

DESIGNING ORGANIZATIONS THAT THRIVE



AN EXPERT INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW SYKES

WELCOA[★]
WELLNESS WORKS HERE

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ORGANIZATIONS THAT

THRIVE

with
ANDREW SYKES

ABOUT ANDREW SYKES • Founder, BRATLAB, Habits at Work



Andrew is a passionate advocate for the power of habits to create thriving, high-performance employees and companies. He has consulted with some of the world's largest companies including Shell Oil, McDonald's, Nokia, British Aerospace, Unilever, Blue Cross Blue Shield and many others. He founded the Behavioral Research Applied Laboratory (BRATLAB) to uncover which habits create health, happiness, security and performance for people, and our employer-focused consulting team, Habits at Work, literally puts habit creation to work to create high-performance organizations. His passion is public speaking, and he has spoken about organizational performance at over 500 public and private events. Born and raised in South Africa, Andrew has lived and worked on five different continents over the course of his career. He is adamant about helping companies flourish through the success of their people, rather than at their expense, and I'm eager to share my ideas with others.

ABOUT RYAN PICARELLA, MS, SPHR



As President of WELCOA, Ryan works with communities and organizations around the country to ignite social movements that will improve the lives of all working people in America and around the world. With a deep interest in culture and sociology, Ryan approaches initiatives from a holistic perspective that recognizes the many paths to well-being that must be in alignment for long-term healthy lifestyle behavior change. Ryan brings immense knowledge and insight to WELCOA from his background in psychology and a career that spans human resources, organizational development and wellness program and product design. Prior to joining WELCOA, Ryan managed the award winning BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee (BCBST) Well@Work employee wellness program, a 2012 C. Everett Koop honorable mention awardee. Since relocating to Nebraska, Ryan has enjoyed an active role in the community, currently serving on the Board for the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition in Omaha. Ryan has a Master of Science in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Northern Arizona University.

In the early 2000s, Andrew Sykes moved to the US from South Africa to learn about our approach to employee wellness. When he got here, he found the wellness industry in the midst of a crisis of purpose and struggling to deliver on its promise. In this interview, WELCOA CEO Ryan Picarella sits down with Andrew to learn more about his vision for employee wellness and how he has dedicated his work since to helping employers design their businesses to help employees thrive.

★ **RYAN PICARELLA** You have had the opportunity to work with hallmark organizations around the globe I know you started your career in South Africa; how did your career in wellness start?

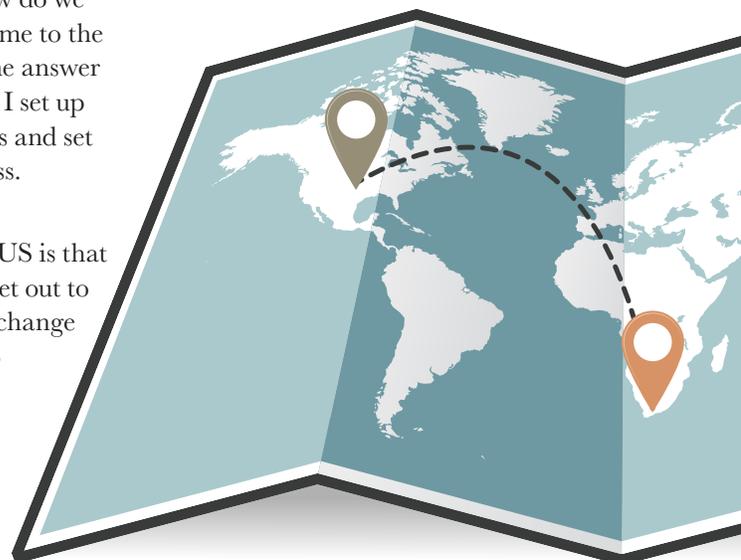
ANDREW SYKES Well, I started in wellness out of frustration. I had set up and built what became one of South Africa's largest and most successful health insurance consulting businesses and would spend many years during that time helping clients adopt consumer directed health plans. Which in a sense were invented in Southern Africa, and we had great success. But around late 1999, I had a conversation with my board. I asked them, in the face of all the success we've had for employers, shouldn't we be concerned about whether or not we're actually improving the members' health that we serve? I remember getting blank stares from most of the faces around the room and this was not a critical question for our business.

So, it didn't take me long after that to really get clear that the problem I wanted to solve in life wasn't only the design of effective health insurance; it was how do we actually create healthy people in the first place? I decided to leave and come to the US under the naïve assumption at the time that I would find in the US the answer to my question—what *does* an effective wellness program really look like? I set up what was in those days called Health at Work in Dallas in the early 2000s and set to work on trying to discover all the best kept secrets of American wellness.

After six months, I came to the firm conclusion that the big lesson in the US is that over the last 40 years, wellness as an industry has largely failed us. So, I set out to understand in what ways we're failing and what we can do differently to change the future of wellness as an industry and to deliver on the promise that so many of us believe is there.

I describe myself as a recovering actuary. I no longer do much work in the realm of insurance design, but I've taken that kind of mathematical or actuarial science thinking into wellness.

"...I came to the firm conclusion that the big lesson in the US is that over the last 40 years, wellness as an industry has largely failed us."



★ **RP** As you know, one of the primary motivations for organizations in the states to invest in employee wellness is to lower health care costs. What do you see as the main motivation that organizations should have when considering an investment in employee wellness? Is cost containment the right metric in your opinion?

