in-office health fairs. The health

fair in office option consists of a chiropractor, dentist, back/hand massages, nutritionist, gym representative, yoga instructor and a free healthy lunch. This is a nice and simple way to bring wellness awareness to your employees at no cost. We are even considering having doctors in the office to provide employees with 30-minute physical exams which are covered by the employees' insurance.

Joe, SPARTAN: That should be the no-brainer of all time. I have 1,500 people in one complex. We should have at least one doctor there at least five days a week so if you have just a cold or other minor illness, you don't have to go and waste time at a clinic.

Joe, Northwell: We are currently working in this direct-to-employer space with sizable companies where we are working on an onsite clinic. Whether that's achieved through a doctor, an advanced clinical provider, a nurse practitioner or PA, these are absolutely doable. Once again, this could be daunting if you try to do it on your own, whether you are talking about the buildout of that space, finding that particular physician who is willing to do this, the state regulations which, in New York, is certainly an interesting thing, and then medical liability, etc.

Even if you could handle all of this, you are going to want the connectivity to subspecialists such as endocrinologists, rheumatologists, behavioral health doctors and so on. A number of big healthcare systems are really interested in getting into this space so they will be able to provide wellness in a different way and we certainly have the means to do so.

Ruth, UTA: I always feel for people who feel like it is so daunting because it has to be this big-ticket item. I have had several experiences where those free health screenings have triggered some report, some anomaly, that sent someone for further care. My mother worked at Equitable, where they had a complete clinic on site every day with a doctor and a nurse but, again, each diagnosis usually required further screening.

Employers who are not yet ready to go all the way there could start today with some free resources.

This starts by making the conversation about health an okay conversation to have. Employees have to know that is okay to go to get checked out and, guess what, legally, I'm not supposed to call you at home if you are on medical leave. Enforce that culture that says, "No, you can't call her. Let her rest."

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-Eric, Paul, Wiess

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A couple months ago I sent out an “if you are sick stay home” e-mail while coughing at my desk. When I sent out the e-mail, my assistant came in and said, “So, are you going home now?” I had to sit there and say, “You know what? You’re right. I am going home, because I must model this for everyone.”

Dave, Optum: It is interesting, because all different industries and all different workforces have their unique challenges. I think a couple things are at play. First, and all ages and all demographics will respond to this – it is just how you approach them. You have to approach them in the right way. So we don’t approach our millennial population or employers who have them in the same way we approach our insurance companies, whose average age is much older. It is a very different population. So you have to drive the right approach.

The second thing, and this ties in directly to what we are doing with SPARTAN, is that we are not going to fix all the cultures. There are going to be bad cultures out there, and you will have a job in one of them someday. So how do we help those workforces be more resilient to those challenges that we face? How do we help you go into work every day and, along the way, decide if that job is your true north, that it is where you really want to be, and if it is getting you to what you want out of life? Maybe it is. Maybe it is a necessary stepping stone. But if that is the case, then how do we get you to a place where you can be resilient to what is going on around you and still perform, and still retain your sense of self, your sense of community, and your personal well-being, both physically and emotionally?

That also leads me to another point on clinics. I think every fully-realized wellness solution should have an on-site clinic at a certain population size, but that is daunting. It is actually the hardest thing to set up on site, although there are things that others on this panel know a lot more about than I do. I think employers naturally gravitate towards this

because it is a very easy thing to say. I want that in my office, because doctors make people healthy.

You don’t always have to start with the big clinic, with the big capital investment, with the big footprint, or with the big real estate space. You can start with a wellness coach or a health promotion professional who can create a relationship with Northwell, for example, or for a smaller population that isn’t ready for that full-blown clinic yet, with another resource in the area. I want employers to realize that it doesn’t always have to be a full-blown medical solution, even though in a lot of cases that is really beneficial.

The other thing, regardless of whether you do this yourself or if you have singular or multiple vendors, is to make everyone work together. It doesn’t do any good if Optum is running a fitness center and Northwell is running the clinic and we don’t connect. If Northwell doesn’t say here’s your biometric data, let me walk you over and introduce you to your new health coach and vice-versa. If we have a fitness interaction with somebody and they pass out because they didn’t eat that morning – which happens all the time - we then should be walking them over to the clinic for treatment. If there is a physical therapist there and we notice a movement pattern that is broken and is beyond what we can fix, we need to be that connective tissue to get them to physical therapy. You have to make sure that the people that are servicing your employees have that connective tissue in place. That is your job as the employer.

Ruth, UTA: As an employer, we sit every year and go through exit data to evaluate what the reasons are that we are losing people and we let that set the strategy for what our next initiative needs to be.

We are in entertainment. We started what we call the Opportunity Fund – the UTA Opportunity Fund. If you are here in New York, but really, really want to work in film, you have to go to LA. The reality is that not every person can afford to make that move on their own, so we started the Opportunity Fund. The Opportunity Fund represents a powerful joint commitment to help our own and “pay it forward.” The Fund was seeded by UTA and then grew through UTA employee contributions. We all have a stake in seeing our colleagues succeed.

You don’t want to lose people for things that you can fix. If you looked at what makes someone want to pick us as their “employer of choice,” you recognize that a woman in an industry should not have to choose between her life and her career. We looked at how we could become more innovative in solving this. As a result, we have developed family planning benefits like I have never seen at another company. We have extended gender neutral parental leave. New moms can bring their baby and another adult with them on a business trip. We will even help pay to freeze their eggs. We keep digging deeper into why we are losing people and addressing the issues we find.

This helps us meet the needs of people early in their career as well as later in their career. I think it is good when you, as a company, can start looking at what the actual problems are, because the problem at my company is going to be very different than the problem at another company.

