

A Study on Employee Wellness Practices

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Abstract: *"A Healthy mind dwells in a Healthy Body" is a well-known saying. Employee wellness is essential in every organization as it helps in increasing employee efficiency which ultimately results in maximum output in the industry. Employee wellness is an emerging concept in the HR where the management is focusing on the health of their employees.*

Employee wellness includes improving the health of employees both physically and mentally. This can be undertaken by the management in various forms based on the need as well as the available resources in the organization. Increasing awareness on Employee wellness is a good sign as it was formerly seen only in the developed countries where as the scenario has changed now and it extended to developing countries as well. Employees should be considered as resources but not as cost and only then management will have interest on the ideas like that of employee wellness.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main concept of wellness is it is commonly defined as an organized set of activities designed to help individuals and their family members make and/or maintain voluntary behavior change(s) that help reduce their health risks and/or enhance their ability to function.

There are many contributors to employee wellness like internal and external factors. These do differ from one organization to another based on the industry and management. Being participative in these programs' employee absenteeism will be reduced a part from increasing productivity and the cost on employee in the form of insurance and medical benefits can be lessened.

The wellness programs are of different varieties like activity oriented, awareness oriented, result oriented etc. As an organization consists of many employees with different age groups, different physical and mental attributes the training needs to be customized for better results. The organization can itself design various programs or it can tie up with third party like some companies who are offering these wellness programs exclusively to organizations.

Awareness oriented programs concentrate on bringing awareness in employees about various options available to them in order to keep themselves healthy. They get to know what if we follow the healthy diets and exercise schedule. But most of the people irrespective of their knowledge fail to execute the program and follow the guidelines whatever they set for themselves. The reason is lack of interest and commitment. Hence awareness programs are not that helpful. But in case of activity and result oriented programs employees are directly involved and are indirectly forced to take part in these wellness activities like going to gym regularly etc. Benchmarks or standards are set by the management like activity goals and this motivates the employees to take it as a challenge as once after successful completion they will receive awards or small letters of appreciation which helps in boosting their morale.

A perfect wellness program should include periodical health check-ups such as BP, Sugar, BMI etc. and focus on the deficiency. The programs should motivate employees and provide them with solutions to their problems if any. Not only employee benefit but it should also result in return on Investment within the expected period. The employees should also have accessibility to various books and publications and

other websites where they can get complete information about wellness activities, ways of implementing them and advantages of following them.

These wellness activities not only include walking, yoga, meditation etc. but also regular counselling sessions, arranging doctor appointments, cessation of smoking and drinking, mentoring etc. Modern trends of wellness programs also include dances like zumba in order to energize employees.

2. WAYS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Healthy Food: Food is essential for every human being. Good food plays a key role in being healthy. Organizations can take initiative and provide their employees with healthy food in the form of Breakfast lunch...snacks etc. As the employees spend most of their time in the office premises organization can provide canteen facilities. This idea is far better than giving food allowance in monetary form.

Incentives: Most of the time are given when the performance of the employee is higher than expected. But here, health incentives can be given to employees when they achieve their fitness targets like reducing the calories in stipulated time, regular workouts, burning the excessive fat etc. Incentives motivate employees to take active part in fitness activities. Getting rid of habits like smoking and drinking can also be appreciated.

Workplace Environment: Employees are to be engaged in yoga schedules, or to be involved in mini exercise schedules apart from their work at least thrice a week. Conducting walkathons, marathons and sports tournaments not only helps in building their body but also develops unity and improves team spirit among employees. This keep them healthy mentally and physically. During these unofficial gatherings they share and discuss not only work-related things but also personal matters.

Preventive Health Care: As always said, 'Prevention is better than cure' regular health check-up is very essential in case of aged employees. As they are experienced, they will have more work which leads to more pressure and tension. So periodical check-up is to me made mandatory by the organization to let the employees know the importance of that.

