

President's Letter

2022



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Emerging into a New Space Where Well-being Is Front and Center

from the President of First Sun EAP

We are at the precipice of a new frontier in well-being. As we emerge from the storm of challenges that took the lives of loved ones, pushed so many to the brink of their coping abilities, created new leadership struggles and made businesses buckle, there is hope and help before us. At First Sun EAP, we are here for you, our customers, and our community. In this letter, I review our work together last year, the factors we see at play for the year ahead and our plans for continuing our high-impact service for you. This is a time of many changes in our work and home lives. First Sun stands ready, and steady, as your partner for organizational and personal well-being.



Well-being Solutions
for work, home and life

A LOOK BACK AT 2021

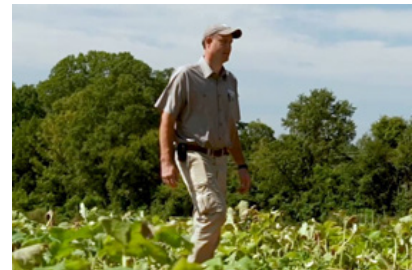
What we saw



Thought Leadership

As the coronavirus continued to challenge our collective behavioral health through 2021, the staff of First Sun set their sights on creating a positive impact on the well-being of US workforces and businesses. It was apparent to us that it was time to contribute our expertise in workplace behavioral health to national thought leadership and to strategically invest to meet the burgeoning need. Here are some notable highlights:

- We participated as a member of the [National Behavioral Consortium's](#) Thought Leadership Task Force to look at establishing creative efforts to advance workplace well-being.
- We hosted monthly EAP Town Hall meetings for The Workplace Collaborative (a best practice consortium of EAPs) to discuss effective response to workplace challenges.
- We created an [array of plan options](#) to extend well-being services to those in need including associations, schools and the South Carolina farming community.
- We held a conference for agents and consultants to share our strategic view of behavioral health in the workplace.
- We formed many new partnerships with complementary service providers to facilitate integration of a suite of vetted services to support workplace success (and we secured discounts!).



We proudly provide South Carolina farmers and farm families with mental health and well-being services through the [SC AgriWellness](#) program.

[VIEW THE VIDEO.](#)

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What we saw



Service Access and Quality

Service quality is only as good as the people providing it. So, we started with investments in our own staff to facilitate their well-being and skill levels in the areas of challenge we saw across the business community. We then looked at places we could provide support or add to our services to increase the experience or impact. Here is a sampling:

- First Sun invested in our staff by providing [DE&I education](#) for all staff and coaching for our leaders. Our direct service staff completed suicide prevention training, and we focused on well-being throughout the year.
- We supported our existing team by hiring two leaders who have extensive experience in the employee assistance (EA) profession.
- In response to increased utilization, we grew our provider and partner networks to expand access and expertise.
- To support our counseling providers who experienced significant caseloads, we provided free case consultation and self-care webinars. We assisted them with challenging cases and supported them through their work in the pandemic environment.
- Our customers were scrambling to keep employees engaged and productive. So, we created an easy step-by-step process to help them get great ROI from our EAP.
- With workplaces moving to hybrid or remote structures, we increased our online training and coaching options for employee and leaders.

