EAPs Can and DO Achieve Positive Workplace Outcomes

WOS, an EAPA-endorsed Tool, is Demonstrating the Effectiveness of EAPs

WORKPLACE OUTCOME SUITE (WOS)

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

CGP
CHESTNUT GLOBAL PARTNERS

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Introduction

The Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) is an easy-to-administer tool developed by the Chestnut Global Partners (CGP) Division of Commercial Science. The WOS is currently the only publicly available, free instrument that has been psychometrically validated and tested for use in EAP settings.

At EAPA's World EAP Conference in San Diego in 2015, **the Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) endorsed the WOS as an EAP Best Practice** for measuring and evaluating work-related outcomes of services provided by EAPs. In voicing its support, EAPA believes that it can collectively advance the field by encouraging EAP providers and professionals to use the same "yardstick" or tool for measuring workplace outcomes.

"This is the only way as a field we will ever be able to truly compare and study outcomes across program models, industries, geographies, referral types, and other variables," said Greg DeLapp, CEO of EAPA.

To continue to thrive, the EAP field needs to be able to measure and demonstrate its effectiveness in quantifiable ***business terms***. The historical focus for measuring EAP success has been on utilization rates, client satisfaction, and occasional surveys of symptom reduction or problem resolution – but none of these are actual workplace outcomes. Companies, government agencies, and other organizations in today's world are looking for objective data to validate and justify all expenditures. The WOS helps EA professionals do just that in a credible way.

Recognizing that the WOS represents a significant step forward in realizing that goal, EAPA and CGP developed a joint agreement with a two-part objective for furthering the awareness and use of the WOS:

- EAPA will promote and encourage the adoption of the WOS as a standard EAP practice; and
- In turn, CGP will produce for EAPA members (as an exclusive EAPA member benefit) an annual report, which pools all of the pre/post WOS data collected across the EAP industry.

This free report updates EAPA members regarding the latest data and information about the **significant, positive results that outcome measurement with the WOS is having on the EAP profession**.

What does the WOS Measure?

The Workplace Outcome Suite (WOS) uses a short, precise, and easy-to-administer survey that collects EAP specific outcome data on both before (pre) and after (post) EAP services. Thus, the WOS is a measure of change that examines five key aspects of workplace functioning: **absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, life satisfaction, and workplace distress.** The ease of use is a crucial point since most outcome measures are too long or time consuming, consider only one aspect, and/or are expensive to purchase or administer. Key features of the WOS include:

- Scientifically validated and tested (Lennox, Sharar, et al, 2010 *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*)
- Focused on workplace (not clinical) outcomes
- Free with the signing of a license agreement – Go to the EAPA website: bit.ly/WOS-License-Agreement
- The WOS-5 in particular is short (five items) and able to detect sensitive change and was derived from the original 25-item version

Why is the WOS so necessary?

Most consumers are passionate about understanding the actual value of their purchases. Similarly, employers will choose their particular version of value, which is always a balance between costs and perceived or expected benefits and results. In the context of EAP, value can be defined as "outcomes achieved relative to cost incurred". If you accept this definition of value, then demonstrating value requires the measurement of outcomes.

Employers have not traditionally viewed EAP outcome measures as being very persuasive or credible, which leaves low price as the one measure they understand. Not many really support paying for a service that does not produce positive outcomes, **but in the absence of routine or standard outcome monitoring, there is no link between price and expected results**.

Consequently, EA providers are currently not paid in proportion to their effectiveness, and this is unlikely to change unless the profession embraces improved outcome measurement. It's time that EA professionals spend less energy and money on counting heads, dissecting *processes* and invest more in measuring outcomes and demonstrating results. Imagine a future marketplace in EAP where the focus is on actual "results" instead of low price and program "features".

The current culture of EAP isn't designed to foster improvements in outcomes. Our services are frequently isolated from view, insulated from peer review or inspection, and even marginalized or ignored by some purchasers.

Many EAPs operate for years without knowing or improving their outcomes. One main reason is that EAPs have no way of comparing their outcomes with those obtained by other EAPs. We need to move towards "head-to-head" comparisons that cross the spectrum of EAP models, modalities, vendor segments, customer types, and geographies.

As opposed to a patchwork of measurement tools that have not advanced the EA field, the WOS presents a *single* tool that can be used across this EAP spectrum for demonstrating our effectiveness, and in turn furthering the profession. Moreover, as noted, the WOS offers a better method for evaluating and authenticating the effectiveness of EAPs in terms that businesses understand and are more likely to appreciate.

While not foolproof, the implementation of **the WOS is in fact showing that EAP intervention produces statistically significant improvements in workplace outcomes with large samples of employees**. EAPA CEO Greg DeLapp states that the WOS is "the best available industry-wide yardstick."

