

Financial Wellness and Well-being

**Introducing the Concept of Well-being in Connection
to Life Events**

By Robert L. Heston, Jr.



What Causes Employee Well-being? And, What Disrupts Employee Well-being – Do we know all the Disruptive Causes?

While the hot topic in HR today is financial wellness, many HR Managers are focusing on an overall idea - their employees' well-being. Many believe that the idea of well-being brings focus to broader issues that bring solutions for employees that might have a greater impact on their lives.

There are many components to an employee's well-being.

HR Wellness Programs



Many HR Wellness Programs Focus on:

- Fitness and Nutrition
- Social connections and support systems
- Mind-body health
- Career planning and continued learning growth


However, one of the most costly areas is in the Emotional Wellness – Stress Management Area

Arguably the area that has until recently received the least attention from HR is an employee's emotional wellness – or what we could call an employee's emotional well-being.

What specific factors impact an employee's emotional wellbeing? With the recent advent of wellness programs, HR has focused increasingly on external stress issues that employees bring to the workplace. Notably, research shows that the causes of stress brought into the workplace might create greater problems than the stress actually experienced in the workplace, and if there are excesses of both kinds of stress, the impact on employee well-being can be debilitating.

One stress study concluded that health conditions such as obesity, alcoholism, drug-use and related issues may bring stress into the workplace.¹ Included among these issues are employee-related practices, behaviors, conditions and situations that often originate outside the workplace. The employee brings in personal external stresses, and stress in the work environment can sometimes intensify the pressure. Ultimately, the employee's well-being is seriously impacted.

Clearly there are health issues that affect an employee's well-being. In turn, those issues can have an impact on that employee's productivity. These health issues may be caused by behaviors related to the stresses in their everyday lives. Depression, anger and even workplace violence can be traced to factors unrelated to the workplace.



To increase employee emotional wellbeing, it makes sense for HR to better understand the causes of some of these debilitating stresses. Over the past two decades, many studies have looked at the effects of stressful working conditions on employees, oftentimes reaching the same general conclusions as stated in a Healthy Workplace IAPA study:

“...when looking at employee health and well-being, it must be recognized that a worker’s general health is substantially affected by two major factors: (1) what workers bring with them to the workplace, in terms of heredity, personal resources, health practices, beliefs, attitudes and values; and (2) what the workplace does to the employees once they are there.”²

There are many producers of stress – some area obvious and some are not. It’s imperative to ask the questions that bring concealed issues into light:

- Do we know all the factors that cause stress for our employees?
- Are we searching in the right places for the actual causes of employee stress?
- Does our wellness program offer solutions for all the major causes of employee stress? Are there stress areas that are not addressed in our wellness programs?
- Can programs that reduce workplace stress also increase work productivity and reduce skyrocketing healthcare and prescription drug costs?

When viewed in the light of stress, financial wellness and financial issues are a very large part of this emotional wellbeing focus. “As the workforce becomes younger and its financial needs are changing, more organizations are taking a broader approach to helping employees face short-term money issues that range from crushing student debt to saving for a house or assisting aging parents.” [Financial Wellness Success Requires Proactive HR; Workers’ needs vary by generation, education and other factors, by Mark Feffer, Aug 30, 2016]

Indeed, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers' 2016 Employee Financial Wellness Survey:

- 45% of employees identify financial matters as the most stressful issue they face.
- 40% of employees have difficulty meeting their household expenses each month.
- 24% have withdrawn money from their retirement plans to pay for unrelated expenses.

The anxiety that workers feel won't surprise anyone in HR. According to a 2010 study by the Federal Reserve, every year financial stress costs businesses \$5,000 in lost productivity per employee.

To relieve at least some of the tension, many employers are implementing programs centered on "financial wellness," an approach that encourages workers to make better choices in both their general financial planning and specific financial decisions. Many studies have examined certain types of employee stress — stress actually caused by the workplace. But there are many causes of stress that are not as obvious because there hasn't been a definitive scientific study on the exact amount of stress put upon employees by their personal legal and financial problems. Additionally, some stresses are concealed from HR and other employees because of their confidential and often embarrassing nature, and legal and financial problems fall squarely into this category.

But, when one frames the issue of financial wellness in terms of the causes of financial stress, new ideas emerge:

“Of course, stress is a factor in every one's life, particularly during major events such as marriage, divorce, or buying a home.”

