



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

WHAT'S WORKING WELL In Law Firm Well-Being Programs?

MAY 2021

LAW FIRM PROFILES

Growing attention to behavioral health problems in the legal profession have prompted law firms to focus more closely on protecting and promoting their members' mental health and overall well-being. Some are launching well-being programs for the first time while others are looking for innovations for existing programs.

In 2021, Vault.com included Wellness as a category for the first time in its Best Law Firm rankings of [large](#) and [mid-sized](#) firms. The rankings were derived from Vault's Annual Associate Survey, in which [associates were asked](#) to rate their firms' efforts regarding attorney wellness on a 10-point scale.

The survey is far from scientifically reliable, it includes only associates' feedback, and the gap among many firms' scores was minuscule. Still, the rankings suggest that those at the top are doing something right.

So, I interviewed top-ranked firms in the large firm category and asked them to identify some of the top factors to which they attribute the success of their programs. I asked about substantive programming as well as their program structures—such as leadership participation, the existence and structure of well-being committees, formal strategic plans, mission statements, communication and marketing plans, and evaluation plans. My findings are discussed below.

Best Law Firms For Wellness 2021 Vault.com

1. O'Melveny & Myers
2. Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe
3. McDermott Will & Emery
4. Akin Gump
5. Ropes & Gray
6. Fried Frank
7. Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg
8. Clifford Chance (US)
9. Willkie Farr & Gallagher
10. Eversheds Sutherland (US)
11. Latham & Watkins
12. Paul Hastings
13. White & Case
14. Morgan, Lewis & Bockius
15. Cooley LLP

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

2

O'MELVENY & MYERS Ranked #1

At O'Melveny & Myers (OMM), I interviewed Mary Ellen Connerty, the Director of Diversity and Engagement about the firm's "Living Well" program for lawyers and staff.

Program Structure

OMM's well-being journey has been fluid, starting with a large committee, shifting to a smaller group to make early decisions, and now moving back to a larger committee. Feeling that it was urgent to take action, the firm moved forward while building its mission and strategic plan using a soft launch approach.

Leaders from Human Resources, Talent Development, Engagement, and Benefits have worked closely with the firm's partner champion and its associate and counsel advisory committee to get started.

Overall, the firm has taken a high-touch, interactive approach—asking questions (through, for example, surveys, town halls, small group sessions, conversations with the firm's career coach, and meetings with the Chief Operating Officer) and always responding based on what they've learned. OMM did not have a "splashy" roll-out of its Living Well program but, instead, slowly built it through ongoing conversations and responsive actions.

Success Factors

Mary Ellen identified the following key aspects of the program as contributing to its success.

Partnership With I M Human

OMM has closely partnered with [I M Human](#) since 2019 to help grow and transform its culture to be supportive of the mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of its people. Working closely with firm leadership, I M Human implemented two programs of note—"Life Moments Workshop" and "Personal Connections Workshop"—that offered employees well-being support and provided the Living Well working group with data and guidance on how to evolve the program to meet employees' needs and interests. The firm's trusted career coach worked closely with I M Human's founder, Ian Shea, to implement the programs,

which consisted of structured, small-group discussions. These groups provided participants with opportunities to talk with other firm members about topics that often have been considered off-limits. They provided emotional support through the experience of feeling validated, heard, and seen, which resulted in employees feeling less isolated in their own well-being challenges. These programs also helped to deepen trust in the firm's commitment to well-being.

The groups originally were conducted in-person and then moved to virtual platforms after the pandemic started. Due to the pandemic and social justice events in the U.S., there was a greater need for such an outlet and people were much more willing to talk openly about their experiences.

Based on learnings from these programs and other human-centered support initiatives, I M Human designed a customized Well-Being Plan, which it uses to support OMM in the execution of enhancing and transforming the culture to meet the growing emotional needs of its people.

Visible, Meaningful Senior Sponsorship

According to Mary Ellen, the highly-visible support of George Demos—a firm partner and Chief Operating Officer—has been a key success factor. George has demonstrated a deep, personal commitment to firm-wide well-being that has strengthened firm members' confidence in the program. He regularly meets with lawyers and staff to share his own journey, seek their feedback, and contribute to ideas to address their needs.

Collaboration With An Upgraded EAP

Another success factor that Mary Ellen identified was switching the firm's EAP from a large organization with generic offerings to [Corporate Counseling Associates \(CCA\)](#), a smaller EAP that takes a more tailored approach and has experience working with law firms.