ANDREW SYKES I don't think it was ever the right metric. Here's why I have that view. I think if the greatest ambition you have in wellness is simply to reduce healthcare costs, that kind of mindset pervades in the way that you communicate with people. The subtext, even if you cover it over with great communication and fancy program material, still lands for most members as if they are part of the problem because healthcare costs are a problem. So, the invitation to participate sounds something like, "You're either unhealthy because you're diabetic or overweight or a smoker or have some other risk factors, and here is a program to help you, but it's really a program to help us—the employer—fix our problem. It contextualizes employees as a problem to be solved.

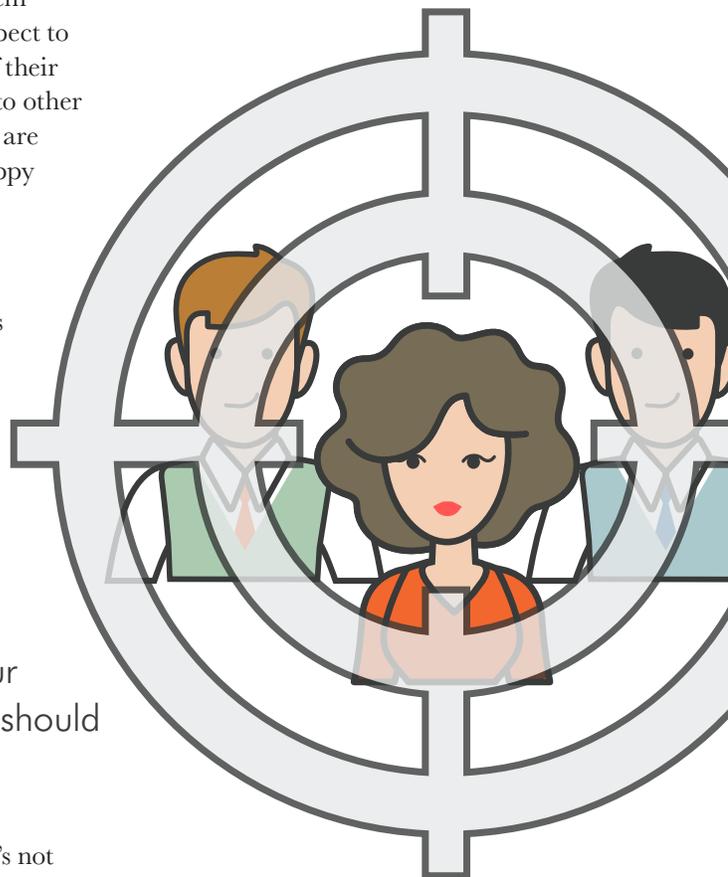
There's nothing wrong with that engineering mindset except that it leaves people feeling targeted, disempowered, and the invitation is really one to say, "Now put up your hand if you would like to be part of the problem to be fixed." When our employers ask what they should expect out of a wellness program, I tell them that if their motive is to reduce health insurance costs then they should expect to fail. If their motive is something higher like improving the performance of their team, driving the vision and mission of their company, being an example to other companies of what a healthy workplace looks like; their chances of success are good, and they are likely to see some reduction in healthcare costs as a happy bonus.

So, my view is the only motivation that makes sense is to drive the performance of your organization—not in the sense of using up employees in the service of producing a profit, but more in the light of investing or filling up employees in this case with health. We know from research that people who show up for work in the best state of health have greater stamina, make better decisions; they are just operating on all cylinders. Of course, in the end, they spend less money on their sick care.

★ **RP** You and I are in alignment that the traditional programmatic, incentivized approach that has been our industry's model is not working. What do you think we should be doing instead?

ANDREW SYKES Well, I think we do need to understand why it's not working, and the best practice model that most companies adopt—HRAs and

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biometric screenings and wellness incentives—are all based on some assumptions about how humans think, act and make decisions. Some of those assumptions, while they are logical, turn out to be at odds with how humans really behave. What I think we should be doing instead is building programs that take into account the irrational and sometimes strange decisions that people make and the ways that people all move to act in one direction or another.

As an example, HRAs and biometric screenings are based on the assumption that, if you know your numbers you're likely to take some action. It's totally logical. Mya Angelou once said, "Do your best until you know better, and when you know better, you'll do better." It just turns out that for most human beings, knowing what a healthy lifestyle looks like doesn't solve the problem and it's actually hard to practice. In the worst cases, as you often see in the medical profession, too much knowledge can breed contempt even. That is why nurses are amongst the least healthy sector of any industries that we look at.

