

# GAIN FROM WELLNESS: Quick wins from a healthy workplace

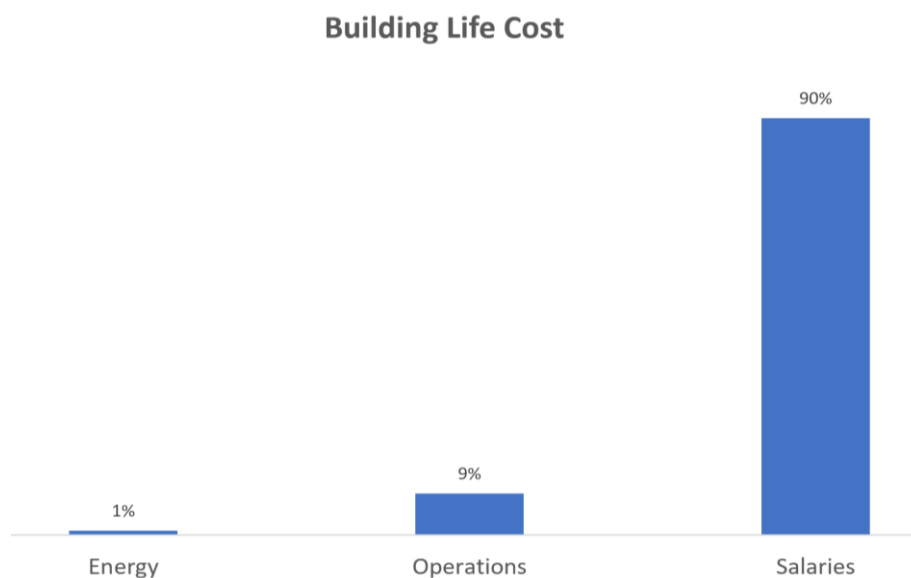
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Facility Management, like most empirical disciplines, produces many experts and professionals that sometimes can have different ideas or interpretations about the dynamics of their field. It is therefore not surprising that Facility Management seminars are notoriously varied with views and diverging opinions. However, occasionally, one would find seemingly opposing views are actually arguments from two sides of the same coin.

It pays to focus on things that matter the most. The challenge is to identify what really matters. Why do buildings matter? It's because we spend about 90% of our time in one type of building or another. The next and more important question is; which is more important, buildings or humans? Perhaps statistics that can help us to find the answer.

There is a somewhat common agreement (as good as it gets as far as the facility management fraternity is concerned) that throughout the life of a facility post completion, 1% is spent on energy (electricity, gas, etc.). Another 9% is the cost of operating and maintaining the building. The remaining 90% is actually spent on the salaries of the people occupying the building. So apparently, we humans, are more important.



Therefore, it is important that people can perform their activities in the workspace, just as well as the workspace needs to be at the right condition for people to work. Lest we forget, the workplace can have an effect to a person's wellbeing. Studies have shown that environment and lifestyle are highly significant factors on a person's state of health.

Health and wellness is widely touted as the next trillion-dollar industry. It is a well-known fact that today's lifestyle is not as healthy as it used to be. Employers are now, more than before, putting emphasis on how they can remedy this, which would have a win-win outcome. Malaysia, at 44%, has the highest percentage of obesity in South East Asia. In general people are far too sedentary with personnel in certain industries doing little than just sitting in front of their computers hardly moving all day. This, of course, has a very detrimental effect on one's health.

So, to do good productive work one has to be healthy and since a substantial proportion of our time is spent in the workplace, what can the workplace offer to help us keep well? There are seven elements of a healthy workplace and the table below lists them out. These seven elements are assessed by the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) in their certification program. It provides a good starting point for organisations in making their workspaces a healthier place.

The table below lists them out including some quick win suggestions that are easily implementable.

WORKPLACE WELLNESS ELEMENT	QUICK WINS
Provision of clean air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care in reducing Volatile Organic Content (VOC) when bringing in or installing furniture, carpentry.</li> <li>• Having live plants in the work area reduces CO<sub>2</sub> by 50%. General guide is to have one plant for every three employees.</li> </ul>
Healthy Nourishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only have healthy foods at pantry. Items that have high sugar, high calorie shall not be present.</li> <li>• Consumption of fruits and vegetables are to be encouraged.</li> </ul>
Availability of good ambient light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilisation of natural light as much as possible</li> </ul>
Fitness facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote usage of stairs by making them more appealing via good décor</li> <li>• Allocate space for physical activity such as table tennis, treadmill, mini gym</li> <li>• Provide shower facilities</li> </ul>
Drinking water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of dedicated drinking water which is separate from water used for other purposes such as washing</li> <li>• The water shall be provided free of charge and be within 30 metres of all employees.</li> </ul>
Ease the mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce more plants within the office space. This infuses the mind with a sense of calmness and peace. Studies show that tension and anxiety can be reduced by as much as 37% simply by having plants around.</li> </ul>
Provide comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a space for collaboration and also quiet space for work that requires concentration</li> </ul>

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And there it is, why health and wellness are important, and what can be done to quickly start off on the right footing. All the best!