

A hand made of crumpled paper, with fingers spread, reaching towards the center of the page. The paper is a mix of brown and yellowish-gold tones, giving it a textured, organic appearance.

A Positive Influence

How distributors are helping reps and team members improve their sense of well-being.

Pursuing important life goals is strictly an after-hours proposition for many people, to be pursued and nurtured outside the workplace. But some employers believe they can help their people nurture their work and personal lives at the same time. Are people ready to accept and trust a helping hand from their employers? At least two medical distributors – Henry Schein and Concordance Healthcare Solutions – believe the answer is “yes.”

“It is no longer sufficient for a company to be a place where an employee can collect a paycheck,” says Josh Naftolin, strategic account manager, Henry Schein Medical. “Just like other employees, sales reps want their company to have a broader purpose and positive influence on society. Loyalty is something that we must continually earn.” In 2020, the company launched the Henry Schein Mental Wellness Committee, “with a mission to empower every Team Schein Member to be their best self – mentally, emotionally, and physically – by offering resources, guidance, and support,” he says.

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Brad Clark

Doreen Nersesian, Concordance Healthcare Solutions' executive vice president of human resources, says, "We realize employees spend a lot of time at work, and the more they can align their interests with the company culture, the better the connectivity to keep employees engaged in the organization and the work they perform. We make a positive impact through our service to healthcare providers across the country and through a variety of programs aimed at expanding our purpose into the lives of our employees and the communities we serve."

"Before the pandemic, many of us were going a hundred miles per hour," says Naftolin. "We needed to stop, pivot, and look inward at our well-being. We needed to be intentional in our thinking, which was – and still is – a struggle for many. The pandemic helped show reps that they are human and that perfection is unattainable. It brought feelings that had been present for years to the surface."

He believes the lesson of the "Three Ps" – championed by Henry Schein Executive Director of Strategic Accounts Brad Clark – has much to offer in terms of well-being. The



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Concordance Healthcare Solutions has trademarked "Positively Impacting Lives" to emphasize its dedication to having a positive effect on employees, healthcare providers and their patients. In January 2022, the company launched an employee volunteer program named "Concordance in the Community," which allows staff members to volunteer in their community during normal working hours, up to eight hours annually.

first "P" – Personal – refers to looking inward at one's personal journey. The second – Perceptive – refers to having or showing sensitive insight with a focus on being intentional. The third – Prospective – has to do with looking forward and being adaptable to change. "Looking at life through this lens has changed my vision of my future, and I hope it helps others see their own path."

Employee-centered culture

The Concordance in the Community program is the company's way of giving back and serving the communities they serve and that support Concordance's business and livelihoods, says Nersesian.



Doreen Nersesian

Time to stop

It's no coincidence that Henry Schein launched its Mental Wellness Committee in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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“Inherently, I think people like to help others,” she says. “Being given the latitude by your employer and getting paid for doing so gives employees the freedom to give back and help their community. Our healthcare providers and their patients are members of our respective communities. The patient that we are providing for in the hospital could very easily receive some sort of benefit from what we do in our community at large. We see Concordance in the Community as an ideal foundational program to build our employee-centered culture and to positively impact lives...on many levels.”

An essential element of an employee-centered culture is recognizing and acting on the needs and interests of employees beyond the work environment, she adds. “It is one more element that connects employees to the work environment of today. We realize employees spend a lot of time at work, and the more they can align their interests with the company culture, the better the connectivity. ... I understand the separation of work from personal life, but I think if employees have the support at work in interests they have outside of work, they could be connected more.”

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Resiliency

Naftolin believes that the changes and challenges of the pandemic prioritized mental health and resiliency among the Henry Schein workforces. “Our sales force has always worked remotely, but the environment changed. Reps were unable to visit their customers in person for almost one and a half years. That meant that even their remote work routines had to change, and this is where the need to build resiliency and become more intentional with how we work came in.

“There were also new concerns for reps. Having a place to express those feelings in a safe environment was necessary.” Henry Schein created a microsite for employees with resources on topics such as working remotely, caregiving, mental health, emotional health, financial wellness and more.

“There are many differences from 10 to 15 years ago that have been taking shape, regardless of COVID,” he

says. “Being able to extol the features and benefits of product is no longer sufficient. We must be able to show the customer how the product will improve their business (efficiency, revenue, etc.). And with COVID, we must be able to do that through both in-person and virtual selling.