Rebecca Maxon, Author ³

Legal problems, while not readily identifiable in most financial wellness programs, actually underlie many employee's financial woes. These stresses must be analyzed before a company adds costly programs and initiatives that may not get to the root cause of problems. If we examine what problems might be causing stress related to an employee's personal legal and financial problems, we find that this issue was actually highlighted over three decades ago in a famous study. An instrument for measuring the severity of the psychosocial stress resulting from recent life experiences was originally developed in the 1960s by Holmes and Rahe. ⁴

One can easily see, by nothing more than a cursory examination of the 1967 study by Holmes and Rahe, that legal and financial problems were a major part of the stress suffered from the external factors employees brought into the workplace. To measure stress according to the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, the number of life change units that apply to events in the past year of an individual's life are added, and the final score gives a rough estimate of how stress affects health.

Life event	Life change units
Death of a spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Imprisonment	63
Death of a close family member	63
Personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Dismissal from work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Change in health of family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sexual difficulties	39
Gain a new family member	39
Business readjustment	39
Change in financial state	38
Death of a close friend	37
Change to different line of work	36
Change in frequency of arguments	35
Major mortgage issues	32
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Change in responsibilities at work	29
Child leaving home	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Spouse starts or stops work	26

Life event	Life change units
Begin or end school	26
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Change in working hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in schools	20
Change in recreation	19
Change in church activities	19
Change in social activities	18
Minor mortgage or loan	17
Change in sleeping habits	16
Change in number of family reunions	15
Change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Christmas	12
Minor violation of law	11

This 1967 study was updated with similar recognition of the weighted matters in a 2000 study.⁵ Very similar results were found with many legal and financial issues continuing to dominate as major creators of stress among employees. As early as the 1960s, there was some recognition that the personal problems of employees — those caused outside the workplace — affected employees in a large-scale manner and caused significant stress. Included among the top-rated stressors in employees' lives were:

- Divorce
- Marriage issues
- Separation
- Personal injury
- Changes in financial state
- Major mortgage issues
- Foreclosure
- Child issues
- Disputes with in-laws and relatives

Figure 3 below shows the many ways employee legal problems cause financial issues both at home and in the workplace and seriously disrupt employee wellbeing.



Stress Can be Debilitating When Legal Problems Strike - and Legal Problems Can Drag on for Years

Bottom Line: Stress Costs Can Be Substantial

The Financial and Legal Well-being Concern – A Hidden but Devastating Issue

It is clear that employee well-being can be devastated by these life events that have legal consequences. And legal problems are occurring in every facet of life today. Legal issues can affect American employees in both widespread frequency and in severity of the underlying legal problem. There is an American Bar Association study that highlights how legal and financial problems are being suffered by more than 70% of Americans.⁶

Many legal problems are private, frustrating, emotionally upsetting and oftentimes embarrassing. Picture the employee that misses work after being arrested, the manager whose son was arrested for the fourth time for drug possession, or the employee whose spouse was jailed for a felony gun possession. Employees are involved in all types of legal issues, many of which are not their fault. Regardless, almost all legal problems bring with them an enormous amount of embarrassment and humiliation. And these problems are not unique to the recession, although they have certainly been compounded by it.

Many legal problems also threaten an employee's job security. Company drivers cannot suffer through repeated driving violations in a year if their policy manual provides for termination after two violations. Employees on work probation cannot miss a day of work to go to court for any legal matter, or former spouses fighting over the kids' carpool can create repetitive employee tardiness issues. The list of effects of legal problems is endless, and most of these legal problems are embarrassing and job-threatening.

