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You are looking after your clients, but who is looking after your team?

Most business owners pour energy into looking after their clients. As much energy as you put into your client experience, why are we not putting that same energy into our employee experience? They are the biggest assets and advocates for your business if they are looked after.

When last did you take a serious look at how your team is doing, not performing, but genuinely doing?

The 2026 Gallup State of the Global Workplace report puts the reality into stark numbers. Only 20% of employees globally are engaged at work. In South Africa, that figure drops to 18%, below the global average and a five-point decline from where we were just a few years ago. That means 82% of South African employees are showing up, but not fully present. Not thriving, or bringing their best.

This is not always an indicator of lack of motivation, it could be an environment issue that has crept in unconsciously. When people are stressed, overloaded, and operating without psychological safety, they do not disengage because they want to. They disengage because the environment makes full engagement unsustainable.

Burnout does not announce itself. It creeps in through the back door over time, missed deadlines, short tempers, quiet quitting, and high staff turnover that costs businesses far more than any well-being programme or team building activity ever would.

The shift happening right now in forward-thinking organisations is away from once-off wellness days and towards structured, consistent programmes that address the real drivers of disengagement: stress load, human connection, physical and mental health, and behavioural awareness as well as behaviour management.

The biggest barrier is not always about budget. There are tools and techniques that do not require significant financial resources. The biggest barrier is business leaders not facing or asking the hard questions, with the fear of opening up a can of worms, or not knowing where to start.

Having the courage to make well-being a business decision rather than a tick-box exercise or afterthought is where the long-term cultural shift begins, and where overall vitality and longevity in the team grows. There is no race or formalised starting block.

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Start with a conversation. Ask your team how they are, make time for it, and listen to the answers deeply. This could be in group or individual settings. You will be surprised what a long way pure communication and connection can go.

Once the ball is rolling and consistent, your team will share the same language, awareness, and build organic connections and appreciation through the process.

Off the back of an interactive workshop recently, some anonymous feedback from staff when asked what they enjoyed most about the session:

- "I enjoyed that it brought everyone together and allowed me to see things from their perspectives."
- "I enjoyed the fact that we were put into random groups for both activities which allowed me to bond with many different people from my team."
- "The fact that everyone was made comfortable enough to share their thoughts."

This process does not need to be over complicated.

Start by asking yourself, are your people Coping, Contributing, Connecting, and Cultivating Performance?

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