

TELUS Talks Health



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A cultural antidote for leading in disruptive times. Why a culture of health is good for business.



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Success in business today is not only measured in financial performance and stock price. It is also contingent on leadership's commitment to creating not just a healthy culture, but a culture of health. Harvard University describes this as a culture that delivers lasting competitive advantage and is built upon a broad framework that encompasses customer health, employee health, community health and environmental health.

As an engineer who has spent the better part of his career in digital health and technology, I've always been passionate about the role technology can play in healthcare. I am often reminded, however, that the largest barriers to transformation are seldom of a technical or even financial nature, but are due to how difficult it can be to change our behaviors. This is why I believe that creating a culture of health in our organizations is so important.

Our ability to innovate, provide excellent customer service and maintain our leadership edge is wholly contingent on nurturing healthy, productive and motivated teams. In today's disruptive environment, where our employees are also brand ambassadors and social networks, a culture of health will play a key role in defining and preserving any company's license to do business.

Fostering a culture of health in a 'VUCA' world.

The environment in which we must affect change, be it as employers, policy makers or healthcare providers, is complex. Today, we are living in a VUCA world. Volatile. Uncertain. Complex. Ambiguous. The acronym was introduced by the American military in the early 90s and has since been taken up by economists and executives alike to frame the challenging and stressful environment in which we must now strategize, plan and successfully execute.

Digital transformation is one important driver behind our VUCA reality. Big data, machine learning, artificial intelligence and advances in wireless networks and processing speeds are increasing the amount of data and the velocity with which information is placed at our disposal and it is showing no signs of slowing down. Consider, for example, the fact that the number of connected devices will triple by 2020. The power of the iPhone 10 is more than 200-times faster than the iPhone released only ten years ago. More data was created in the last two years than in the entire previous history of the human race.

This tsunami of data and digital innovation is also upending traditional business models and placing new pressures on businesses and employees to keep up. Employers are often the first to witness the effects of this VUCA reality on their teams.

Of note:

- A 2018 Morneau Shepell survey showed that 54 per cent of those employees who missed days from work for identified mental health reasons claimed that the company could have taken action to reduce their absenteeism.
- The 2016 Sanofi Canada Healthcare Survey found that 59 per cent of employees with a health benefits plan are living with at least one chronic condition, but when employers were asked about the prevalence of chronic conditions in their workplace, they estimated the employees affected at just 32 per cent. This gap in awareness means that many employers are greatly underestimating the impact of chronic disease on their workplaces.
- The annual cost of lost productivity due to chronic disease is around \$135 billion.¹

Clearly, work and health are intimately related. On that note, I recently had the privilege to attend an event hosted by Cochrane Canada - part of an independent global network of over 38,000 healthcare practitioners, researchers, patient advocates and others - based at McMaster University and focused on evidence-based research for making better every day health decisions. Participants had the opportunity to learn more about the culture of health and its potential to improve health outcomes.

The good news? Employers are well positioned to be powerful catalysts for driving change. Close to 24 million Canadians rely heavily on the healthcare benefits and services they have access to through their employer. Notably, a recent Sun Life study revealed that 84 per cent of Canadians believe employers have a responsibility to support the physical health of their employees, while 86 per cent feel the same about psychological health.

Unpacking the culture of health at TELUS.

Well before the Harvard vernacular of culture of health made it into business lectures, TELUS was already well on its way to a culture of health. These foundations were further crystallized with the creation of TELUS Health ten years ago and the ensuing 2.5 billion dollar investment in digital healthcare transformation.

“ Companies that create and support a culture of well-being will serve customers better, have the best talent, enjoy the best economic returns and win over the long run. TELUS' focus on healthcare means we need to be a role model for our customers. We must lead the way in redefining employer engagement. ”

Sandy McIntosh, Executive Vice President, People & Culture and Chief HR Officer, TELUS

1. Customer health: equipping those we serve to improve health outcomes

Our customers comprise Canada's healthcare ecosystem. From physicians, pharmacists and allied healthcare professionals, to health insurers, provincial health authorities and other bodies enabling the provision of care, our digital health solutions touch citizens and patients across the country.

When we apply our culture of health mindset to our customers, it means enabling them to better serve their customers. For example, physicians who use health outcomes dashboards can leverage data in their electronic medical record (EMR) systems to focus on improving the overall health of their entire cohort of 1,000 – 2,000 patients in addition to the daily interactions with 20-to-30.

Similarly, with solutions like home health monitoring, our government clients can support citizens to manage chronic disease with confidence from the comfort of their home, with remote clinical supervision. Recent pilots in British Columbia saw 76 per cent decrease in health system utilization, an 81 per cent reduction in acute inpatient days, and a 60 per cent reduction in emergency visits.

Other patient engagement solutions, like physician portals, personal health records, and the ability to renew prescriptions online are giving individuals access to their health information and the ability to proactively undertake basic interactions with the health system.

2. Employee health: a strategic and customized approach to tailored well-being for all team members

Delivering the best customer experience globally requires an exceptional team member experience. Team members who are able to bring their best self to work are healthy, engaged and productive every day.