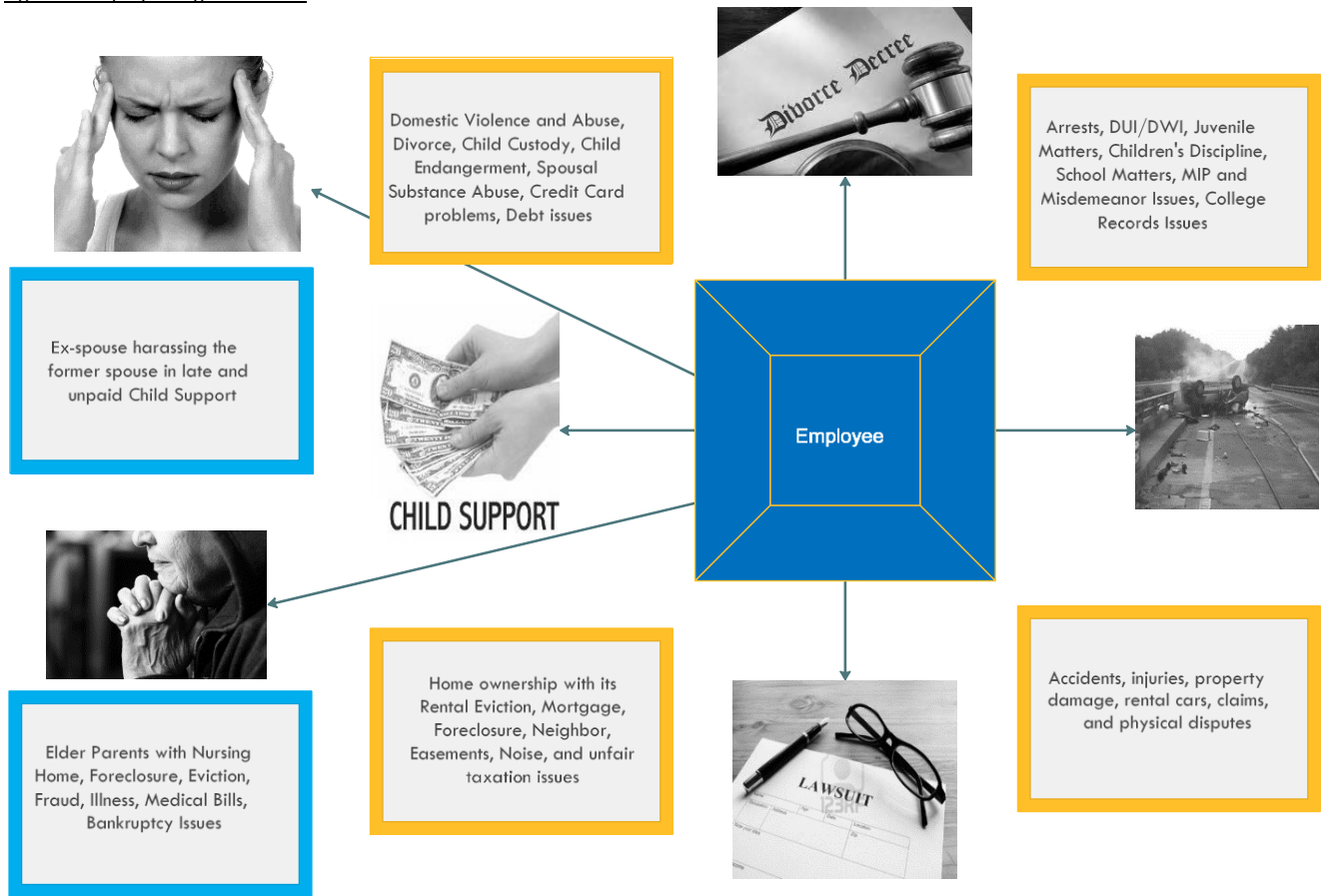
Right now, at any company in America, there is a substantial portion of each company's employee demographic who are suffering through one or more components of this legal and financial illness. We begin with the myriad of issues employees face as they begin each new work day- personal problems brought unavoidably and unintentionally into the workplace –but all-encompassing because of their magnitude.

Today, employees face so many challenges from simply engaging in life:

- Marriages fall apart
- Parents argue over the care of children
- Spouses with drug/alcohol abuse issues
- Difficulties with friends and acquaintances

Many of these will manifest themselves in the form of legal problems. See Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Employee Legal Problems