"The WOS supports practice-based research in the Employee Assistance field by providing an instrument capable of generating multi-site cross sectional analysis… it represents a major step forward." *~ Daniel Hughes, PhD, CEAP, Chair EAPA Research Panel and Practice Based Research Network (PBRN) Steering Committee*

In the WOS-5, what does the "5" refer to?

The WOS-5 is a "super-short" version of the WOS. As noted earlier, the five constructs of the effects of personal issues on workplace functioning are at the core of the Workplace Outcome Suite concept, and are as follows:

Absenteeism (looks at the number of hours absent due to a personal problem taking the employee away from work). *"Includes both complete eight-hour days and partial days when the employee came in late or left early."*

Presenteeism (measures decreases in productivity even though the employee is not absent per se but not working at his or her optimum due to unresolved personal problems). *"My personal problems kept me from concentrating on my work."*

Work Engagement (refers to the extent to which the employee is invested in or passionate about his or her job). *"I am often eager to get to the work site to start the day."*

Life Satisfaction (addresses one's general sense of well-being). *"So far, my life seems to be going very well."*

Workplace Distress (examines the degree of anxiety or stress at work). *"I dread going in to work."*

(The constructs are examined in greater detail later in this report, and illustrated in Appendix A on pages 8-9.)

Who is using the WOS?

Currently, **more than 500 EAP firms** have signed license agreements to utilize the WOS. More importantly, results indicate the WOS is working. A recent evaluation that included roughly **8,100** EAP users from 20 different EAP providers revealed gains in workplace effectiveness in each of the five constructs after using EAP services measured by the Workplace Outcome Suite-5 tool (Sharar, Sept. 2015 *Employee Assistance Report*).

Moreover, a 2014 CGP study in conjunction with DuPont demonstrated positive results from the WOS-5 among **1,140** employee clients in over **80 countries** worldwide (Sharar, Mollenhauer, 3rd Quarter 2016 *Journal of Employee Assistance*). This study demonstrated that the WOS is working not only in the U.S., but across various borders and cultures. (Complete, pooled results are examined later in this report. Pooled refers to results from numerous EAP providers.)

Measuring the impact of EAP services using the WOS

What is the difference between the longer and shorter versions of the WOS? The original 25-item WOS was specifically designed for EAPs and has five scales (i.e. constructs), each with five items, that lie at the heart of understanding EAP effectiveness. The constructs were listed previously as *absenteeism, presenteeism, work engagement, workplace distress, and life satisfaction*.

For space purposes, we will not list all of these 25 items in this report but to give you an idea, here are a few examples. The five entries appearing under "absenteeism" in terms of the number of hours missed are typically what:

1. Caused you to miss work altogether;

2. Made you late for work;

3. Caused you to take off early;

4. Pulled you away from your normal work location;

5. Required you to be on the phone, email or Internet while at work.

The remaining four constructs use the self-report 1-5 Likert scale that examines various components of the effects of personal issues in relation to workplace functioning. (Those are: strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and strongly agree, with "1" indicating the least applicable response, and "5" indicating the most appropriate response.)

The pre-test was administered by trained intake counselors. Most EAPs conducted the pre-test over the phone at the end of an intake – this usually added about 2-3 minutes to the typical intake. Some EA providers opted to have the client complete the intake in a waiting area before meeting with an EA counselor or clinician. Both approaches are acceptable since the WOS was validated using two delivery methods: (1) A counselor administered to subjects over the phone or in-person; (2) The subject self-administered over the Internet or by paper and pen. Both modes worked equally well.

Moreover, only employee clients (and not family members or dependents) were included because of the sponsoring employer's interest in the relationship between EAP intervention and work performance among their particular employees. Employees were not offered an incentive for completing the WOS and were allowed to drop out at any time – meaning participation was entirely voluntary.

The WOS can assess individual differences that focus on workplace outcomes that are specifically relevant to EAP intervention and are likely to be sensitive to detecting change over time after the use of EAP services. A key aspect of the WOS is to determine if an increase in work performance after the use of the EAP persists over time, and so **post-test measures were not assessed immediately after the last EAP session.**

Instead, the post-test was typically sent out about 90 days after the pre-test as an email link, or the client (subject) was contacted by phone to complete the post-test. This required getting good locator information at the point of intake. Most EAP providers participating in the study made at least three follow-up attempts such as email-phone, email or phone,-email-phone before considering the subject non-responsive.

This simplistic design, known as "Correlational" or "Before/After" can identify IF employees are improving at work but it cannot definitively explain WHY. Its purpose is to test association, or how EAP intervention and workplace outcomes relate to each other in nature and strength.

