Temat 15: How to measure employee well-being – 4 metrics you need to track

It's a well-known fact that there's a direct link between employee performance and their mental and physical well-being. It's simple – if you give your team the means to recover from work, you'll avoid the havoc a heavy workload can wreak on your team.

Sid Sijbrandij, GitLab co-founder and CEO puts this nicely by stating that:

There's individual freedom, and there's peer pressure. As a company, we should take a lot of care that there's no peer pressure to work long hours.
Everyone is used to that [being pressured]. At every company I've been at, that was a celebrated thing. We have to be super, super careful that we do not celebrate that at GitLab.

What few organizations realize, however, is that the traditional approach to well-being metrics might be insufficient or even distort the image you have of your team's work-life balance. Here's where team interaction data can help.

At Network Perspective, we conducted an analysis of several large companies (in total, approximately 10,000 employees at all levels of seniority). We ran their data by 4 key well-being metrics – time spent on meetings after hours, emails after hours, time from first to last daily activity, and the time since the last 'balanced' week. Below, you'll see:

- an explanation of each metric,
- what our data revealed,
- how to measure each metric for your organization,
- how to avoid common analytics' mistakes.

4 well-being metrics worth tracking & results from our study

All of the metrics discussed below will help fill any informational gaps you might be having on team interactions, since the introduction of remote work during COVID.

#1 Time spent on meeting after hours – 1.4 hours/week/employee

Our study reveals that most employees in large companies (i.e., those employing more than 1000 people) spend **an average of 1.4 hours each week on meetings after hours**. While this might not seem like a lot, bear in mind that some weeks might even see an increase of 4-5 hours. And, if your team ends up working 9 hours a day, this could lead to serious burnout over time.

You can calculate this number for your business by looking at meetings after hours for all employees, regardless of their seniority levels. This might tell you how your team's everyday work is shaped.

Why can this metric be tricky?

Firstly, the experience of leaders is different from the experience of an IC. Even when you have a low average for the entire company, when you narrow down your search to leaders, the numbers might skyrocket.
For instance, at a company we cooperate with, managers are partially responsible for its implementation of the well-being program among their subordinates (which means additional work).

As we've discussed in a previous piece, companies should give an oxygen mask to leaders first, as they won't support others' well-being if they themselves are suffering.

#2 Emails written after hours – 20 emails/week/employee

Take the entire number of emails sent from your domain during the week and filter out those sent before or after operating hours.

Our findings reveal that the average employee sends **20 emails after working hours per week**. This means four emails each day, so, four things the employee has to do for work in their spare time.

Why can this metric be tricky?

People might be writing emails in the evening and scheduling them for the next morning. You won't see those emails in your analysis. That's why it's crucial to fill any gaps by conducting regular 1:1 meetings to discuss each employees' work-life balance.

#3: Time since the first to last daily activity – 10-11 hours/employee/week

In this metric, you take the average number of hours since the employees' first work activity and last during each day.

Our study shows that **the average is 10-11 hours**, however, it's rising year over year.

Why can this metric be tricky?

It only shows how long people are logged on to company tools. Some employees might schedule free time during the day. What we recommend doing is counting this metric based on actual, verifiable work activity (for example, the emails sent). For this, you might reach for more sophisticated, ONA tools.

Metric #4: Time since last balanced week – 12 weeks

To calculate whether your team had ‘a balanced week’, you look at whether they haven’t worked a single day for more than 9 hours. If the number of extra hours is ‘zero’, then you can assume your team isn’t overloaded with tasks. However, if you see overtime, you need to do more research.

Go through the calendar and find when the last balanced week took place. Look at a sample of several weeks/months and aim to understand – are people spending more time because we’re in the middle of a project, or is this chronic?

I generally recommend conducting an analysis if your team hasn’t had a balanced week for at least 4 weeks.

Why can this metric be tricky?

There are two reasons:

- Some teams might have 50 weeks of 9+ hour workdays, but their working style and team setup might lead them to be happy with the state of things. Do, however, make sure it is so by conducting meetings or running anonymous employee satisfaction surveys.
- You should not calculate this metric using time from first to last daily activity. Consider following our methodology, i.e., measuring the time on meetings supplemented with 15 minutes of work time for each email employees send.

What can you do to improve employee well-being? Three tips

With the metrics now discussed, let’s take a look at a few tips on how you can better nourish your employees’ well-being.

1. As a leader, **send a clear message to your team that working after work hours is neither healthy nor required**.
2. As a leader, **be an example to others**: do not organize meetings after 6 PM, and do not send emails or messages after work.
3. If you schedule lots of emails to be sent in the early-morning hours on a regular basis, you’re sending a signal to your people that working outside of work hours is expected (and is the only way to be seen as a valuable team member).

Closing remarks

The traditional people analytics approach fails to take into account crucial, interaction data. That’s why I highly recommend measuring the above four metrics. Be sure, however, to avoid common mistakes, such as not accounting for different working styles or the varying context between regular employees and leaders.