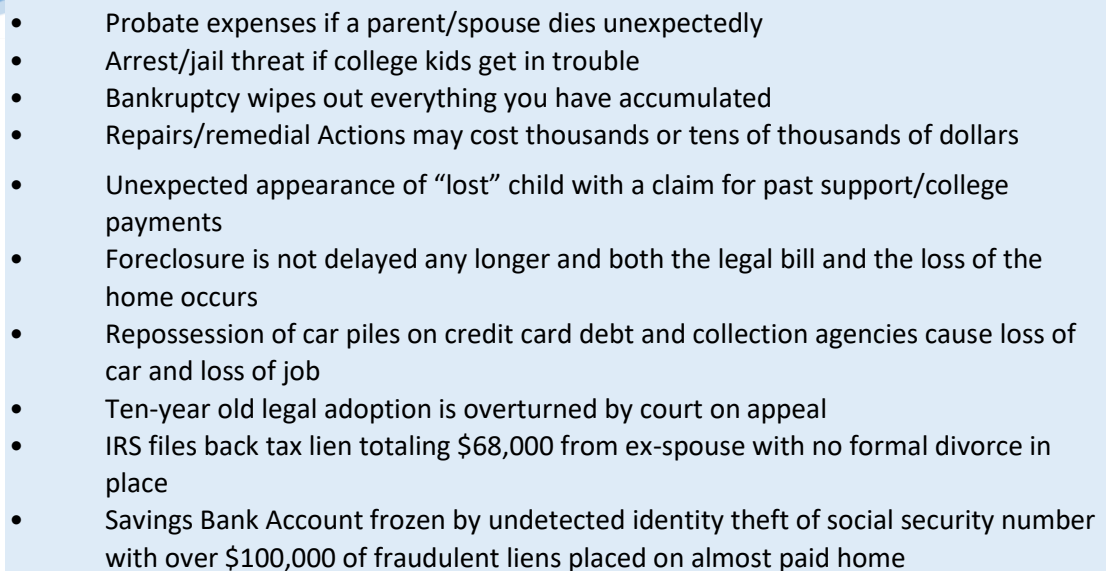


We all know employees who have suffered or are currently suffering through:

- Divorces
- Parental illnesses
- Nursing home issues
- Injuries and medical problems
- Spousal abuse
- Arrests
- Traffic license suspensions
- Child custody battles
- Credit card debt
- Bankruptcy
- Foreclosure
- Evictions
- Identity theft


Figure 5 provides another list of more specific problems that threaten employees and their families on a daily basis.

Figure 5

- 
- Probate expenses if a parent/spouse dies unexpectedly
 - Arrest/jail threat if college kids get in trouble
 - Bankruptcy wipes out everything you have accumulated
 - Repairs/remedial Actions may cost thousands or tens of thousands of dollars
 - Unexpected appearance of “lost” child with a claim for past support/college payments
 - Foreclosure is not delayed any longer and both the legal bill and the loss of the home occurs
 - Repossession of car piles on credit card debt and collection agencies cause loss of car and loss of job
 - Ten-year old legal adoption is overturned by court on appeal
 - IRS files back tax lien totaling \$68,000 from ex-spouse with no formal divorce in place
 - Savings Bank Account frozen by undetected identity theft of social security number with over \$100,000 of fraudulent liens placed on almost paid home

Many employee legal problems are extraordinarily real and devastating:

- Domestic abuse arrest
- CPS allegations about a good mother whose child is taken away
- Elder domestic abuse arrest
- A wealthy, successful employee faces home foreclosure
- Employee with a son abusing drugs who stole everything from their bank accounts
- Employee with a parent in an abusive nursing home
- Employee [VP] who gets a note at work from the spouse of another employee she is having an affair with [disclosure imminent]
- School teacher underage sex allegations
- Single father’s alleged abuse of son or daughter [made up by the mother’s family – the mom is in prison]
- Employee’s 10-year old child is accused of sexual abuse



With so many possible and difficult issues comes even more stress in the employee or individual's life. The search for solutions is endless, and the need for emergency funds to fight these unexpected problems is tremendous.

A fact that pervades this discussion becomes very clear from understanding the nature of these legal problems – ***these problems are not likely to be publicized. Employees who suffer through them are likely to be embarrassed, upset and certainly engaged in every effort to keep them as private as possible.*** It is completely unlikely that HR will ever know their employees are suffering through these incredibly embarrassing legal problems. And this makes understanding the scope of the problem very difficult and even impossible in many situations.

Take for example the devastation wrought by the highest utilized category of legal problems - divorce and divorce related legal issues. These family law matters include child custody/visitation battles, vicious disputes with ex-spouses, repeated court appearances by the deliberate actions of one party, missed work time for court, children being endangered by the drug abuse of an ex-spouse, one's savings being wiped out just to keep custody of the kids and losing one's job for missed court time.

Family law problems can be some of the most debilitating problems for employees. So many single mothers are employed in today's corporations and so many are juggling their daycare and school issues with their work responsibilities.

One of the most obvious employee problems that affects work is when an employee files for divorce or is served with divorce papers. Stress levels skyrocket, particularly if the divorce was unexpected, because the employee must respond immediately to the divorce petition. Chances are, the employee feels lost. Their life has been turned upside down, they will have to sort out issues with their children, and there is the prospect of losing their friends, their lifestyle and the financial and material holdings acquired during the marriage.

The employee's concentration shifts away from work to divorce, and feelings of betrayal, frustration, anger and even rage emerge against the spouse who is "doing this." Managers or supervisors who have witnessed an employee going through a lengthy and nasty divorce can attest to the effects on the workplace, which can be turned upside down.