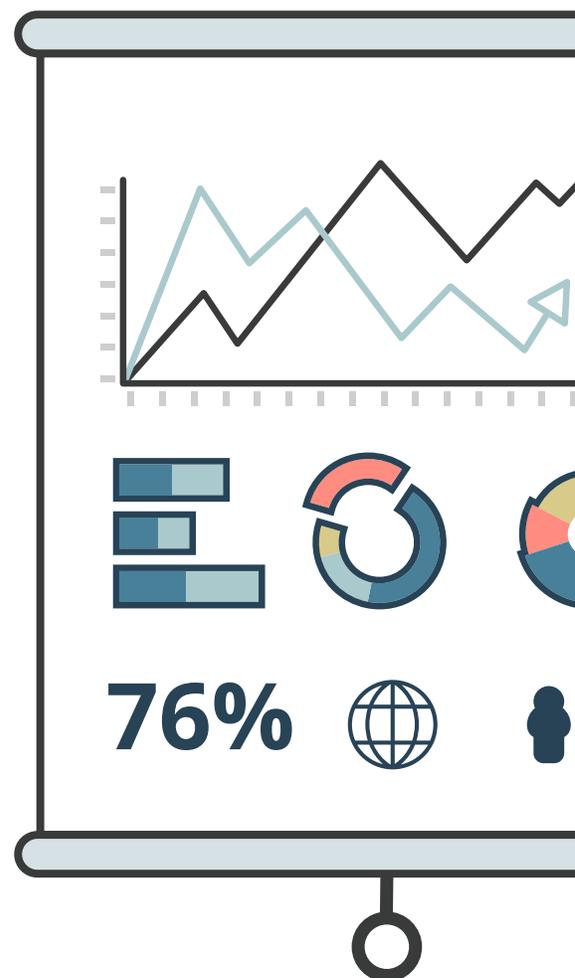
What we should do instead is ask, not *how can we educate people about how to practice health, but how can we focus instead on the design of our businesses in a way that makes work itself fundamentally healthy?* Because most people would blame work as the source of their stress and probably a big contributing reason for why they feel that they don't have time to exercise or cook healthy meals. Certainly, we're complicit in sacrificing our health at the altar of our companies. So, what I think we should really focus on is the built environment, the policies and procedures, the culture of our organizations and the mindset around health as the genesis of performance at work—not something we do to repair the damage that the way of work has caused.

★ **RP** One thing I would love to hear your thoughts on is the role of incentives. In your proposed approach, is there a place for them?

ANDREW SYKES Well, I'll try and not rant on the subject, although I'm prone to because I'm very passionate about it and I'm deeply concerned about the wave of wellness incentives as a trend. The reason I'm concerned is that one of the assumptions we make about other people is that they are moved by incentives. Whereas, we tend to think of ourselves as moved by a higher purpose. In reality, incentives can change the way that people act *if* you want them to do something once or maybe twice. But there's also a dark side to wellness incentives. I am referring in particular to those extrinsic incentives like cash prizes and penalties, especially around your insurance premiums.

Much research has shown that, extrinsic sources of motivation like those traditional wellness incentives can often undermine people's intrinsic drives for change. And it doesn't take much to imagine why. If you enjoy exercising and it's something you do for fun or for being in the outdoors and for enjoyment, then your employer says *if you exercise we'll pay you*, that changes the mental bucket that exercise falls in from something we do for fun to something we do for money. That's the same bucket that holds work in general, and we relate to work as if it's hard and we'll only do it if someone pays us.

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I think employers have signed up for a lifetime of increasingly large incentives to get the same behavior. In the worst case, if they ever try to remove them, they'll likely find that people will stop practicing those habits that they might've done on their own before simply because they've re-contextualized that habit—in this case exercise—as something they'll only do for money. So, I'm hopeful that imagination will replace money as the driving force in wellness program design going forward. I think employers are now starting to realize that the enormous amounts of money they're spending on incentives just aren't getting the job done. At best, they are rewarding the people who were already practicing healthy habits. With the exception of a few people who become the poster children of incentives, the vast majority of people just aren't moved in a sustainable way by these incentives.

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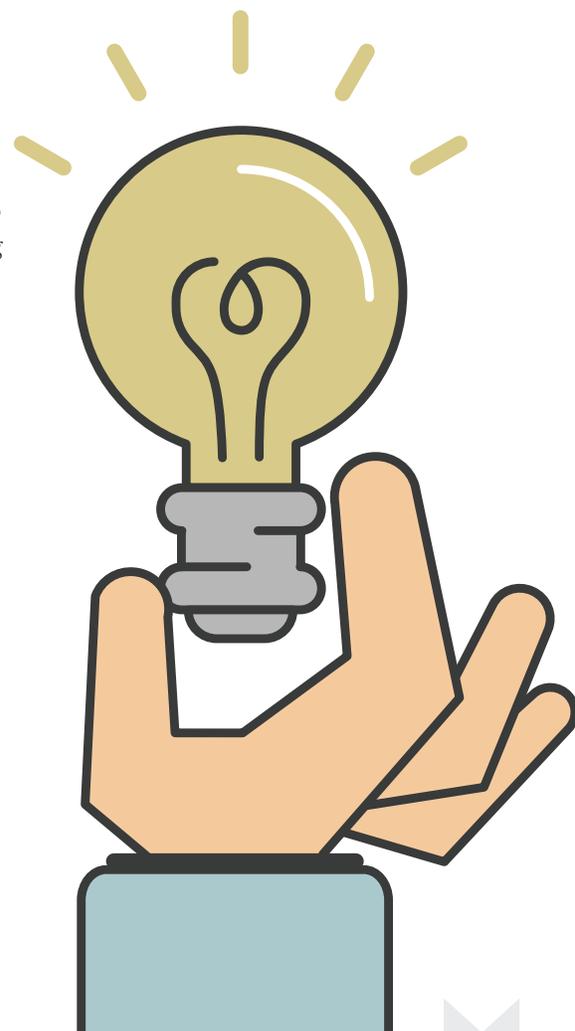
★ **RP** Let's talk about success. What does success look like? What should we be measuring?

