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Travelex Insurance Services redefines workplace culture with strengths-based approach

Leading the way in the marketplace, Travelex leverages CliftonStrengths® and partnership with Gallup to transform workplace culture.

OMAHA, Neb., Nov. 1, 2022 — “Workplace culture” and “employee engagement” are prominent topics in today’s business discussions. The trend started in 2016, the year multiple research reports revealed workplace culture to be the most influential factor in employee engagement. By then, business leaders had been working to improve employee engagement for several years, with little success. In the years since, businesses in almost every industry have made improving workplace culture an organizational priority.

Around that time, [Travelex Insurance Services](#), an industry-leading travel insurance provider, got a head start in building a positive workplace culture. An executive vice president at the company learned about [CliftonStrengths®](#) (formerly StrengthsFinder), a model that concentrates on identifying and developing employees’ strengths. The Travelex EVP asked her direct reports to take the CliftonStrengths assessment and provide feedback.

Created by U.S.-based analytics and advisory firm [Gallup, Inc.](#), CliftonStrengths identifies 34 core strengths, or signature themes, with insights for a person’s top five, top 10 or full 34 strengths.

“Employees today expect organizations to invest in their development,” said Austin Suellentrop, CliftonStrengths Portfolio Manager at Gallup. “Providing employees with focused attention on their strengths is one of the most powerful ways for an organization to engage and connect with its team members.”

Shannon Lofdahl, President and CEO at Travelex, said that, like many businesses, Travelex wanted to attract and recruit millennial talent. “Millennials deserve a lot of credit for instigating change in workplace culture,” she said. Lofdahl was that EVP who asked her team to take the CliftonStrengths assessment in 2016.

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Those 2016 research reports, including [the Deloitte Millennial Survey 2016](#) and "[2016 Global Human Capital Trends: The new organization — Different by design](#)," discussed the importance of workplace culture on employee engagement and well-being. For the former, Deloitte surveyed 7,700 millennials in 29 countries, uncovering an alarming trend: 66% of respondents said they expected to leave their current jobs within the next four years. This and other findings gave businesses insight into the millennial mind and underscored the need to improve workplace culture.

"Millennials continue to indicate that simply signing their paychecks isn't enough to galvanize their loyalty to an employer," Lofdahl said. "They're looking for something more, so, at Travellex, we foster a culture of positivity and encouragement."

Building a strengths-based culture

Lofdahl stepped into her role as Travellex's President and CEO in November 2020. By that time, she and her team had been using the CliftonStrengths model for more than four years. The following year, Lofdahl piloted CliftonStrengths across the full leadership team. In 2022, she implemented the model companywide.

Today, Lofdahl describes Travellex as "leading with strengths": Every employee takes the CliftonStrengths assessment and learns their top five signature themes on their second day at Travellex. To support employee development and growth, the company offers on-site strengths coaching and workshops at no cost to employees.

"By understanding their CliftonStrengths, and those of their teammates," Suellentrop said, "the employees at Travellex are empowered to know best how they fit into the culture and how they can uniquely impact the performance moving forward into the future. We are excited to partner with Travellex as they continue their investment in the strengths-based culture they are creating."

The Travellex leadership team has been impressed with the culture changes they've seen occurring in their workplace. "This approach is positive and proactive," Lofdahl said. "We focus on what each employee does well and how we can help them to grow and develop, not just as Travellex team members but as human beings. Diversity, equity and inclusivity are inherently woven into the program — we celebrate our strengths, the strengths of others, and the fact that we all have different strengths."

Avil Jackson, Director of Organizational Development at Travellex and a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach, was one of Lofdahl's team members who participated in the initial launch of CliftonStrengths at Travellex. "We knew we were onto something when we looked at Gallup's program," Jackson said. "Now, it is a part of who we are and what we do. We put in the work. We knew this was important. And we provide an opportunity for employees not just to learn their strengths but also to develop and grow."

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By the time employee resistance to return to the office and a nationwide labor shortage forced businesses in most industries to place renewed importance on employee well-being in 2021, Travelex had been working to improve in that and other areas for several years.

“We want to improve the well-being of our teams,” Jackson said. “There are five elements of well-being — career, financial, social, physical and community — and we look at how can we help our employees identify and use their signature themes to live their best lives. For us, it is all connected, and by focusing on strengths and well-being, we’ve created a culture where our team knows we want them to bring their whole selves to Travelex. We are honored to be a part of their lives and their journey.”

Jackson said most Travelex employees can list their top five signature themes from memory, and, in strengths workshops, they learn to “name it, claim it, and aim it” as they develop each of their strengths. Employees are also encouraged to share their signature themes with each other and to use them when assembling cross-functional teams.

“Team dynamics are important — department teams, project teams, you name it,” Jackson said. “CliftonStrengths establishes a common language at Travelex. If I know your signature themes and you know mine, we can get things done. We use strengths to get things done. We don’t tamp your strengths down; we let them shine, so we can collaborate to achieve fantastic results.”

The Travelex leadership team proactively seeks out novel ways to incorporate strengths into the company’s culture; business and individual goals; meetings; team development; and training and development programs, including its leadership and manager training program.

“The strengths discussion gives our new employees and those who haven’t worked together closely some common ground, something to talk about,” Lofdahl said. “‘What are your top five?’ is a question I overhear all the time because our strengths are inherently woven into our culture. We’ve made strengths a ubiquitous part of our business, so our employees naturally look for new ways theirs can propel them forward.”

About Gallup, Inc., and CliftonStrengths

Gallup delivers analytics and advice to help leaders and organizations solve their most pressing problems. Combining more than 80 years of experience with its global reach, Gallup knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students and citizens than any other organization in the world.

Invented by Don Clifton, the CliftonStrengths assessment uncovers a person’s unique rank order of 34 CliftonStrengths themes.

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Each individual's CliftonStrengths themes are their talent DNA. They explain the ways that person most naturally thinks, feels and behaves.

Our research shows that people who know and use their CliftonStrengths are:

- More engaged at work
- More productive in their roles
- Happier and healthier

Whether you're looking to improve yourself, or you're a leader wanting to empower your people to perform better, your efforts start with CliftonStrengths. Learn more at Gallup.com/cliftonstrengths.

About Travelex Insurance Services

For more than 25 years, Travelex Insurance Services has been a leading provider of travel insurance in the United States. As a premier partner to the travel industry, Travelex offers a diverse array of products designed to help travelers create and protect the moments that matter most while they explore the world.

Our commitment to outstanding customer service makes Travelex stand out among the competition, and we are frequently honored with travel industry customer service, technology, and innovation awards. We know our partners and travelers are real people at the other end of the line, so our customer solutions and travel assistance teams are ready to respond with kindness, respect, and patience when you need us. We also believe the claims process is as easy as we design it to be, so we've made it simple, and we have a 95.9% claims payment rate.

In 2017, Travelex joined the Zurich family of global brands, which has enabled us to broaden our footprint and strengthen our presence throughout North America. We are a woman-led organization that values diversity, and we are guided by our values. We are optimistic, caring, and reliable. With forward thinking, determination, and a sense of togetherness, we bring our purpose to life and help travelers dream, explore, and travel on. After all, adventure doesn't wait.

To learn more about Travelex, visit us at TravelexInsurance.com.

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