EA providers who implement the WOS used their own data collection platforms to include secure commercial websites such as SurveyMonkey®, proprietary technology systems, and EAP software where the WOS-5 is embedded in the software. A few used "paper and pen" and then recorded responses in a spreadsheet.

WOS Pooled Results

The most recently available pooled research data-base shows a total of **13,400** EAP users have been assessed both before and after EAP use with the Workplace Outcome Suite. This is a very large and persuasive sample size. It should be noted that due to variables not applicable to this report, the actual number of participants in the pooled results varies in each of the five constructs.

The data was analyzed by examining changes in average WOS scores before clients received EAP services and then after services were rendered. The formula for calculating a percent change is "Post minus Pre divided by Pre". For example, a post of 2.51 – a pre of 3.36 = -.253 or an improvement of 25.3%. The term "statistical significance" indicates there is a very high probability that an actual change occurred.

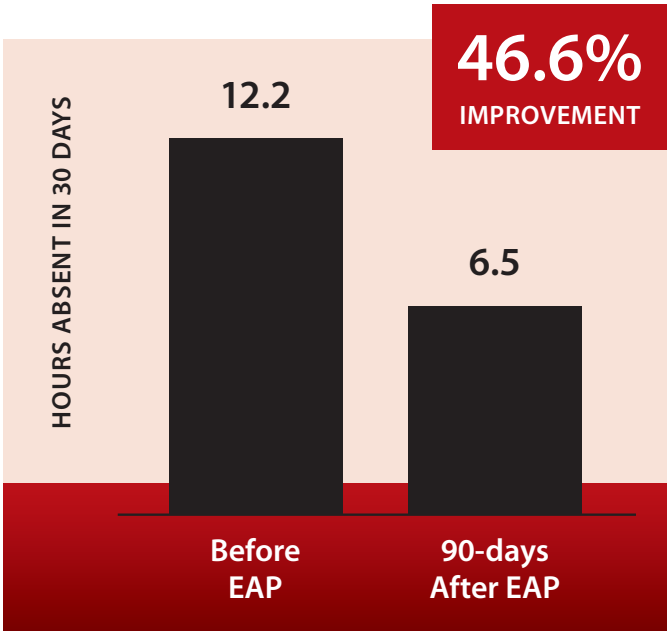
The results are outstanding and represent very good news for the EAP field. All changes were statistically significant, and the percentage difference in pre/post EAP scores is substantial (with the exception of work engagement at 7%)**.**

Change in Work Absenteeism – 9 and 25-item version

Because of the different versions used for the Work Absenteeism scale, it was necessary to report that construct separately as 9 and 25-item and 5-item versions. (See Appendix A on pages 8 and 9). The combined results for the 9 and 25-item versions appear below and at right.

For the previous 30 days, participants were asked about concerns that caused them to miss work. As noted earlier, this included both complete eight-hour days and partial days when the employee came in late or left early.

- Before EAP services, participants missed 12.2 hours of work over the 30-day period.
- Ninety days after EAP services, participants missed just 6.5 hours of work – an improvement of **46.6%**. *(See Appendix B on page 10.)*

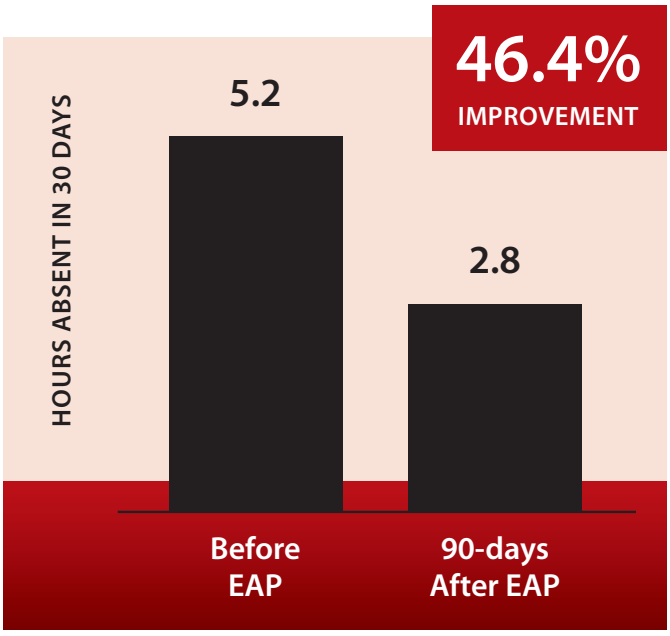


Change in Work Absenteeism – 5-item version

The 5-item version has undergone its own validation study and is comparable to the original 25-item. (See Appendix A on page 8). Not surprisingly, the shorter version revealed an improvement in work absenteeism just as substantial as the longer one. The 5-item version results appear below and at right.

