

HUMAN RESOURCES

Workplace Wellness: A Source of Productivity

by Danielle Miguel



Encouraging wellness programs in the workplace has tangible benefits for employees and employers alike - as correlations can be drawn between happiness, health, and overall productivity.

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While some people might tell you to “do what you love”, others might say “love what you do”. Both adages, different as they may be, describe the ideal relationship between a worker and their work. This relies on two factors: employees entering fields they enjoy and employers taking measures to make their workplaces enjoyable for workers with consideration to the latter group’s health and social needs.

Across the globe, employers are becoming more aware of the importance of having happy and healthy workers. Encouraging workers to enjoy their jobs has been shown to increase productivity for the company overall. This article will explore some of the ways that the world's most popular companies incorporate employee wellness into their workplace culture. The overarching trend has been to initiate programs that strategically bring worker wellness to the forefront of the office's attention. Some popular program topics include: physical activity, employee social, health, and educational resources, and diversity activities and trainings. Here are some of the tactical moves employers make and the benefits that come with them.

1. Incentivize for Progress

Companies recognize that, with each hired employee, they invest their worker's potential abilities into the future of the company at large. In order to make sure their employees are healthy, happy, and productive, several companies have implemented programs and policies aimed to incentivize engagement in workplace wellness programs. Some of these initiatives include offering free gym memberships, catering healthy food and providing healthy snacks, and reducing health care insurance premiums for employees who participate and make progress in wellness programs. The logic behind this move is two-fold: not only do employers find that healthy employees work harder and are more alert, but employers also create a sense of engagement and community by investing in their employees as individual persons – not just workers.

2. Promote Health Education

Studies have shown that employees tend to focus on daily responsibilities, rather than on long-term issues - such as their health. This often causes them to overlook how their bodies are influenced and impacted by their work environments over time. Utilizing the workplace as a platform to promote awareness of health and wellness helps employers encourage their employees to maintain their health outside of their specific wellness programs. Social modes of education – posters, community building activities, and dialogue spaces – can encourage employees to actively learn about the factors that impact their health and to make choices that will benefit their bodies in the long run. This method

of health education benefits employers by showing their investment in employee wellness without mandating participation in a program. It also is a way for companies to show employees the link between health and workplace productivity.

3. Acknowledge the Existence of Burnout and Mental Illness

Workplaces and organizations often avoid discussing employee mental health over fears of stigma. However, when companies take action to de-stigmatize mental health - especially work burnout - they take a step forward in protecting the wellbeing of workers. Burnout is often caused by workplace stress damages the mental, emotional, and even physical condition of employees. It is often aggravated by negative or apathetic company cultures, which leave workers feeling both disconnected to the company and out of touch with their career goals. By acknowledging burnout and taking steps to prevent it, through workplace relaxation, discussion, and mental health education, employers can alleviate some of the stress burdening workers. Employers then benefit by reduced burnout rates and increased productivity.

4. Reshaping the Workplace with Public Image in Mind

Not only does corporate wellness practices improve worker productivity, but they also benefit customer relations by allowing companies to promote their treatment of employees as a desirable trait. For example, Patagonia's attention to the wellness of its workers promotes civilians to purchase their clothing for the ethics they represent.

5. Preventing Public Health Risks

Workplaces who endorse employee wellness participate in preventing public health risks, such as heart disease and cancer. These effects lead to fewer worker absences and illnesses, as well as less money spent on health insurance. Thus, both employees and employers win - workers receive physical and mental health benefits and thus have greater capabilities to invest their energy in the workplace, while employers reap production rewards.



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