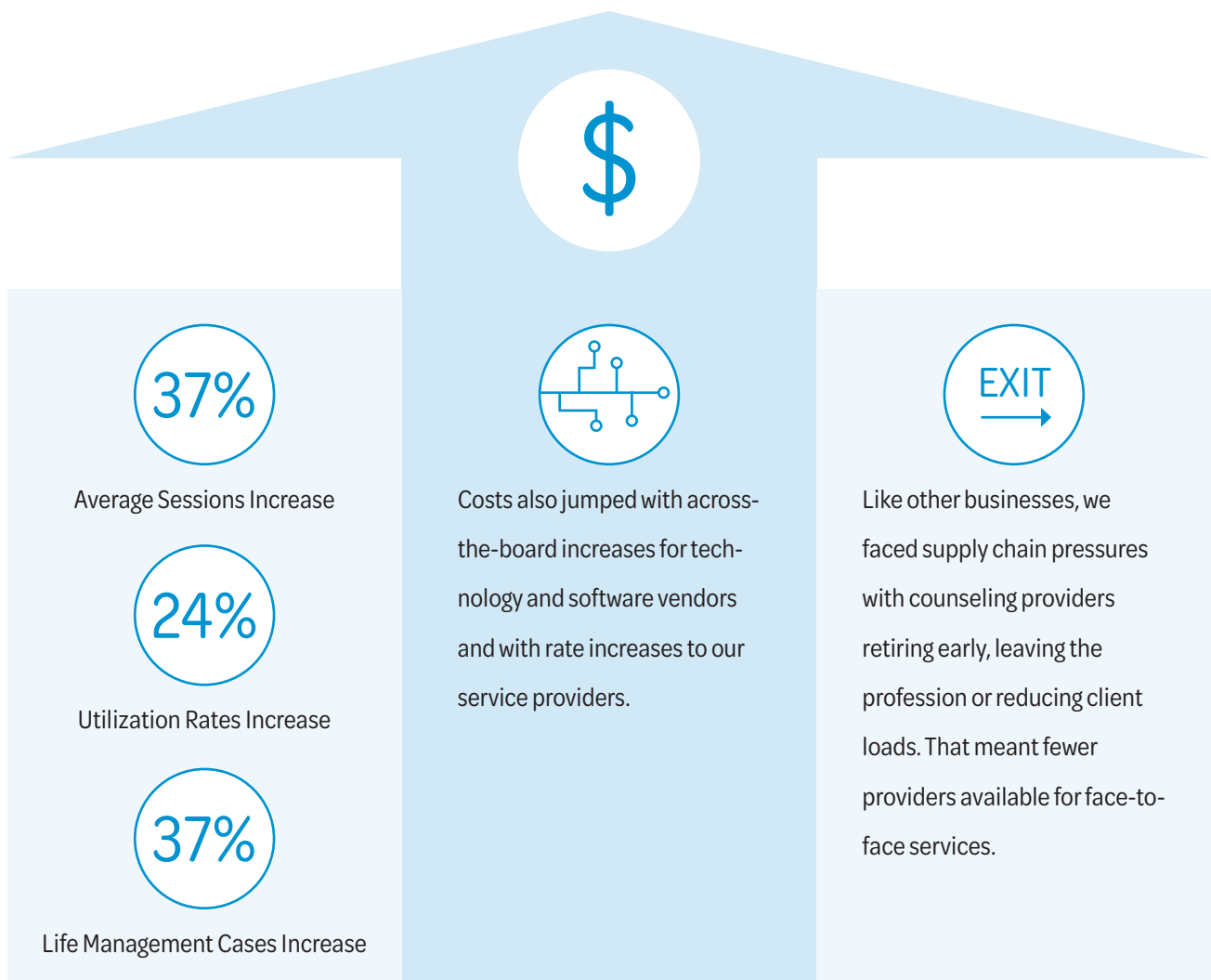
A LOOK BACK AT 2021

What we saw



Challenges We Squared Off Against

Our response to the rising tide of mental health problems was not without challenge. We had to get creative to maintain our quality services in light of economic pressures.



A LOOK BACK AT 2021

What we saw



And We Grew!

- Our reputation as a trusted and high quality EAP partner led us to maintain and gain business through the pandemic.
- Even with businesses having to make serious cuts in expenses, we maintained a 95% retention rate.
- Due to the effects of the pandemic on employees, our customers expanded their EAP coverage. Over 25% of our customers have session models above the standard model.
- Many employers who had free EAPs through ancillary carriers shifted to our services to take advantage of the benefit of [more robust services](#) and partnership.
- Our Solutions division saw significant uptick in leader coaching and employee and manager training – especially for manager skills, [compliance](#) and DEI.
- First Sun was selected as the standalone EAP partner for local and national broker networks who made a commitment to quality for their customers.



EAP Sales Growth



Retention Rate



Session Models Above the Standard



Solutions Sales Growth

What we see ahead



Organizations are facing long-term changes that will affect their workforce. With remote and hybrid work as the norm for many, and the talent pool expanding across geographic boundaries and salary bands, there will be an impact to businesses large and small. Those who anticipate and proactively work to establish new strategic practices and operations to address changes (vs. reflexive hiring or inequitable practices) will fare best.

The “Great Resignation” – Surveys say the number one reason employees are leaving is poor leadership. This is closely followed by lack of flexibility or training. The good news is this is something that can be addressed. Providing coaching or skills training to management, injecting flexibility where you can and providing education and growth for employees can help stem the exodus. The bonus: doing anything in these arenas shows you care, and that goes a long way to fostering employee retention and engagement.

