



Episode 17 – The Role of Resilience in Employee Wellbeing

[MUSIC PLAYING]

JAN BRUCE: Helping them cope with their stress, get control of their lives, be more successful, be more on top of things.

ANNOUNCER: Welcome to The Cure for the Common Co., a podcast series looking at innovations in the world of employee health and wellbeing. Steve Blumenfield and other experts from Willis Towers Watson's health and benefits practice are talking to entrepreneurs and industry leaders who break ground to meet the needs of today's workforce and deliver benefit solutions that can separate employers from the pack.

This podcast was recorded remotely with computer equipment. So the sound quality may vary from other pods.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Jan, how are you?

JAN BRUCE: Steve, I'm great.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Great to have you here. Hi, everybody. Welcome to Cure for the Common Co. On this podcast, we talk with health and well being innovators that bring value to companies and their people, I'm Steve Blumenfield, head of strategy and innovation for Willis Towers Watson Health and Benefits. And I'm also joined today by my excellent colleagues Julie Stone, our head of intellectual capital. Hi, Julie.

JULIE STONE: Hi, Steve.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: And Suzanne McAndrew, our global head of the talent business. Hey, Suzanne.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: Hey, Steve. Hey, everyone.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Welcome, also, to Jan Bruce, CEO and founder of meQuilibrium, a wellbeing and resilience app and solution. Great to have you all here. Jan, let's start with you. We met a few years ago when you first founded meQuilibrium. At the time of this podcast, we're actually all getting our footing from a pandemic rally that has beset all of us, and every one of us could use doses of emotional wellbeing. And that's what meQ's all about. Can you share with us why you founded meQ, as we call it, in the first place, and what you're hoping it would deliver?

JAN BRUCE: Sure. And thanks for having me, and I'm delighted to be on with you, and Suzanne, and Julie, Steve. meQuilibrium, and we often call it meQ, was founded to help people manage their mindset and their thinking to get control of their emotional wellbeing and their stress. And let me just tell you how I got here. I actually am not a software developer and an engineer. I actually trained as a publisher and an editor and

have worked for a long time. And consumer wellness. I was running a website called wholeliving.com all about whole health inside and out.

And as a wife-- well, I sold that company to Martha Stewart. Think about Martha Stewart Living, and then she wanted whole life living.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Huh, no kidding?

JAN BRUCE: Yeah. And she was actually very into natural, healthy living. But it was about 10 years ago. I was a wife, and a mother, and an entrepreneur. I was really at the top of my game. And it got to a point where I couldn't reconcile how spectacular my career and life was with how exhausted and conflicted by obligations and distracted I was all the time. And I was supposed to be the expert on taking care of myself, and healthy living, and I got to the point where I understood that we need to get to the root cause of what's going on there, which is all about our thoughts.

So I found resilience and emotional wellbeing and decided to start a company around helping people focus on that.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Wow. Jan, that is just an amazing story. I'm sure, like all of our listeners, I can relate to a lot of that. Although, maybe not the wife, mother, and entrepreneur parts.

JAN BRUCE: Oh, come on, Steve.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: But just kidding aside, Jan. Seriously, you are inspiring, and your story is inspiring. But when it comes to resilience, just to make sure we're on the same page, what do you mean by that word, and is that something that people can learn?

JAN BRUCE: Yeah. So resilience is the capability to manage through stress, adversity, change, and recover, and then bounce back even stronger. Think about a tree that gets bent by the wind and snaps back. And because it's been challenge, it grows bigger and stronger. And we sometimes refer to this as adaptive capacity and agility.

The silence around this is really incontrovertible. It is not a personality type. These are learned skills that we can identify, and measure, and train. And I found, in a group of scientists and psychologists, that we could actually apply this to workplace behavior, and to human behavior, and build a software application around it.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Amazing.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: So Jan, it's really interesting to me, as we think about the nature of resilience becoming more and more important to the workplace, and the ability for people to bounce back. We know, from our data, that employees are really feeling the strain as we ask them to work in new environments, think in new ways, act differently. From some of our research, the heightened anxiety and worry, it's extreme.