- Before EAP services, participants missed 5.2 hours of work over a 30-day period.
- Ninety days after EAP services, participants only missed 2.8 hours of work – an improvement of **46.4%**.

To illustrate workplace improvements that are easier to disseminate, the remaining constructs represent the 5-item version only. (The 1-5 Likert scale is used in each.
** Lower scores represent a better outcome.
*** Higher scores illustrate a better outcome.)
(See Appendix B on page 10.)

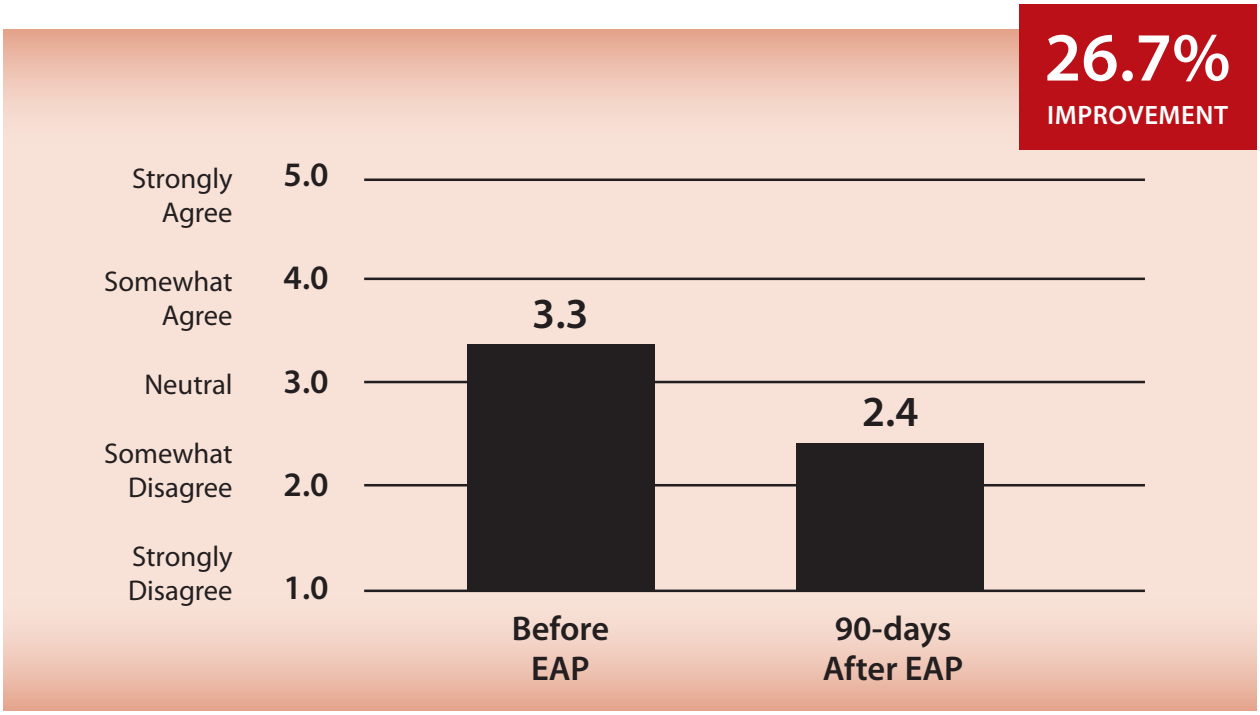


Change in Work Presenteeism

*** "My personal problems kept me from concentrating at work."*

- Before EAP services, 3.3.
- Ninety days after EAP services, 2.4 – an improvement of **26.7%**.

(See Appendix B on page 10.)