ANDREW SYKES I first want to talk about how quickly one should expect to see a response or a result. There's a myth in our industry that well-being takes a 5 to 10-year period to show any kind of return. I think it is true in one sense, but a very worrying myth in the other. Let me explain. The human body responds very quickly to changes in health habits. So physiologically, if you've never exercised and you've eaten poorly and been a smoker, then in an instant, you change your lifestyle—you start to exercise, improve your diet, quit smoking, control your alcohol—you would see in a matter of minutes, weeks and certainly months changes in your performance, your immune system, health care costs and many other outcomes.

Why it normally takes 5 or 10 years for people to see a result is frankly, because it takes that long, if ever, to actually get people to practice these healthy habits. So, I would say the first measure you should look for is any positive sign of improved outcomes in a 6 to 12 month period. If you're not seeing it in that timeframe, it's unlikely that you're going to see it in a much longer one. No change means what you're doing to get people to change is fundamentally failing.

When it comes to what we should actually measure, I think biometric screenings basically measure all the ways in which people's health is on its way to failing, and claims in a health plan just measure how much money we've spent when people's health does fail. That's a little bit like asking someone about how well their phone works and them just telling you about all of the ways in which it fails. What you were really interested in is how it performs positively. What it can do? What are the features? So, I prefer measuring the positive attributes of our health like measuring cardiovascular health and stamina. When it comes to performance, we look for four different outcomes that I think employers value: people's stamina, the quality and speed of their decision-making and their error rates. Measuring productivity in something like revenue per person is really how you determine whether your health initiatives are driving success for the businesses that these people work in.

★ **RP** What are the biggest mistakes that organizations make when it comes to implementing a wellness initiative?



ANDREW SYKES Mistake number one is the assumption that the program is the source of success. When we look at success across a client base of a wellness vendor, they have some clients who are getting amazing results, and they usually are the case studies that you see on their websites and who everyone is talking about at conferences. What you don't hear about is the clients where engagement is poor or it's not sustained over time. These are usually the clients who fire a vendor and then look for the next best thing and they go from one vendor to the next continuing to fail. The range between success and failure even within one program vendor is remarkably broad.

In other words, the best client may have 90% in improving engagement and the worst might have 10% and deteriorating engagement, however you define it. What that tells us is the secret isn't in the program. It's in something that the employer itself does. Mistake number one is plugging in a program from outside and expecting that it will do magic. Sometimes that's what's promised by vendors. I'm not having a go at the vendor programs themselves. It's a necessary part of success. But it's a little like the curriculum in a classroom. It's necessary, but what really explains success in the classroom is the quality of the teacher, the environment in which the class is taking place, the peer-to-peer learning and support and the culture towards learning and the mindset of the student.

Those are four things that I think are entirely or predominantly under the control of the employer and cannot be outsourced. But in my experience few employers have the knowledge, appetite or resources to go to work on themselves admitting that their built environment, their culture, the mindsets of their employees or the systems under which people operate might not be the healthiest in the first place. The consequence they end up with is a fundamentally unhealthy company and a wellness program implemented as an almost apology to try to fix the damage that's been done.

★ **RP** You said earlier that we can't expect that humans will make rational decisions, so logic is not a good motivator. What does ultimately drive employee behavior?

ANDREW SYKES We fail to understand employee behavior when we take what I describe as the *engineering mindset* that many of us have because of our training. We focus on the person as the problem. We look at a person and are quick to judge. We often people as, in some sense, broken and need of repair. We need to drive them to change. We need to incentivize them. We talk about them as if they are in some sense machines that are in need of a fix. I spoke earlier about how that leaves someone feeling targeted and disempowered. But it also misses the greatest insight I've had in my career. People are highly influenced by the things that surround them, and their behavior is explained more by looking at what's around somebody than by understanding their thought process at any given time.

Think of a goldfish in a bowl swimming away its life; it doesn't realize that it lives in the water. Yet every movement it makes, the way it lives and breathes and dies and everything in between is completely influenced by the fact that it lives in the water.

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Similarly, human beings are in a sense surrounded by what we call these contexts of life. Things that are in the background, highly influential over how we behave in the foreground, and—here’s the beauty of it—also largely unnoticeable in their influence. Just like the fish doesn’t notice the water’s impact on its life, human beings tend not to notice that sixty-plus percent of our decisions each day are made by following the example of others that surround us, which is why culture is so important.

We don’t notice how the built environment, our office space, the retail stores we shop in and the cars that we drive influence how we feel and behave. We don’t even notice our own mindsets, our biases, our education, our culture and how that influences how we think about things. Certainly, because systems are abstract like policies and procedures and laws and rules at the office and in the world at large, they influence the decision that we make. We can’t see them and we can’t feel them but they still affect us.

The answer is that there are four contexts that surround a human being. The context of other people (the social context), physical spaces, systems and the context of the self and our mindsets. Success in wellness is really the craft of designing the context in which your employees live, learn and work. That design has a goal, which is *making it easy and natural for people to practice the habits that drive performance*.

★ **RP** What is the relationship between habits and performance?

