

Creating a Culture of Health and Engagement through Organizational Support

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Creating a culture of health and engagement is a priority for many organizations in 2015. In fact, many 2014 industry surveys on health care strategy revealed that developing a workplace culture of health is a top priority for employers this year. Therefore, it is timely to highlight the broad nature of this priority, and recognize how this lofty goal is challenging us to learn from other disciplines. It is essential to consider the impact of organizational dynamics on an individual's engagement in their own health, their work and the programs we develop, implement and evaluate.

A healthy workforce culture is intentionally designed with elements and indicators that support health and well-being. In other words, a company with a strong culture of health is one that prioritizes the health and well-being of its employees. Thus, the norms, values, beliefs, traditions and symbols that define each organization's culture are intended to promote health and well-being. Organizations with a healthy workforce culture take deliberate steps that include formal and informal programs, policies and procedures that make "the healthy choice the easy and desired choice."

These steps incorporate management policies and practices that involve, empower and engage employees in decisions about their work, health, safety and the business. Such an environment makes it easy, convenient, acceptable and expected to engage in healthy and safe behaviors. These deliberate steps are referred to as elements of organizational support and have been outlined in the recently published Program Measurement and Evaluation Guide: Core Metrics for Employee Health Management from HERO and Population Health Alliance.

Cultivating a healthy workplace culture is essential to optimally supporting individuals in managing their health and well-being. The focus then becomes identifying effective strategies that not only support individual health needs, but also enhance organizational dynamics. These strategies aim to positively affect employee decisions about their health, work, safety and the business. We must explore, understand and apply expertise and research from disciplines that focus on organizational assessment, development and change to complement our knowledge of individual behavior change. It also requires us to experiment with new strategies; challenge traditional approaches and identify effective models. Finally, and perhaps most important, our success should be measured by the degree to which our employees, managers and leaders feel they are supported in their health and well-being. It is only when a person feels supported, valued and cared for that they will fully engage in their work, health, safety and our businesses. The following quote from Maya Angelou expresses this better than any program outcome measure:

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou

I encourage you to join me, my peers and my industry colleagues as we expand our knowledge and expertise to facilitate the implementation of the most effective strategies for creating healthy workplace cultures.

- 2013/2014 NBGH/Towers Watson Staying@Work Survey Report; The Willis Health and Productivity 2014 Survey Report; 18th Annual Towers Watson/NBGH Survey on Purchasing Health Care, 2013
- HERO Culture of Health Committee, 2013-2015