

Building a Healthy Culture:

Write Your Own Bestseller

live well, work well

Health, wellness and risk management tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance, risk management, and healthcare specialists at Hunt Insurance Group, LLC/Hilb Rogal & Hobbs.

Have you ever picked up a book when browsing through your local bookstore where the cover sold you on the purchase? Whether it was attractive graphics, compelling quotes, or a captivating passage that hooked you – all too often the end result is disappointment; the book doesn't live up to its promise.

The same thing happens frequently in corporations. Prospective employees are "sold" on the company mission; they buy in to the espoused values and expect they will be coming to work at a certain type of place. Sadly, disappointment reigns all too often in this circumstance as well. The result? Workplaces that are often not only unproductive, but downright counterproductive to the common good. The organization doesn't live up to its potential.

Many companies are embarking on corporate wellness programs with the hope of reducing health care costs, increasing productivity, and attracting and retaining a healthy workforce. These programs start off with high ideals and foretell wonderful benefits for the employees and management alike, but at the end of the day their programs fall short. Participation is low, employees are not engaged, and results – well, there just aren't any. So what goes wrong?

Organizations that have achieved success with their wellness programs have a number of things in common, two of which are a healthy corporate culture and strong senior leadership support.

Healthy cultures don't just happen; they are purposefully built over time. Before you roll out a wellness initiative, take some time to consider whether your organizational culture will help or hinder the success of your program. Common elements that are often on the "checklist" for culture or supportive environment include ergonomics, vending machines and food service, lighting, sound, and safety. You can feel a healthy culture the minute you enter it. People are pleasant and helpful. Energy is high. Plenty of work gets done – but fun makes a regular appearance. Culture extends beyond the physical structure.

How would your employees answer these questions? Do I know what is expected of me? Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day? In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing a good job? These are a few questions from the Gallup Q12, an instrument used to measure the strength of workplaces (available online.)

A strong and healthy culture almost always exists because of the senior leadership of the organization. Wellness programs relegated to the HR department are doomed to failure without strong leadership support and participation. Some companies are getting this right. At Bucyrus International in Milwaukee, President Tim Sullivan personally addressed all employees prior to the kickoff of their Health Management initiative. He sends letters to employees' homes, including recently communicating results and key findings from health assessments as well as steps the company was planning to take as a result of the information.

Do you want a wellness program that lives up to its billing? Spend some time cultivating the results of your internal Gallup Q12 survey along with strong senior leadership support; and use them to build the type of culture that will allow your program to flourish. Make your organization's story a bestseller.

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