

Recommendations for Worksites

Most businesses consider their employees to be their biggest asset. As such, it makes sense that each worksite would want to promote and even facilitate better health among each of their employees. While this may sound time-consuming and expensive, many large corporations are reaping the benefits of worksite wellness programs. Studies have found that worksite wellness programs can lower health care costs, reduce absenteeism, produce higher productivity among workers, lead to a reduced use of health care benefits and a reduced use of worker's comp and disability, reduce the number of injuries, and increase morale and loyalty among employees. All of this means a monetary savings for the employer.

For example, Johnson and Johnson reduced their absenteeism rate by 15% within two years of introducing their wellness program. They also cut their hospital costs by 34% after just three years. Coors has saved over \$2.3 million in lost wages due to absenteeism and \$1.9 million in rehabilitation costs and cost avoidance.

There are several key points to keep in mind if you want to greatly increase your chances of success when implementing a worksite wellness program.

1. The leaders (managers, executives, etc.) of the organization must buy-in to the program and be actively involved. In order to create long-term change, employees must see that their leadership values the wellness program activities and is willing to participate in them and work toward a healthier lifestyle along with everyone else.
2. Establish an individual wellness director position or committee (comprised of a cross-section sampling of the employees) that is primarily concerned with and personally passionate about improving the health of the employees through a wellness program.
3. Attrition, a reduction in the numbers of people participating, is common in worksite wellness activities (yoga classes or pilates classes for example). In order to avoid this and keep participation high it is necessary to be constantly evaluating and possibly modifying, or changing, the programs and classes being offered.

Here are some tips to help your workplace establish a culture and environment that values healthy employees and a healthy workplace. Every organization is different and has different needs and resources. Use ideas that fit you best and change other ideas to better fit your population and area. Better yet, put on your creative thinking caps and create some ideas and changes of your own.

- Encourage, facilitate, and promote a healthier lifestyle among employees
 - Serve only healthy foods at workplace functions
 - Provide low-fat meals at working lunches
 - Provide fruit and vegetable snacks in employee break rooms instead of candy and pastries
 - Ensure that water fountains are easily accessible to all employees

- Provide exercise facilities and equipment in or around the organization property
 - A walking track on the grounds around the building
 - Convert an empty room into an exercise room for aerobics classes or yoga classes
 - Use an empty room for a gymnasium with some cardio equipment, free weights, and other exercise equipment
 - Purchase some bicycles or rollerblades that employees may check out and use at nearby public facilities
- Encourage and facilitate active lifestyles
 - Share the costs of a gym membership with the employees
 - Offer incentives and recognition to those that participate in a movement program or meet a goal
 - Facilitate the formation of exercise buddies among members perhaps through a bulletin board or circulation of an e-mail with opportunities
 - Allow employees time to utilize the exercise and educational opportunities that you are providing
- Educate about the importance of health and ways to improve
 - Provide seminars and presentations during the lunch hour that address different health related topics
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise
 - Stress Management
 - Time Management
 - Include health tips about exercise and eating right in publications such as employee newsletters, e-mails, or included with pay stubs
- Plan health related activities
 - Have a health fair to educate and encourage healthier lifestyles
 - Cooking demonstrations with taste testing
 - Health screenings
 - BMI
 - Blood Pressure
 - Flexibility
 - Activity stations
 - Musical chairs
 - Dance revolution
 - Relay races
 - Correct form for resistance training
 - Lead walks or bike rides in the area during lunch times and after the work day
- Ensure a safe work environment for your employees
 - Do routine safety checks of equipment and the facilities to avoid accidental injuries
 - Monitor air and water quality

- Provide all necessary safety equipment and ensure use
- Keep employees updated on safety and emergency procedures

Implementation of just some of these tips can lead to a healthier and happier workforce, which means a healthier bottom line.