



Wellbeing - the business strategy

<http://www.hrzone.co.uk/topic/strategies/wellbeing-business-strategy/102222>

By Jamie-Natalie Cross, HRZone

08/04/2010

Jamie-Natalie Cross explains why wellbeing is a business strategy and offers tips to help get your workforce in shape.

Now it looks like spring has finally sprung, promising warmer temperatures and gently reminding us about that long-awaited summer holiday, employees may be more health conscious than they have been in recent months. With staff already more open to the idea of getting fit, now is the time for employers to put this goodwill to use and implement a wellbeing plan in the workplace.

Why should employers care about the fitness of their staff? It's simple – healthy workers mean happy workers, which means they're more likely to stay on with the company and perform their duties better with more enthusiasm. It also reduces the amount of sick time they have to take, which in turn saves the business money.

The time for commuting between your desk chair and your sofa without breaking a sweat has passed. Now is the time to come up with a plan and get everyone on board. After all, as the proverb says; 'He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything'. Below are a few tips to help you get started.

Consult staff

Create a questionnaire to assess employees' views on how their working environment can be improved. Questions such as; 'Do you think you have acceptable space to relax at lunch time?' or 'If there were company sports events, would you attend?' would work well. Then leave a space at the end where staff can provide their own suggestions as to how their wellbeing at work might be enhanced. Be prepared to listen to the views you get and act on them.

Education

If you want to encourage workers to ditch those detrimental habits, you'll need to get them to recognise the benefits. One of the most common of these is smoking, but it's not easy one to overcome. The aim here is not to enforce rules or guilt trip people about smoking on-site, but to encourage and offer support to those who wish to stop and become healthier. The NHS provides advice and support for those wishing to implement workplace stop smoking campaigns and in some cases can send a healthcare professional into your office to give lunchtime support seminars. (We did it here at HRzone towers and although not everyone was able to quit permanently straight afterwards, it did help!)

Cycle to work schemes

If your company isn't already involved in the government's Cycle to Work scheme, it's worth investigating. The scheme enables employers to purchase bicycles tax free, which employees can then buy from the company by paying instalments from their salaries each month.

Breaks

Regular breaks are essential for boosting productivity and ensuring that employees' concentration levels remain high. To encourage employees to take this valuable downtime during the day, companies should consider creating a 'chill out zone' if possible where staff can relax at lunch time and get away from their desks. This needn't be a costly exercise – a quiet space with a few comfy chairs is all that's required.

Nutrition

While you can't tell employees what to eat, they might be more encouraged to get their 'five a day' if the company was able to offer a regular supply of fruit. This might encourage more healthy snacking, rather than employees dashing out for crisps, cakes and other unhealthy treats. Many local greengrocers offer

preferential rates for business customers and can deliver a weekly box of seasonal fruits straight to your door.

Encouragement

Emotional wellbeing is just as important as physical wellbeing and a positive outlook is essential to success. In order to help staff feel happier and more appreciated at work, it's important to take time to speak to them individually about how they're progressing and what they're aiming for. Show encouragement and understanding and let them know that you appreciate their commitment to their work. One to one meetings may be time consuming, but they are a powerful motivational tool and will help staff feel more connected to you and the company.