So 92% of employees in some of our surveys right now are reporting at least some anxiety. And they're struggling to find balance-- another 70% report that. They're concerned about their financial security. 61% of employees report some concerns there. So you have all of these factors at play. How do you help? You're an organization-- you're a human actually dealing with some of these things yourself-- how do you help people manage all of that and really bounce back?

JAN BRUCE: Suzanne, I'm going to answer this on two levels. First, from a science perspective, what we've learned is that there are a specific set of skills that form, think of it as, a support net for people of sorts-- skills like empathy, emotional intelligence, emotion control, problem-solving, agency and self-confidence, growth mindset, risk taking, but also things like positivity and mindfulness. And teaching these skills to people help them develop the ability to act resilient naturally or subconsciously.

On the second level, what we do is we have tried CBT-- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-- and other types of techniques to help people become aware of their deficiencies and the skills that they need, and then help them practice and learn to develop stronger competency in these skills. Now, what's great about doing this as a SaaS platform and a software platform is that we can measure people, we can measure people uniformly, and we can test longitudinally where they're getting better and where they need more help.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: So just taking, for example, that stat I shared on anxiety, the 92% of employees report that anxiety or worry, can building that resilience-- I mean, do you have the data to prove that that can sort of alleviate that anxiety?

JAN BRUCE: Yeah. So we actually do. And our data mirrors yours right now. We see heightened anxiety, about 25% increase in the number of people presenting at a clinical level of anxiety compared to a year ago. But what we can do with skill building is help people understand that, at a foundational level, for example, anxiety is a fear of future threat or a fear that something is going to go wrong. And what happens with us, with our thinking styles, is that we use our thoughts as-- think of it as a crutch.

We start getting accustomed to feeling fearful about the future, so then we start scanning for, oh, I'm feeling anxious. What around me is the cause of that? And we usually are pretty good at finding things to blame. What we can do is help people get in touch with that feeling of anxiety, and then help them reframe it by calibrating whether things are really wrong or they're just feeling anxious today and giving them strategies for managing their thinking.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: It's much more fun to blame people though. I think we should stick with your strategy instead of moving to this resilient stuff. What do you guys think?

SUZANNE MCANDREW: No. I think, building on what Jan said, that resilience is this notion could be more in touch with sort of your own resiliency, where you are, that self-awareness. And building that resiliency of your teams, it is a critical capability for all of us this week we navigate a lot of complexity, and pace of change, and uncertainty going forward.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Jan, what's the typical experience for the employee who's interacting with meQ.

JAN BRUCE: So when my company buys meQuilibrium, a couple of things might happen. I might get an email from a leader at the organization saying that resilience or emotional wellbeing is a really important part of our culture and encouraging me to try this great new app or website that the companies has now made available to the employees.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: OK. So it's going to be an app or website. I'm going to get invited to enroll. OK, got it so far.

JAN BRUCE: And I might get an invitation from my manager as well. Because my manager might say, I want everyone on the sales team to check this out, because we think emotional intelligence is really important for our business. Or I might get an email from benefits.

After I click on the email, or I read the email, I click into it, I am presented, as I enroll, with an assessment, which I don't have to take immediately. But actually, 90% of people take it and complete it on the spot. Which is great, because then because of the questions that the equilibrium asks me, I am able to get a profile, like a stress and resilience profile back.

And the assessment is asking me questions like, when things go wrong, do I get angry or do I get anxious? And do I get frustrated when I don't have the tools and resources that I need? And my friends are a supportive strength for me, but maybe they're a support of stress for me to the obligations that I have. We're trying to find out how I think and how I react in certain situations, and what in my work environment and home environment is a source of support and a source of stress.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: I'm guessing you're going to use those inputs as a way to tailor, and increasingly over time, the things you put in front of that person to help them.

