

THE JOURNAL RECORD

Being Well: Bart McDonough, Agio Technology

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Bart McDonough with Agio Technology.
(Photo by Maike Sabolich)

NORMAN – Bart McDonough is guiding a rapidly growing software information technology company in Norman whose reach extends across the globe.

In parallel, he's cultivating a workforce that he wants to be among the healthiest, grounded in proper nutrition and exercise and ways to handle stress and get proper sleep.

McDonough, CEO of Agio Technology, with about 50 employees at his operational headquarters in Norman, has first taken that journey himself. He's found a healthy regimen that allows him to deal with the rigors of constant travel and the fast-paced world of his company – providing technology infrastructure to some of the world's top hedge funds.

"A lot of people, when they think about health, fitness and nutrition, it's all about weight loss," he said. "While that's certainly one component of it, general health and well-being is about those four components – nutrition, fitness, overall sleep and stress. If you master all of those, I think you end up with this very healthy byproduct. They're all very connected. Over the past year, I've gotten a better appreciation for those components and not just the vanity components of weight loss. And as a business focused on providing high-touch customer service, I feel like if we can provide a platform for our employees to take advantage of that well-being, then from a business perspective, we'll have better service for our customers."

McDonough recommitted himself to healthy living several years ago after returning to his hometown of Edmond one Christmas and realizing that he'd lost his energy and activity level. He got back in his old regimen of running and riding his bike, and he found another helpful tool in the Paleo diet, which focuses on the foods and lifestyle available as humans evolved through the Paleolithic era.

Transferring his belief in the power of healthy living to his company not only makes business sense, it's also an important goal for his home state, which suffers from some of the worst health outcomes in the nation.

McDonough said education must serve as the foundation of his wellness initiative – making sure his employees have the opportunity to learn the basics of blood chemistry and what affects the body's energy level. He relates it to smoking – once people understood the dangers of tobacco, they could make better educated decisions about its use, as opposed to the time when no one knew smoking was harmful.

McDonough said Agio is full of driven, type-A personalities whom he predicts will be eager to learn more about healthy lifestyles. He's planning a lecture series, some fun incentives to monitor health metrics and nutritional counseling. The program will extend companywide, which includes 82 employees across several other states.

McDonough said he wants to build Agio into a "destination workplace," and a focus on well-being is a big part of that. A healthier staff also provides an edge in a competitive landscape, he said.

But he said his wellness approach will take the path of one of his business philosophies: "context, not control." Just as he believes in talking with staff about how to meet a business goal – instead of prescribing the path to get there – he said a grounding in the context of healthy living should lead to its own good outcomes.

"People don't like to be controlled," he said. "With wellness, I want people to get the context – we want to establish something where people feel better, have greater energy and have the tools to make better decisions."

Check it out

At Agio Technology's operational headquarters in the Three Partners Place building in Norman, CEO Bart McDonough has built a "de-tension" room. With the play on words, he has created a room of respite or exercise – calming decor, comfortable seating, green plants and a large TV equipped with Wii fitness games.