

Communication and Investment for a Healthy Culture in the Workplace

If you are looking to supplement your workplace healthcare by trying to create a healthy workplace culture, then you want to make sure that you get that message across in a clear way. But that involves taking the time to ensure that your employees understand the changing culture, and making sure that they participate in it.

Why is a healthy culture in the workplace important? As you likely know, the cost of healthcare is increasing rapidly, and there doesn't seem to be an end to it. But what can you do about that? Developing a healthy culture that includes the following practices can help you reduce the costs of healthcare, both from the employer and out of the pocket of the employees.

1. Above everything else, you need to educate your employees about living in a healthy manner. Some people just don't understand how to live healthy, and what a difference that living healthy can make in their lives. So the base of everything that you do has to be education. Offer your employees options to learn exactly how to stay healthy, from workshops that teach about physiology and ergonomics, to offering an option for your employees to meet with a nutritionist and learn more about proper diet and nutrition. No matter how you decide to offer it, it is going to be beneficial. It may cost a little (hence the investment) for you to do this, but the benefits and outcome far outweigh the cost you are putting into it.
2. One of the most difficult things about working, especially in an office environment, is how much people sit in front of a desk or stand in front of a conveyor belt. Physical activity is just not a part of the culture in the electronic age. You actually have to sit there and plan out when you are going to do physical activity in your day because the world revolves around electronic devices that we sit in front of. You may have to invest a little cash in making sure that your employees move more often (some employers buy standing desks, or will set up some sort of gym in the workplace), but you may not. It may be as simple as developing an area to walk in your workplace, or developing a map that covers the area that you'd be able to walk during a break, then encouraging your employees to take those walks.
3. Let your employees know that doing things for themselves, even if that means taking a vacation, is not only allowed, but encouraged. Most work cultures have this stuffy environment that doesn't encourage vacations because that means you will "fall behind" in your work. This is probably the most difficult investment to make, because it is important to have your employees at work. The thing is, if they are stressed out from the job, then they are less likely to be productive. So think about it; is the investment of encouraging vacations worth the increased productivity you will see? Vacations give your employees' bodies and minds the break that they need in order to "get going" when they return.
4. Help the process along yourself. If you're usually the person who stocks the fridge or break room, try for juice, water, or tea instead of soda. Instead of donuts, try fruit or granola bars. If no one has started a walking program or decided on what particular topics they want to learn about, start the conversation. If you are someone in authority at your job, you need to step up and lead; you are investing in your employees by making sure that they get all of the resources that they need in order to live healthy lives

and for your entire workplace to have the healthy foundation that you want it to. It's going to be difficult at first,

But what can you do in order to enhance that communication? How can you make sure that your message gets across and is effective? Sure, you can invest money and time into trying to develop this healthy culture, but how can you do it in such a way that your investment is not wasted, and so that it "sticks?" That's what we're going to take a closer look at here. Employing effective communication strategies for your healthy culture investments is vital to making sure that they happen in an effective manner.

- As your workplace transitions into a healthy culture, you're going to want to sit down and figure out exactly what a healthy culture is. Have a meeting with your employees and look for their input; you can't just try to enforce this thing on your own without the input of your employees; it's going to be much less effective that way. So in that initial meeting (and you may want to have several meetings about it to make sure that the expectations are clear), sit down with your employees and see what they want and need. Then, find a way for you to meet in the middle so that you are developing a healthy culture, but you're not sacrificing productivity and efficiency in order to get it.
- After that initial meeting, you will want to make sure that you plow the ideas into their mind. Yes, you can put them up in the break room, and the washroom, and everything else. But after awhile, they'll likely get ignored. So make sure that you're switching up the posters and whatever other information that you are using in order to encourage a healthy culture. People will at least take a first glance at something that looks unfamiliar, and they may stop to read the entire thing if they determine that it's important for them to read and understand.
- If you bring in speakers, they need to be people that your employees actually enjoy listening to. If the speakers that you choose are dull and/or are not engaging, then the only thing that may happen is that your employees get some extra time to work on a project or they may even get to take a nap. Speakers and meetings need to keep your employees engaged, and if they don't, you're going to be less likely to see results from your employees. See if they have any suggestions for speakers or topics that they want to learn about; that way, they're more likely to come to meeting because they're part of the process as well.
- Make the process fun. No one likes to feel as if they are being forced to do something. So instead of forcing a healthy culture down their throats, offer incentives. You can hold a "Biggest Loser" style competition with prizes, or offer incentives based on how many "healthy living" meetings they come to, or give out prizes for making certain achievements and milestones in the healthy culture journey. Incentives make it more enticing for your employees to get involved, and it will be fun for you as well. It may cost a little bit of money, but as we mentioned above, the investment is going to be worth the outcomes that you get from it.
- Talk to your human resources and public relations departments to make sure that all of your messages are the same. If you, as an employer, are pushing this healthy culture initiative, but

that's not also being echoed by other areas of the company, then the reinforcement principle completely goes away. If all areas of your company are working toward this healthy culture initiative, not only will your employees understand it, all potential employees will understand it. It may also get out to the public that you are pushing (and achieving) this lifestyle initiative and that sort of information is always good press. So, it's a win-win situation for everyone that is involved.

- Encourage leadership among your employees. The best encouragement that your employees can have is the support of other employees who are being trailblazers for the initiative. That takes a lot of time and energy to encourage that sort of leadership, but if it happens, it can really be beneficial, both for your workplace and for the employees. So, instead of just sitting back and hoping that you can do it on your own; you can encourage your employees to step it up. Then, they can all help each other in this new journey.

So, as you can see, there are a number of different ways that you can engage your employees in the development and investment of a healthy culture in your workplace. It will take time and work, but as we've mentioned several times, the investment is definitely worth any outcome that you will have as a result of your efforts. By communicating and leading effectively, you will be able to see a lot of differences in your employees and in the workplace in general. As a result, the health care costs that your workplace has will decrease significantly as a result of these changes in lifestyle. Everyone wins.