JAN BRUCE: That's exactly right, Steve. Maybe you've tried it before.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: OK. Truth be told, I have. But I haven't thinking about that at the moment.

JAN BRUCE: That's fine. So yeah, I finish my assessment, and meQuilibrium shows me my profile. And then, it shows me-- it recommends certain things that might be helpful to me. So, for example, I tend to be very anxious. And we were talking about anxiety earlier, maybe one of you knew that about me. And I'm always sort of studying to see what could go wrong. meQuilibrium instantly pegged me for that. And so it offered me a skill about changing my thinking to calm my mind.

And what the skill helped me do is it taught me that when I have anxious thoughts, it means that I'm looking around or I'm generally thinking that something is about to go wrong. And it gave me an activity to try, which we call trap it, map it, zap it. The activity is a consumerized version of CBT.

Basically, we're asking you to trap that thought-- Oh, no, I'm feeling anxious. And then, map it over to what under the surface is making me feel that way. And as I write down, oh, I may have to go to go to the store later, and I don't think I have gas in my car, I'm getting all this anxiety because of that. Or let's do something even more serious-- my boss may call me at any moment for a report, and I haven't even started it.

Then it helps me. Then the next thing it does is it teaches me to zap it by coming up with a workaround that can help me dispel that feeling of anxiety. Like, I'll leave 10 minutes early and get gas, or I'll call my boss and say I'll be done tomorrow, and then I'll work furiously all night. But whenever it is, oftentimes our thoughts and our emotions create what I call that sort of catastrophic creature in the corner, in the dark. But when we shed some light on it, it's not really that bad.

So we actually have an app for that in our product, Steve. That every time you get anxious, you can pull it up and use it. And the science is pretty clear, because the more you use it, the more it becomes second nature. So that's just one example.

We have an app, an in-app experience, which works on any phone or mobile device. We also have a website. And today, we have mood trackers and 75 different modules for different types of thinking styles, everything from some people personalize and blame themselves for everything, and other people externalize and blame other people. And some people magnify their problems. Some people are just saying, that I'll never be a problem-- they minimize the problem.

We have modules for anything like that we come across. We also, in this day and age, where it's so important to help people tackle unconscious bias and inclusiveness in the work force, have a whole section on unconscious bias, DEI topics, having tough conversations, being able to speak honestly under pressure-- things like that.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: It's very robust, as you describe it. I think people get the image for that. But used the term CBT-- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. We've had that concept on this on this podcast a couple of times before. So it may sound silly to folks. It's a great tool.

But I'm a little worried now about my gas tank the report that I forgot to do for my boss tomorrow. So maybe others have some questions while I go tend to those things real quick.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: Right. I thought Jan was speaking to you, Steve. But one of the questions that I was having-- because I was kind of taking myself through the experience, Jan, and then thinking about, well, a lot of the things you brought up are very personal. And yet, there's the other side, which is this collection of data. So how comfortable are our participants in releasing that data, and how are employers looking at that data?

JAN BRUCE: Yeah, it's a great question, Suzanne. First of all, I should say that we, right up front when you enroll, make a claim-- and we've never broken it-- that we will not share data with the employer. We are HIPAA compliant, and we follow strict measures to protect your privacy. We will not aggregate data unless there are at least 50 people in a group, so that you wouldn't be able to say, oh, I bet so and so is the one that's the outlier.

And we basically do everything we can to protect your data, because that is our stock and trade with the member. We want it to be a place where you can learn about yourself and learn from yourself.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: Yeah. That makes sense. And having that psychological safety to uncover a little bit more about your strengths and weaknesses is needing to break through. So then how does the employer benefit from this aggregation of the data? What are they seeing?

JAN BRUCE: For the employer, we are able to give you a pretty robust suite of reports, strategically segmented, that show you what's going on in the organization in terms of things like behavioral health risks, engagement, resiliency-- like how resilient is your workforce and how resilient is this division versus that division, and this type of worker versus that. So we're also able to show things like, is there great risk for burnout, for turnover? What about productivity impairment-- things like that.

