

Employee Health and why it matters to HR

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Providing employees with tools to manage and improve their health is not just the right thing to do, it's a winning business strategy. For great workplace productivity, the health of your employees is the determining factor.

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. To live a healthy life, people need to have a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. They must also live in a stress-free environment and have good hygiene.

Creating a work culture that advances wellbeing through all parts of your employees' lives has different health advantages. They can be fit, healthy, satisfied, and happy. Emphasizing employee health and wellbeing is very important as it contributes massively to overall employee engagement.

What is Employee Health?

Health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1986). Employee health is a term used to describe the overall health of an organization's employees. It incorporates all viewpoints and measurements of wellbeing and health, including physical and emotional wellness. Worker wellbeing or representative prosperity is quite possibly the most basic parts of an organisation.

Healthy employees are widely considered as the pillars of organizational success. Numerous businesses overall understand this and put the wellbeing of their workers first by presenting different health projects and drives. Employee health plays a direct role in the overall success of the company.

A healthy job is one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources, the amount of control they have and to the support they receive. A healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health promoting ones.

How much does employee health cost your business?

• Employee Productivity

Healthier employees are better equipped to combat fatigue and handle the day-to-day stresses caused by the typical work environment (Isaacson, 2010). With a greater ability to handle stress and fatigue along with being physically healthier, employees can be more productive by being able to work efficiently and consistently through the entire work day. Increased worker productivity is an associated benefit of

wellness programs often sought by employers (Lee et al., 2010).

• **Employee Absenteeism**

According to Miller (2010) healthy employees tend to miss fewer days from work due to illness, which is highly valued by employers. Another related outcome is that employees who condition themselves to make healthy life decisions may try to get family members involved in the same practices. As such, healthier employees may miss fewer days from work having to care for sick relatives.

• **Employee Turnover**

Turnover is expensive and is often a result of a company that fails to meet the needs of its employees. With health being one of the more critical needs of employees, having a wellness program may have a positive impact on employee retention. It could also be harder for employees to leave when they are committed to an employer who has invested in their overall well-being; indeed, increased commitment leads to lower turnover (Dyck & Neubert, 2008).

• **Commitment to the Organisation**

One commitment that a company can make to its employees is to improve and maintain their personal wellness. This will result in employees constantly performing at their best. According to Dyck & Neubert (2008), employees who are committed to their organizations exert more effort, go to greater lengths to help co-workers, and offer more creative ideas for organizational improvement.

• **Enhanced Company Image**

Most of what creates the image of a company is how much it cares about and treats its employees. The support of wellness programs is one way that a company can send a message that it cares about its employees, thus enhancing its image (Lee et al., 2010). That is, if employees are happy to work for a certain company then this sends a positive message to the public, thus enhancing the company's representation in the prospective applicant pool and community at large.

What can your organization do?

Employee wellness programs generally include any health promotion intervention, or activity in the workplace designed to improve health outcomes of workers (Lee et al., 2010). They show employees that their employers truly care about their health and well-being.

All employees have the desire to be treated as human beings with human needs – not robots. The 2018 Global Talent Trends survey found that one in two employees would like to see a greater focus on well-being at their company. This includes an emphasis on physical, psychological and financial wellness.

Employees desire managerial support for their physical and emotional well-being. A simple solution for

this is implementing a workplace wellness program. To be successful, employee wellness programs need to be customized and include a wide variety of wellness initiatives. Wellness challenges, onsite health screenings and regular lunch and learn sessions are examples of wellness initiatives that should be implemented year-round.

It's not enough for employers to simply offer employees the chance to participate in wellness activities. To truly make a commitment to employee health and well-being, employers need to lead by example and create a culture of wellness in their organization. Employers should offer employees mental health days, opportunities for stress relief and opportunities for physical activity. Investing in standing desks, weekly meditation programs or even an onsite gym are all ways that employers can fulfill employees' desire work for a company that promotes employee well-being.

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