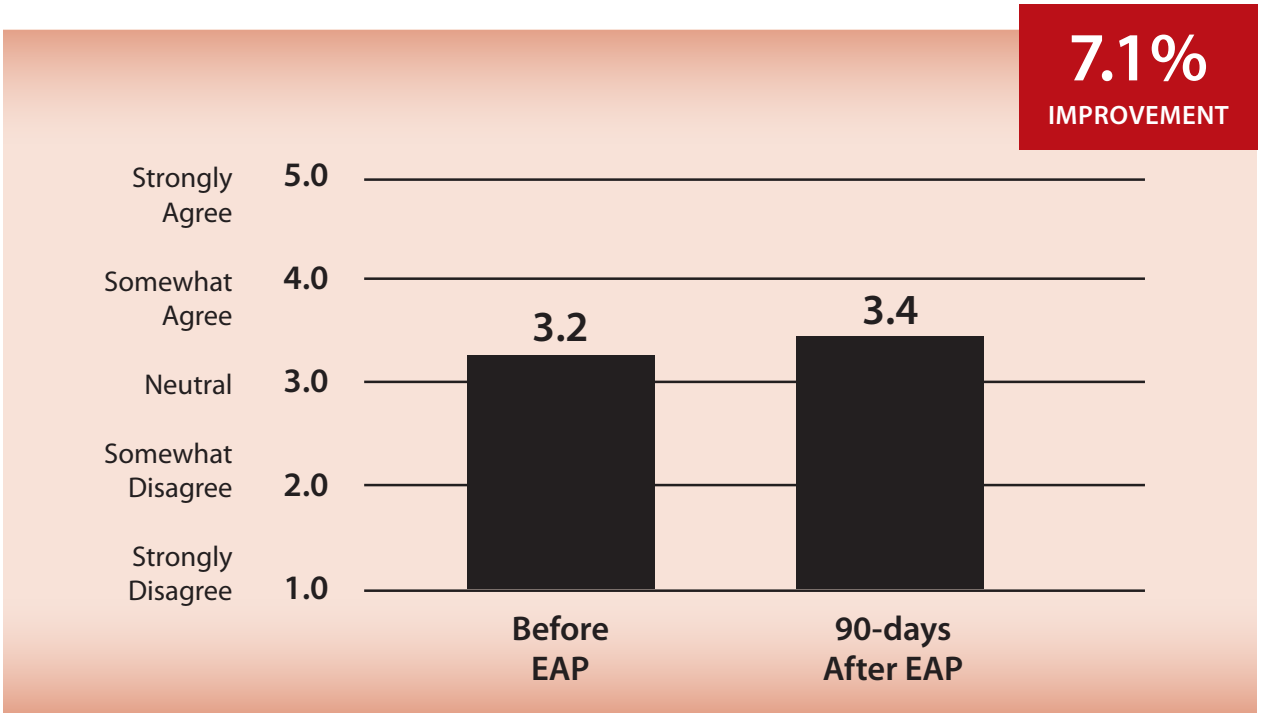


Change in Work Engagement

**** "I am often eager to get to the work site to start the day."*

- Before EAP services, 3.2
- Ninety days after EAP services, 3.4 – an improvement of **7.1%**.

(See Appendix B on page 10.)