Several recent studies have directly linked marital and relationship breakdown to the increased likelihood of developing serious physical and emotional disease.

- A multi-year study found that men who divorced or separated were 3.3 times more likely to experience depression than men who remained with their spouses. Among women, the odds of depression after a break up were about 2.4 times higher. For many in the study, depression remained a problem for as long as four years post-divorce.⁷
- According to University College in London, stress associated with marital struggle was found to increase the likelihood of a heart attack or other heart trouble in both male and female subjects by as much as 34% over the 12-year life of the study.
- The American Diabetes Association has suggested that stress caused by poor relationships aggravates diabetes for those afflicted with the condition.

- Researchers at Ohio State University found that when couples re-lived past arguments, self-inflicted blister wounds healed at only 60% the rate of wounds inflicted on couples who exhibited lower-hostility behavior.

But that's not all. Studies compiled by Life Innovations on behalf of the Marriage Commission had these key findings:

- Immune system function is lower in couples surviving poor relationships compared to couples enjoying satisfying relationships. (Waite & Gallagher, 2000)
- The likelihood of domestic violence grows as relationships fail. (Gallagher, 2002)
- Domestic violence costs corporate America up to 7.9 million paid workdays of lost productivity annually. (Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, 2006)
- Unhappily married couples are almost four times more likely to have a partner abusing alcohol than in happily married couples. (Whisman, Uebelacker, & Bruce, 2006).
- Those with alcohol problems skip or miss work 30% more than those without such problems. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004) ⁸

One of the most revealing examples of a legal issue that employees face more than any other legal problem is divorce litigation, especially when child custody challenges are involved. Spouses are abusive, inconsiderate and even mean when divorce is an issue. Much of this litigation can be contentious, vindictive and upsetting to parties who end up being at each other's throats. Often one spouse has the expectation that the other spouse is the clear "bad actor" and that everyone in the legal proceeding should "just be able to see this." The employee with this expectation wants everyone to grant them the relief or resolution they want. When one's attorney or judge may not agree with the employee, they begin to feel alienated and angry. The feeling that one's attorney is not able to get them quick help can create a serious rift with an employee and their attorney. These feelings can make employees feel like there is no true help anywhere.

As frustration builds, so does the stress. This becomes a long-term problem — a problem that ultimately produces a devastating increase in anger, frustration and stress that is costly to the employee and their work productivity. As an example, an employee may be in court for a prolonged divorce proceeding with a spouse ordered to vacate the house they once owned jointly, or an employee may be suffering through delay after delay in court modification hearings of child visitation orders, or one alcoholic spouse is unbelievably ordered to retain custody of the children. Employees in these situations cannot help their lack of concentration and distraction in their workplace, and this condition and their stress is directly related to the legal problem.

Of course, dealing with the emotional aspects of divorce is easier said than done. With the build-up of many years of anger, resentment, neglect, or jealousy, as well as demands for justice and vengeance, these emotions can often drag cases through years of litigation.

The net effect of a lack of extra funds can force the settling or abandoning of a lawsuit or legal dispute before the case is won since most employees do not have a rainy-day lawyer fund and may be forced to use their savings, take out a loan or even borrow money from a 401k retirement account. In addition, most employees are not sure how much money might be involved in resolving disputes.

The financial impact of these legal problems is devastating to employee well-being.

The Hidden Problem of Unseen Legal Issues

The way employees encounter the legal world is something that needs more consideration. As we have seen, traditional thinking about legal problems tends to be prescriptive—addressing legal needs only once the individual has an acute legal problem. This type of legal insurance that many companies have for employees works great when a legal problem is encountered because the legal insurance plans typically pay all or most of the legal costs incurred by an employee when a legal problem arises. Employees often have no deductibles or co-pays, and the legal insurance plans actually pay the providers directly in most cases, saving employees huge out-of-pocket expenses for lawyer fees.

But do employees have legal concerns that we may not know about? Could their well-being be shattered by an unexpected and unplanned for legal problem? The problem is that because these legal encounters may not occur in a predictable manner for most people, there isn't an overwhelming feeling that a legal problem is "on the horizon." That often leads employees to a lack of focus or planning for legal problems, leading many employees to believe that they will not need legal insurance coverage to protect their families. In fact, when polled many employees say that "I do not have a legal problem," or "I don't need that legal insurance program."

