

## **Measuring the Return on Investment of Workplace Health Initiatives**

If you are looking to make sure that your investments in your workplace's health culture are worth the cost, you need to be able to determine exactly what the return on investment (ROI) is for your particular items. Measuring this can be interesting, because there are a lot of things that you need to focus on during the exploration of the topic. And some of the things that you will be looking for are not exactly going to be tangible, so it's going to be difficult to pinpoint exactly what is going on with your investments.

**Educate yourself.** Employer education is one of the most important parts of exploring the ROI of your healthy living and culture initiatives. You can't just slap some initiatives up and expect them to happen yourself. Instead, make sure that you are regularly attending seminars and workshops, reading the most recent developments in the health care system and healthy workplace culture, and doing everything that you can in order to educate yourself. If you are "behind the times" in this realm, then you're likely not going to see the ROI that you want to see in your efforts. By staying educated and up to date, you can make the changes that you need to make and start to see a difference in your company. You may also be able to get more tips on how to increase your ROI, which is always beneficial, no matter what sector you are in.

**Have you seen differences in yourself?** If you are an employer and you are looking to see whether or not your healthy workplace culture is making a difference, the first place that you need to look is within yourself. Being engaged in your own workplace culture makes it more likely for your employees to see. Employer engagement in particular programs and initiatives is an incredible motivator, whether it be because people want to follow your lead or because they think that they will get an advantage in the workplace if they imitate what you do. But, if you're seeing differences in the way that you are living, and you are seeing that certain parts of your life are changing, that is probably happening with your employees as well. Sometimes, even as an employer, you have to "get down to their level" so that they understand the importance and the impact of what you are doing.

**Look at your finances over an extended period of time.** This is the question that every employer has in their mind: how much money is this initiative saving or making me? And that's, of course, a very important thing for you to consider when you are looking at the ROI of a health and wellness initiative at your place of employment. So what exactly are you looking at?

First off, you are looking at how much your health care costs are. Did you know that, if you're doing things in an effective manner, you can expect an ROI of \$3.27/\$1 per year when it comes to health insurance costs? Yes. For every dollar that you are investing, you are saving over \$3. What's even better? You're saving almost \$3 on other health related costs (missed work, etc). That means that you can save over \$6 for every \$1 that you spend. That's a big deal, especially with the thousands of dollars that you are spending on health care. It will take some tweaking and education to get your program to that level of effectiveness, but that's why the previous point is important.

Make sure that you take a look at your finances over a period of time, however. You may not see the difference in a couple of months, but compare the entire year. How much are you saving? Are you seeing

differences? If you're not seeing big numbers in the cost sector, then use the next few evaluation methods to see if differences are being made, and then make the necessary changes so that you are successful in your endeavors.

**Talk to your employees and their families.** This is important because, if your program is successful, you won't only see a difference in your employees, but you will see a difference in their families as well. Do your employees think that the healthy living initiatives are working? Do they feel as if it's a waste of their time to go to meetings or go to the gym? Are their families seeing the differences in mood, in overall health, and in other areas that may be impacted by the changes in the workplace? By getting a fuller picture from each of your employees and their families, you're going to be more likely to find the holes that may be in your program, and you may also be able to figure out exactly what is working and how you can enhance those.

**Observe productivity.** Okay, so you may not be making the huge differences we mentioned above. But are you noticing that when your employees are at work, they're getting more done? Are they missing work less? Do they seem happier with their jobs? You can get some of these answers by talking to your employees (as mentioned above), but you can get a lot just by looking at what people are doing individually. Does your secretary seem to get through her to-do list a lot more quickly? Are your employees meeting their deadlines more efficiently? Do projects seem more thought out and complete? These sorts of things may not result in a lack of health care costs, but they will, in the long run, make your company more money because more things are getting completed in an efficient manner.

**Have meetings with managers and other "higher ups."** If you're an employer, then you may not have a lot of time to actually do all of these things. But you know who is going to see these changes and results directly? Your managers, supervisors, and whoever else is overseeing the operations of your company. So, if you don't have time to meet with every employee or observe the productivity of your company, ask those who are supervising your workers directly. Are they seeing differences in their employees? Are there fewer days being taken off because of health reasons? Do they see a difference in themselves? If not, then you may need to work with them, because their lack of leadership in this area may be resulting in a lack of results in other areas of your culture. If your supervisors are the "middle man" between you (the employer) and your other employees, you need to make sure that they're along for the ride and that they are encouraging the changes as well. It takes a lot of teamwork and cooperation, but in the end, the efforts will be worth it for everyone.

**Make changes as necessary.** The hardest thing to do is admit that something isn't working like you wanted it to. But, as an employer, you probably realize that change is important. The PR department and marketing department always have to change what they're doing to keep up with the times and the needs of the world around them; it's no different if those who are working on your healthy culture initiatives need to change the way they're doing things. So after you've sat down and evaluated exactly how well your healthy culture initiatives are doing, you need to make appropriate changes. These changes could be anything you can imagine; you may have to change the way that you present the information, you could have to be more assertive about what you're doing, you may even have to bring someone in as a contractor or employee that can help develop the program for you. No matter what

those changes may be, it will be worth the investment if you are doing them in an effective manner. Do a lot of research, talk to other employers, and figure out what your best course of action is. If you can't figure out what isn't working, then you may need to spend a little on a contractor; that's no big deal. There are a number of people who specialize in changing workplaces so that they are more healthy environments. You just have to keep up with the times and change your initiatives in such a way that you're moving forward and not backwards, and you will start to see results.

If you are educated about what is going on with your healthy workplace, you're going to be more likely to see the differences. This is the case, especially if you are doing the same exact things that you are expecting your employees to do. As time goes on, you will see all of the things listed above. And if you start to see those differences, no matter how small they may seem right now, in the long run, it's going to be more beneficial than you even imagined. So take the time to engage and evaluate and you will notice the differences and benefit in a number of different ways.