Infrastructure: The infrastructure at office also plays a key role in motivating employees to get themselves engaged in wellness activities. Gym, sports equipment, open lawns, indoor stadiums in the office campus all these influence the employees to spend some time in sports and games before leaving the office. When it is a part of schedule it will be fine otherwise it may lead to waste of time.

Support of Management: Not only providing all these facilities, management should also consider some other points like emotional wellness. It keeps on changing with age and gender. So, management should come up with new initiatives for e.g. In case of new mothers offering work from home, flexible working hours, creche facility in the office help them feel flexible at workplace. Transfers in case of newly wed and leaveincaseofmaternityallthesehelpintheretentionofemployeesaswell.

In and Out: Employee wellness should not be constrained to the four walls of the organization. Most of the people may not be extroverts and hence they won't express their problems. But continuous support from the management in the form of councilors, mentors and helplines help the employees to share their feelings and come out of their zone. It reduces their mental burden too. In addition to fitness trainers the organization should also provide the services of a financial and a legal advisor to the employees and they must also assure that the information the employees share with such advisors is kept confidential. This builds trust among the employees.

Accountability: Management, apart from all these should keep a track on the cost of these wellness programs and also on the employees who got benefitted from these. The success stories of employees who made use of these wellness programs can be shared so that it motivates others to some extent. This also helps in understanding the employees better and their suggestions can make these programs more effective. Participation rate also be increased.

3. ADVANTAGES OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS SCHEMES

There are many benefits of these employee wellness programs. Some of them are as follows:

Reduces Absenteeism: Most of the employees will take leave on health grounds. These employee wellness programs if implemented well helps the employees to stay healthy and fit. As they are in good health absenteeism will be reduced and thereby tasks are completed on time without delay.

Retention of Employees: Increase in such programs changes the perspective of employees towards the organization. They stay committed to the organization and hence there will be low attrition rate. Thus, employee works for the organization in long run and it makes easier for the employer to retain the employees. Retention of employees is tough in today's competitive environment.

Corporate culture: Giving importance to programs such as employee wellness establishes a corporate culture there by increasing the brand image of the organization in the industry. Employees morale is boosted and this organization stands as an example and trend setter in the industry. Employees urge to work in such organization where they are valued.

Reduces employee costs: As employees are healthy the organization will not incur any additional costs in the form of medical emergency of the employees. The attack of diseases will be reduced because of good health habits and participation in regular wellness programs. This also results in job satisfaction of the employees.

Rise in Productivity: As employees are healthy and the environment being supportive, they work in peace. They tend to be creative and come with innovative ideas that help in increasing productivity. Using the available resources efficiently to the maximum extent possible is the essential criteria in increasing the productivity. High production ultimately results in high profit for the organization.

Early identification: Regular medical check-ups like Blood sugar levels are done along with total body check-up and BMI is checked. These periodical checks help in identifying the diseases if any at earlier stage and preventive measures can be taken at the earliest. This also helps in reducing the medical costs incurred as initial identification.

Employee Engagement: These wellness programs influence employees and thereby helps in employee engagement. Attrition rate reduces and employee tend to work in the same organization.

4. SOME EXAMPLES OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMS IN CORPORATE COMPANIES

1. Apollo Life

Their main focus is on providing health related packages. These include a combination of testing, periodical scanning, medical aid like Ayurveda and counselling sessions are also being conducted. They also help their employees to get rid of smoking and drinking so that they can work more efficiently.

2. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

As ill health effects day to day activities of employees TCS designed a program such that it conducts regular health screening for its employees. In addition to this regular screening, TCS also offers regular counselling sessions and in order to promote positivity and peace at workplace and to enhance employee lifestyle reduce obesity physical activity sessions are also conducted. Stress management counselling and sleep management sessions also are organized.

3. Wipro

Wipro concentrates on the well being of the employee as well as his/her family. Complete health check-up and basic treatments during the year are provided and treatment, surgeries are facilitated at discounted prices in those clinics having tie-up with Wipro.