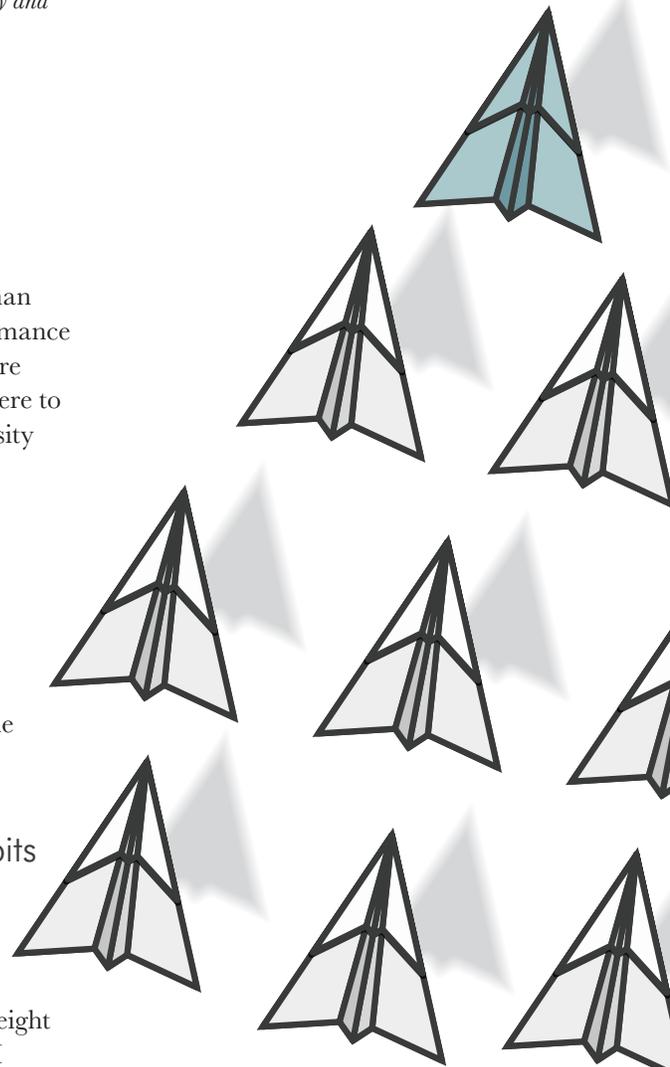
ANDREW SYKES Although, there’s good research that says healthy habits will reduce healthcare costs over time, the beauty about focusing on human performance is that the relationship between our habits and our positive performance is so rapid. For example, you may have to exercise for three to four months before you see a really strong improvement in your cardiovascular fitness. But if you were to finish this call with me today and go and do three or four minutes of high intensity exercise at your desk for the next two hours following that short burst of intense exercise, your decision-making and error rates would be improved and reduced respectively.

So, I think when employers start to join the dots and see that one of the largely untapped sources of human potential is small bite-size chunks of healthy habits interspersed or netted into the fabric of the workday and that the return is both significant and rapid, we might start to see employers get really serious about the design of the workplace as a context.

★ **RP** You founded two organizations: BRATLAB and Habits at Work. What are the stories of those organizations?

ANDREW SYKES BRATLAB actually has two origin stories. One is personal. When I was six years old I had my first cigarette. I’m the youngest of eight kids and my older brother Greg asked me to share a cigarette with him so that I wouldn’t tell our mom that we were doing something that we both knew was naughty and wrong, and frankly neither of us cared. It wasn’t the last cigarette I had even

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though it tasted terrible and I coughed my lungs out and swore I would never do it again. As I got older, there were more and more occasions for me smoking with friends or smoking on weekends. I grew up in a country where smoking was a fairly normal activity for teenagers. I knew it was bad for my health by that stage and it made no difference.

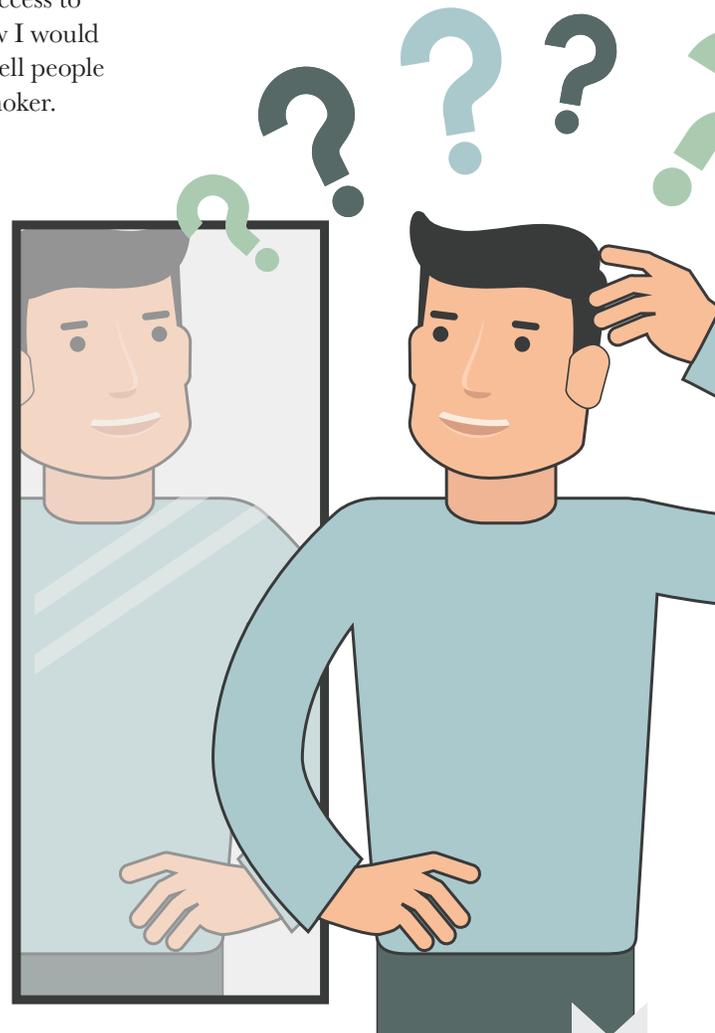
As I said earlier, I studied to become an actuary. I qualified as the youngest actuary in South Africa at the time, so there's some evidence that I paid attention in class. As you know, actuaries study the science of mortality—what will kill you, when it will kill you and why it will kill you. I would argue that I knew better than 99.99% of the world's population that smoking would kill me eventually, and I continued to smoke through college. In fact, when I was 25 my mom got pancreatic cancer and she had smoked as a teenager. I can't say for certainty that the cancer was related to her smoking, but she made that connection. The day before she died she said to me, "Andrew one of the things I hope for you is that you will give up smoking and you won't have the same kind of outcome I had." She said it in more elegant terms.

