

# Wellness begins at work

## It's all about empowerment

**W**orkplace Wellness could be defined as “any workplace health promotion activity or organisational policy designed to support healthy behaviour in the workplace and to improve healthy outcomes. Generally speaking, health promotion is defined as ‘the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health’”.

Workplace wellness benefits both employers and employees and both have a responsibility for creating a healthy workplace. Employees are expected to arrive at work in good health, and the employer is expected to provide an environment that allows employees to maintain good health, enjoy their work, and contribute to the company's success.

Companies today who want to attract and keep good employees have management teams who understand the connection between employee satisfaction and employee health and believe that workplace wellness is a business strategy. Their management practices include making reasonable demands on time and energy, involving employees in decision making, rewarding work well done, openly communicating, and providing support to balance work and home life.

Employers know that workers are looking for jobs that pay well, have good benefits, are interesting, and include excellent health and safety programs. So in today's competitive hiring market, it has become more important than ever for companies to enhance job satisfaction and ensure that employees are happy in their working environment.

Wellness programs are linked to greater productivity, less absenteeism, and a reduction of long-term health care costs. Are

you doing enough to ensure the health of your workforce? Even if you don't have the resources to implement a complete wellness program, there are several things you can do which show your employees that you value their health.

Some initiatives that can be implemented at a reasonably low cost could be providing employees with fresh fruit once a week; encouraging employees to do some light exercise by setting up a lunch time walking club; providing employees with water bottles—an ideal way to encourage increased water intake. These are simple ways to show employees that their health is important. As the winter season approaches, it is an opportunity to promote preventative care by providing or subsidising flu vaccinations. This has one of the clearest returns on investment as when your employees avoid the flu, they avoid missing out on days, if not weeks, of work.

Some companies host an annual wellness day, where a medical team set up their equipment at the workplace to test cholesterol levels, blood pressure, blood glucose levels and general wellbeing. It is always a valuable exercise to have a motivational speaker address employees on new life skills like healthy cooking, or how to deal with pressure and stress in the workplace. This promotes good mental health.

Another initiative could be to employ the services of an Employee Wellbeing Program. This service provides a 24-hour telephonic counselling service designed to assist the employee or any member of their immediate family with issues that may be affecting their life or work. The services includes advice on dealing with emotional and personal difficulties, alcohol, drug or gambling abuse,



financial matters, legal matters as well as coping with bereavement and loss.

Small gestures like a delivery of flowers or a hamper when an employee is unwell, or a small gift on birthdays can demonstrate a company's appreciation for their employees. Further, life changing events like getting married, or the birth of a child should be

celebrated! It is also a great way to reward loyalty by offering employees incentive programs, like long service awards for milestone working anniversaries.

A lot can be said for the benefits of team building. These events are generally a fun way for employees to interact with each other socially; and away from the work environment.

These events should appeal to a wide variety of people with different interests.

If any of these ideas appeal to you, it may be time to take a step in the wellness direction. The main components of a workplace wellness program are awareness, education and behavioural change. Start with a small change, and if it's successful, try

another idea a few weeks later. Whatever you choose, know that taking even a small step in the wellness direction can benefit your employees, your productivity, and your bottom line.

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