CLOCKING ON AND CHECKING OUT

WHY YOUR EMPLOYEES MAY NOT BE WORKING AT OPTIMAL LEVELS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT
Our scientifically developed, independently proven program (formerly the GCC) takes employees on a journey that fundamentally improves their relationship with exercise, nutrition, sleep and psychological wellbeing.

Virgin Pulse Global Challenge draws upon the latest aggregated health information and outcomes shared by more than two million employees who have successfully completed the Global Challenge award-winning, 12-month health and performance program. These insights, from 5,500 of the world’s leading companies across 185 countries and combined with the latest independent research, provide employers with new perspectives and practical recommendations to improve the health and performance of their workforce.
Present – but not accounted for

Presenteeism: “A situation that arises when sick employees drag their forlorn carcasses into the office and waste everyone else’s time by hacking their way through their working day on an empty tank.”

Joe Queenan, Journalist and commentator.

Absenteism is easy to understand and measure:

Your employee simply isn’t there. By contrast, presenteeism is more subtle. It’s when an employee physically turns up at work but is not working at full productivity. But Dr David Batman said the causes can be varied and may not be physical at all.

This report is based on a study of nearly 2,000 participants who in 2015 completed both the Global Challenge 100 Day Journey and the World Health Organization (WHO) Workplace Health and Productivity Questionnaire (HPQ).

It contains expert commentary from Dr Batman and Virgin Pulse’s Data Scientist, Dr Olivia Sackett.

Dr David Batman is a member of the Science Advisory Board for Virgin Pulse Institute. He has been a medical practitioner for more than 40 years and a registered Specialist Occupational Health Consultant for the last 30 years.

Before joining Virgin Pulse, he was GCC’s Chief Medical Officer. And previously, Head of Occupational Health and Safety for Nestlé in the UK and Ireland.

His expertise covers risk assessments, health surveillance, return to work and rehabilitation procedures; he has a special interest in psychological health at work.

Dr Olivia Sackett is Virgin Pulse’s Data Scientist. She has a doctorate in biostatistics and population research, as well as experience consulting for business and government.

Her work has also been featured in internationally peer-reviewed journals.

At Virgin Pulse, she successfully combines her passion for big data with the drive to have a positive impact on the world.
Absenteeism has been on the radar for businesses for a long time according to Virgin Pulse’s Data Scientist, Dr Sackett.

“Everyone can see that if your employee isn’t at work, it’s costing you money,” Dr Sackett said.

“Conservative estimates by the likes of PwC and Deloitte put the annual cost of absenteeism to businesses in the billions. But when we analysed the data we gathered from almost 2,000 participants in 17 countries, it clearly showed that absenteeism levels were less than 10% of total presenteeism levels.

“On average, employees in our sample group took about four sick days off each year but when they reported on how many days they lost while on the job, that number shot up to a staggering 57.5 days per year per employee,” Dr Sackett said.

“That’s almost 12 full working weeks or one quarter of the entire year – that employees admit they really aren’t performing at their best.”

“For every one day off sick, employees waste 10 more doing very little.”

Dr Olivia Sackett, Data Scientist for Virgin Pulse

“Psychological challenges are so widespread that workplaces should view them as inevitable and plan accordingly.”

Dr Batman

With over 40 years of clinical experience, Dr Batman is a registered Consultant Specialist in Occupational Health with particular expertise in psychological health at work.

“It’s a fact that life is uncertain and psychological challenges are going to affect everybody at some stage. Each day, 17% of the workforce will be affected by some form of psychological problem and one in four people will suffer from a major diagnosable mental health disorder in their lifetime but that doesn’t mean everyone else is off the hook,” Dr Batman said.

“Some of us will lose a loved one or suffer the breakdown of a relationship. We may experience a financial disaster or be bullied at work. We may be victims of crime, have a car accident, contract a serious illness or break a leg while skiing.

“A resilient business is built on resilient people.”

Dr Batman

“Life happens and it can be really tough. These are all things that can affect our focus and performance at work and they can happen to anyone.”

Dr Batman says workplaces cannot avoid the inevitability of managing staff in crisis. You can’t plan your business around a team of robots that never experience any human challenges – that’s just unrealistic.

“Far better to create a supportive culture and build a resilient team that can effectively deal with the inevitable struggles of being human.”

* Source: Gallup-Healthways Well-being Index, 2012. PwC, 2013. Absence Management Survey by Direct Health Solutions, 2014. ** Based on a study of 1,872 respondents to the WHO-HPQ (conducted by Virgin Pulse Global Challenge in 2015), where absenteeism levels were found to be on average around 10% of presenteeism levels.

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LIFE IS TOUGH – PLAN FOR IT

4 DAYS LOST TO ABSENTEEISM
57.5 DAYS LOST TO PRESENTEEISM
THAT’S ALMOST THREE WORKING MONTHS.2

PER EMPLOYEE EACH YEAR:

TOTAL COST USA4, AUSTRALIA4 AND UK5

ABSENTEEISM
USD $150 BILLION*

PRESENTEEISM
USD $1,500 BILLION**

 Everyone will face tough challenges at some stage in their lives.”

Dr David Batman, Member of Science Advisory Board, Virgin Pulse Institute

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SIGNS YOUR TEAM IS STRUGGLING

“Change is a red flag. Pay attention to it.”

Dr Batman

A TYPICAL EMPLOYEE ADMITS TO LOSING 25% OF THEIR DAY BEING UNPRODUCTIVE.2

Dr Batman’s expertise includes helping employees at all levels of a business who are stressed, distracted and struggling to perform at work. He says presenteeism is easy to spot if you know the signs. “I preach a simple message – pay attention if you notice something has changed,” he said.

WHAT ARE THE RED FLAGS?