4. Accenture

Accenture has one of the well-known wellness programs and it has been accredited with being the healthiest employer in United States and is trying to be one in India as well. In addition to standard modes of treatment it also considers alternative treatments like Homeopathy etc. Here the employees are also provided with access to some stuff such as websites to assess their health and they also can have personal coaches to track their diet and lose weight.

5. Larsen and Turbo(L&T)

It considers long term illness and designs programs to handle it effectively. Technology united with strategy in L&T offers optimum wellness programs to its employees.

5. HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT ASSOCCHAM STUDY REGARDING EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

The paper titled, '**Corporate Wellness Program: Benefits to Organization and Economy,**' covered the industries of engineering, FMCG, Financial Services, IT/ITeS, Infrastructure, Market Research/KPO, Media and Real Estate during its analysis.

- For every rupee that is spent on employee wellness, employers get a saving of Rs.132.33 as savings on absenteeism costs, and Rs. 6.62 back as reduced health care costs.
- 83% of the respondents of the study are willing to contribute a percentage of their salary in company-sponsored wellness programs.
- In the IT/ITeS sector, 93% of the employees were of the view that a company-sponsored wellness program will motivate them, whereas the remaining 7% felt depressed about health care programs.
- Similarly, 60% in the media industry, 75% in FMCG, 84% in financial services, consider such programs to be motivating, whereas the remaining did not express any interest in participating in wellness programs.
- Employees belonging to the sectors of engineering, infrastructure, market research/KPO and real estate recorded a 100% approval of the view that wellness programs motivate them.
- The motivation to participate in a wellness program stems from a concern to lead a healthy life but is further accentuated if the company offers incentives to participate in the program. The numbers for both the factors vary greatly over different sectors though.
- Several top 500 Indian companies undertaking Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives offer healthcare programs and facilities in areas around their factories, yet 42% of them ignore the health of their employees.
- Despite the availability of preventive health care benefits, most of the respondents are unable to take advantage of the same. This is due to lack of awareness of the benefits or hesitation in asking for clarifications about them.
- 48% of the respondents stated that their company offers wellness programs, of which 62% are of the belief that the program needs improvement.
- Of the 52% who said that their organization offers no wellness program, 51% admitted that if in the future, their company does initiate a wellness program, they will participate in the same.

6. CONCLUSION

As said above, employee wellness includes both physical and mental wellness. Though it is the responsibility of employee to keep himself/herself healthy the employer is also interested in it as it results in the benefit of the organization. In spite of having many options like work from home, work whenever you prefer etc... though employee is at home he/she keeps thinking of work and hence can't

escape. This results in stress and more stress. The alarming deadlines, lack of support from team members all these have a huge impact on the mental health of employee. Irregular eating and sleeping habits disturb physical health. All together prepares ground for diseases reducing the employee efficiency thereby decreasing output.

The environment at the office also paves way for employee wellness. Even the minor things like light vibrance, seat adjustment alternatives, surroundings etc have a huge impact on the work as employees spend most of their time in the office premises itself. Suitable ambience at the workplace motivates the employee to perform well.

According to research conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 75% of employers indicated that their companies offered some type of a wellness program, resource or service to employees. This is highly appreciable as the employers are investing on the wellness of their employees. This has to be increased and implemented more effectively to make sure that there is ultimate benefit to the employee as well as the employer.

In the near future an organization cannot compete with others in the industry as lack of awareness to the management about these wellness programs acts as a major constraint. Also, organizations implementing these programs should bring awareness among its employees and encourage them to be a part of these. The managers and HR should take the responsibility to spread the advantages among the employees regarding these programs.

There are many companies which are offering customized wellness programs to other organizations. Based on the factors like number of employees, their nature of work, working hours, employees' requirements these companies will design strategic programs for the overall wellbeing of the employees in the client organization. This is suggestible when the employees are more in number and also the company has high turnover so that it can invest in such programs. For successful implementation of any program awareness of employees is important.

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