

Five Reasons to Promote Corporate Wellness

Below are five important reasons why every business should consider developing and implementing corporate wellness initiatives:

Reason #1: Health care costs

Corporate wellness is important to organizations because health care costs continue to be a major concern. Over one trillion dollars is spent in the United States alone on health care, far more than any other nation in the world. The average annual health care cost per person in the United States exceeds \$3,000 - lifetime costs per person are estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$225,000.

Despite these enormous expenditures, it is estimated 41 million Americans are without health care insurance. However, because much of these costs are linked to health habits, it is possible for employers to take aggressive action toward reducing health care utilization and containing costs.

Reason #2: Most illnesses can be avoided

The leading causes of most illnesses are largely preventable. Experts suggest preventable illnesses are responsible for approximately 70% of the entire costs of illness in the United States. Behind these illnesses are a host of preventable factors including tobacco use, high-risk alcohol consumption, sedentary lifestyles and poor nutritional habits.

Employers can take important steps toward preventing unnecessary sickness and death by leveraging health promotion initiatives. If companies can reduce the burden of illness among the workforce by preventing the major causes of sickness, more employees will remain healthy and productive.

Reason #3: The work week is expanding

The third reason why corporate wellness is important to businesses is the reality that the workweek is expanding. According to Harvard economics professor Juliet Schor, people are working harder than they ever have before. The typical American now works 47 hours a week -164 more hours annually than only 20 years ago.

Without question, an ever-growing workweek poses a number of threats to the health and well being of employees. As a number of progressive employers have demonstrated, health promotion programs can help alleviate some of these concerns.

Reason #4: The technology revolution is on

We are currently knee-deep in a revolution of technology. Since 1983, American businesses have added more than 25 million new computers to the nation's business operations.

Our increased reliance on technology has ushered in a host of new health concerns including repetitive stress injuries, low back problems and compromised vision. Moreover, because almost one-third of the workforce now spends the majority of their day seated at desks plugged into workstations, sedentary lifestyles have become a major concern.

Reason #5: Employee' stress levels are increasing

A recent nationwide poll revealed 78% of Americans describe their jobs as stressful. The vast majority indicated their stress levels have worsened over the past ten years. These high levels of stress can lead to increased accidents; reduced productivity, unnecessary absenteeism and increased medical care costs.

More and more business leaders are looking to corporate wellness programs as a means of reducing, managing and - in some instances - even eliminating harmful stressors. By implementing a comprehensive stress management intervention program, it is

possible for leaders of businesses to successfully combat prevalent stressors in the workplace.