The reporting, sometimes I like to compare it as a weather map for your organization, because you can see what really people are suffering from or what are the clouds. But then, it also assesses the weather gear, because it can show you what strains different people have-- different teams have, not individual people-- and what weaknesses. So, for example, we were talking to a customer the other day, and we noticed that the people that were the managers in the organization, that sort of very senior level, long-term tenure, older group of people, were fairly high on resilience, and they were not really-- like, they didn't have a lot of stress, they didn't have a lot of anxiety. So they were resilient because they weren't worried about anything is a way of putting it.

Yet, the next generation, the high potential employees, the millennials, the people that were the managers of tomorrow, they were stressed out of their minds. And they were at risk from burnout, and they had high anxiety and sleep problems. And the employer said, oh, my goodness, I have people on the top that are not concerned or in a relatively good place, but if I lose all these people that are my next class of leaders, I am really going to be in trouble. So that's the kind of data that we can help people.

Now, at the same time, our data is clinically validated. I'll sort of move over to Julie's side of the house. Our data is clinically validated. We can peg people on a spectrum of depression, like a PHQ-9 nine or a GAD anxiety score, and we can see who is seriously at risk. Now, again, we won't tell the employer that these employees are at risk, but we will try to activate those people, through messaging, to the other services that the employer has.

So in this way, what we're trying to do is change this model of the whole spectrum of emotional wellbeing to mental health. Because it's been very sort of siloed, late stage, acute, and it's not really working for enough people. So what we're trying to do is, by getting everyone to engage, make this proactive, widespread, not tucked away, and simple, and accessible, and practical to use, not sort of difficult to schedule and punishing. And then, at the end of the day, I said, very measurable. So you can see your progress, but also the employer can see that the percentage of people that have anxiety, or depression, or are at risk for burnout is declining year over year.

JULIE STONE: So Jan, in five years, if you have a cover story in your favorite business magazine, what would the headline be?

JAN BRUCE: So in five years from now, we have a cover story that says this company knows more about people than any primary care physician in the US. And we intend to make the resilience of our resilience score and our resilience profiles the gold standard tool to measure how people think, and, by doing that, how they are able to cope and succeed.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Nice. I just want to comment that will be very, very large cover to fit that entire cover story. But it sounds pretty great.

JAN BRUCE: Well, thanks.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Let's just explore a little more of the user experience, Jan. Now, how does this appear to a consumer? Let's say I'm an employee-- I'm at a company that put meQ in. What's my experience? How do I get started? What does an interaction feel like?

JAN BRUCE: Yeah. Let's talk about that from the point of view of the individual. Initially, we enroll people by attracting them with the idea of helping them cope with their stress, get control of their lives, be more successful, be more on top of things. But it's essentially tools to help them cope and to help them succeed and excel. And that could be with anything from they're feeling anxious, to they are not sleeping well, to they can't manage their work-life balance right now, to say they can't seem to get promoted. It kind of runs the spectrum across your whole wellbeing, from workplace to home life.

But in addition to the tools, let's talk about how we help you. We start by profiling people in onboarding. And we give you a pretty rich view of your thinking styles and your mindset, and where you're strong and where you're vulnerable. For example, we might say that you don't manage your emotions very well, or we might say that you're not very good or interested in problem-solving or trying new ways to attack a problem, or you're not sleeping well, or you don't have good social connections. All of these things are ways to help people understand what's holding them back and what could make them stronger.

And then what we do, because of our data and our analytics, is we have powerful algorithms that look at your profile and construct a journey for you, a curriculum that is personalized to you, that helps you, over time, learn new skills and practices, and give you activities, and challenges, and we make it fun, and fast, and easy to help you learn these things. Now, when you think beyond that, beyond the individual, we also are aggregating or scraping up all that data about people, deidentifying it, and aggregating it, so that the employer gets some insight into what's going on in the organization.

