



HealthNEXT

# Investing in Workforce Health:

*Operationalizing McKinsey's  
Evergreen Principles with  
HealthNEXT*



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# Introduction

The McKinsey Health Institute's recent report, Thriving Workplaces: How Employers Can Improve Productivity and Change Lives, underscores the immense value of investing in workforce health. With the potential to unlock up to \$11.7 trillion in global economic value, prioritizing employee wellbeing is not just a moral imperative—it's a strategic advantage. This investment drives productivity, enhances employee engagement, and fosters long-term resilience. By prioritizing employee wellbeing, organizations can moderate escalating healthcare costs, improve retention, and create a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

**At HealthNEXT, we've been building cultures of health and wellbeing for Fortune 100 employers through a comprehensive framework built on over a decade of research and peer-reviewed evidence.** By focusing on creating an enterprise culture of health and wellbeing that empowers employees to be knowledgeable health and healthcare consumers—capable of navigating their benefits and healthcare systems effectively—organizations can drive long-term success. Our approach ensures that health initiatives are not just impactful but also deeply embedded into an organization's culture and operational strategy, leading to high engagement, improved employee health outcomes and sustained business performance.

**In McKinsey's report, the authors outline six evergreen evidence-based principles that foster long-term resilience and make a positive impact on employee health. Below, we explore how HealthNEXT operationalizes each McKinsey principle with real-world examples from our experienced Chief Medical Officer "NEXTperts."**



# 1 Understand the Baseline Health Status of Employees and the Value at Stake

As McKinsey highlights in their evergreen principles, understanding the baseline health status of employees is the critical first step in workforce health transformation. Without a clear picture of current key health metrics and the associated costs, organizations risk implementing initiatives that fail to address root causes or deliver measurable outcomes. At HealthNEXT, we operationalize this principle through our data-driven employer health opportunities assessments which provides a comprehensive evaluation of an organization's workforce health landscape and present state.

These assessments are designed to uncover the hidden drivers of healthcare costs, absenteeism, presenteeism, and productivity losses. Using a six-sigma methodology, it evaluates over 200 contributing factors across our 10 Best-Practice Pillars, including Leadership Support, Workplace Environment, and Data-Driven Decision-Making. This rigorous process identifies gaps and opportunities for improvement while benchmarking against a proprietary collection of industry best practices. The result is a multi-year strategic plan tailored to move employees toward a culture of health, safety, and wellbeing.

## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Establishing Baseline Health and Value



### Comprehensive Data Collection

We gather data from multiple sources, including employee surveys, claims data, biometric screenings, and workplace assessments. This holistic approach ensures we capture both physical and mental health indicators from across the population health continuum.





## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Establishing Baseline Health and Value (continued)



### Advanced Analytics

Leveraging analytics tools, we analyze trends and identify prevalent health risks and conditions that are driving costs and tarnish company performance. Predictive modeling helps forecast future risks and prioritize interventions.



### Strategic Roadmap

Equipped with actionable insights specific to each unique challenge, organizations receive a roadmap guided by an experienced population health “NEXTpert,” outlining targeted initiatives through a clinical and executive lens to address identified gaps, complete with measurable goals and timelines. HealthNEXT’s propriety AI-infused platform recommends these interventions in the correct sequence. Our research shows that sequence matters.

### CASE STUDY



A manufacturing company discovered through their employer assessment process that 30% of their workforce was either dealing with or at risk for musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions due to repetitive motions while at work and poor physical fitness. By implementing a comprehensive MSK intervention which included pre-work stretches, on-site athletic trainers and occupational health nurses, as well as rapid response to workplace injuries, worker’s compensation caseload and days lost were markedly reduced.

## 2 Develop Initiatives for a Sustainable Healthy Workforce

Sustainability is critical to workforce health transformation, as McKinsey emphasizes in their evergreen principle to develop initiatives for a sustainable healthy workforce. At HealthNEXT, we believe that sustainable wellbeing programs must be designed to adapt and endure, delivering long-term value for both employees and organizations. Our approach ensures that health initiatives are not just impactful but also deeply embedded into an organization's culture and operational strategy.

By leveraging our 10 Best-Practice Pillars and the expertise of our NEXTperts, we guide organizations through a structured process to create programs that evolve with the needs of their workforce. This approach is proven and vetted, helping organizations avoid missteps or investing countless dollars with minimal results. Sustainability is achieved through a combination of strategic design, continuous measurement, and cultural integration.

### How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Sustainability



#### Strategic Program Design with Long-Term Vision

Sustainability starts with designing initiatives that address both immediate needs and long-term goals. HealthNEXT works with organizations to develop multi-year plans that align wellbeing programs with business objectives while ensuring scalability and adaptability over time.



## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Sustainability (continued)



### Supporting the Population Health Continuum

HealthNEXT ensures sustainability by addressing the full spectrum of employee health needs across the population health continuum. This includes keeping well people well through preventive care and wellness activities, mitigating illnesses by encouraging regular check-ups and medical home utilization, and supporting individuals with chronic or serious conditions through condition management programs, Centers of Excellence and other targeted resources. By addressing health holistically, organizations can reduce healthcare cost trends while improving long-term outcomes.



### Continuous Monitoring and Adaption

Using our measurement system, we track progress at regular intervals to ensure initiatives remain effective. This data-driven feedback loop allows organizations to refine their strategies, address emerging challenges, and double down on successful efforts.



#### CASE STUDY



A pharmaceutical company partnered with HealthNEXT over several years to establish a baseline using our assessment process, then demonstrated measurable progress by implementing the strategic plan developed from those assessment results. Their approach documented in a [peer-reviewed paper](#) outlines how they integrated health, wellness and safety. They collected data to build the case for investing in a culture of health and used these data points to demonstrate progress over time. Their interventions were across many wellbeing components – including nutrition, mental health, financial fitness and exercise. Over time health care cost trends moderated and employee engagement rates improved.

# 3 Pilot Interventions to Test and Learn

McKinsey's evergreen principle, pilot interventions to test and learn, emphasizes the importance of experimentation in workforce health transformation. Piloting allows organizations to test initiatives on a smaller scale before rolling them out broadly, minimizing risks while maximizing the potential for success. This approach ensures that interventions are tailored to the specific needs of the workforce and refined based on real-world insights.

At HealthNEXT, we view piloting as a critical step in creating impactful and sustainable health programs. By testing interventions in controlled environments, organizations can identify what works, adjust what doesn't, and build confidence in their strategies before scaling. Pilots also provide valuable data that inform decision-making and demonstrate measurable outcomes to stakeholders. These pilots go beyond one-off wellness campaigns by leveraging population health expertise to design programs that target the full spectrum of employee health. By identifying root causes and potential health risks across the continuum of care, NEXTperts ensure that pilot programs are comprehensive and impactful by emphasizing the importance of operational excellence.

## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Pilot Interventions



### Instilling a Comprehensive Population Health Focus

NEXTperts analyze the full spectrum of employee health needs across the population health continuum. This includes preventive initiatives to keep healthy employees well (e.g., fitness challenges or nutritional education), early interventions for at-risk populations (e.g., encouraging medical home utilization and regular screenings), and specialized support for prevalent chronic or catastrophic conditions through disease management and Centers of Excellence (COE).





## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Pilot Interventions (continued)



### Instilling a Comprehensive Population Health Focus *continued*

COEs are facilities or programs that deliver exceptionally high concentrations of expertise and resources for complex medical challenges. By addressing every stage of health, no employee is left behind. Often pilot programs are initiated at the corporate headquarters and studied for effectiveness before rolling them out to the company at large.



### Driving Targeted Interventions Based on Organizational Needs

Pilots are designed based on insights from baseline assessments and aligned with organizational goals. For example, if stress-related absenteeism is a key concern, interventions might include mindfulness workshops, flexible scheduling options, or virtual counseling services. These targeted approaches ensure that pilots address specific workforce challenges while aligning with broader business objectives.



## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Pilot Interventions (continued)



### Scaling What Works

Once the pilot concludes, HealthNEXT analyzes the results and provides recommendations for overcoming barriers and scaling successful interventions across the organization. This ensures that broader implementation is informed by lessons learned during the pilot phase.



Working with a hospital system, a pilot was established to take all new hires through a comprehensive physical exam and biometric screening to determine whether they were healthier than the existing workforce. The data demonstrated that new hires had many of the same challenges of the longer standing employees such as obesity, poor nutrition, sedentary lifestyles, high cholesterol levels and metabolic syndrome. The results supported the importance of emphasizing the health and wellness benefits available to all employees during the orientation process.



## 4 Track Three to Five Metrics to Measure Success

McKinsey's principle to track three to five metrics to measure success highlights the importance of using meaningful, actionable data to drive workforce health transformation. While focusing on a few key metrics can provide clarity, organizations often need a more comprehensive approach to fully capture the effectiveness of their initiatives. Limiting measurement to just three to five metrics may overlook critical aspects of workforce health, especially when addressing complex and interconnected challenges like employee engagement, healthcare costs, and chronic disease management.