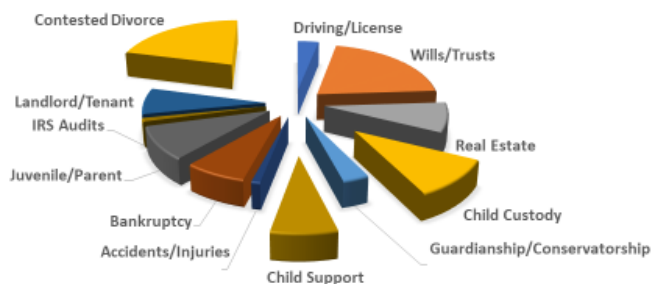
But, statistics tell a different story. Typical usage on a legal insurance plan shows that in excess of 80% usage is normal for employees and the use of the legal plan for at least one legal matter is very likely each year.

Covers Most Common Legal Needs for Members

Top 10 legal issues

- ✓ Divorce
- ✓ Child custody battles
- ✓ Child support order modifications
- ✓ Will and trust drafting
- ✓ Real Estate
- ✓ Vehicle-related issues
- ✓ Juvenile and school Issues
- ✓ Guardianship
- ✓ Bankruptcy
- ✓ Landlord and Tenant Disputes

LEGAL MATTER SAMPLE USAGE 2017



Additionally, in the last study the American Bar Association did, they found that "70% of employees will have a legal problem in the coming 12 months."⁹ The result is that legal problems are far more prevalent than many believe.

Do We Need to Think Differently?

What happens is that employees tend to think about whether they actually have a legal problem, when, perhaps, employees should think about whether events in their lives may have legal consequences. All employees face big events. With our ever-complicated society comes more and more complicated social issues, like financial issues, child issues, health issues, housing issues, support issues, family issues, education issues, neighbor issues and all kinds of similar problems that may have direct or indirect legal consequences. These events happening to employees are the everyday occurrences we all experience, like getting married, or having a baby, adopting a child or moving a parent into a nursing home. Many of these events often happen with much less fanfare, such as having a birthday, celebrating a child's graduation or moving.

But, without realizing it, most of these life actions can produce legal issues either in real time or in a delayed manner. Often, there is no apparent or immediate "legal" description of the issue or problem. Instead, these life event actions are what we might call "problems of everyday life."

Indeed, many employees will admit to facing these kinds of problems almost every year. What often keeps employees from realizing the magnitude of these issues and some of their legal consequences is that they may not realize the close association between these problems and the necessity of navigating the complex and difficult American legal system. What companies may not be spending enough time on is determining how widespread these problems of life are among employees and how impactful these issues can be on the lives of their employees.

Employees may really need to re-think everyday life problems and how it might help to have access to better advice earlier so that when, or if, these problems become more serious they can be better engaged and better prepared. More importantly, we might be able to gain understanding that enables our employees to take actions early that might actually prevent some of these everyday problems from escalating into acute issues. This type of support might be more proactive, accessible, and thus, engaging and effective.

How can we do this? By changing the way employees understand the effects of everyday problems on their lives in a long-term manner. And, by equipping employees with the right tools to support them in better understanding legal and legal related scenarios in their daily lives.

Life Events

One way to approach this new method of thinking is to think in terms of life events. Most of the events discussed above can be classified as life events. When an employee decides to purchase a home, or have a child, or put a parent in a nursing home, or declare bankruptcy, there are so many preemptive legal solutions that can make things easier for them in the long run. Not only is access to preemptive solutions beneficial for the overall legal health of employees, but it can also ease the burden of financial stress associated with drawn out legal issues. In turn, employees feel more prepared and confident that they are taken care of when major life events are actually happening in their lives.

What are Life Events?


Life events happen to each one of us at different times in our lives and impact the way our lives change. No single aspect of any life event is necessarily connected to a legal issue or problem, and often, as we unpack one of these events, we do not at all comprehend the legal consequences that could be related to these life issues.



Looking at these sample life events, we can see why it is unlikely that these issues will give rise to thinking about legal matters. Who in the world thinks of calling a lawyer when one is having a child? Only a very small part of the American population ever thinks of calling an attorney as they are going to get married. For parents of children heading off to college, lawyers and legal issues are the furthest things from the college planning mindset.

But our diagram above fills in some of the issues that are related to these ‘innocuous’ life events. We begin to see that there are legal problems and issues that are related to each and every life event. We begin to see that buying a house could result in having neighbor problems, noise problems, drainage problems, pricing problems, defects in construction issues, title issues, mortgage payment disputes, tax assessments, property assessments, joint repair bills and maintenance, foreclosure, homeowner rules and fees, boundary rights, flooding problems, insurance claims from roof leaks and all kinds of other problems that do not come to mind automatically when an employee announces “, I am buying a home.”