CCA has collaborated with OMM throughout the pandemic to deliver programs on stress, fear, resilience, and grief, and to facilitate small private discussions for colleagues to safely raise their concerns and challenges and gain support from coworkers. Trained clinicians conducted all the sessions and also stand ready for personal counseling. CCA also provided programs addressing the adjustment to working remotely, particularly for those sheltering alone or caring for children, and addressing the ongoing racial violence in the country.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

3

Pulse Surveys

Throughout the pandemic, OMM has been regularly conducting pulse surveys—which are short, confidential electronic questionnaires using a Qualtrics platform that ask various questions about firm members' well-being, work experience, and needed support.

During COVID, responses reflected common issues related to mental well-being, work-life conflict, caregiving, and contracting the virus. The Living Well working group has discussed the results with CCA and they have collaborated to devise responsive action. For example, two specific recent recommendations were to develop training on leading with empathy and on recognizing the physical and mental health impacts of pandemic fatigue.

ORRICK Ranked #2

At Orrick, I spoke with Karen Barry, the Mindfulness/Wellness Ambassador, and Danielle Van Wert, the Talent Innovation and Lawyer Development Manager, about the firm's "Whole You" well-being program for lawyers and staff.

Program Structure

Since mid-2018, well-being has been Karen's full-time focus and she leads the Whole You program. The committee structure is relatively informal, comprised of a working group of supporters, but Karen gets regular feedback from interested lawyers and staff.

The program has a logo, multiple intranet websites, and two regular columns on the firm's blog. The curriculum and strategic plan are shaped and developed with input from the larger Benefits team, key managers, healthcare vendors, and industry and Orrick-specific wellness data. The team also continually invites and receives employee testimonials and feedback, which help drive strategic planning and decisions.

The program's mission statement articulates the goal of ensuring that individuals are supported in bringing their whole and best selves to work. The firmwide wellness budget is supplemented by individual office budgets, which fund local activities (well-being or otherwise) tailored to their own needs.

Success Factors

Karen and Danielle identified the following as top factors explaining the success of Orrick's well-being program.

Investing in a Dedicated Well-Being Position

Creating a salaried position and hiring Karen to focus on well-being full-time helped accelerate Orrick's ability to develop programming. Perhaps as importantly, the firm's investment in a dedicated well-being role was a highly visible sign that Orrick genuinely cares about firm members' well-being.

Infusing Well-Being Into Everything — With Support From The Top

According to Karen, Orrick is not a churn-and-burn law firm—the firm has high expectations for lawyers but also cares about them as people and wants to protect and promote their well-being so that they can have successful, sustainable careers. A related aspect of this support is the firm's full-time career coach, valued as an integral part of attorneys' professional well-being.

Danielle emphasized that Orrick's top leaders have prioritized being a "best place to work"—an honor that Orrick has earned multiple times from Fortune magazine. That vocalized goal from firm leadership guides decisions, acts as a guardrail to make course corrections, and helps shape and promote programming.

An important part of Orrick's effort to be a best place to work is to infuse well-being into all aspects of what the firm does (often promoted by the Chair or other high-level management). Departments and affinity groups regularly collaborate to devise innovative strategies for doing so. Some examples from that collaboration or from the Talent side of the house include:

- Offering meditation to law students during on-campus interviews.
- Incorporating aspects of well-being into the Mentor Program.
- Cross-sponsorship and cross-communication of events and resources.
- Incorporating some aspect of well-being during all global retreats and training academies, as well as many internal meetings or forums.

Innovative Well-Being Programming

The firm's well-being programming before and during COVID has included:

- **Free weekly meditation sessions** led by Karen for all US offices, attended by all levels of staff and attorneys, and setting up meditation rooms in several offices.
 - **\$1,000 Wellness Stipend** paid to all staff globally through a federal tax program.
 - **No Increase in Health Insurance Cost:** The firm assumed 100% of the premium increases.
 - **Well-Being Resources & Programming:** The firm offers extensive live and on-demand well-being-related programming. Programming has included mandatory training in Mental Health First Aid to key management across all US offices and resiliency training in U.S., London, and Asia offices.
 - **EAP Support:** The firm increased its EAP benefit to offer 10 free sessions—well above the industry average of 5.
 - **Team/Community Fun:** The firm regularly hosts fun activities or events in each office to support wellness and foster a collegial culture. A few recent examples include: mini wellness challenges; holding team competitions for paint-by-number or Easter gingerbread house decoration; sending “We Care” packages (filled with edible goodies and recipes).
- **Implementing an [Unplug Policy](#)** that offers all timekeepers 40 hours of billable credit to take time off—the purpose of which is to ensure that everyone can take at least one full week of truly unplugged time. The policy was accompanied by encouragement by top management for everyone to take advantage of the policy, plus best practices and suggestions for out-of-office communication and encouragement/use of the policy.
 - **Creating “Focused Fridays” and Limited Weekend Emails** programs that discourage non-essential internal meetings on Fridays, as well as weekend emails not tied to clients so that employees can have time to get their work done and enjoy their weekends.
 - **Improving meaningful performance feedback**—including through use of a real-time feedback app.
 - **Providing more career path guidance** through, for example, a quarterly career-focused associate newsletter, a job board about opportunities with the firm's clients, and an internal lecture series on career planning.
 - **Enhancing credit** given for time devoted to training and working on innovation-related projects.
 - **Offering two career coach options** within the Lawyer Development team.

Continuous Innovation to Enhance Career Development & Work-Life Management

Orrick increasingly has focused on career development and facilitating work-life management which, although not formally part of The Whole You well-being program, can significantly impact mental health, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Innovations have included:

- **Offering “agile working options”** that enable associates to craft a work-from-home schedule that makes sense for them and their teams.
- **An option for caregivers** to work an 80 percent schedule at full compensation during the pandemic (offered to eligible associates and counsel).
- **Giving “Wellness Dollars”** in the form of a \$500 gift certificate to associates who bill over 250 hours in a single month with a list of suggestions for using the gift to support their well-being. The intent of the Award is not

to encourage unsustainable work habits but to convey gratitude to lawyers who may inevitably need to work long hours and to encourage them to take some time to focus on wellness.

McDermott Will & Emery Ranked #3

At McDermott, I talked to Director of Professional Development Hannah Fabrikant, who coordinates the firm's well-being program (and who repeatedly expressed her passion for well-being topics) along with Associate Director of Professional Development Erica Gholson.

Program Structure

The firm takes a less structured approach to its program, with no firm-wide well-being committee, communication plan, logo, or branding. The well-being activities led by Hannah and the Professional Development group are distinct from the

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

5

firm's mental health resources and firm benefits (e.g., mental health benefits, EAP services), which are coordinated by the Benefits group.

The firm's focus on well-being began organically after Dan Harris from 10% Happier spoke at the firm-wide partner retreat in 2017. The talk gave Hannah the idea of starting working groups across the firm—which she referred to as “Happiness Committees,” a label she used jokingly as a placeholder. After the firm's new chair Ira Coleman got wind of Hannah's idea and announced the launch of “Happiness Committees,” the name (and idea) stuck and took off.

Happiness committees are led at the office-level and focus on developing small, in-person events tailored to the local office culture which, though inexpensive, provide continual opportunities for firm members to talk about and engage with well-being ideas and strategies. They supplement the robust training and well-being programming offered by the PD team. Hannah's belief is that all of the efforts devoted to well-being resources and programs make people feel that the firm truly cares about them.

Success Factors

Hannah identified the following as top factors explaining the success of the firm's well-being program.

Billable Credit For Mindfulness Activities

Since 2018, McDermott has allowed associates to bill up to 25 hours annually for mindfulness activities, which is interpreted broadly to include, for example, all well-being programs sponsored by the firm and meditation practice. Hannah believes that the billable hour allowance is very important, but that the firm's well-being success is also due to the efforts to embed well-being into everything they do—discussed next.

Integrative Approach To Well-Being Supported By Top Leadership

In Hannah's view, the most important reason for the success of McDermott's well-being program is its integrative approach that has been supported by top leadership. The Chair's endorsement of “Happiness Committees” (a name that might not fly in many firms) and billable credit for mindfulness hours are visible ways that

McDermott walks the well-being talk.

The Chair also oversees a monthly Happiness Survey and is transparent about the results. For example, every time he has a town hall, Ira provides firm-wide and office-level results, discusses whether results have changed for the better or worse, and expects office heads to take any needed action. Ira also has openly shared about his own experience with mindfulness at firm events.