JULIE STONE: Jan and you brought meQ to the market, what were some of the early learnings that shaped both the content and your approach to employers and their role in helping employees and family members build their resiliency and address emotional health issues? And you mentioned the data just a minute ago, and the insights, and that's what prompted me to ask this question.

JAN BRUCE: That's a great question, Julie. So when we started, we got our first customers about six years ago. And what we saw at the time was that employers were very concerned with physical wellbeing and using that to manage the cost of their benefits. What started to change is that employers started to think about benefits as a way to positively impact talent and potential. And as that started to happen a few years ago, it became very, very clear that starting with your thinking styles and your mindset, your adaptive capacity, your emotional wellbeing, all of which meQuilibrium does, was a foundational part of the talent and talent and benefits experience.

JULIE STONE: And where you met resistance from employers at the onset-- and were in very different times now than when you started-- what were some of the sources of resistance and how did you overcome them?

JAN BRUCE: Initially, people said, well, you're not a physical wellbeing product, and you're not an acute emotional or mental health product, so where do you fit? And our learning was that we needed to position meQuilibrium as foundational to all of that, that we needed to help employers understand that in order for all of their programming to be affected, they needed widespread programming that was proactive, that was accessible for everyone, not just acute care, that would help people in a widespread, ubiquitous, and measurable way.

JULIE STONE: Thank you for sharing that. Because I think, with a very unique offering, finding the ways to have people connect to it and understand that the power of what you offer and how it's different than other things that they had looked at or engaged in before must have been one of the early challenges. And clearly,

the results you've had, you've worked through that. So I was really curious as to how and what was underneath how you moved that forward.

JAN BRUCE: I think that's really right. I think that, originally, it was hard for people to-- like, what category do we fall into? It's only been recently, because of a number of trends-- and Suzanne started to talk about that initially-- that have sort of laid the groundwork for resilience, and emotional wellbeing, and agility for people, adaptive capacity. Everyone is thinking of that as foundational across HR.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: You know, it takes a lot for an employer to take a leap of faith that resilience is going to matter, pay off. What is that shift that is foundational within HR? How have you evolved that.

JAN BRUCE: It's interesting. When we started-- and when you think back even to 2010 or 2011-- we had just come out of a recession. People were coming back to work, but people were stressed. They were stressed about their jobs. They were stressed about their money. People understood the stress thing. And then, as things got better, the world of work changed, and everyone started to focus on transformation and how technology was really going to transform the way we work. And as the labor market got sort of tighter and tighter, our talent market, employers really struggled with how to keep people engaged at work-- employed and engaged-- because they needed them. And that was really when we started to see that helping people with the adaptive capacity to grow with the organization and helping the company help their employees have that capacity surveyed could "stay with the program," quote, unquote, was becoming more and more important.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: Here's one for you Jan. So if meQ was an animal, what would it be and why?

JAN BRUCE: So I would say-- this is going to sound a little funny first, Suzanne. But I would usually say, we are a mouse, but we are Mighty Mouse.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Mighty Mouse.

JAN BRUCE: Mighty Mouse

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: I love Mighty Mouse. (SINGING) Here I come to save the day!

JAN BRUCE: To save the day. And here's

SUZANNE MCANDREW: (SINGING) Mighty mouse.

JAN BRUCE: Mighty Mouse is because with resilience we are flexible, and we are stronger than we look. And think back to our conversation about originally employers were like wait, what is this? Is this clinical, nonclinical, wellbeing? What is this? Resilience is stronger than it looks. It's foundational. And as Mighty Mouse, a superpower, it always saves the day.

And by the way, mice are very adaptable creatures.