Workplace Culture Shift – After shifting and changing to face the COVID-19 virus, employees are coming to a strong sense of what they want from their job. Many are looking for permanent remote work, easier work, better benefits and more learning opportunities. They expect the employer to understand and take care of their needs and for the work experience to be one that resonates with their values.

Redefinition of Workflows and Processes – Every business had to make changes in light of the pandemic. Leaders must sort out which changes are here to stay and how to run a successful business in 2022. Customer service staff have to reskill to work with impatient customers. Collaboration skills and processes are needed to keep remote and hybrid workers from becoming siloed. Communication and people skills are needed to enhance team performance and work through inevitable conflict.

“ LEADERSHIP is the main thing we have to sort out. ”

Dr. Tyler Arvig,
Associate Medical Director
R3 Continuum

What we see ahead



Employee Well-being – Across every industry, employees are exhausted and burned out. Life issues, work complexity and cultural stress are pushing people out of well-being and into psychological distress. Coping skills used in the past are failing to help people deal with long-term change and daily unpredictability. Work-life balance is tilting toward more life support as the home becomes the epicenter of life. Simultaneously, new skills are needed to remain successful at work. Employees are feeling challenged from every side.

Recommendations for Action – Along with these trends are powerful opportunities for employers to enhance productivity and set a path for long-term success. Here are some ideas:

- Establish employee well-being as the new success metric to augment satisfaction or engagement. Work with your EAP to define and measure this.
- Strategically purchase benefits. Get the right fit for your goals and then promote them.
- Help employees understand the available support and actively assist them to engage.
- Destigmatize the use of support. Encourage and model healthy use of services.
- Collaborate with employees to redefine your workplace culture. Incorporate values and practices to highlight the purpose and meaning of their work.
- Level up leadership with new skills to create maximum and long-term bottom line impact. Managers are the primary and sometimes only connection employees have to the workplace. It's essential for them to be effective. Here are the new baseline skills for managers and leaders:
 - Communication – empathy, listening, connection, engagement and conflict
 - Vision – creating or translating a vision into clear and meaningful priorities
 - Coaching – helping employees use their strengths to progress past barriers
 - Ethical Leadership – DE&I, psychological safety, transparency and forging authentic relationships

Our plans for 2022



First Sun maintains a five-year road map. In 2022, we are actively working to meet the current and emerging needs of our customers and clients. From taking a strong role in thought leadership for the employee assistance profession to investing in our own staff to establishing reimagined best practices for 2022, we are lighting the way to continued great service. We have been recognized in these efforts by agents and brokers and selected by yet another broker group to be their EAP partner.

Behavioral Health Thought Leadership

- I accepted the position of editor for the Journal of Employee Assistance. It is the international Employee Assistance Professionals Association's ([EAPA](#)) publication that serves to educate EA professionals about best practice EAP work.
- We are collaborating to educate the behavioral health marketplace about top-tier EAPs in the [WorldatWork WorkSpan Daily](#) column.
- We continue as members of the Thought Leadership Taskforce for the National Behavioral Consortium.
- First Sun will be presenting to various broker groups on the road map for behavioral health in the workplace.

Next-level Technology

- First Sun will be migrating to a new client database system to provide more efficiencies in the service process, outcome data and portals for counselors.
- We will launch a new client access platform to allow clients expanded access to tiered services including guided education, life management services and counseling.
- Our partner list is growing to include more service partners who provide both EAP covered and discounted complementary services.

Our plans for 2022



Investment in Quality

- First Sun is hiring a technology coordinator to head creation and integration of our digital projects.
- We have hired a new risk management consultant to assure we are ready for all requests due to the increase in crises and complexity and urgency of cases.
- We have engineered a project with associate licensed counselors to foster their growth and entry into practice. This has already enhanced access to care and assures adequacy and quality of our future counseling service pipeline.

Service Enhancements

- We are revising customer reports to better reflect the array and value of services we are now providing.
- We are increasing education and training for employers to include manager skill-building, [skill-based coaching](#) and [trainings](#) to cover education and skills needed to succeed in the current workplace landscape.
- First Sun is investing in the creation of a coaching service for our workplace referrals. This will be a cutting-edge service that we have not seen anywhere else in the EAP profession.



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These are tough times, and First Sun is committed to serving employers, employees, families and our community. I welcome your [email](#) or call to discuss behavioral health in the workplace and how First Sun can help you move toward your highest personal and professional potential.

Best regards – Maria Lund