The PD team also tries to embed well-being into everything they do. Both Hannah and Erica continually “ask the wellness question”—how they can integrate well-being into, for example, educational programming, mentoring, career plans and reviews, and team meetings. Examples of McDermott's activities include the following (some of which are office-specific):

- **Including a well-being goal** in Associate Development Plans (ADPs)
- **Incorporating well-being into the firm's mentoring program**—which assigns all associates to one-on-one and group mentoring. Mentors are provided with a wellness agenda and topics for discussions including, for example, physical exercise, gratitude practices, and wellness goals within ADPs.
- **Providing a tool to send “Gratitude Grams”** (delivered in hard copy before the pandemic and now online) that provide space for conveying gratitude to colleagues.
- **Organizing a “detox day”** after the winter holidays with, for example, healthy drinks and face masks.
- **Sponsoring “Fraps & Laps,”** which are regular breaks in which firm members walk to get coffee together.
- **Firm Peloton groups** and SoulCycle classes, so people can work out together.
- **Monthly birthday celebrations** with cake.
- **A well-being tip sheet (a laminated card)** distributed to all firm members that listed meditation apps, wellness articles, and contact information for the PD staff. The back of the card included an invitation to try out the “3 good things” activity (a daily practice of listing three things that happened for which we're grateful) along with an erasable pen. The cards were well-received—and not expensive.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

6

- **Encouraging supervisors** to use team meetings as a channel to, for example, communicate the purpose and importance of work, foster connection, and acknowledge contributions.

Wellness Programming

McDermott also rolls out a wellness curriculum every year—which may change (as it did during the pandemic) based on changing circumstances and needs.

- Programming has included, for example, stress management, resilience, civility, mental health, and reducing stigma.
- “Survive and Thrive” panels are offered a few times a year, during which successful partners describe their own well-being practices.
- As a supplement to the formal curriculum, McDermott offers one to two short, live guided meditations with outside facilitators each week.
- Each lawyer and staff professional has a membership to a well-being app that offers on-demand guided meditations, yoga, and stretching.

Ropes & Gray Ranked #5

At Ropes & Gray, I spoke with Chief Human Resources Officer Erica Murphy about the BeWELL@Ropes&Gray program for all lawyers and business support. Of the firms I interviewed, Ropes & Gray has developed among the most structured, formalized approaches to well-being—which, in 2020, was honored as the “Most Innovative Program for Employee Health and Well-Being” by Chambers & Partners.

Program Structure

The firm evolved into its current approach based on prioritizing well-being in its lead-up to signing the ABA Well-Being Pledge in 2020.

Initially, local offices were responsible for well-being programming using existing staff and lawyers. The firm decided a global approach was needed to take the program to the next level and invested substantially in resources, planning,

centralizing the program, and meeting with internal stakeholders to understand their needs.

The firm hired Katherine Adamenko as the Manager of Well-Being to focus full-time on developing and implementing a global program—which ultimately is led by Director of Total Awards Julie Blume. Some offices retain local well-being committees, but they align with the firm-wide approach.

BeWELL is supported by a formal strategic plan, a mission statement, and a communications plan. The firm’s communications team is closely involved in creating campaigns and devising ways to deliver information effectively. The global well-being committee meets annually, and the committee leaders meet quarterly to discuss available resources and best practices.

BeWELL program’s mission is to provide tangible resources, premier education, and compassionate support to enhance their people’s emotional, physical and financial well-being. The program has a logo, a cohesive marketing strategy, and a robust internal resource webpage.

Success Factors

Erica identified the following as top factors explaining the success of the firm’s well-being program.

Intentional Approach to Well-Being

The leading factor to which Erica attributes Ropes & Gray’s success is the “intentional approach” it has taken to develop a robust well-being program. The strong support from top leadership by firm Chair Julie Jones and Managing Partner David Djaha is a crucial contributing factor.

The BeWELL program focuses on three well-being pillars:

- MyMind (emotional well-being)
- MyHealth (physical well-being)
- MyWealth (financial well-being)

Under the “myMind” pillar, programming has included firm-wide and lawyer-specific resiliency training, mental health first aid training, weekly live and recorded mindfulness sessions, and a global direct-dial to the EAP.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

7

The firm also developed a targeted mental health response this past year that included guidance for leaders, led by their in-house clinical expert and executive coach.

