



The Ultimate Bottom Line: Creating a Culture of Wellness for Your Employees September 10, 2013 Best Practices Panel Key Points

The following comments are the key points from the Best Practices Panel held during the wellness workshop. The panelists represented organizations from the Quad City area and the Healthier Workforce Center at the University of Iowa. They were:

- Sharon Hodson - Deere & Company
- Carol Brenner - MetroLINK
- Dennis Huston - East Moline Metal
- Jenny Hall, Ed.D. - Healthier Workforce Center, University of Iowa

What strategies have you implemented to create a healthy work environment?

Deere & Company : We have created a governance council on wellness, corporate athlete program, policies focused on tobacco use and food and employee fitness guidelines. During this process we have learned that it is important to have strong leadership support and to make all planning efforts highly visible to employees.

MetroLINK: We have created a wellness committee, implemented guidelines for healthier vending machines, started a weight program and offer wellness training for our employees. We also have an indoor and outdoor walking track that employees can use.

East Moline Metal: We have implemented vending machine changes that include a variety of good tasting, healthy options at a reduced price as compared to typical vending foods. We offer annual health screenings and an incentive program on premiums to try and involve families and spouses as well. Education is key; don't be afraid to start small. A small turn-out doesn't mean a failed event, it's an opportunity to cater to a group's specific needs and interests. Most of all, have fun.

Healthier Workforce Center: Strategies we have seen in award winning workplaces include: having a mission as a visible part of the workplace, having a strong diverse wellness committee made up of leaders and employees from all levels of the workplace, having long-term strategies and policies in place, making or encouraging physical changes to the work environment that promote positive thinking and behavior, wellness as a part of initial employee training and offering a variety of options that employees are allowed to do on paid time.

What types of new partnerships (internal or external) have helped you to create a healthy work environment?

All: Incorporating wellness and safety together is important. In this way you can create a culture of wellness in the workplace. When health and safety are connected it helps employees “buy into” the idea that both are equally important.

How do you measure the impact of your wellness initiatives?

Deere & Company: We focus on employee well being and engagement. If your employees see that you care about their wellbeing and are actively working to improve it, they will be more engaged and invested.

MetroLINK: Our way is more qualitative. When employees come to you with success stories, you know you are making a difference in their lives.

East Moline Metal: With our annual screenings we are able to compare the results over years and can see the long term health improvements of our employees. Short term, we can see a drop in sick days and workman’s compensation claimed every year.

Healthier Workforce Center: For smaller businesses the “success story” method is more reliable than any measured results. Small sample groups can be skewed by just one or two people. Keep your eyes open for employees that are more engaged, eating healthier, being more physically active in the workplace.

What do you hope to work on next in your journey to create a culture of wellness?

Deere & Company: Blending concepts of corporate athlete programs and into the environment, creating a formal structure for wellness and recognizing volunteer efforts.

MetroLINK: Getting more spouses and families involved.

East Moline Metal: Total education programs; want to see employees taking the knowledge home.

Healthier Workforce Center: Total Worker Health programs; complete integration of healthy habits between home and work. This includes the families of employees.

What's the best tip or lesson you've learned about this work that you can share with us today?

Deere & Company: Make sure your leadership is championing the programs and policies. These changes and opportunities need to be real. This means highly visible in the workplace. Focus on the environment.

MetroLINK: Participation increases when management is actively involved. Make things visible and accessible to the employees. Bring things to them, don’t wait for them to come to you.

East Moline Metal: Management has to buy what you are trying to do. If leadership doesn’t participate or allow the employees to participate then they won’t take your efforts seriously. Engage employee interests; really listen to what they have to say. Try to incorporate their ideas and interests into events or policies. Offer coaching and education.

Healthier Workforce Center: If you don’t have a program, start one. If it doesn’t incorporate both wellness and safety, add whatever is missing. Don’t be afraid to start small.

Questions from audience:

MetroLINK - How long did revenue dip after vending changes?

About 3 months. We had to keep a constant eye on the machines during this time, the company continually tried to fill them with typical, less healthy options. Once the healthier snacks started selling better, and they saw that we were serious about the change, they stopped.

How do you prevent the slump/lack of continued interest that occurs after the initial weeks/months of a program?

Constantly work at it. These changes are lifelong and will always be a work in progress. If you sense interest or participation waning, sponsor an event to reignite their interest. Incorporate small changes that can be done daily into policies and long term strategies.