

Increase Wellness While Decreasing Costs

Healthy employees contribute to a healthy bottom line.

According to the Center for Disease Control, “productivity losses related to personal and family health problems cost U.S. employers \$1,685 per employee per year, or \$225.8 billion annually.” Yet there are little things you can do to shift the health and mind-body-spirit well-being of your employees.

Create a Wellness Culture

A wellness culture starts with establishing and communicating clear mission, vision, values and goals of the business. Clarity of purpose, direction and focus supports positive attitudes, sound decision-making and open communication.

Next, ensure your physical environment supports wellness. Your workplace should be safe and clean, clutter free, with appropriate lighting and ergonomic work spaces. In addition to a healthy physical space, offer your employees opportunities to make healthier choices for their physical bodies. For example, have bottled or filtered water available. Have healthy snacks in break rooms. Make healthier choices when deciding on locations or catering for team lunches. Hold stand up or walking meetings instead of always sitting down at a table. Remember that most importantly, you need to lead by example.

Offer Wellness Programs

Establishing a wellness program can contribute positively to your company’s bottom line. An aggregate of business wellness statistics shows a savings of \$2.30 to \$10.10 for every \$1 spent on wellness initiatives.

The *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* has reported that wellness programs improve absenteeism, and lower health costs and disability claims.

Optimal wellness programs include curriculum that both educates employees on health and wellness, and guides them to incorporate new healthy habits.

Don’t assume everyone knows what to do to be healthy and well. Start with the basics and explain not just what to do, but why and how. Understanding the “why” behind health and wellness basics makes choosing better options a more conscientious process.

Tailor to Your Employees

Beyond the basics, your wellness program can address specific issues facing your employees. Don’t assume that just because someone is thin that he or she is healthy. Nor does being obese mean complete lack of wellness. Health and wellness is not just about weight. Your wellness program, while it certainly can

include a weight loss portion or contest, should be more holistic in its approach.

It is good to have an overall picture of what the variety of health and wellness concerns of your employees may be.

You can start by anonymously surveying them. There are companies that can provide an aggregate of employee health data, which will help you target areas of concern while maintaining employee privacy. For example, the data may indicate that a significant percentage of

your employees have high cholesterol or are borderline diabetic. Having this information allows you to tailor programming to educate and help bring those numbers down, ultimately reducing your health care/health insurance costs.

It is not only a gap in knowledge that keeps us from being well, but rather a disconnect between our intentions and actions. Provide the education and the culture that will nurture and align their individual, and your company’s, intentions with actions. ■



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