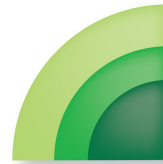




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STAFF

FOSTER STAFF WELLBEING AND PREVENT BURNOUT

We all know how to recognise great staff but do we know how to make sure they're looking after themselves and not neglecting their health and wellbeing?

STORY FIONA COSGROVE

GREAT STAFF THE ones who put everything into their work, will go the extra mile, are loyal to the company and, if they're exceptional, are even fun to work with! What we often don't realise is that the best employees are often the ones who neglect their own personal health as they juggle commitments to their families and jobs.

Eventually, these hard workers can become tired, stressed and experience related health problems and frustration as their ability to be productive decreases. Their energy declines but they spend longer hours at work, becoming more and more out of balance. Eventually, burnout strikes. Sound familiar?

HOW TO HELP YOUR STAFF ACHIEVE BALANCE

As employers in SMEs, we have regular, direct contact with our team. We encourage them to take care of themselves, but sometimes fail to provide them with the proper tools to do this. As business owners, why should we make ourselves responsible for helping our staff improve their lifestyles?

Marshall Goldsmith, an international expert on positive change for potential leaders, asked this question in his research: If you stayed with this company, why are you going to stay? The top three answers were:

1. "I am finding meaning and happiness in my work."
2. "I like the people here. This feels like a team."
3. "I can follow my dreams."

People want so much more than financial success. Help your employees create a better way of living and they will remain with you and continue to be productive and, most importantly, happy.

Typical corporate health programs often include:

- **Health measurements:** Assessing body fat and fitness levels, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood lipids, and more. But chances are many people already know if they are unfit, need to lose weight, or need to de-stress.
- **Information:** In the form of handouts, emails, posters; in short, another round of expert advice telling us what to do!

The result can be escalating guilt and more pressure, because again, people know they should do something to change their health. And they know what to do: the trouble is, they often don't know *how* to do it.

Effective corporate health programs will give staff the tools they need to lead healthy, balanced lifestyles.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN EFFECTIVE CORPORATE HEALTH PLAN

1. Create awareness

Encourage staff to take stock of their own lives by increasing their awareness about themselves in a non-threatening way. This is different to taking measurements. Ask your staff:

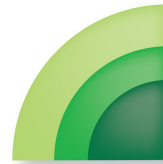
- What do they really want? For example, do they want to lose weight, de-stress, or achieve better overall health?
- What is getting in the way of them achieving it?
- What are the barriers?
- What are some solutions?
- Give those that are already physically healthy the opportunity to think about how they could become even healthier and fitter, or look at their other goals – for example, they may want to make more time for themselves, or incorporate more "fun" activities into their week. Very few people have total satisfaction with where they're at!

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- Help your staff figure out what drives them. What are their deepest motivators? For example, they may want to lose weight so they can run around after their kids.

2. Design a vision for the future

The next step in a program such as this is to encourage the person to create a picture of where they would like to be if they were living at their best.

- Get the person to picture their ideal life. Where would they be and what would they be doing if they were living at their absolute best?
- What would they be able to do at their best that they are not doing now?
- What else could change around them?
- What other opportunities could open up?

Until we know which aspects of our lives we really want to be different and why, it's impossible to commit to a strategy that will create change.

3. Create a plan

One of the primary reasons people fail to achieve and maintain lasting changes in their lifestyle habits is because they lack an individual and structured plan.

- Set achievable goals. Don't set someone up for failure. Initial success will motivate them to continue to achieve.
- Goals should be detailed and followed to the letter. This will make the person fully accountable to the goal, which will be more rewarding than achieving "vague" goals.

4. Space the goals out

Make the goals realistic by spacing them out. Ask the person to set goals for three months from now. This is far enough away to give the person time to build those new behaviours gradually, but it is close enough to create a sense of urgency and excitement.

5. Make goals about behaviours rather than outcomes

Instead of making the goal "lose five kilograms", ask the person to list the behaviours that will produce this result. For example "exercise regularly", or "eat healthily". Make the goal precise, like: "I will exercise four times a week for 40 minutes at time at an intensity that makes me breathe heavily" is better than "I will take up exercise". When setting goals, answer the questions: What? When? For how long?

6. Set weekly goals

Ask the person to set their first weekly goals. This should be based on a habit or behaviour that they are ready to change or adopt, and it should be an achievable goal that works towards their three-month goal. For example: "I will walk on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 30 minutes before work". At the end of each week, ask the person to record how successful they were, any obstacles that got in the way, and what they could do differently. The next week's goals should build on the first.