It was at that point you would expect that I would have changed forever. In fact, I made a promise to myself that I would quit smoking. I don't know how your family handles funerals, but in our family everyone comes together, we cry together and then we drink together. Two days after my mom passed away I had a cigarette again. Something as powerful as her words made no difference. At some point I got really curious about how it is possible that someone who knows better, who's got access to all this knowledge, who has many incentives to change, simply doesn't. Now I would argue that I had perhaps more sophisticated excuses for my habit. I would tell people that as long as I quit by 35, the data says that I'll be fine. I'm not really a smoker. I'm just a social smoker. I just happen to be a very social person.

At some point I had to look in the mirror and say, I'm running a health insurance consultancy. I'm smoking cigarettes in the car on the way to my clients, and this is the most inauthentic thing I can be doing with my life. So that was the original genesis for BRATLAB—trying to understand why smart people who know better battle so much to do what they know to do. That's actually why we called it BRATLAB. It's an action acronym for the Behavioral Research Applied Technology Laboratory. It is a mouthful, but we chose that so that it would sound like BRATLAB because that's really the problem we're trying to solve, which is how to get adults not to behave like brats. Brats know what to do and do the opposite.

The second genesis story was, as I said, coming to America and thinking I would understand the world of wellness and why it works. After six months here, I learned that really all the very smart people in wellness at that time must be missing something, because as an industry we are demonstrably failing. So BRATLAB was set up with the following three missions. Number one was to really get to a powerful answer about which habits matter to human performance in domains like health and financial fitness and employee happiness and engagement and, in fact, in the context of work overall.

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We've created what we call a dose value model, which is a collection of some 3000 peer-reviewed journal published research articles that allow us to say for example, *two minutes of exercise practiced every hour on the hour throughout the day would improve your memory retention by 10% and your stamina by 50% in the last two hours of each day.* So, getting really specific about the dose of the habit and the outcome that an employer can expect to see or a human can expect to see. The second big research agenda is—I think—the most fascinating question, which is how do we actually support people in making it easy and natural to practice these habits and in a way, that leaves them feeling empowered, grateful to the employer for the support, thrilled with the experience ideally whether they notice the influence methods or not? I think that caveat is terribly important. It's one of the reasons why I am against wellness incentives. Even when they work, I think the side effect of how they leave people feeling isn't worth the spend.