Under the “myHealth” pillar, programming has included yoga sessions, onsite healthy eating options, virtual cooking demos, discounted gym memberships, and a global physical activity challenge.

Programming for “myWealth” includes a variety of retirement, investment and estate planning advice and tools. These three dimensions roll up to an overall “myLife” theme, including EAP services and high-quality health care and benefits plans.

Three key themes ran through the BeWELL program this past year: Responsiveness, relevancy, and adaptability. The ability to recognize their importance has ultimately led to the program’s positive impact and success.

Fried Frank Ranked #6

At Fried Frank, I interviewed Annemarie Crouch, Chief Human Resources Officer, about the firm’s Living Well at Fried Frank well-being program that started in 2019.

Program Structure

Living Well is organized around three key aspects of well-being:

- Mind (mental health)
- Body (fitness and nutrition)
- Self (work-life integration)

Annemarie leads the Living Well Working Group of people from across the firm. The Working Group is not exclusive—anyone interested can join—but a core group of about 12 people (from, for example, Communications, Operations, and Benefits) drive the day-to-day management of the Living Well program. The firm prepares an annual strategic plan for key initiatives, including plans for collaboration with other firm programs, such as, DEI and employee resource groups (ERGs).

Success Factors

Annemarie identified the following as top reasons for the success of Fried Frank’s program.

Communication As A Conversation

Fried Frank has placed a priority on making communication about Living Well an ongoing and holistic conversation. Annemarie and her team have spent a substantial amount of time focused on its communication plan and campaign management—by continually seeking to highlight well-being and engage firm members through the right channels; at the right time; with the right messages, information and resources.

The team brands all communication with a dedicated Living Well logo and focuses on delivering information in a way that resonates with everyone. They continually hone how best to use email, intranet, member content, and the firm’s mobile app and how to make resources and information easily accessible.

One popular communication channel is the firm’s monthly Spotlight Series, which focuses on a particular well-being-related theme, corresponding firm resources, and stories about firm members and service-providers.

For example, the January Spotlight focused on physical health, including fitness and nutrition information to support firm members’ health-related New Year’s resolutions. This Spotlight edition also included a profile and Q & A with a partner who competes in Iron Man Triathlons. Another month’s Spotlight answered common benefits questions relating to mental health services. It included profiles of the firm’s wellness counselors to further connections with them and raise the comfort level with seeking help.

The spotlight series ties into Fried Frank’s drive to cultivate an open, positive conversation about wellness at Fried Frank and remove the stigma often associated with topics related to wellness issues in the workplace.

Annemarie describes the communication philosophy as a positive conversation—not a top-down delivery of information. The team has many ways to listen and gather information about firm members’ interests and needs, including by continually connecting with firm leadership, the associates committee, business services committees, and the like, as well as using surveys, having town halls, and relying on the HR team to gather information about the needs of the communities they support.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

8

All-Firm Approach

Because everyone at the firm contributes to high-quality client service whether directly or indirectly, Living Well is a firm-wide program for everyone at the firm, not only attorneys. It seeks to embed well-being in the firm culture across all offices. Fried Frank takes the same approach to professional development and DEI, which includes both attorneys and staff. The diversity of departments involved in the core Living Well program team further reflects Fried Frank's inclusive approach to wellness.

Integrative, Holistic Approach

Fried Frank approaches well-being as an interactive movement that seeks to embed well-being into everyday business and firm culture rather than as an isolated, top-down program that delivers "one-and-done" webinars and resources. For example, Living Well topics and programming are embedded in all professional development programs for associates at all levels, partners, management teams, and business services. All include some aspect of Living Well programming.

Living Well also is holistic, focusing on more than physical or mental health. Programming is tailored to three pillars—Mind (mental health), Body (physical health), and Self (work-life integration)—which are targeted to the firm's particular needs but also broad enough to encompass a variety of topics and approaches.

For example, an important way that the firm supports the Mind pillar is onsite wellness counselors in the New York and DC offices (which have provided virtual services during the pandemic). Fried Frank started this service in 2019. The service is completely confidential, but counselors do provide the firm with general trend information to inform program and resource development. Like OMM, Fried Frank's EAP is CCA, with which the firm closely collaborates.

A popular program aligned with the Living Well Body pillar is Fried Frank's "Fit Club," which is an eight-week, firm-wide physical fitness competition in which teams compete on a wide variety of fitness challenges. Fried Frank shifted this competition to a virtual setting via a mobile app due to the pandemic.