Life events related to housing can also include how to find money to make a serious water damage repair, how to get a landlord to make repairs, how to keep a landlord from retaining a security deposit after one terminates a lease, how to resolve a serious roommate rift, or how to get a guest to leave



one's apartment when they have overstayed their invitation to stay with the employee who invited them.

Life events include problems related to money issues, such as the bank not being able to find the paycheck an employee just deposited, when the bank places a hold on a check for \$5,000 that an employee deposited and then wrote checks to cover back rent, those issues related to not being able to access one's funds, when an employee is trying to recover money owed by a boyfriend that has suddenly disappeared, when one is trying to remove a lien from their property title after they paid the contractor for shoddy work, or if an employee is dealing with a contractor that will not return to the job in the middle of disconnecting the employee's bedroom toilet.

Life events arise when employees are facing domestic issues, such as when to initiate adoption proceedings, what agency to use, a child's school bully problem, how to help resolve a friend group conflict, high school issues such as a charge for drug possession when a student carried drugs for another, vehicle issues when a "friend" demands an employee's child take them to a corner drug dealer, when a classmate demands an employee's child post pictures with them on Facebook, or when a teacher has a real bias toward one's child.

We also see that in the excitement of having a child go to college, we often do not think of drug and alcohol arrests, minor in possession (MIPs) charges, court hearings, suspension for violating codes of conduct, alleged sexual assault, education bias, professor discrimination, housing evictions or back rent demands, security deposits not returned, car repossessions, student loans and debt demands, academic dishonesty, bullying, Greek hazing, gang assaults, traffic violations and grade disputes.

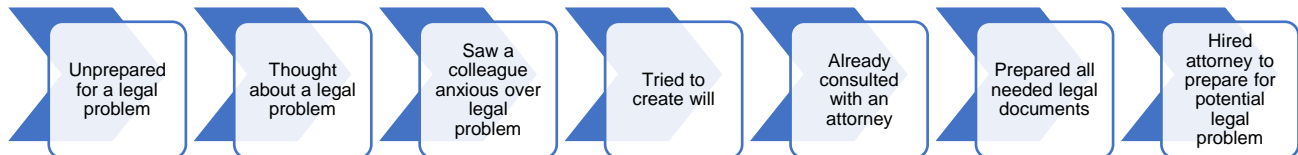
When expecting a child, one of the most joyous times in a couple's life, most couples are not thinking about guardians, financial difficulties, lengthy medical treatments, difficult childbirth, genetic defects, significant medical bills, insurance coverage disputes, life insurance beneficiaries, wills and trusts needed, Powers of Attorney, trustees and executors, bank accounts, student payment 527 accounts, faulty daycare centers, hospitalizations, babysitter liability and a host of other more serious issues.

Life also requires employees to deal with elder parents, including their issues of medical bills that they cannot pay, their medications they are confused about taking, when the nursing home seems to be hiding the real condition of an elder parent and will not release their records, the lack of security for an elder parent in their deteriorating housing, when an employee's dad will not move out of his house even though he keeps falling, when an elder parent announces they have just married a new spouse after their spouse of 45 years dies unexpectedly and this new spouse is 40 years younger than the living parent, or finding out that a girlfriend of an employee's dad has a Power of Attorney over his healthcare and financial affairs instead of the employee.

All these problems can become serious legal problems. But, employees may not realize two things: (1) how these life events almost never start out as legal problems such that one thinks they need to immediately run out and get a lawyer to help with; or (2) how fast these problems can morph into serious legal problems.

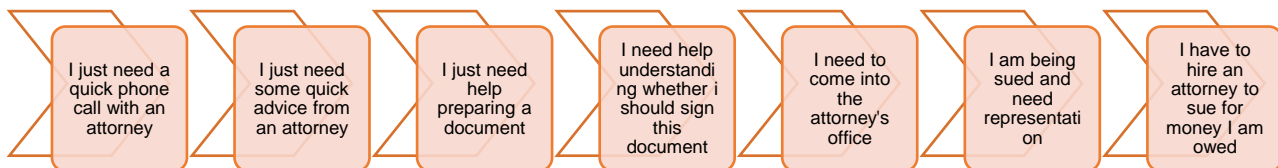
We simply do not think of legal problems when we think of life events. But, what if we did? What if we changed our thinking and did want to face these issues. What do we need? What would we do differently? Would everyone want the same tools? Would every employee take the same action?