JULIE STONE: Jan, as we think about what's required for employees to bring their best selves to work, we know that their family members' abilities to manage stress and anxiety, and build resilience, and especially at this particular point in time, with more people spending more time together in their family space, I'm interested in a couple of thoughts on engaging family members and what you're seeing around how meQ is doing that. One of the things that most impressed me the very first time I met with folks on your team was opening up tools to family members, and particularly high-school-age family members, to engage, and guide, and have a different kind of experience. And I think it would be helpful for our listeners to talk a little bit about the member activity and its role in creating employees who are engaged and productive, and also addressing the need in their family unit.

JAN BRUCE: So we have a number of employers who purchase meQuilibrium for all spouses or family members over the age of 12. But to get to your question about engagement and value, we see very high engagement and improvement in populations-- nonemployee populations-- where we get access. And I think that's what you are asking, Julie.

JULIE STONE: Yes, thank you. It was. I think we want to be mindful of the broader environments our clients and employees are in, and the impact of emotional wellbeing and addressing stress broadly, as well as for the individuals. That's behind my question.

JAN BRUCE: Well, you know, it's funny. We know that we've made an impact. In fact, I there's one person in the industry who, every year when he sees me at some annual event, credits meQuilibrium for saving his marriage. Because he started working on skills around empathy and then brought his wife into the mix. And now it's very helpful for both of them.

But kidding aside, we have found that some of these skills that deal with emotionality, confidence and agency, empathy, but also learning to listen and hear in difficult conversations, these are skills that foundationally can change people's ability to function in life. And we have developed some for people as parents of children, like raising resilient kids. We also cover that. And we're very whole person. These skills can be applied to working with a colleague, to working with a family member, to understanding why you go into-- I'm just going to make up a funny example-- every Thanksgiving, you know you're going to be stressed, and why is that. We can help you with that.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: Can I ask Julie a question? Julie as our wellbeing thought leader on the call. You know, Jan and I, we share a mutual client, and that particular client has made it their mission and vision to really make their whole wellbeing strategy available to employees and families. Julie, in your work, are you seeing more of that trend, and what needs, specifically, are you seeing beyond the employee base?

JULIE STONE: So I think there's a good amount of variation out there, and leadership-driven, industry-driven. But, generally speaking, I'm seeing that trend of organizations recognizing, and that's current and post-pandemic, a much deeper awareness of the impact of emotional wellbeing and mental health that underlies some of the issues we're talking about and the connection to family and support. And we will be impacted for some time to come by all of these issues. And I know we're not focusing solely on COVID-19 and the pandemic, but we also can't set aside that that is an important factor here.

And to your question, Suzanne, I think that it has changed the conversation in a way that will be sustained beyond this year and this particular point in time around wellbeing and expansion of services. But targeted, thoughtful, engaging surfaces for employees and their family members.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: I just want to add that the need for mental health support is something that has come into the forefront increasingly over the last several years. And we don't have to recap all of the events that happened before this time of crisis during which this is recorded. But just to highlight a few, we were having peaks in suicidality, there was gun violence, violence in the workplace, the stress of our environments really, really coming into our lives. It's become, for employers, just for the language they've got to speak every day, and the need has been so great.

One of the challenges for a company in putting something out there for the people is to know where to start. And we've talked about this continuing in the past. Do you start with that front door and try to pull people in? Do you give people navigation tools to get them to a network? Is there a network that's actually available that they can talk to? When do you talk to people, and do you do that virtually or do that in person? And what happens when you've got a crisis?

JULIE STONE: Jan, if you could describe, at a high level, the types of clients that will best benefit from meQuilibrium, it would be great if you could take just a couple of minutes to share that with our listeners.

JAN BRUCE: Sure. So we work with all types of companies. We often say from Wall Street to Main Street. We work with very large banks, and technology companies, manufacturing companies, automobile companies, a lot of Fortune 500 accounts. When it comes down to people, I think that we've done very

strong work with employees that are working in high strain and low control situations, like truck drivers or people in call centers-- whether it's in telecoms, or health care, or insurance, or even in banks call centers. We've worked with nurses and bank tellers, who, if you think about it, are under a lot of strain.