Latham & Watkins

Ranked #11

At Latham & Watkins, I talked to the Director of Global Health & Well-Being Mark Goldberg, who is part of a four-person full-time team that manages the LiveWell Latham program, which focuses on all lawyers and staff.

Program Structure

Latham's program is well-established with formal structures. It focuses on four main pillars:

- Mental and emotional health
- Musculoskeletal and physical health
- Exercise and physical activity
- Medical care (preventive, acute, and chronic)
- There also is a burgeoning fifth pillar of financial well-being.

The firm's well-being team engages in a formal strategic planning process, but keeps plans fluid to be responsive to changing needs. In the past few years, a well-being working group was established with representation across roles, levels, and offices. The working group provides feedback and acts as a sounding board, but the dedicated well-being team is responsible for the day-to-day management of the program.

Success Factors

As some of the top reasons for the success of LiveWell Latham, Mark identified the following.

Long-Standing Program With A Holistic Focus

The firm's focus on well-being long pre-dates its signature on the ABA Pledge. The firm first launched LiveWell Latham in the U.S. in 2010 and expanded it in 2012 to its Europe, Asia, and Middle East offices. Like many wellness programs, the firm originally started with a primary focus on physical health. The program has evolved over time to encompass a primary focus on mental health, resilience, and overall self-care. Because they've been building and experimenting for so long, the team has been able to better understand what works well for Latham.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

9

Tailored, Integrated Approach

Latham is laser-focused on what works well for attorneys and staff in the large law firm context. It avoids off-the-shelf, generic programs and those that take a “one-and-done” approach. Virtually everything they do on the well-being front is customized for lawyers and those working in the law firm environment.

A model of Latham’s approach is its partnership with Dr. Amit Sood—a physician and long-time professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic who developed the popular Stress Management And Resiliency Training program (SMART) for thousands of people who have passed through Mayo. The firm’s well-being team worked extensively with Dr. Sood to customize his resiliency training to Latham’s workforce and brought Dr. Sood to each of its U.S. offices at various points over the past few years to deliver his training.

More recently, Latham decided to digitize the entire program to make it more scalable. The firm again worked extensively with Dr. Sood to record, edit, and customize his program to ensure that the end result would be a good fit for the firm. Latham has also worked with Dr. Sood on a variety of other matters, from individual consults to customized trainings to presentations for specific groups.

This is the model that Latham prefers: Finding innovative experts at the top of their field, and collaborating closely with them to “go deep” and create programming specifically for Latham that takes a longer-term, integrated perspective.

Accessible Mental Health & Work-Life Support

A few years ago, Latham realized that it had outgrown its EAP and was seeking a more robust alternative. The firm has formed a strategic partnership with Johns Hopkins Medicine to open on-site health clinics for its Los Angeles (and later New York) offices, which provide a full-time nurse practitioner and part-time mental health counselors, as well as part-time physical therapists.

The firm also worked closely with an organization named BHS, which provided the clinic’s mental health counselors, ensuring that they understood the unique experiences and stressors of Latham lawyers and staff, and were integrated with the firm’s other resources.

The firm also collaborated with BHS to develop Latham’s customized “CareConnect” service, which provides 24/7 telephone access to mental health counseling, coaching,

and work-life services across the globe.

The firm continues to work with both BHS and Johns Hopkins to expand its resources for mental health and overall medical support in a very customized fashion.

Being Innovative, Nimble, & Scalable

The firm has an established agenda of annual programs such as flu shots and a regular presence at firm training academies. It is now organizing its 11th annual firm-wide “Spring Challenge.” This is a physical activity competition in which Latham attorneys and staff log activity on firm-provided Fitbits to help their office in the quest for a coveted “Bronze Sneaker” trophy, which has made its way each year to winning offices from San Diego to Manchester to Munich to Singapore. This year, participants also will be able to earn “steps” for engaging in mental health activities.

At the same time, the firm tries to be attentive and responsive to changing circumstances and needs. For example, when the COVID pandemic hit, Latham was ready to move quickly to support well-being because firm leadership had prioritized it for years and it had long-standing relationships with doctors and other well-being experts. This readiness allowed the team to quickly build meaningful programs and resources tailored to the moment.