Historically, TELUS has a solid track record. We were one of the first organizations to promote flexible Work Styles, enabling employees to better achieve work/life integration, which contributes to their well-being. Collaborative work-tools that incorporate video have reduced travel requirements and also offer a way to stay connected with one another across distributed work teams, many of whom work from home or mobile locations.

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Today TELUS is embarking on a strategic approach to well-being, building on and moving beyond separate wellness programs for team members to something more comprehensive, tailored and measureable that impacts our organizational culture.

We're advancing a culture of holistic well-being that is integrated across the business and encompasses several dimensions: physical, psychological, financial, social and environmental.



We know this will be a key tool in our future recruitment efforts as millennials and the next generation enter into the workforce with a different set of expectations and priorities: an employer who gives permissions and creates an environment conducive to their wellbeing is top of the list.

3. Community health: making a difference in the lives around us

At TELUS, our social purpose extends to community health in many important ways, including mobile health clinics to provide care to marginalized people across Canada.

Up to 300,000 Canadians can face homelessness each year and experience the barriers associated with accessing traditional medical care as a result. Mobile Health Clinics powered by TELUS Health are the result of an innovative partnership approach

between TELUS, community partners, and health authorities working together to ensure people who are marginalized have access to healthcare that meets their unique needs.

TELUS and Doctors of the World launched the first Mobile Health Clinic in Montreal in 2014 and since then close to 7,500 patients have received general health examinations, screening tests and vaccinations. This year, we will expand our mobile clinics to Victoria and Vancouver, to deliver primary healthcare and prevention through over 5,000 patient visits each year. Over time we will expand this program across Canada and establish a broad set of data to understand trends in communities and support governments in a shared social mission.

Community health extends beyond healthcare. It's also about giving back and supporting the causes that can make a difference where we live, particularly for children and youth. In support of our philosophy to give where we live, TELUS, our team members and our retirees have contributed more than \$525 million to charitable and not-for-profit organizations and volunteered the equivalent of more than a million days of service to local communities since 2000. TELUS' twelve Canadian community boards and five International boards have led the company's support of grassroots charities and have contributed more than \$60 million in support of more than 5,500 local charitable projects, enriching the lives of more than two million children and youth annually.

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4. Environment health: reducing our carbon footprint

TELUS is considered a global leader in sustainability, and is continually seeking new and innovative ways to minimize our impact on the planet. From building LEED-certified workspaces and data centres, to opting for low carbon alternatives for our fleet vehicles, to turning to renewable energy to power our operations and implementing Work Styles for our team members, we are proud to demonstrate our shared obligation to reduce our carbon footprint and use materials and resources responsibly.

Our Work Styles program alone avoids more than 8,000 tonnes CO2 annually and has saved 32.8 million km and 1.9 million hours in commuting for team members. Overall, our concerted efforts have resulted in a reduction in energy consumption by seven per cent and our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 19 per cent, since 2010. Our goal is to achieve a 10 per cent energy consumption reduction and a 25 per cent GHG emission reduction by 2020.



Creating a culture of health as a collective.

Creating a culture of health within our own organizations is a great place to start. Employers are an extremely important piece of the puzzle and often the first line of defense when it comes to wellness and prevention. But more needs to be done for Canadian healthcare to transform.

There is profound dissonance between how we compare on the international scene and how we resist change. If no advancements are made and the status quo is maintained, our fragmented and unsustainable legacy model for healthcare delivery in Canada will collapse. When modern advancements are adopted and new collaborative models of working across the sector are established, transformational and disruptive change will follow. It need not be destructive.

To this end, more sharing of successes, failures and best practices between employers, payors, and healthcare providers and policy makers is needed to support a national culture of health. Furthermore, it requires an open mind to fostering innovation.

At TELUS, we made the decision not to walk the innovation road alone. We are building an ecosystem with partners; not exclusively based on our proprietary technology. The TELUS Health Exchange is a national, standards-based, open and secure electronic healthcare communication platform. It connects both TELUS and third-party systems to deliver a series of solutions to health providers, public and private insurers and patients.

Our initial partnerships are focusing on the basics and delivering capabilities that citizens are seeking, such as:

- Allowing patients to get improved access to their health information via patient portals
- Faster and better experiences with their healthcare providers leveraging on-line scheduling or virtual care
- Or allowing patients to better share their health information with their providers via electronic forms or by making it easier to upload data collected in medical devices or wearables
- Allowing plan members or employees to settle their extended claims the same way as they do their drug claims with physios, chiros and vision care specialists

This ecosystem for better health collaboration and innovation may be technology based, but it will be brought to life by care providers, policy makers and innovation partners, not to mention citizens themselves. Technology can support change, but ultimately, people and behaviors drive it.

It requires bold thinking to create a culture of health in our organizations, our regions, and nation-wide. Collectively we can turn the tide to create a new standards of care, preventive health and wellness for Canadians.

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References

¹ Public Health Agency of Canada

