

AbbVie Launches Well-Being Essentials for People Leaders

A Conversation with Leah Holzwarth

Leah Holzwarth, Associate Director of Global Well-Being Programs, discusses AbbVie's new Well-Being Essentials for People Leaders. This program was recently launched globally to educate and engage leaders about the role of well-being in shaping company culture, sustaining high performance, and enabling employees to thrive.



Leah Holzwarth
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BCCWF: What is the goal of Well-Being Essentials?

LEAH: The program aims to educate leaders about why well-being matters to the success of our company, help them identify the root causes of issues impacting employee well-being, and give them the words they need to approach well-being conversations, which may not always feel natural and comfortable. We also want to underscore the importance of leaders modeling positive well-being behaviors themselves.

BCCWF: How are you framing well-being for people leaders?

LEAH: Well-Being Essentials reframes well-being for many. Well-being is often thought of as “I just need to exercise more, manage stress and eat healthier.” During Well-Being Essentials we want People Leaders to know that they can have a significant impact (both positive and negative) on the well-being of their team. And that we know work life can impact home life and home life can impact work life.

We ask leaders to identify organizational factors that most impact their teams and individual factors, which they may struggle to have conversations about. Things like workload, transparency, workplace flexibility, and physical and mental health are significant drivers of well-being and can impact productivity, absenteeism, and turnover.

BCCWF: Well-Being Essentials trains people leaders on how to have well-being conversations by being “REAL.” Can you tell us what that means?

LEAH: We created a new acronym “REAL” to help people leaders remember how to have these well-being conversations. REAL means Respectful, Empathetic, Authentic and Listen. Using key “moments” or scenarios, leaders practice REAL conversations and identify actions they can take to support their employees and direct them to resources. For example, if a team member is taking longer to complete tasks than is typical, people leaders learn how to engage in a REAL conversation to identify the root cause (e.g. too many meetings) and to collaborate on how to identify solutions. They also learn how to model healthy boundaries themselves and seek out relevant resources like the Setting Team Norms Guide.

BCCWF: How are you rolling out Well-Being Essentials and how is it going so far?

LEAH: We rolled this out as part of our People Leader Total Rewards Learning Series. It includes a short self-paced on-line learning module, a longer recorded or live webinar and a resource guide. So far we have held a number of global webinars in May and are beginning to work with different parts of the global organization to hold the webinar as a roadshow. Throughout we have developed and implemented the program in close alignment with our Culture Team, Occupational and Environmental Health, ERGs, and the Leadership Development Team among others.

BCCWF: Ultimately how do you view the role of the people leader when it comes to well-being?

LEAH: There may be some organizational factors that are in the people leader’s span of control but besides that, we don’t expect people leaders to have all the answers when it comes to supporting employee well-being. We ask them to lead with empathy and know where to point people for support. Then it is up to the employees themselves to take action.

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