Joe, Northwell: Northwell team members’ average age is 45 and our average tenure is nine-and-a-half years. When people join us, they tend to stay with us for a while. Our turnover rate 12 months running is 8.9. Nursing has been viewed as one of the top five most difficult jobs across industry because of the lifting, the strenuous nature of it, and the stress.


Let’s stay on stress for a second as a critical issue within well-being. Stress for someone at your phase of life is going to be very different from the stress of a 60-year-old who is worrying about whether they have enough for retirement or not. The HR department of any company has to think about how they are meeting people where they are on their particular part of the life journey. That is a big part of how organizations need to continue to adjust and evolve their models, whether it is freezing eggs, whether it is making sure retirement plans are right, or whether it is making sure people understand what is in their retirement plan when they are in their 40s and 50s so that they are prepared in their 60s. That is how you develop the culture of an organization by really understanding each individual’s problems. You are only going to understand those problems if you are willing to ask the employees through the surveys that you do and then act upon them year in and year out. As an HR person, I would say that you have to challenge your HR department to do that every day and then put the pressure on them because, quite frankly, that’s what they’re there for.

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-Ruth, UTA

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Lara, SPARTAN: I agree, and I think one of the most discouraging things is when, at organizations where they do exit interviews and people keep saying the same thing, nothing happens. It just erodes the trust of the organization. Again, you feel that reverberate in the fiber of your being.

Dave, Optum: Asking and not acting is worse than not asking. I would also add to that, guess what? Everybody in your workforce already knows they need to move more, eat better, and sleep better. This is not a knowledge problem. We are bombarded all day long with messaging about this. So why aren't they? Because they have some other kind of problem.

Until you get to the root cause of what is preventing them from engaging in their own well-being, they will not engage in fitness, as an example. Don't bring the doctor on site. They won't visit. Optum On-Site, as an example, has a predominantly female workforce of child-bearing age, and this is a big issue. So we have to become a great place for women to work, and we have to identify the unique barriers to engagement for our workforce and try and help them overcome those barriers. Only then might they engage in their own well-being. That will be different for you and your law firm, Eric, because your population's barriers are different.

I just encourage people to take an active look at your employee base and stop thinking about wellness for a minute and start thinking about, "what are my employees' problems?" For better or worse, you own the healthcare system in the United States. You own it. You don't run it, but if we all stop paying, Optum goes out of business. Northwell goes out of business. Employers own the healthcare system.

To talk about food for a second, at your workplace, you also own the food system. We have hundreds of clients that we serve on site and only four of them subsidize healthy food. If you subsidize healthy food, that is what people will eat. So you have to put some skin in this game as employers to really change behavior.

David, LEADERS: Everyone has acknowledged that culture is important. What attributes, beyond just culture, are important?

Dave, Optum: C-Suite ownership, 100 percent. That is why I said earlier that if this is personally important to you and you are not working for a C-Suite that sees the value in this, unless you think you have a reasonable shot at changing their mind, which you probably don't, you need to leave and find a place where you can do what's personally important to you.

Brad, VARIDESK: Last year, we hired the former chief people officer from Southwest Airlines. He's our COO and President. If you know anything about Southwest, their culture is magnificent. What he says, that I think is fascinating, is that you can work in an office and know people's names, but if you work in a transparent office, you know the people.

You have to know individuals. You have to know not just that Jill deals with our accounting issues; you have to know that Jill has two kids at home and that she is a single mom so holidays and things like that are difficult on Jill.

Our CEO talks about this a lot. It is the leadership of the organization that has to drive this, because you typically mimic what your leaders do. The reason you stay at the office through lunch is because the person you work for stays at the office through lunch. If that person went to lunch, you would go to lunch.

Again, we mimic those behaviors because we feel that is what is being rewarded. You have to change that whole mindset from the notion that we are going to reward people for staying at work 12 hours a day and not taking a break to we will reward healthy behaviors. When we start doing that, we will see the systems and the cultures change. That's just basic data, basic science.

Ruth, UTA: I think the other thing I would add to that is as a company, do the right thing for the right reason. Otherwise you will have no trust from your employees. I've had a lot of people criticize the "Facebook model," where employers were having these huge campuses and were providing everything. Then the question came in, are you really doing this because you care about me or do you just want me to be here all the time?

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For me, just in closing and hearing what everyone's saying, one word that hasn't been used today but is huge is fear – the fear of employees having to ask for help or to get what they need, but also the fear of the employer that if they give their employees freedom, they will run too far with it... My hope is that each of us takes at least one thing and does something with it.

-Lara, SPARTAN

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I believe that part of the strategy is to always intentionally make sure that we are messaging that we are doing the right things for the right reasons. At the same time, we were revamping all our parenting benefits, we were smack dab in the middle of #TimesUp and #MeToo. We had to make sure people knew the changes we were making were because we cared about females, not because it was a hashtag thing. If employees, especially younger workers, feel that there is a lack of authenticity and sincerity in whatever program you are rolling out, you will not get engagement.

Lara, SPARTAN: For me, just in closing and hearing what everyone's saying, one word that hasn't been used today but is huge is fear – the fear of employees having to ask for help or to get what they need, but also the fear of the employer that if they give their employees freedom, they will run too far with it. I always say to my clients in therapy, you only have 50 minutes with me, so go take what we have talked about today and use it in your life.

I would encourage all of us that are here in this room to really think about today and what we are going to do with this information. If it just stays in this room, it doesn't help. We are not helping humanity as much as we can. So I would encourage everybody really to think about what is the one thing they learned today that they can start to do in their own workplace. To me, that is really important. How can we move forward? What can we do next? This has been an unbelievably robust conversation, and so many amazing things have been discussed. My hope is that each of us takes at least one thing and does something with it. ●