

How Mental Wellness Drives Performance: What Every Leader Needs to Know

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Today's leaders are navigating business landscapes that are more complex, fast-paced, and unpredictable than ever before. Add in market volatility, resource constraints, generational shifts, and the rise of hybrid work, and many teams are hitting their mental and emotional capacity.

As performance demands increase, the pressure on leaders to maintain both results and wellbeing is intensifying. So how does this environment affect performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels? And how can leaders recognize the early warning signs, and respond with strategies that actually work?

We partnered with our internal research division, the Premier Mindset Institute (PMI), to identify the key behavioral factors that sit at the intersection of mental wellness and high performance.



What we found is simple but powerful:
five behavioral domains that underlie whether employees are thriving or simply surviving.

The Five Behavioral Drivers of Sustainable High Performance

The five behavioral domains were identified through a technique called group concept mapping. Group concept mapping is an approach that relies on content matter experts to identify what is important for a given topic. In this case, researchers at the PMI prompted business leaders to list the behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that contribute to optimal mental health and performance for their employees. Researchers at the PMI took this information and identified five domains as being critical to the mental wellness and performance of employees. These behavioral indicators can serve as early signals for leaders seeking to optimize both wellbeing and output across their teams.



Recovery: Creating Space to Recharge

Burnout is no longer a fringe issue; it's a workplace epidemic. Deloitte's 2022 survey found that 77% of professionals have experienced burnout in their current roles (Deloitte, 2022). Research from the PMI shows similar trends, with only 10% of employees reporting they "always" take time to mentally disconnect from work. Recovery is the foundation of sustainable performance. It's not just about rest, it's about building in space to reset and recharge, so energy and focus remain consistent over time.

Outcomes that signal strong Recovery:

- Steady, consistent performance with minimal energy crashes
- Clear focus and decision-making even under sustained pressure
- Low rates of absenteeism and emotional fatigue

Outcomes that signal poor Recovery:

- Midweek burnout or persistent low energy
- Frequent expressions of overwhelm or disengagement
- Presence without productivity - "showing up," but not fully functioning

Many high-performing leaders intentionally protect time for hobbies and personal interests; not just for fun, but to recharge mentally and return to work with greater focus and energy. In fact, a recent Harvard Business Review article found that top CEOs often devote significant time to personal pursuits to maintain their performance and wellbeing (Harvard Business Review, 2023). Encourage your team to make time for their interests outside of work. This will help reduce burnout and boost performance.



Mindful Intention: Working with Focus and Purpose

In a world of endless notifications and competing priorities, focus has become a rare and valuable commodity. Mindful Intention is the practice of working deliberately – setting goals, managing distractions, and maintaining alignment with what matters most.

Outcomes that signal strong Mindful Intention:

- Completion of priority tasks with high accuracy and minimal rework
- Seamless task-switching with clear direction and intention
- Alignment between daily efforts and broader team or organizational goals

Outcomes that signal weak Mindful Intention:

- Lack of clarity on priorities or next steps
- Frequent task-switching and distraction, leading to inefficiency
- Little reflection on progress or impact

According to Harvard Business Review, employees who set daily goals and take short mental breaks demonstrate 23% greater focus and 18% higher job satisfaction (HBR, 2022). Yet, PMI data shows that only 9% of employees “always” set clear, realistic goals for their work. Encourage your team to set daily or weekly goals, and make sure you celebrate wins no matter how small.



Performance Mindset: Connecting Effort to Growth

In a world of endless notifications and competing priorities, focus has become a rare and valuable commodity. Mindful Intention is the practice of working deliberately – setting goals, managing distractions, and maintaining alignment with what matters most.

Outcomes that signal a strong Performance Mindset:

- Steady motivation and momentum through complexity or uncertainty
- Willingness to take on stretch opportunities and apply feedback
- Fast recovery from setbacks or missed targets

Outcomes that signal a weak Performance Mindset:

- Withdrawal or disengagement when work becomes difficult
- Reluctance to pursue growth opportunities or accept feedback
- Rumination on setbacks that impedes forward motion

PMI research with elite athletes confirms this pattern: the highest performers consistently train their mindset to stay adaptable, purpose-driven, and grounded under pressure. Work with your team to find ways to get more comfortable with change and to build resilience. Ask your team to reflect on the work they find motivating, and to focus on the aspects of their work they can control.



Relational Dynamics: Trust and Communication in Action

No team performs well without trust. Relational Dynamics refers to how people interact. Does your team give feedback constructively, communicate openly, and remain flexible in the face of interpersonal challenges?

Outcomes that signal strong Relational Dynamics:

- Regular, low-conflict communication – even in high-stakes situations
- Frequent and constructive feedback exchanges
- Strong collaboration across roles, departments, and stress levels

Outcomes that signal weak Relational Dynamics:

- Avoidance of difficult conversations or interpersonal tension
- Feedback is either withheld or sparks defensiveness
- Siloed work, limited collaboration, and rising interpersonal friction

Google's Project Aristotle found that teams with high psychological safety are 27% more likely to perform well, and 76% more likely to report full engagement (Google, 2015). PMI findings reinforce that trust and feedback quality often make the difference between collaboration and burnout in high-pressure teams. Encourage open conversations between you and your team. Actively seek feedback and seize opportunities to strengthen and build new relationships.



Team Culture: Creating Clarity and Belonging

Team Culture defines how supported, safe, and aligned people feel. It's the glue that holds high-performing teams together, and the friction point when things fall apart.

Outcomes that signal a strong Team Culture:

- Teams move with clarity and aligned expectations
- High participation in meetings, idea-sharing, and peer support
- High retention and morale, even during external change

Outcomes that signal weak Team Culture:

- Unclear roles, misaligned priorities, and duplicated efforts
- Hesitancy to contribute ideas or flag risks
- Inconsistent engagement and elevated turnover

A 2023 CultureAmp study found that employees who feel supported and valued are 41% more likely to stay, and teams with strong cultures are 24% more productive (CultureAmp, 2023). Internal research from PMI echoes this: alignment and belonging are core drivers of team resilience. Ensure your team members have clear roles and feel valued for their work. Consider creating role clarification documents and team goals to strengthen cohesion amongst your team.

Leading at the Intersection of Wellness and Performance

According to the American Psychological Association, organizations that support both wellness and performance behaviors see up to 56% improvement in engagement and retention (APA, 2023).

Wellness and performance aren't opposing forces, they're interdependent. When leaders actively model and support the five behavioral drivers above, teams don't just feel better, they perform better.

The takeaway? Sustainable success starts with leadership. Those who invest in reflection, recovery, intentionality, and growth create the conditions where people thrive, and where performance becomes the natural result of wellbeing.



Want to Help Your Leaders and Teams Perform Without Burning Out?



Explore how Premier Performance Advising helps organizations transform wellness into a competitive advantage — grounded in performance psychology.

Additionally, learn more about our proprietary Mindset Assessments at the link below. Our team of researchers at the PMI have developed an assessment to measure how you and your employees are doing in the five behavioral domains identified as being critical to supporting your mental wellness and performance. Complete the “Request an Assessment” form on the web page to learn more.

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