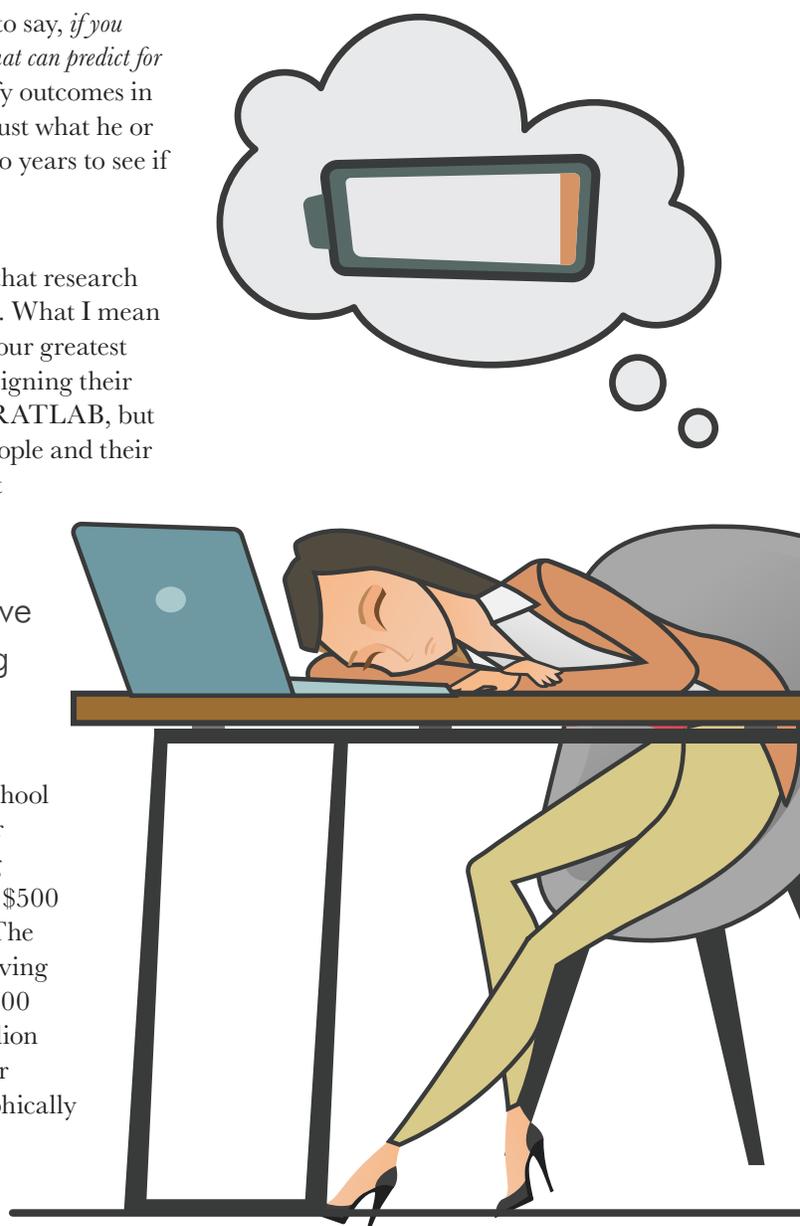
The last part of BRATLAB is this question of what's it all worth in the end? Because I know a lot of us battle with the perennial CFO question of *what's the ROI?* Is there a return and can you prove it to me? We wanted to be able to say, *if you can demonstrably change these habits for employees, here's an actuarial model that can predict for you what kind of performance improvement you'll get.* We wanted to quantify outcomes in terms of dollars and cents so that the hard-nosed CFO can really trust what he or she is about to fund versus having to take a leap of faith and wait two years to see if there's any ROI. So that's BRATLAB.

Habits at Work then sits on top of that in a sense, and it takes all of that research and it uses it to build capacity in employers rather than dependence. What I mean by that is, I think that the most successful employers, and certainly our greatest success, is when a leadership team wants to own the expertise of designing their workplace and their work systems. They are using research from BRATLAB, but their solution is customized to their business, their product, their people and their culture. We help employers really understand that research, apply it and bring it to life in the way that their business is designed.

★ RP Can you tell us more about clients who have successfully achieved this? What does the resulting work system look like?

ANDREW SYKES We worked with the Douglas County school district in Denver back in 2009. If you remember, that was just after the financial crisis. Steve Herzog was on his way to being the acting superintendent. We had a discussion about three weeks before their \$500 million bond and budget election was to be parsed by the citizens. The conversation was about how we would spend some money on improving their wellness program. Now to give you some context, they had 7,000 employees, 70,000 students from a community of a quarter of a million people. Of those 7,000 employees, about 11 had participated in their wellness program the year before. You could describe it as catastrophically bad results.

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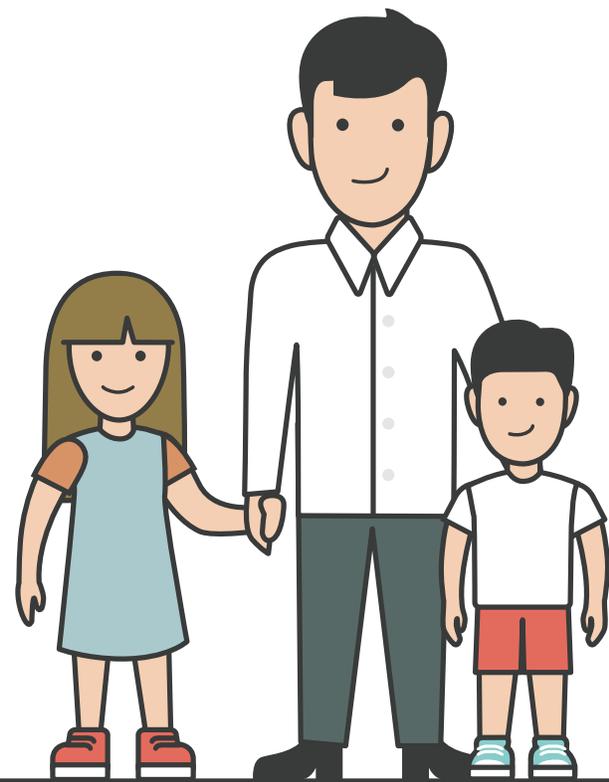
Now it wasn't fundamentally a bad program. It had the usual pieces that you would see in any one wellness program. But something was missing, obviously, that had people relate to it as *"not for me."* Now what happened on the 5th of November is that Douglas County lost their bond and budget election. It was a surprise defeat. Steve called me two days later to say, "I'm sorry. We just can't afford it. We're going to have to cut benefits and cut salaries and freeze salaries." As it turned out, for the next five years they really had a catastrophic financial future. My response to Steve—and all credit to him for how he then acted—was, "Steve, are you sure that you can afford not to do this?"