For example, the well-being team launched a regular podcast hosted by Mark and a psychologist from a premiere medical center with whom the firm has had a long-standing relationship, to address a host of well-being-related issues that were emerging—such as managing uncertainty, working from home, and navigating the “new normal.”

It also worked with a top-rated boutique fitness center to create customized exercise classes via Zoom — known as “Latham HomeBody” — in which firm personnel across the world could work out together and get to know each other in sessions that focus as much on engagement and connection as on exercise.

As the pandemic has dragged on, the well-being team recognized the importance of training supervisors on how to effectively have “well-being check-in” conversations with their teams, and built a customized training program that it is in the process of scaling up globally. The team seeks both to be responsive and to continually improve. Its philosophy is to figure out what works for Latham, how to make it work better, and scale it up to replicate successes across all offices.

Morgan Lewis Ranked #17

At Morgan Lewis, I interviewed Director of Employee Well-Being Krista Larson about the firm's ML Well program for lawyers and staff.

Program Structure

In addition to Krista's role as Director of Employee Well-Being, Morgan Lewis has created the unique role of Chief Engagement Officer (led by Amanda Smith)—which appears to be the first of its kind among law firms. ML Well resides within the Employee Engagement department, which has an overarching goal of enabling positive connections between the firm and its members. Well-being is a key component of that goal.

The formal well-being team includes a full-time Well-Being Assistant and is advised by a committee of Senior Associates from the firm's global offices. The ML Well team works closely with other departments, such as Diversity & Inclusion, Professional Development, Associate Talent, and Human Resources to weave well-being into the fabric of the firm's culture.

ML Well has a dedicated intranet portal and focuses on five main dimensions:

- Intellectual well-being
- Physical well-being
- Emotional well-being
- Occupational well-being
- Community well-being

The program emphasizes that well-being exists on a continuum and is not defined only by the absence of illness.

Success Factors

Krista identified the following as some of the top reasons for the success of ML Well.

Commitment from Top Leadership

The firm's Chair, Jami McKeon, is a leader and innovator in lawyer well-being program development and regularly speaks about the importance of engagement in a successful

law firm culture. Additionally, the firm's managing partner, Steve Wall, has demonstrated courageous leadership by speaking publicly about his own journey with substance misuse. Jami and Steve are just a couple of examples of ways in which firm leaders are personally committed to providing real support to all within the Morgan Lewis community so that each member can construct a life in which they thrive, not just survive.

Inclusive Approach

ML Well supports both lawyers and professional staff, which the firm believes has been a key success factor. While research in the profession has focused primarily on lawyers, the firm's view is that its ML Well efforts should positively impact everyone in the firm's community. The inclusive perspective also recognizes that there's no one-size-fits-all approach to protecting and promoting well-being. ML Well encourages each person to adopt skills and strategies that work best for them.

Dedicated Role & Evidence-Based Strategies

The firm's decision to create a dedicated role of Director of Employee Well-Being both communicates its commitment to well-being and has helped the program progress more quickly. The selection of Krista for the role also ensured that programming would be evidence-based—which the firm also believes is a success factor. Krista earned a Master's in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania where she studied the science of well-being with the founder of the field, Dr. Martin Seligman. She now works to integrate the field's science-based strategies into ML Well programs.

High-Quality Well-Being Programming

ML Well programming—with its multi-dimensional framework—also was highlighted as a success factor. The firm focuses both on high-quality content and on effective delivery. The ML Well team partners with the firm's Marketing and Creative teams to create formal marketing campaigns that are communicated through, for example, the ML Well portal (which includes a mobile app version), direct email, internal newsletters or bulletins, social media, and other office and practice group communication channels. Recent programs have included:

- **Mental Health:** Mental health management education for partners

- **Burnout Campaign:** A burnout educational campaign that taught techniques for identifying, addressing, and preventing physical and mental exhaustion.
- **Gratitude Exchange:** The firmwide gratitude letter exchange (which has used both hard copy and electronic formats) encourages firm members to write letters of thanks to colleagues and generated thousands of letters in 2020.
- **Moving Together:** About 1,500 personnel participated in a firmwide movement challenge that was launched in 2020. Participants in the program reported increased mental and physical health, in addition to feeling more connected to colleagues around the world.
- **Action Impact Series:** Krista designs and delivers a data-driven curriculum offering on-demand education and strategies on topics such as mindfulness, goal setting, the mind-body connection, stress management, character strengths, active constructive responding, mental health, and optimism.