There are three ways in which you can start measuring the above metrics today.

On an individual level, you can analyze your calendar – it's a great starting point to understanding how many hours of overtime you experience.

If you want to do the same for your team, you can download and analyze your employee data in Excel to get a bird's eye view. That said, given the variety of tasks you might already be engaged in, it's worth considering using ONA tools like [Network Perspective](). It will automatically conduct the analysis for you, and all you'll have to do is come up with the right action plan to tackle the issues you uncover.

Reach out if you'd like to learn more about how team interaction data can support you in creating a better employee well-being environment.

Scaffold for content

Audience

High intent

Title / lead / beginning

How to measure employee well-being – 4 metrics you need to be aware of

Topic / main thesis

Few organizations realize that the traditional approach to well-being metrics might be insufficient. The reason for this is that they fail to include team interaction data into analytics, though it stores crucial well-being information.

Relevance of the topic to the audience

#1 Time spent on meeting after hours – 1.4 hours/week/employee

- **Case study:** NP analysis
- **Factoid/ key number: 1.4 hours/week**
- **expert advice / insiders tip / insiders know-how:**
    - Calculate this number by looking at meetings after hours for all employees, regardless of their seniority levels.
    - Why can this metric be tricky?
        - Firstly, the experience of leaders is different from the experience of an IC. Even when you have a low average for the entire company, when you narrow down your search to leaders, the numbers might skyrocket.

        - For instance, at a company we cooperate with, managers are partially responsible for its implementation of the well-being program among their subordinates (which means additional work).
        - You should give an oxygen maks to leaders first.

#2 Emails written after hours – 20 emails/week/employee

- **Case study: NP analysis**
- **Factoid/ key number: 20 emails after working hours per week**
- **expert advice / insiders tip / insiders know-how:**
    - Take the entire number of emails sent from your domain during the week and filter out those sent before or after operating hours.
    - Why can this metric be tricky?
        - People might be writing emails in the evening and scheduling them for the next morning. You won't see those emails in your analysis.
        - Fill any informational gaps by conducting regular 1:1 meetings to discuss each employees' work-life balance.

#3: Time since the first to last daily activity – 10-11 hours/employee/week

- **Case study: NP analysis**
- **Factoid/ key number: 10-11 hours**/employee/week
- **expert advice / insiders tip / insiders know-how:**
    - In this metric, you take the average number of hours since the employees' first work activity and last during each day.
    - What can this metric be tricky?
        - It only shows how long people are logged on to company tools. Some employees might schedule free time during the day.
        - Counting this metric based on actual, verifiable work activity (for example, the emails sent).

#4 Time since last balanced week –

Why can this metric be tricky?

There are two reasons:

- Some teams might have 50 weeks of 9+ hour workdays, but their working style and team setup might lead them to be happy with the state of things. Do, however, make sure it is so by conducting meetings or running anonymous employee satisfaction surveys.

- You should not calculate this metric using time since first to last daily activity. Consider following our methodology, i.e., measuring the time on meetings supplemented with 15 minutes of work time for each email employees send.

    - **Case study:**
    - **Factoid/ key number:**
    - **expert advice / insiders tip / insiders know-how:**
        - To calculate whether your team had ‘a balanced week’, you look at whether they haven’t worked a single day for more than 9 hours. If the number of extra hours is ‘zero’, then you can assume your team isn’t overloaded with tasks. However, if you see overtime, you need to do more research.
        - Go through the calendar and find when the last balanced week took place. Look at a sample of several weeks/months and aim to understand – are people spending more time because we’re in the middle of a project, or is this chronic?
        - Conduct an analysis if your team hasn’t had a balanced week for at least 4 weeks.
        - Why can this metric be tricky?
            - Some teams might have 50 weeks of 9+ hour workdays, but their working style and team setup might lead them to be happy with the state of things. Make sure it is so by conducting meetings or running anonymous employee satisfaction surveys.
            - Do not calculate this metric using time from first to last daily activity. Consider following our methodology, i.e., measuring the time on meetings supplemented with 15 minutes of work time for each email employees send.

Closing remarks

The traditional people analytics approach fails to take into account crucial, interaction data. That’s why I highly recommend measuring the above four metrics.

Be sure to avoid common mistakes, such as not accounting for different working styles or the varying context between regular employees and leaders.

Three recommended methods:

1.) On an individual level: analyze your calendar – it’s a great starting point to understanding how many hours of overtime you experience.
2.) For a small team: conduct a manual analysis in Excel. Download and analyze your employee data in the spreadsheet to get a bird’s eye view.
3.) For larger team: Leverage ONA tools such as Network Perspective to automate the analysis and look at the metrics at scale.

CTA

Goal: depends on the purpose the scaffold is used for. Among others, it can be:

- Asking readers to reach out to discuss Network Perspective's solution in more detail (Reach out if you'd like to learn more about how team interaction data can support you in creating a better employee well-being environment.).
- Reaching out on LinkedIn/email
- Signing up for a dedicated webinar