What I meant by that is, clearly what lay ahead for them was troubled times, and in troubled times trust is easily broken, people's spirits are easily broken. Three months from the date we had that call there was evidence of this all over the place. For the first time, they were really struggling to recruit people. The culture was beginning to be toxic. So, we went to work on interviewing the teachers about this question of, *why aren't you participating?* We have a wonderful wellness program. It's exciting. There's lots to do here. There's lots in it for you. What's missing? They said something that I'll paraphrase for you, but it stuck with me for the rest of my life. They said, look. We hear what you're saying and your program looks nice. But what is landing for us is the message that we're sick. We're broken. We're expensive. We're diabetic and we're the cause of the high health care costs. So, your program is aimed at ferreting out who's the problem and punishing us with coaching. Even if that wasn't bad enough, we have increased class sizes. We have more to do with less and you're asking us to also do this wellness program? The truth is, all we want to do is teach kids. That's why we signed up for this job. That's what we love in life doing. So, if the choice is spending more time with my kids or spending more time on myself in your program, it's an easy choice.

What we realized is, despite everyone's view outside of America that Americans are in some sense selfish, I think the opposite is true. That people generally put others before them to the detriment of themselves. That's very true for teachers. It's very truth for nurses. But we think it's truth for parents and even for single people that put their company and their customers before their own needs. In some cases, it's even as bad as people where their poor health is a badge of honor as evidence that they're sacrificing themselves and they're really doing a good job. We realized that the problem was in the messaging not in the program. There were many other issues, but that's the one we went to work on first.

Over the course of the next three months, Steve and his CFO along with the head of HR literally went school to school with a new message. The message was that we were going to become the healthiest school district in America. The reason we were doing that is that kids that are fit get 15 to 20% better grades in math and English and every other subject. We've also seen the research that says that teachers that exercise have more stamina and more presence in the classroom. They make better and faster decisions. In a sense, they're just better educators. But here's the real kicker. There's great research on the power of social contagion, meaning that kids do what they see teachers do—not what teachers tell them to do. So the new call to action is, we expect you to be role models of healthy habits for your kids.

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Four months into that program, we had now, not 11, but 4,000 teachers as active change agents. They were not only participating themselves, but leading the charge of recruiting their 70,000 kids to take the message of health habits home to their families. They took that message into the community as well. They were not just going to produce fantastic students ready for the workforce, but send them out into the world in the best shape of their lives knowing that that's the way to set them up for a lifetime of performance.

So, it wasn't a terribly expensive change. It wasn't a complicated change. But just a change in the higher purpose or the why behind what they were doing, and the results that flowed from that were fantastic. They saved a lot of money. They did reduce their health care surplus. They turned around from \$2 million in the hole to \$15 million surplus in just two years. But for me the joy of that story is not in the financial results. It was in what people were saying. Because for the first time in what had been a very tough two-year period, teachers would say they had joy back in their lives. They were doing what they really love to do, which is teaching kids, and they felt like the initiative was a great way for them to be role models.

I think the real opportunity is not just the financials, but how it can transform people's lives and the meaning they get out of their work. So, I always say to employers, if you're really looking to succeed in wellness, ask not what your program can do for your people but ask what their participation can do for the people that they love and serve, whether it's their customers, their kids or anyone else that they care about.

★ **RP** Great story. So, we're in the midst of a lot of change. Looking ahead five years from now, what do you think will be the state of the wellness industry?

ANDREW SYKES I have a sense that it might bifurcate. What I mean by that is I think there will be many employers who say, "We've been at this for 10 years. We've tried five vendors. We've had repeatable and predictable results—some excitement at the beginning and rapidly waning participation over time—and everyone is fed up with it. We've lost confidence and faith and so we're out." I'm really worried that a big part of our future is simply going to be HR and benefits managers and CFOs saying that the promise that was made wasn't delivered and they will move onto the next shiny object be it a financial fitness program or the next social media platform that promises improvements in performance.

The thing that I hope happens is that groups of employers continue to internalize the value of having the healthiest team as a key competitive advantage, and will start to relate to their well-being strategy not as a program to fix an issue in HR, but as a secret weapon to compete. I know you have some wonderful speakers Rosie Ward and others at your upcoming WELCOA Summit who really believe that and are helping employers get this insight that we don't drive employees, but we create opportunities for them to flourish. We don't punish them for nonperformance; we support

"I think the real opportunity is not just the financials, but how it can transform people's lives and the meaning they get out of their work."



them in making it easy to be the best player they can be on our team. Certainly, the Conscious Capitalism research suggests that companies that are investing in their employees as a first priority, and care about other stakeholders in addition, have greater returns, improved share price and better return on equity. So, I think CEOs are inspired in some cases to be that model of a new way of working for the rest of the world.

★ **RP** If our readers are inspired by this interview, and want to make an actionable change, what is one thing they should start doing and one thing they should stop doing?

ANDREW SYKES My one thing to stop doing is to stop offering biometric screenings. They're inflationary. They usually over screen people without necessity and very often all they do is drive people to drug therapy and leave them feeling in some senses fragile and less inclined to change their health efforts.

The one thing I would encourage them to add in is focus. What I mean by that is, we're attracted to programs that are very broad, that have a smoking cessation piece and healthy diet and stress management and all these other pieces. The key lesson we've learned in BRATLAB is that human beings are capable of changing one habit at a time only. As soon as we try and change two or three things at a time, we just sort of collapse in the face of the complexity. I've seen much better results when a company says, "We're going to tackle physical activity and only that. When that's become part of our culture then we'll move onto the next thing." It takes enormous courage to do that, but focus over breadth is the clearest path to rapid success. 📌

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