At HealthNEXT, we emphasize the importance of our Data Warehousing and Analytics pillar in driving workforce health transformation. We help organizations identify key performance indicators (KPIs) that align with their specific goals and challenges. Our approach includes establishing a robust data warehouse to ensure easy access to critical information. We guide companies in effectively reviewing and interpreting this data, implementing processes for regular quarterly reviews with leadership and management teams. This systematic approach leads to actionable next steps, enabling organizations to make data-driven decisions that positively impact employee wellbeing and organizational performance.

### How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Success Metrics



#### Align Metrics with Organizational Goals

HealthNEXT begins by working with leadership teams to define health and wellbeing objectives tied directly to business outcomes. For example, after a baseline assessment, if reducing absenteeism is a priority, we identify metrics such as absenteeism rates, employee engagement scores, and healthcare claims related to stress or chronic conditions. By aligning metrics with organizational goals, we ensure they are connected and impactful.



## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Success Metrics (continued)



### Establish Benchmarks and Targets

To measure progress effectively, HealthNEXT establishes baseline metrics during the initial assessment phase. From there, we set realistic, yet ambitious targets based on industry standards and best practices. This also includes working with established vendors to ensure consistent and transparent data sharing and providing clear data-driven plans of action. For instance, if an organization's baseline participation in wellness programs is 30%, the target might be a 50% increase within a year. These benchmarks provide a clear point of reference for evaluating success.



### Conduct Regular Data Reviews with Leadership

HealthNEXT facilitates frequent data review sessions with leadership and management teams, typically on a quarterly basis. During these reviews, we analyze key metrics, trends, and progress towards established goals. These sessions go beyond simply presenting data; we work collaboratively to interpret the information and develop actionable next steps. For instance, if participation rates in a specific wellness program are lagging, we might recommend adjusting communication strategies or incentives. These regular reviews ensure that leadership remains engaged with the health initiatives, can make informed decisions, and can proactively pivot strategies based on real-time insights.

#### CASE STUDY



While working with a utility company, HealthNEXT collaborated with their data warehouse and analytics partner to develop a state-of-the-art health, safety and wellbeing cockpit. Utilizing the guidance of the well respected healthcare quality "triple aim" framework, metrics were chosen to track the effectiveness, efficiency and experience (satisfaction) of their programs. Trending these metrics over time demonstrated improved health of the workforce and covered lives, cost savings, and high satisfaction and participation.

## 5 Ensure Leadership Commitment and Sponsorship

McKinsey's principle to ensure leadership commitment and sponsorship highlights the critical role leaders play in driving workforce health transformation. Leadership sets the tone for organizational priorities, and when leaders actively support health initiatives, it signals to employees that wellbeing is a core value. Without visible and sustained leadership commitment, even the best-designed programs risk falling flat due to lack of engagement or alignment with organizational goals.

At HealthNEXT, we know that leadership is the linchpin of success in creating a culture of health and wellbeing. We specifically focus on this principle in the Leadership Support and Management Alignment pillar, ensuring that leaders are not only involved but also fully invested in championing workforce wellbeing. By equipping leaders with tools, insights, and strategies, we help them model healthy behaviors, align wellbeing initiatives with business objectives, and foster an environment where employees feel supported in making healthier choices.

### How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Leadership Commitment



#### Leadership Participation in Wellness Programs

HealthNEXT encourages leaders to actively participate in wellness initiatives alongside employees. Whether it's being an active member of wellness committees, joining fitness challenges, attending mindfulness workshops, or engaging in health screenings, visible participation demonstrates that leaders are personally invested in health and wellbeing. This not only boosts program credibility but also inspires employees to follow suit.





## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Leadership Commitment (continued)



### Leadership Participation in Wellness Programs *continued*

As a best practice, HealthNEXT advocates identifying dedicated leaders in the C-suite to sponsor, direct and champion the importance of health, safety and wellbeing as a fundamental part of their job. Additionally, having a Chief Medical Officer or similar role signals to employees that health and wellbeing are strategic priorities, not just optional programs.



### Consistent Messaging and Communication

Leaders play a key role in reinforcing the importance of wellbeing through consistent messaging. HealthNEXT works with leadership teams to craft clear and authentic communications about health initiatives—whether through town halls, email updates, or team meetings. These messages highlight progress, celebrate successes, and reiterate the organization's commitment to employee wellbeing.



## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Leadership Commitment (continued)



### Sharing Metrics and Progress with Employees

HealthNEXT fosters transparency by helping leaders regularly share key metrics and progress updates with employees, such as increased wellness program participation or decreased stress-related issues. This approach keeps employees informed and creates a sense of collective achievement. Additionally, HealthNEXT recommends forming a cross-departmental wellness committee of leaders and managers that meets quarterly to review program effectiveness, approve budgets, and ensure alignment with organizational goals, keeping leadership and management engaged and accountable.