CONCLUSION

One key insight from the interviews is that a variety of approaches can be effective. For example, while formal structures (e.g., logo, strategic plan, communication plan, mission statement, formal budget) clearly were success factors for some firms, other highly-rated programs were less formal.

But at least two common themes stood out among these programs: top leadership support and an integrative approach. The firm representatives whom I interviewed almost uniformly named specific people in top leadership who not only supported the programs in theory but also actively participated in visible ways and sometimes communicated about their own personal experiences.

Additionally, almost all described a concerted effort to approach well-being as a way of doing business—as opposed to, for example, a siloed initiative that offered one-and-done webinars unconnected to a larger framework. For example, Hannah Fabrikant at McDermott framed it as “**asking the wellness question**”—i.e., always asking how some aspect of well-being can be integrated into whatever they’re doing. Most other firms echoed this approach in various ways.

The growth of the well-being movement in recent years should make us all optimistic that positive change is possible and that the future of the legal profession is bright. The law firms profiled above are helping to trailblaze a new path—along with many other firms that also are highly engaged in solving the puzzle of high achievement and full well-being in the profession.

As Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu reminds us: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” The journey of well-being in the legal profession will surely be long, but it’s exciting to see so many steps in the right direction.

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

SUMMARY OF KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

	OMM	OHS	MWE	RG	FF	LW	ML
ABA Well-Being Pledge Signatory	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Top Leadership Support/Participation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Logo/Branding	x	x		x	x	x	x
Formal Well-Being Committee				x	x	x	x
Formal/Informal Working Group	x	x	x				
Formal Strategic Plan		x		x	x	x	x
Mission Statement		x	x	x	x	x	x
Billable Credit for Well-Being-Related Activities		x	x				
Onsite Mental Health Counseling					x	x	
Regular Well-Being Related Surveys	x		x				x
Focus on a Fixed Set of Well-Being Dimensions		x		x	x	x	x
Programming Includes Lawyers and Staff	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Career Coaching	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Formal Process to Flag and Curb Excessive Hours		*					

OMM=O'Melveny; OHS=Orrick; MWE=McDermott; RG=Ropes & Gray; FF=Fried Frank; LW=Latham & Watkins; ML=Morgan Lewis

* Orrick provides Wellness Dollars for over 250 billable hours in a month.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL IN LAW FIRM WELL-BEING PROGRAMS

11

Author

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Select Publications For Your Workplace Well-Being Library

- **Handbook.** *Workplace Well-Being Handbook for Law Firms*, 2021. Available on the [Resources page](#) of the Well-Being Week in Law website (proceeds donated to Well-Being Week in Law).
- **Book.** *Positive Professionals: Creating High-Performing, Profitable Firms Through the Science of Engagement*. American Bar Association, 2017.
- **Article.** *3 Ways to Motivate Your Team Through an Extended Crisis* (co-author), Harvard Business Review, 2020.
- **Article.** *Enabling Lawyer Well-Being Through Diversity and Inclusion Practices*, ABA's Law Practice Magazine, 2020 (longer version available on the Well-Being Week website [here](#)).
- **Report.** *Law Firm Well-Being Program Benchmarking Report, 2021*.
- **Policy.** *Alcohol Use Policy Template for Legal Employers, 2021*.
- **Book Chapter.** *Transform Lawyer Well-Being into a Team Sport* in *The Best Lawyer You Can Be*, an anthology of chapters related to lawyer well-being. American Bar Association, 2018.
- **Book Chapter.** *Positive Institutions: Organizations, Laws, & Policies* (co-author) in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology*, 2020.
- **National Report.** Editor-in-Chief & co-author of *The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change*, the 2017 report of the National Task Force on Lawyer Well-Being.
- **Toolkit.** *Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers*, sponsored by the American Bar Association, 2018.
- **Article.** *Judge's Well-Being and the Importance of Meaningful Work* (co-author), Court Review, 2018.
- **Article.** *Five Ways to Foster Meaningful Work and Boost Lawyer Well-Being*, Texas Bar Journal, 2018.
- **Research Paper.** *Engaging & Retaining Women Lawyers: Examining the Role of High-Quality Leader-Member Exchange & Gender Differences in Need-Satisfaction*, 2017, Master's Thesis, Claremont Graduate University.