

# WELL-BEING WEEK IN LAW

## ACTIVITY PLANNING GUIDE

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### WELL-BEING WEEK IN LAW

MON



#### STAY STRONG

Physical Well-Being

TUES



#### ALIGN

Spiritual Well-Being

WEDS



#### ENGAGE & GROW

Career & Intellectual Well-Being

THURS



#### CONNECT

Social Well-Being

FRI



#### FEEL WELL

Emotional Well-Being

Activity Title:

Strengths-Based Feedback Strategies

Well-Being Dimension:

Organizational Theme: Rewards & Recognition

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#### Activity Objective:

To equip supervisors with practical, do-able strategies for providing strengths-based feedback that bolsters employees' experience of appreciation, recognition, and support for development as well as their well-being.

#### Well-Being Connection (How/Why Does this Work?)

The Rewards and Recognition theme is based on research finding that employees' well-being can be significantly impacted by whether they perceive that their efforts and contributions are fairly balanced with their rewards (called effort-reward balance).

Easing job demands (including enabling rest and recuperation) is one way to balance the effort-reward scale. Other strategies are to increase job security and rewards. While rewards obviously include compensation and career opportunities, they also include respect, esteem, approval, status, prestige, recognition, appreciation, and support for development. It also includes intrinsic rewards, such as feeling proud of the importance of our work.

*This Activity Guide focuses on esteem, recognition, and social rewards.*

When employees feel that they are chronically giving more than they're receiving, their mental health and functioning can deteriorate. Effort-reward imbalance is a risk factor for, for example, psychological distress, cardiovascular disease, reduced job satisfaction, and burnout. People may be able to handle a greater workload if they value the work, feel they are doing something important that is valued, and if they feel well-rewarded for their efforts (Brafford, 2017).

#### Respect The Reciprocity Norm

The powerful norm of reciprocity is one explanation for this effect. The reciprocity norm has been hard-wired into us by evolution. We reflexively feel a need to help those who benefit us. We expect others to also observe the reciprocity norm, and when they fail to do so, we feel irritated and stressed.

#### The Challenge of Counter-Balancing Overcommitment

Because overcommitted people (which describes many in the legal profession) devote so much of themselves to their work, they have elevated risk of experiencing an imbalance and its adverse health effects. So, legal employers should take extra care to keep the effort-reward scale balanced for their hard-working lawyers and staff. Luckily, there are many ways to do so.

### Procedure

#### Supervisor Behaviors To Help Balance The Effort-Reward Scale

Many intangible rewards are available that are cheap and easy to give. They may require supervisors to develop new, consistent habits. Some examples are:

- Frequent informal feedback to improve feelings of accomplishment and support for development.
- Never ignoring contributions; regularly delivering praise, recognition, and gratitude for good work and team/organizational contributions.
- Interpersonal fairness, respectful interactions.
- Actively caring, being a good listener.
- Conveying importance and impact of employees' role and work.
- Mentoring, fostering a sense of self-efficacy and confidence.
- Honest and open communication, especially about performance and advancement.

#### Strengths-Based Feedback

*Regular strengths-based feedback is a practical, doable strategy that supervisors can use to provide important intangible rewards to employees.*

Supervisors' formal and informal feedback, recognition, and support for employees' development all can positively contribute to balancing their effort-reward scale. But traditional appraisal systems often do more harm than good by emphasizing the negative. Such weakness-based feedback can actually hinder development and undermine job satisfaction and commitment.

An alternative, strengths-based approach to feedback focuses on what employees are doing well and how they can further use and expand their unique strengths and talents. This type of feedback can produce myriad benefits, including increased self-efficacy, well-being, motivation, and engagement.

Importantly, a strengths-based approach does not require ignoring weaknesses, but rather emphasizing strengths while helping employees understand how they can manage their weaker areas.

The purpose of this activity is to outline a strengths-based feedback approach that will enhance employees' well-being by contributing to their effort-reward balance as well as support their peak performance.

Below are five practices for delivering strengths-based feedback without ignoring areas for improvement.

### Procedure

#### **PRACTICE #1: Conduct a Feedforward Interview**

##### **► What Is It?**

In feedforward interviews (FFIs), supervisors elicit positively-charged success stories from employees to help them identify their personal blueprint for success and reflect on how they can recreate those conditions to optimize future performance.

##### **► How To Do It?**

- Ask employees to describe a specific positive situation when they felt they were at their best.
- Then invite them to collaboratively explore the circumstances that were involved in their success story, how those circumstances differ from the present situation, and how they might be replicated in the future.
- Actively listen and highlight strengths that the employee exercised in the story and suggest ways that they might be leveraged for future success.

#### **PRACTICE #2: Incorporate Reflected Best Self Stories**

##### **► What Is It?**

A sociologist named Charles Horton Cooley proposed the concept of the “looking-glass self,” which reflects that people base their sense of self (in part) on how they believe others view them. They use social interactions as a type of “mirror” to evaluate their own worth, values, and behavior—and significant others like supervisors have a particularly powerful impact. This means that supervisors’ acknowledgement of employees’ value and contribution can be very important to their own self-evaluations. In the Reflected Best Self activity, supervisors share examples of when they have seen employees at their best to, in turn, boost employees’ positive views of themselves.

##### **► How To Do It?**

- Share stories of instances where you observed employees at their best. Using as much detail as possible, describe what positive contribution they made in the story and what strengths they were drawing on.
- After sharing stories, engage employees in interactive discussions about how they can continue to leverage those strengths to maintain or improve their performance in the future.

#### **PRACTICE #3: Align Key Goals With Strengths**

##### **► What Is It?**

Once you have helped employees identify their strengths, engage them in an interactive goal-setting conversation that aligns their strengths with goals and expectations.

##### **► How To Do It?**

- Ask employees to identify additional ways they can exercise their strengths in the workplace and use their strengths to optimize their performance.
- Ask them to identify and practice complementary skills that will reinforce their top strengths.

### Procedure

#### PRACTICE #4: Find Strengths-Based Strategies for Managing Weaknesses

##### ► What Is It?

Employees may have performance weaknesses that you'd like to address. After discussing those areas, you can help them identify ways to use their strengths, and those of their co-workers, to manage those areas.

##### ► How To Do It?

- Effective constructive feedback has some basic components including (1) asking permission to provide feedback, (2) providing information and data points that illustrate the issue rather than judgments (e.g., "The memo was late," vs. "You're not conscientious") (3) explaining how the behavior impacts others, and (4) discussing employees' reactions to the feedback (Watch this 5-minute [TED video](#) for more details.)
- Focus weakness-based feedback on knowledge and skills (which are more alterable) rather than talents and personality traits.
- Encourage employees to brainstorm how they can use their strengths to compensate for their weaknesses.
- Encourage "complementary pairings" whereby employees partner with others who possess strengths in the areas in which they are lacking.

#### PRACTICE #5: End on a Positive Note

##### ► What Is It?

Conclude the feedback session by sincerely expressing your appreciation for employees' effort, attitude, and contributions.

##### ► How To Do It?

- Tell employees that they are valued members of your team, and give specific examples of ways in which they have contributed. Emphasize that you appreciate their effort, dedication, and positive attitude, in addition to their tangible contributions.

1.



#### Best Self Stories

What are examples of when they've been at their best?

2.



#### Align Goals With Strengths

How can they capitalize on strengths to achieve goals?

3.



#### Improve With Strengths

How can they use their strengths to improve areas of weakness?

4.



#### Positive Ending

Why do you appreciate them and value their contribution?

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### Other Resources

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