But then we also work with what we call knowledge workers-- bankers, engineers, sales people. And the thing about resilience is that it can calibrate to the different needs, and skill deficits of each of those types of workers, and help them gain control over their environment and therefore be more successful and more effective, less stressed.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: It's overwhelming right now for organizations who are dealing with a lot of change. And yet, you described a risk of not paying attention, and Julie, you too, and Steve, to the emotional wellbeing of your people. So I guess, kind of back to Steve's question, where would an employer begin? Do you start with all employees? Do you focus on managers? Do you start with the top of the house? What's one step to enter into the space, given everything else going on.

JAN BRUCE: So if you're asking me my thinking about this, Suzanne-- and we've thought about this, and we've read a lot of experimentations on this over the years-- we've learned that our messaging to individuals works best-- and I mean individual employees-- when it is all about the better, gaining control, coping, and succeeding, and excelling, as opposed to being sick, being punitive, talking about a problem or being sick. When we cast a very wide net and when the leadership of the company supports this as a cultural initiative, let's say emotional wellbeing, or changing our culture around their emotional wellbeing, or having a resilient or agile culture, that is the most effective thing. At the same time, we're getting phenomenally strong results by activating managers today. Because managers are really today's frontlines.

With so many employees working remotely, I've heard Steve say this in other circumstances, managers are like the new HR department. Sometimes, your manager is the only person you talk to across the organization for days. And managers, when they see and learn that there is a tool to help them and their people be more resilient and improve emotional wellbeing, and they push it out to their teams, it's very successful. The value of that is that the more people that use this, the more aggregated data, both for managers and for HR, CHROs C-suite, the more data there is available.

One company of ours launched fairly recently. They have over 25% to 30% of their population now enrolled in meQuilibrium. And when the CEO saw our aggregated reporting about his workforce, he was really struck by the level of burnout across the organization. And that led that company to decide to add extra PTO days for the entire company this quarter. His thinking was, wow, we are so burned out, but this is a team of people that is so driven, that unless everyone takes a day off, I don't think people are going to stop working.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: That's just an amazing--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

JAN BRUCE: This is a profound-- this is illustrative of how data can change how companies act, and how companies who are thinking about emotional wellbeing and resilience as power, as a cultural initiative, that can help them achieve their goals, will start to do things differently.

JULIE STONE: Jan, one of the things that I think will really be helpful for our listeners is to hear more specifically about the results that you have achieved for employers and the outcomes. So let's make it tangible in terms of takeaways from this conversation.

JAN BRUCE: Sure. I would start with the measurable results that we can see in our data and deliver it to our employers. And those usually center around reducing burnout risk. We typically can significantly reduce the risk of burnout across the population, reduce of depression risk, and anxiety, and stress risk. At a higher level, I think that customers want to see that the enrollment rates are high. And right now, we are typically getting one out of three employees will enroll in meQuilibrium. We're gunning for 1 out of 2

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Well, Jan, I'd just like to acknowledge, for everyone here and everyone listening, you should never expect everybody to need every solution all the time, right? We talked at some point about the continuum of care. Some people don't want to interact in certain ways or not at that time, or may not have a need. We know about 1 in 4 to 1 to 5 people are going to have an emotional wellbeing need. Some of them might have a different type of care needed. You're getting more than that percent of people.

I mean, heck, when I want to buy a pair of socks, I might go online, I might use an app, I might go to a store, I might go to one of five different stores. So to think that you might go one place when you have a need is probably unrealistic, but those numbers are healthy numbers.

JAN BRUCE: I think, for meQuilibrium, our philosophy is we want to do a really good job for the employer. And the more data we can get, the more we can help the employer understand what's going on. And then we want to work with them, and we want to work with you all, to help the employer develop best practices. And maybe they need to change their operating strategies, maybe people aren't focusing under pressure, maybe they need to change the way people are working. Or if people are burned out, maybe they need to examine the conditions-- things like that.