IMPLEMENTING A CORPORATE HEALTH PROGRAM

Offering a corporate health program is great, but it needs to be structured. Informing staff about wellbeing isn't enough. People need to be taught how to change and given encouragement.



Here are some guidelines:

1. Hold group sessions

Group support is underrated. As business owners, we know it's important to work collaboratively in the workplace, and we understand how a dynamic team is one that combines the talents of each individual. This can also apply to health behaviours. People encourage each other in many different ways. Not only can this bring team members closer together, it can enhance the atmosphere of support in the workplace. Knowing others struggle with the same issues is often a relief.

2. Find out which areas in which each person needs help

Is the person in need of nutritional change? Would they benefit from a higher level of activity? Is stress an issue for some? When you find out the greatest need, you can address the problem.

3. Use your budget effectively

Groups can work on different areas at the same time. "Wellness," a holistic term, can be created by changing a range of behaviours. But the principles behind creating lasting change remain the same. A weekly meeting encouraging staff members to achieve their goals can be useful, whether it be for someone losing weight, or others learning to de-stress. Everyone should set individual goals and report each week on their progress.

4. Behavioural change is like building a business.

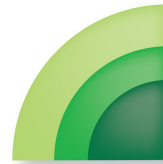
Behavioural change needs to be gradual, thorough, and methodical to stick. It should be planned for, and goals should be realistic. We don't tender for accounts we can't possibly meet. So why do it with our lifestyles? **DB**

—Fiona Cosgrove has more than 20 years' experience in the fitness and wellness industry and recently published her book *Coach Yourself to Wellness* (www.wellnesscoachingaustralia.com.au). She is a certified and licensed executive wellness coach.



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WORKING SMARTER



DO YOU HAVE A SUCCESSION PLAN?

A study by Certified Personal Accountants (CPA) Australia has revealed only 25 percent of business owners have a succession plan. However Peter Hanlon, Westpac's group executive, retail and business banking, says the best day to plan moving out of your business is the day you start it.

"Businesses with a workable succession plan in place have a significant competitive advantage over those who have put planning aside in favour of what they see as more pressing day-to-day concerns," says Mr Hanlon.

His key pointers to an effective succession plan are:

- **Goals for exiting the business:** These include the age you plan to leave, how much capital you plan to take and your business' worth. Then there's who you envision succeeding you or the sort of buyer you want to attract. And finally, what, if any, involvement your family will have.
- **A timeline for achievable steps:** From now and until your business comes to an end.
- **Contingency plans for every scenario:** Plan for sudden departure such as death and accident or illness, to a potential buyer or successor withdrawing at the last minute.
- **For more information about succession planning, visit** <http://businessiq.westpac.com.au/>

NOT SURE WHETHER TO HIRE NEW STAFF?

If market pressures and declining business and consumer confidence is putting you off hiring new staff, think again, says Debbie Loveridge, chief executive officer of Vedior Asia Pacific. Interest rates, high petrol prices and the global crunch have undoubtedly hurt many businesses, however employers should not lose sight of their long term recruitment strategies.

"Organisations should be mindful that the knee-jerk reaction of cutting staff levels when times are tough is only a short-term solution. After such a long period of struggling to find talent, businesses should do all they can to maintain their workforce or they will find themselves back at square one when the economy picks up again," she says.

WEB CONFERENCING TO TRAIN OVER THE INTERNET

In today's world, getting people together in a training room can be a difficult task. It's no surprise that in a recent survey of Australian and New Zealand trainers, respondents universally expect to increase their use of Web conferencing for live training over the internet.

The survey found that while only 6.7 percent of respondents use web conferencing for training today, 19 percent will be using it one year from now, a 283 percent increase.

Respondents indicate that the single greatest driver for training over the internet is to "reach people we would not otherwise reach".

The research can be found in the White Paper *Reach More Trainees: Web Conferencing Training Trends in Australia and New Zealand* at www.citrixonline.com/anztrainingtrends. It was conducted by 1080 Group on behalf of Citrix GoToMeeting Corporate between June and July 2008.

FAST FACT

Less than **one percent** of employees think people under 27 have strong business skills and only two percent consider them to have any market knowledge at all.

—Source: Linkme.com.au

COMBAT WORKPLACE BULLYING

Workplace bullying is costing the economy between \$17 and \$36 billion according to a Griffith University Report. However Evelyn Field, internationally recognised authority on bullying, says the incidence of bullying is set to rise.

"Employers all too often don't understand the true cost in human potential and life, how bullying affects everyone, with the effect that people's minds are focused more on watching their backs than their jobs. Stressed, angry workers are far less productive."

To make business owners and managers aware of the need to address this growing problem, Field will be running workshops around Australia later this month to combat bullying. For further information visit www.pics.com.au



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