

Cotton On Leading the Way With Wellness



BOARD DISCUSSION

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Health and Well Being Manager, Luke McLean, shared the Cotton On wellness journey at the recent Marsh Workforce Strategies Forums, held in Sydney and Melbourne.

According to the *Australian Financial Review* (AFR)¹, Cotton On Group has announced plans to add 227 jobs in Australia and overseas this year as the business pursues a strategy to better its five-year record of 20%-plus sales growth.

Group sales are expected to rise by 22.5% this year to \$1.51 billion. It expects 20% cent-plus growth in 2016. This will be on the back of more than 100 store openings and beefed up online trading capabilities with new online sites, improved digital content and click and collect options.



As outlined in the AFR article cited above, Cotton On plans to open 570 stores internationally, with the total number of stores likely to hit nearly 1900 over the next three years, while online sales are expected to rise to \$250 million.

“We can’t do that if we don’t look after people. At Cotton On, we’re always on, be that at work, at home or with the kids. So we need to be in shape mentally, physically and emotionally because the business is moving so fast,” he said.

According to McLean, the company’s vision is to create the best workplace in the world. Citing Jim Loehr’s famous workplace management book, *The Power of Full Engagement*, he explained Cotton On is focused on helping to manage the team’s energy, rather than its time, which is something that’s fixed and unmanageable.

Importantly, he acknowledged the company’s commitment to mental wellbeing is rooted in its culture. This is one of the reasons why it has established the Cotton On Foundation. “This gives staff the ability to be connected to their job beyond just receiving a pay cheque,” McLean explained.

However, he stressed the business’s notion of wellbeing is flexible to allow individual staff members to express what health and wellness means to them.

¹ Mitchell, S. (2015), “Cotton On plans next stage of global growth, *The Australian Financial Review*, 30/03/16, accessed 19/11/15, <http://www.afr.com/brand/cotton-on-plans-next-stage-of-global-growth-20150328-1m9ztm>.

Here's a snapshot of some of the wellness initiatives Cotton On's staff can take advantage of:

- Onsite gym with more than 180 three-on-one personal training sessions a week.
- Access to an osteopath, beauty therapist and car wash.
- Café with subsidised meal options.
- Bring your dog to work.
- \$50,000 spent on fresh fruit each year.
- Standing desks.
- In store yoga.
- Flexible hours: staff can choose their hours between 7am and 7pm, as long as they work eight hours a day.

Plus, the business builds wellness into day-to-day activities. For instance, smoothies are served to participants during meetings that run longer than an hour. McLean says this makes good business sense because it helps keep team members energised. Managers are also coached on how to ensure their staff maintain their energy levels.

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LUKE MCLEAN

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