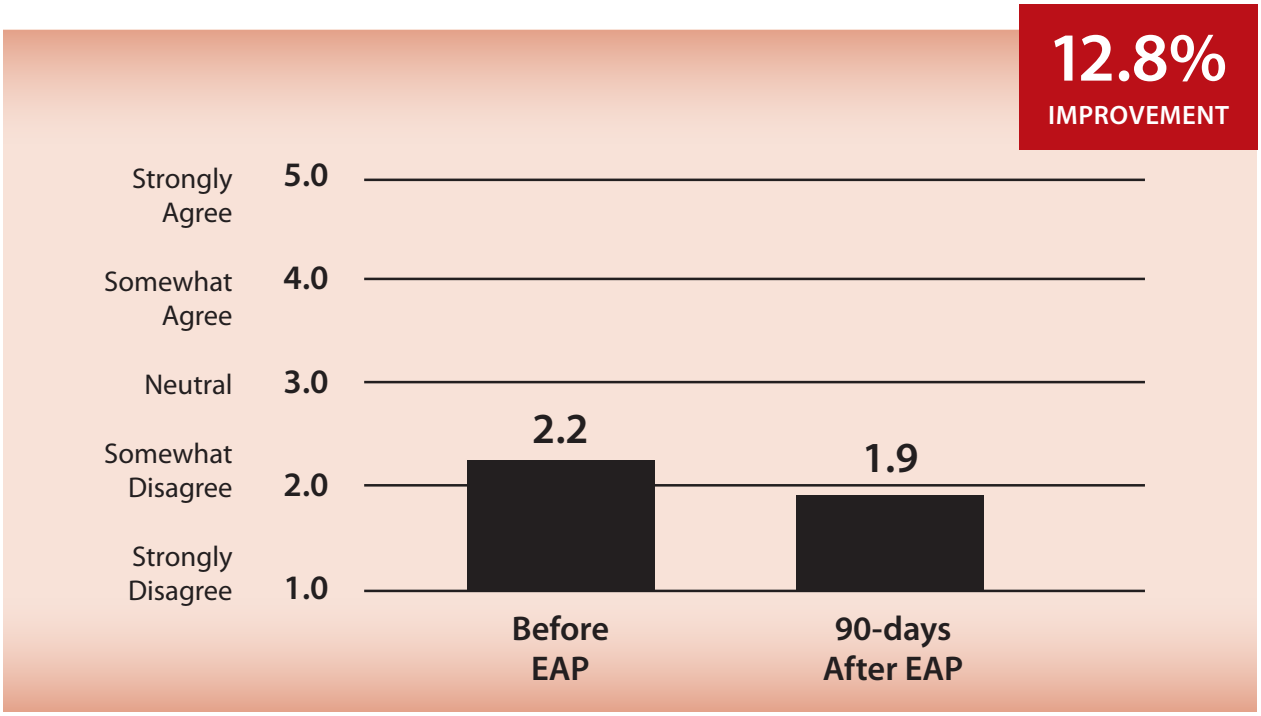


Change in Work Distress

*** "I dread going in to work."*

- Before EAP services, 2.2
- Ninety days after EAP services, 1.9 – an improvement of **12.8%**.

(See Appendix B on page 10.)

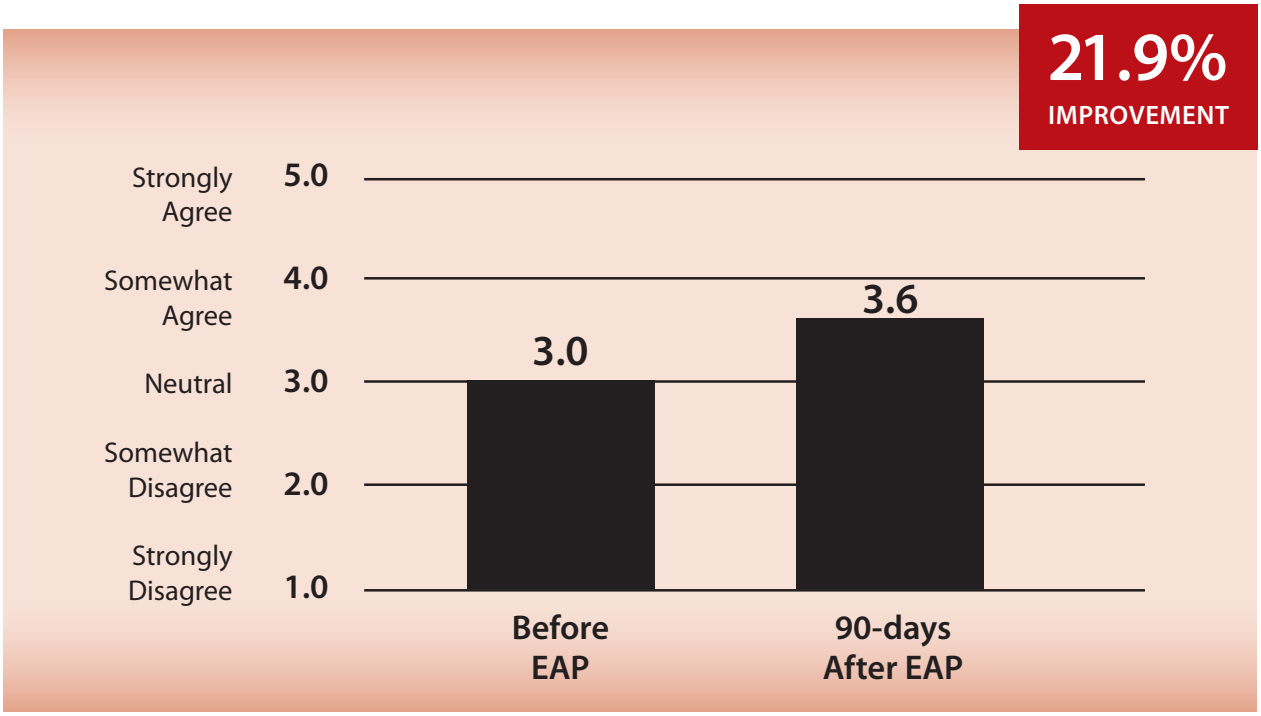


Change in Life Satisfaction

**** "So far, my life seems to be going very well."*

- Before EAP services, 3.0
- Ninety days after EAP services, 3.6 – an improvement of **21.9%**.

(See Appendix B on page 10.)



Discussion and Conclusion

The usual methods of determining EAP effectiveness have included citing end user utilization rates, client referrals, or even website click-throughs.

The workplace outcome approach represents a departure from conventional measures by objectively identifying when EA services demonstrably work in the context of the workplace.

Absenteeism and presenteeism effects are particularly strong, likely producing cost savings through productivity enhancements that may exceed the expense of the EAP itself.

Even without knowing the types and severities of presenting concerns, EAPs help clients to substantially increase their degree of satisfaction with "life".