So that's sort of beyond the SaaS solution. But the SaaS solution does the core of the work. Because we can measure people, we can train and upscale people, and then we can remeasure them. And then one important thing that I didn't say early on, Steve, when you asked me about the product and how it works, is we are very AI and machine learning driven. So the more data, the more we know about you, the more personalized the program gets at a very atomic level. So the more you use it, the better it will be.

And right now, we are giving people a daily blog post based on what we know about you and your profile. So everyone on this call-- you, Suzanne, Julie-- would all have a different post every morning and a different recommended activity.

[INAUDIBLE]

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: You mentioned, Jan, software as a service. Just for those listening who might not be aware, you're talking really about the software as a service, the app experience, the AI, that's what you're referring to when you said that.

JAN BRUCE: Yeah. And when I said it's really about the software now and the software as a service, it puts this all together for employers. Because we help individuals, then we help managers, and we help CHRO, and the HR department, and the C-suite, with data, and we give them the data so that they can better design how to plan the next generation of their programming.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: All right. Let's end this one on a fun note. Jan, if meQ were a mythological creature, such as a Greek god or goddess, what would it be?

JAN BRUCE: Well, I thought about this, and this is not exactly a creature in the sense of many of the animals. But I would have to say, if you're familiar, Ariadne's magic yarn. And that's the yarn that helps Theseus get out of the labyrinth.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Wow.

JAN BRUCE: Because it rolls out in front of him and traces the path for him. And he still has to do all the work, Theseus. He has to slay the Minotaur and do all the walking. But without that yarn, without that journey and path, he would wander forever and ever, and never get out. And that's kind of what resilience can do for people. It can help you get in touch with your mind, so that you can get out of the labyrinth.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Wow. That is actually one of the most thoughtful answers to that question that's appeared in this pod. If I had a gold star to hand to you, if we were in the same room, I'd be giving it to you right now.

JAN BRUCE: Well, if you knew my profile, Steve, I'm, in the equilibrium parlance, a real problem-solver. So getting a gold star is totally [INAUDIBLE].

[LAUGHTER]

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Jan Bruce, thanks so much for being here today. I wish I could see you in person again, but we are on phone. And we hope all of our listeners learned as much as we have about this really important and critical area of emotional wellbeing and resilience and about meQ. So Jan, thanks again for being here.

JAN BRUCE: You're welcome, Steve. It was great.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Julie, thanks for being my partner in crime again today.

JULIE STONE: Echo your comments to Jan, Steve. Jan, this was so critical to have everybody hear your thoughts on meQuilibrium, and growth plans, and value that you bring to the market. Thanks.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: And Suzanne, what a great treat for us to have your voice here. Can't wait to have you on the pod again. Thanks for being here.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: Yeah, it was my pleasure to be here. I learned so much, Jan, from this conversation. I was thinking about a conversation I had with one of my leaders last week, and I asked her how she was doing. And she said that she was like an onion. If you opened her up, she'll start to fall apart.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Wow.

SUZANNE MCANDREW: And I think that we have so much to do to help our people cope in this wave of uncertainty. And I just learned a lot thinking about meQuilibrium and resilience. Thank you.

JAN BRUCE: Thank you. And it's great to talk to all of you, and also to work with all of you, and help companies navigate through this uncertainty and change and optimize their potential.

STEVE BLUMENFIELD: Awesome. And to the audience, thanks once again for listening to Cure for the Common Co. Please rate the part and share with others if you like it. If you don't like it, you don't have to rate it. Just kidding.

We hope you can maintain some emotional wellbeing in these very unusual times. And if you're as stressed out as I am about your gas tank and about finishing that report for your boss, now you've got some tools to use. Thanks, everybody. Stay well.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

ANNOUNCER: Thank you for joining us for this Willis Towers Watson podcast featuring the latest thinking on the intersection of people, capital, and risk. For more information, visit the [Insights section of willistowerswatson.com](https://willistowerswatson.com).

[MUSIC PLAYING]