• The first thing that may decline is sleep patterns. People may have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep.
• As a result, they may be fatigued and this affects their concentration.
• They may lack attention and become easily distracted.
• Their engagement with their job may decrease and they may seem uninterested in what they’re doing and unconcerned about outcomes – for example, they may become less competitive.
• Their performance may deteriorate. They may:
  - Begin coming in late and leaving early.
  - Have more accidents and altercations with colleagues.
  - Begin falling asleep at work.
  - Become unproductive.

TACKLE THE CAUSE, NOT THE SYMPTOMS

“Presenteeism isn’t the virus; it’s the sniffle or the cough. If you want to cure it, you need to go after the cause.”

Dr Batman

Addressing presenteeism directly is difficult because it’s often a symptom of other issues going on in an employee’s life, according to Dr Batman. “This is much more complex because there can be more than one issue contributing at a time,” said Dr Batman.

“Many of these topics are incredibly personal and not things that employees will naturally want to talk to people at work about. This means employers are often the last to know when there’s a problem and may only find out when the person has hit crisis point.”

THE KEY METRICS

In the Global Challenge’s study, three key metrics correlated well with presenteeism—sleep, stress and happiness.2

“In our study we found that improvements in sleep, stress and happiness for participants who completed the Global Challenge program were associated with decreases in presenteeism. This indicates that if you can encourage your employees to form positive lifestyle habits, this pays dividends by reducing presenteeism levels.”

Dr Olivia Sackett

THESE ISSUES CAN BE GROUPED INTO FOUR PRIMARY CATEGORIES:

1. PERSONAL ISSUES
   E.g. Family, debt, relationships, substance abuse.

2. BUSINESS ISSUES
   E.g. Job design, work relationships, trust and uncertainty.

3. PHYSICAL HEALTH DECLINE
   E.g. Chronic ill health, major illness diagnosis.

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH ISSUES
   The biggest problem affecting an increasing number of people, and still growing.

2 Virgin Pulse Global Challenge data. Based on the responses of 1,872 participants who took our scientifically validated survey, benchmarked against the World Health Organization ‘Health and Workplace Performance’ Questionnaire (WHO-HPQ), 2015.
One of the great things about presenteeism is how quickly you can bring about dramatic positive change, says Dr Batman. “Studies show there is no quick fix for absenteeism; it needs long term solutions but presenteeism responds well to short term action that tackles those underlying issues of sleep, stress and happiness in creative ways.” The critical element is balance – a simple, scientific equation not nearly as difficult to manage as people think.

“Balance is about how you manage your life – at work and at home – and it’s just a series of simple steps,” Dr Batman said. “It’s how you exercise, eat, drink, whether or not you smoke, how well-rested you are and whether you find time for yourself, family and colleagues. The Global Challenge has taken these principles and simplified them so they can be delivered easily in a workplace setting and the beauty of it is how simple and engaging it is – people almost can’t believe it.

“After participating in the Global Challenge, businesses were able to shift the needle on those key metrics of sleep, stress and happiness and get their workforce productive and performing.”

The Global Challenge program clearly shows that by investing in your people, you can make measureable improvements in productivity and reduce the phenomenon of lost time in your business, according to Dr Sackett.

“Employees who participated in the Global Challenge reported substantial improvements in sleep, stress levels and overall happiness levels at the end of the 100-day program,” Dr Sackett said.

“These changes were associated with improvements in their productivity. Those who participated in the Global Challenge were not only generally happier and more relaxed, they were also markedly more productive than they had been before the program.

“This graph shows the overall wellbeing of Global Challenge 2015 participants (a composite of sleep, stress and happiness responses). As wellbeing increases, presenteeism decreases. For all psychological wellbeing categories, presenteeism was lower after employees completed the Global Challenge; and those who had the worst presenteeism levels before the program improved the most.

This graph shows that following the Global Challenge, the population shifted into a state of lower presenteeism. This means that more participants reported being more productive at work after completing the Global Challenge than they were before.


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Download graph data:

globalchallenge.virginpulse.com
HOW CAN I TRANSFORM MY WORKFORCE?

BECOME PART OF THE REVOLUTION

It’s time to change the conversation, according to Dr Batman. “We need to stop talking about how many sick days people are taking and focus our energy on what they’re doing when they’re actually at work,” he said.

“We need to create a culture where our employees feel empowered to make smart choices that help them maintain balance in their lives and become more productive. Having happier, healthier, less stressed employees is not only a great human outcome, it’ll provide direct benefits to the business as well.”

“The impact is immediate and powerful. When you change the conversation, you change the game.”

Our Deep Dive Reports empower you to make better business decisions. They provide evidence of the health and performance challenges that matter in your organisation. Then benchmark you at industry and global level for a wider perspective and competitive advantage.

Click here for more information about our Deep Dive Reports. Then make better business decisions across the board.

DISCOVER DEEP DIVE REPORTS

ABOUT VIRGIN PULSE

Virgin Pulse, part of Sir Richard Branson’s famed Virgin Group, helps employers create workforces that are happier, healthier and ultimately more productive in all aspects of their personal and professional lives.

The company’s modern, mobile-first platform delivers a personalised user experience that utilises gamification to engage users in building habits that inspire meaningful and measurable change across individuals and the business.

By helping employees thrive at work and in all aspects of life, Virgin Pulse is helping change lives and businesses for good.

Unlike narrowly focused employee health solutions, Virgin Pulse’s solutions span the full wellbeing spectrum – from traditional wellness to strategic wellbeing – providing organisations with solutions that are appropriate for them today and tomorrow.

More than 2,500 organisations representing many of the Fortune 500 and Best Places to Work have selected Virgin Pulse’s solutions to engage their workforces and drive their businesses forward.

FIND OUT MORE AT:

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