Although EAP use does move work engagement in a positive direction, the effect is much smaller. It may be that effective EAP intervention reduces stress or anxiety in a manner that inhibits work engagement – or perhaps the EAP counselor cannot directly impact workplace conditions that foster higher levels of work engagement. Finally, use of EAP does seem to reduce feelings of distress or anxiousness about being at work.

It is worth mentioning there is a high degree of variability or difference among the many EA providers who submitted data and thus, the EA intervention itself is not well defined but rather generic. However, this outcome data suggests that "generic" EAP intervention seems to be having a substantial workplace impact. We would be more effective as a field if our collective efforts at intervention were more highly specified and described. This way the most successful interventions that contribute to the greatest outcomes could be more easily replicated.

With more than 500 EAP firms using the WOS and **13,400** individual users in the EAPA/WOS database, these pooled results to date demonstrate that EAP intervention can be highly effective at improving these five (5) workplace variables. As mentioned earlier, no survey instrument is perfect, but the WOS is the best tool to date that EA professionals have for refuting the age-old question that skeptical employers have of whether EAPs actually work.

EAPA and CGP are grateful to those EA providers who made this report possible by going to the time and expense of collecting and sharing their de-identified data. We also would like to acknowledge and thank Mike Jacquart, Editor of the Journal of Employee Assistance and the Employee Assistance Report, for his contribution in the preparation of this document.

Appendix A

WOS 5-Item

WORKPLACE OUTCOME SUITE – 5 ITEM VERSION

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS
Below is a series of statements that refer to aspects of your work and life experience that may be affected by the personal problems you want to address at the EAP during the past 30 days. Please read each item carefully and answer as accurately as you can.

			NUMBER OF HOURS
AB	1.	For the period of the past 30 days, please total the number of hours your personal concern caused you to miss work. Include complete eight-hour days and partial days when you came in late or left early.	

		INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITEMS 2 – 5 The following statements reflect what you may do or feel on the job or at home. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the statements for the past 30 days. Use the 1-5 response key to the right.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
PR	2.	My personal problems kept me from concentrating on my work.	1	2	3	4	5
WE	3.	I am often eager to get to the work site to start the day.	1	2	3	4	5
LS	4.	So far, my life seems to be going very well.	1	2	3	4	5
WD	5.	I dread going into work.	1	2	3	4	5

WOS 9-Item

WORKPLACE OUTCOME SUITE (WOS) – 9 ITEM VERSION

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS
Below is a series of statements that refer to aspects of your work and life experience that may be affected by the personal problems you want to address at the EAP during the past 30 days. Please read each item carefully and answer as accurately as you can.

		INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITEMS 1-5 Please report for the period of the past 30 days the total number of hours your personal problems:	NUMBER OF HOURS
ABSENTEEISM	1.	Caused you to miss work altogether.	
	2.	Made you late for work.	
	3.	Caused you to take off early.	
	4.	Pulled you away from your normal work location.	
	5.	Required you to be on the phone, e-mail or internet while at work.	

		INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITEMS 6-9 The following statements reflect what you may do or feel on the job or at home. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the statements for the past 30 days. Use the 1-5 response key to the right.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
PR	6.	My personal problems kept me from concentrating on my work.	1	2	3	4	5
WE	7.	I am often eager to get to the work site to start the day.	1	2	3	4	5
LS	8.	So far, my life seems to be going very well.	1	2	3	4	5
WD	9.	I dread going into work.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix A

WOS 25-Item

CGP WORKPLACE OUTCOME SUITE (WOS)

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS
Below is a series of statements that refer to aspects of your work and life experience that may be affected by the personal problems you want to address at the EAP during the past 30 days. Please read each item carefully and answer as accurately as you can.

		INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITEMS 1-5 Please report for the period of the past 30 days the total number of hours your personal problems:	**NUMBER OF HOURS**
ABSENTEEISM	1.	Caused you to miss work altogether.	
	2.	Made you late for work.	
	3.	Caused you to take off early.	
	4.	Pulled you away from your normal work location.	
	5.	Required you to be on the phone, e-mail or internet while at work.	

		INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITEMS 6-25 The following statements reflect what you may do or feel on the job or at home. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the statements for the past 30 days. Use the 1-5 response key to the right.	STRONGLY DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
PRESENTEEISM	6.	I had a hard time doing my work because of my personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5
	7.	My personal problems kept me from concentrating on my work.	1	2	3	4	5
	8.	Because of my personal problems I was not able to enjoy my work.	1	2	3	4	5
	9.	My personal problems made me worry about completing my tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
	10.	I could not do my job well because of my personal problems.	1	2	3	4	5
WORK ENGAGEMENT	11.	I feel stimulated by my work.	1	2	3	4	5
	12.	I often think about work on my way to the work site.	1	2	3	4	5
	13.	I feel passionate about my job.	1	2	3	4	5
	14.	I am often eager to get to the work site to start the day.	1	2	3	4	5
	15.	I often find myself thinking about my work at home.	1	2	3	4	5
LIFE SATISFACTION	16.	My life is nearly perfect.	1	2	3	4	5
	17.	I am not very satisfied with my life as a whole.	1	2	3	4	5
	18.	So far, my life seems to be going very well.	1	2	3	4	5
	19.	There isn't anything about my life that I would change if I could.	1	2	3	4	5
	20.	I am very disappointed about the way my life has turned out.	1	2	3	4	5
WORKPLACE DISTRESS	21.	I often feel anxious at work.	1	2	3	4	5
	22.	Thinking about being at work makes me upset.	1	2	3	4	5
	23.	I am unhappy most of the time at work.	1	2	3	4	5
	24.	I dread going into work.	1	2	3	4	5
	25.	I can't wait to get away from work.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Table 1. Results for Workplace Outcome Suite 25-Item Pre and Post Test Scores

WOS Scale	Pre Score	Post Score	N	Raw Difference Score	t[a]	*p*-value	Diference Percentage
Absenteeism*[b]	13.33	6.92	1262	-6.41	-10.698	0.000	-48%
Presenteeism*	13.98	10.99	1601	-2.99	19.15	0.000	-21%
Work Engagement**[b]	18.3	17.91	1239	-0.39	2.405	0.016	-2%
Life Satisfaction**	14.24	15.87	1600	1.63	-16.024	0.000	11%
Workplace Distress*	12.93	11.79	1599	-1.14	8.908	0.000	-9%

Notes. *Lower scores are a better outcome; **Higher scores are a better outcome.
[a] Wilcoxon signed rank test used to test change in absenteeism. The Z statistic is reported.
[b] One organization did not ask the absenteeism nor the work engagement items, thus we have a smaller n size for these two measures.

Table 2. Results for Workplace Outcome Suite 9-Item Pre and Post Test Scores

WOS Scale	Pre Score	Post Score	N	Raw Difference Score	t[a]	*p*-value	Diference Percentage
Absenteeism*	11.75	6.35	3347	-5.4	-22.40	0.000	-46%
Presenteeism*	3.51	2.54	3344	-0.976	41.12	0.000	-28%
Work Engagement**	3.19	3.50	3344	0.315	-16.27	0.000	10%
Life Satisfaction**	2.74	3.56	3343	0.827	-39.90	0.000	30%
Workplace Distress*	2.40	2.03	3341	-0.37	18.50	0.000	-15%

Notes. *Lower scores are a better outcome; **Higher scores are a better outcome.
[a] Wilcoxon signed rank test used to test change in absenteeism. The Z statistic is reported.

Table 3. Results for Workplace Outcome Suite 5-Item Pre and Post Test Scores

WOS Scale	Pre Score	Post Score	N	Raw Difference Score	t[a]	*p*-value	Diference Percentage
Absenteeism*	5.15	2.76	8362	-2.39	-29.09	0.000	-46%
Presenteeism*	3.22	2.35	8581	-0.865	51.50	0.000	-27%
Work Engagement**	3.23	3.45	8568	0.22	-14.58	0.000	7%
Life Satisfaction**	3.08	3.71	8576	0.63	42.25	0.000	20%
Workplace Distress*	2.07	1.81	8561	-0.26	19.37	0.000	-13%

Notes. *Lower scores are a better outcome; **Higher scores are a better outcome.
[a] Wilcoxon signed rank test used to test change in absenteeism. The Z statistic is reported.

Table 4. Results for Workplace Outcome Suite Pre and Post Test Scores Pooled across versions

WOS Scale	Pre Score	Post Score	N	Raw Difference Score	t[a]	*p*-value	Diference Percentage
Absenteeism 9 & 25-item WOS versions*	12.18	6.5	4609	-5.68	-24.681	0.000	-47%
Absenteeism 5-item WOS version*	5.15	2.76	8362	-2.39	-29.09	0.000	-46%
Presenteeism*	3.274	2.40	13294	-0.874	66.829	0.000	-27%
Work Engagement**	3.216	3.443	12918	0.23	-19.561	0.000	7%
Life Satisfaction**	2.992	3.647	13279	0.66	-57.18	0.000	22%
Workplace Distress*	2.187	1.907	13269	-0.28	26.227	0.000	-13%

Notes. *Lower scores are a better outcome; **Higher scores are a better outcome.
Presneteeism, work engagement, life satisfaction and workplace distress are the single item scores across all 3 versions of the WOS.
[a] Wilcoxon signed rank test used to test change in absenteeism. The Z statistic is reported.

For comments or questions feel free to contact:

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