

CATEGORY	OUTSTANDING	EXCELLENT	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
ABSENTEEISM					
PRESENTEEISM					
WORK ENGAGEMENT					
LIFE SATISFACTION					
WORK DISTRESS					

THE WORKPLACE OUTCOMES SUITE: Measuring the Real Impact of Employee Assistance

AN EMPATHIA REPORT

While the volume and types of employee assistance programs continue to increase, the HR industry faces a perennial question: how effective are they? More and more, employee assistance providers need to demonstrate measurable outcomes for their services.

Historically, EAP providers have turned to end-user utilization rates, client referrals, satisfaction surveys or even employee click-throughs on a Web site to illustrate value. However, none of these truly address whether employees have become more productive at work as a result of having overcome depression, stress, substance abuse, marital conflicts or other challenges to emotional well-being.

While many vendors have created their own proprietary measurement tools, most are not validated by a third party. Employers and HR professionals expect well-researched, statistically valid and reliable metrics that credibly support the value of workplace services.

Enter the Workplace Outcomes Suite (WOS), a comprehensive measurement tool that focuses on employee absenteeism, presenteeism, life satisfaction, work engagement, and workplace distress—all critical areas that link emotional well-being with performance.

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WOS applies scientific rigor to the process of surveying employees and determines whether they are achieving positive outcomes—and whether employers are seeing the benefits of increased staff productivity and other effects. The scientifically-validated questions, developed by Chestnut Global Partners scientist Dr. Richard Lennox, revolve around absenteeism, work engagement, work satisfaction, life satisfaction and workplace distress. In an effort to determine if progress has been sustained, the questionnaire is administered at the initial EAP assessment, final follow-up (case closure) and approximately four weeks after the final follow-up.

Several employee assistance organizations are using the Workplace Outcomes Suite on a “pilot” basis with a particular customer organization. Rather than employ it with a particular company, Empathia chose to pilot the Workplace Outcomes Suite as a *standard of care* practice with *all* of its client organizations.

After just 241 clients, the pilot program has already revealed a significant increase in work engagement and life satisfaction, a reduction in hours of missed work and workplace distress, and a significant decrease in presenteeism (disengaged employees that diminish productivity). Here’s how the results stack up:

Empathia Final Analysis (N=241)						
WOS Score	Pre-test		Post-test		N	2-tailed Statistical Significance
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Absenteeism	15.41	30.15	8.13	29.52	241	0.000 ^a
Presenteeism	3.35	1.44	2.63	1.33	241	0.000
Work Engagement	2.92	1.35	3.32	1.19	241	0.000
Life Satisfaction	2.74	1.22	3.54	1.03	241	0.000
Workplace Distress	2.69	1.47	2.24	1.21	241	0.000

Note: ^a Wilcoxon signed ranks tests was used to test the significance of the reduction in missed hours of work. Although the 2-tailed test is reported, the 1-tailed test is appropriate in this directional test of the hypotheses, which means that the presented significance levels should actually be divided by 2

Absenteeism: Average hours missed dropped from 15.41 to 8.13. The larger sample produces a much smaller standard deviation providing support for the stability of the data in the larger sample. As expected, the distribution was highly skewed, necessitating the use of a nonparametric statistical test. A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Tests found the reduction in hours of missed work to be statistically significant (p=.000).

Presenteeism: The average presenteeism score dropped from 3.35 to 2.63, again showing a significant reduction ($p=.000$) in the average amount of diminished productivity caused by the presenting personal problem, using the single items version of the scale.

Work Engagement: The results showed a significant increase ($p=.000$) in work engagement score from 2.92 to 3.32, suggesting an improvement in the degree of involvement in one's job ($p=.000$).

Life Satisfaction: The results also found a significant increase ($p=.000$) in life satisfaction scales scores from 2.74 to 3.54, indicating an improvement in overall life satisfaction after the intervention ($p=.000$).

Workplace Distress: The reduction in workplace distress was also found to be statistically significant ($p=.000$), indicating an improvement in the degree to which subjects experienced aversive feelings about the workplace.

...the survey focuses on workplace effects rather than clinical outcomes.

“While we liked the original version of the Workplace Outcomes Suite, we had concerns about how to best incorporate 25 questions into a client-focused, conversational-style assessment process,” said Philip Chard, president and CEO of Empathia. “Frankly, we were concerned about using a lengthy tool that might impair our overall assessment process by turning off clients. So we worked with Rik Lennox, the WOS researcher, to develop a shorter version from the existing set of questions, and came up with a nine-question version that retains a high level of validity and allows us to quantify the outcome that our services produce for our employer clients. Further, the nine-question version has enabled us to incorporate a discussion about meaningful outcomes directly with our clients. We believe this makes for a more meaningful client engagement experience.”

Empathia is the only firm using the nine-question format, as opposed to the typical 25-question measure. Another key difference is that the survey focuses on workplace effects rather than clinical outcomes.

The Workplace Outcomes Suite enhances the EAP client experience by:

- Providing a framework for setting goals/objectives and seeing results
- Helping a client to be more focused on achieving goals and objectives
- Sustaining longer term positive behavior change
- Providing counselors with data that indicates their involvement was effective and useful

In order to determine outcomes, follow-up interaction must be made with clients. EAPs have historically struggled with direct client contact during follow-up attempts—typically having to rely on leaving a message and hoping the client calls back. The further from the date of intake the follow-up occurs, the less likely the chance for direct client contact.

Empathia addresses the direct follow-up contact issue by expanding on its whole-health and well-being intake assessment model, while helping increase the client's anticipation of follow-up with them to discuss their progress, and to explore meaningful new goals and future growth opportunities.

Traditionally, and often in general practice, EAP intake counselors view their role as primarily triage and initial assessment, along with referral for ongoing assessment (in-person) and/or treatment. Even when additional EAP services are available, intake counselors tend to perceive their role as short-term. By pairing Empathia's whole-health and well-being assessment model with the use of workplace outcome measures, counselors can deepen their level of engagement with clients and better perceive the potential long-term impact on a client's life. Armed with workplace outcome metrics, counselors can focus on engaging clients in meaningful change to support personal and organizational well-being, safety, and productivity.

Empathia is currently focused on collecting Workplace Outcomes Suite data that will be compared between clients who voluntarily access EAP services and those who have been referred to the EAP by their employer due to work performance issues. Experts believe there are significant outcomes to explore between these two types of clients, including increased productivity, employee engagement, and financial impact when defined in relation to employee salary/wages.

Prior to the Workplace Outcomes Suite, employers had to rely on satisfaction surveys that don't truly show how effective a program has been in helping people address personal issues that affect their work. Now, they can obtain validated metrics that:

- Demonstrate meaningful changes in employee behavior, facilitated by their interactions with the EAP, that are highly correlated with performance, productivity and personal well-being.
- Inform decisions about how to focus EAP services in those areas most likely to improve employee well-being and productivity.
- Translate the impact of EAP services into financial measures that offer a meaningful appraisal of the organization's return-on-investment.

About Empathia, Inc.: Empathia provides behavioral health solutions that improve the well-being, safety and productivity of organizations and individuals. The company collaborates with private and public sector entities from expansive Fortune 500 corporations to small businesses in addressing a diverse range of needs: employee assistance, disaster response and planning, work-life balance, employee relations, leadership development, training and benefits support. Founded in 1982 under the name NEAS, Empathia has distinguished itself as a quality leader dedicated to creating a superior customer experience for both client organizations and employees. For more information, visit www.empathia.com.