“Additionally, the complexity of the medical landscape has been increasing the demands on reps’ time.” But they can rely on teams outside of sales to help provide service and support, Naftolin says. For example, Marketing can help educate customers and provide qualified leads, and E-commerce can help create a self-service and seamless buying experience.

“In the end, as a salesforce we trust our leadership and the direction that our company continues to go in. Loyalty, purpose, and service is reflected by the tenure of our sales team. Even during the most difficult of times, we continue to see growth in our business and others wanting to join our organization.”

Bringing it to life

Creating an employee-centered culture – one that people trust – is a deliberate process. It doesn’t happen overnight.

“You need to start somewhere and start small,” says Nersesian. “Pilot something and have someone close to the initiative, so it gets the attention it needs and gets off to the right start. We piloted our Inclusive Hire program at our headquarters in Tiffin, Ohio. We worked out kinks early on, before we introduced it to the rest of the company. Once we were able to fine-tune the program, it was easier to roll it out to other facilities.”

The company followed the same process with other initiatives, such as Concordance Cares for You (CC4U), an employee assistance fund, as well as Concordance in the Community. “We listened to the feedback from employee surveys and used suggestions to gradually introduce new programs, so employees and the company could grasp and incorporate the new programs.”

The manager’s role

Both Concordance and Henry Schein believe managers are a crucial link in building an effective companywide program to promote wellbeing.

“We find that educating our leaders – supervisors and above – when we introduce a new program is crucial to its deployment and success,” says Nersesian. “More recently we have had meetings via Teams where we go over program highlights and field any questions

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so they can address them with their respective teams. We find that this approach helps streamline the rollout of the program.”

Concordance has also developed a team of volunteer ambassadors at each location to promote volunteer opportunities within local communities and team events. Some managers have become volunteer ambassadors themselves, and others support their staff in doing so. Since the rollout of Concordance in the Community, the company has had team meetings during which a volunteer event was planned for the city in which the meeting took place, she adds. “Aside from what they are doing for the community, it is an excellent teambuilding exercise.”

Henry Schein’s partnership with YES Community Counseling Center, an external non-profit organization, helps the company deliver education on wellness awareness to all people managers in the United States, says Naftolin. These education sessions highlight the importance of a manager’s role in supporting their team’s overall wellness, he adds.

“Years ago, reps might not have asked for help or looked for assistance.”



For example, managers learn how to identify when a rep may be struggling and how best to approach that rep in an effective manner. For managers to be effective, the company must foster a culture based on trust, openness and vulnerability, he says.

“A present manager is one of the most important aspects of a cohesive team. As a manager, I always strived to be a sounding board for my team. My goal was to support them no matter what, and work with them regularly in the field. I would call them just to say hello and ask how they were doing. I would foster that relationship individually, as I do with customers.

“A manager must be intentional in their support for their team,” he continues. “They must do their best to understand the feelings and needs of their reps. They must be able to talk to them and show empathy toward them. Being there when a rep needs you most is one of the strongest actions a manager can take.”

Managers are the first line of defense to help their teams, and they need to take the time to build trust so their team can come to them in times of need, continues Naftolin. “I have always said that managers need to have difficult conversations and help direct and support the mental health of their reps. Henry Schein has, and continues to, implement support tools for its managers. In turn, we see that reps feel more comfortable having those courageous conversations.

“Years ago, reps might not have uttered the words, asked for help, or looked for assistance. Today, there is a deeper understanding and acceptance of resources that can help identify and address mental health awareness in the workplace.”

The bottom line

Ensuring that reps feel connected to the company’s purpose is important to Henry Schein’s bottom line, he says. “When a company provides a work environment that prioritizes career development, enables work-life balance, and connects team members to their purpose, they will retain and attract top talent. When team members feel connected and understand the importance of their role in healthcare, they naturally provide an improved, seamless experience for the customer. This influences a customer’s loyalty and impacts customer acquisition and retention costs.

“My motto is, ‘What we do in life, echoes in eternity.’ These are words I live by every day. We all need a motto or a mission statement that will guide each of us to our own personal success and help maintain a healthy wellbeing.” 