In truth, no two employees in any company will take the same actions – life events, life crises and their legal consequences will affect each employee differently. The sense of preparedness for legal issues runs on a continuum for employees:



Some employees have a handle on the legal aspects of these events, but most employees do not have any idea (1) that a legal issue may be involved; or (2) what to do if a legal issue arose.


When asked, employees also react to the arrival of legal issue in many different ways. However, few employees have an idea about how they would access legal help, if a legal problem arose.



New Thinking about Life Events could be the Key to Success

What seems clear is that almost all employees who encounter life events in the course of each year could use advice, consultation and information on all of the legal consequences inherent in each of the likely life events that may arise. This means changing the way employees look at and think about life events. While it may be counter-productive to treat every life event as a serious legal problem, employees could have trusted advisors available to them who could easily be called or emailed just to talk without any pressure or agenda about the life event and to verify what an objective trusted advisor could foresee about potential legal consequences. This necessary change in thinking might simply be to consistently ask about their life events through having access to resources where they could get a trusted professional opinion when they need it.

This new thinking might also require going farther than just advice and consultation by designing services that would engage more employees in preventative services. As we have seen, many employees who encounter life events, almost never think about these life events having serious legal consequences. Because employees are not thinking about life events as legal problems, many employees take no action, only to find out their life event came with a host of legal issues. At that point,



it would be too late to take the needed preventative actions that could have helped that employee completely avoid serious legal issues.

But, what if there are easy to use solutions to help employees better understand and predict the effects of these life events and their corresponding legal issues? What if an employer could offer a set of tools that had more components than a traditional legal plan? What if this new kind of legal plan had two major components instead of one? First, the legal plan would still have all the traditional paid-for insured legal benefits and coverages that the traditional legal plans have had for 15 years.

But what if it also had this unique, cutting edge second component?

Even for employees who might not have a legal need at the moment, these tools could offer expanded services or solutions to offer fast, immediate, access to trusted advisors whenever a question arises or if any employee undergoes a life event, such as marriage, birth of a child, death of a parent, divorce or any such change of life event. All these life events require changes in the business part of our lives, changes in beneficiaries, wills, trusts, powers of attorney with all kinds of legal implications.

In Conclusion – Well-being throughout Life Events

We have seen how our employees' well-being can be affected by stress at work caused by outside factors such as financial and legal issues, and how the way we currently think about life events could be a root cause to the current distress much of our employee demographic is suffering. Understanding the legal implications surrounding the impact life events have on employees' lives could make the difference in fully supporting and growing our employee's well-being with the life-tools they need.

We will discuss this topic further in part II of the Well-being series.

Footnotes:

1/ Id., p. 6.

Unhealthy lifestyles

- Employees with four lifestyle risk factors (sedentary, >>overweight, smoker, high alcohol intake) are absent over 50% more often than those without the risk factors, and cost 2-3 times more in health costs.²¹
- Employers pay an extra \$597/year for each employee >>who consumes excessive amounts of alcohol.²²
- Employers pay an extra \$488/year for every sedentary >>employee.²³
- Every smoker costs a company \$2500/year.>>²⁴
- There is a linear relationship between obesity and >>number of workers' compensation claims, lost workdays, medical claims costs and indemnity claims costs.²⁵
- The total cost of obesity to Canadian employers is >>\$1.3 billion per year.²⁶
- Obese employees spend about 35% more on health >>services and 77% more on medications than people of healthy weight.²⁷
- Telus Mobility estimated that each health risk factor >> (e.g., smoking, obesity, etc.) costs their organization about \$2000 per employee per year.

2/ The Business Case for a Healthy Workplace, © IAPA (Industrial Accident Prevention Association) 2008, p. 2.

3/ Stress in the Workplace: A Costly Epidemic, By Rebecca Maxon. Retrieved from <http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/99su/stress.html>

4/ A. Spurgeon, C.A. Jackson and J.R. Beach, Institute of Occupational Health, 2000. Their study referencing Holmes and Rahe study is "The Life Events Inventory: re-scaling based upon an occupational sample."

5/ Id.

6/ "Public Perceptions of Lawyers Consumer Research Findings," American Bar Association Study, 2002, p. 5.

7/ Statistics Canada, The Daily, May 22, 2007

8/ "Onto Death as We Part: The Impact of Divorce on Employee Wellness," Jason Krausert and Donna Tosky, Sep 4, 2009, Corporate Wellness Magazine.

9/ "Public Perceptions of Lawyers Consumer Research Findings," American Bar Association Study, 2002, p. 5.