After informing a CEO that one out of every five employees were dealing with a mental health problem based on medical and pharmacy claims analysis as well as health risk appraisal data, he organized a series of company-wide town halls to increase awareness and reduce the stigma related to seeking help. Consequently, there was an uptick in the use of the employee assistance program and mental health services. Over time, after implementing a comprehensive mental health campaign under the CEO's direction, there was evidence of reduced stress levels and a leveling off the behavioral health illness burden.



## 6 Embed Employee Health into Organizational Culture

McKinsey's principle to embed employee health into organizational culture underscores the importance of making wellbeing a core organizational value. When health is deeply ingrained in a company's mission, vision, and daily practices, it moves beyond being a standalone program to becoming part of the organization's identity. This cultural shift ensures that employees feel supported in their wellbeing while fostering a sense of belonging and trust.

Through our Culture of Health and Wellbeing program we help organizations integrate health and wellbeing into their operations so thoroughly that it becomes second nature for leaders and employees alike. This transformation not only improves employee health outcomes but also drives engagement, performance, and long-term organizational success. A key aspect of this cultural integration is creating knowledgeable health and healthcare consumers by increasing individuals' ability for self-care and effectively navigating their benefits and healthcare systems. By empowering employees with the tools and knowledge to make informed health decisions, organizations can foster a culture of proactive wellbeing that extends beyond the workplace.

### How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Cultural Integration



#### Aligning Health and Wellbeing with Organizational Values

HealthNEXT works with leadership teams to ensure that health and wellbeing are explicitly reflected in the organization's mission and values. This alignment helps communicate to employees that wellbeing is not just an initiative but a fundamental part of how the organization operates. This may include creating defined wellness budgets, embedding health and wellbeing in recruiting and employee onboarding programs, or crafting vision statements that emphasize their commitment to supporting employees' physical, mental, and emotional health.



## How HealthNEXT Operationalizes Cultural Integration (continued)



### Integrating Wellbeing into Day-to-Day Operations

To make health part of the workplace fabric, HealthNEXT helps organizations weave wellbeing into daily practices and policies. Examples include incorporating wellness breaks into meeting schedules, offering healthy food options in cafeterias, or designing workspaces that promote movement and collaboration. These small but consistent actions reinforce the message that health is a priority.



### Empowering Employee-Led Health Ambassadors

HealthNEXT encourages organizations to create employee-led health ambassador programs where team members act as champions of wellness initiatives. These ambassadors help promote programs, share resources, and provide peer support, creating grassroots momentum for cultural change. By involving employees directly, organizations ensure that wellbeing initiatives resonate across all levels.



#### CASE STUDY

A financial company partnered with HealthNEXT to address low participation in wellness programs and low use of health-related benefits. The leadership team recognized that to achieve meaningful change, they needed to embed health into their organizational culture and needed to cultivate a “feet on the ground” network of employees to motivate the workforce to be more actively involved in the valuable programs and services available to them.

HealthNEXT worked with the leadership to update the company’s mission to prioritize employee wellbeing, emphasizing that a healthy workforce is key to top performance. They also created a network of “wellbeing champions”—employees who shared health information and encouraged participation at each location. These champions met monthly to learn about available benefits and incentive programs. As a result, wellness program participation doubled over two years.

## Building Thriving Workplaces with HealthNEXT

Investing in workforce health is one of the most impactful decisions an organization can make. As McKinsey's report highlights, prioritizing employee wellbeing not only improves lives but also unlocks significant economic value, driving performance, engagement, and resilience. Organizations that embrace this investment see measurable results: a bend in the healthcare cost curve, higher employee satisfaction, and a more engaged workforce that is better equipped to meet business challenges.

At HealthNEXT, we've spent years researching what successful organizations do to build cultures of health and wellbeing. Through this work, we've identified the 10 Best-Practice Pillars that serve as a blueprint for achieving sustainable success. These pillars are more than just guidelines—they are actionable strategies backed by evidence and real-world application. Our approach eliminates guesswork by providing organizations with a strategic roadmap tailored to their unique needs, guided by our experienced NEXTperts, former Chief Medical Officers at Fortune 500 companies, who have successfully nurtured culture of health and wellbeing programs across various industries.

What sets HealthNEXT apart is our ability to operationalize McKinsey's principles into action with measurable outcomes. While McKinsey provides a compelling vision for thriving workplaces, HealthNEXT delivers the tools, expertise, and proven methodologies to make that vision a reality. We ensure that organizations avoid common missteps and achieve meaningful progress faster.

When organizations invest in their people with the right strategies and support, the results speak for themselves: healthier employees, stronger teams, and workplaces where everyone thrives. Companies that adopt these strategies have a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Let HealthNEXT be your partner in building a culture of health and wellbeing that transforms your organization from the inside out to support high performance.