

## **Healthy Human Resource Strategies** **By Robert L. Selders, Jr.**

The success of any small business relies on the talent of the people who help run it. To stay competitive, business owners are looking for innovative and unique ways to attract and retain high quality talent. One effective way small businesses can set themselves apart is by offering comprehensive health and wellness programs for employees.

Making health and fitness an integral part of your human resource strategy simply makes sense. Employees will certainly appreciate any employer who values their health. Offering a wellness program is a way to tell your staff that you care about their wellbeing, and are willing to go the extra mile to support them.

Wellness programs have also been shown to boost morale among employees. Healthier staff members are happier, more loyal, and more productive; and this usually leads to fewer sick days that keep them out of the office. Another bottom-line benefit, wellness programs have been shown to reduce healthcare-related costs, including workers' compensation, for businesses that offer them. In one recent study, a business saw a reduction of \$6 for every \$1 it invested in wellness programs.

So what are some wellness initiatives for small business workplaces? Here are some of the more popular and effective programs employers have implemented.

Create a wellness newsletter with healthy tips, exercise suggestions, nutrition recipes and other information to support employee wellbeing.

Bring in professionals to conduct wellness screenings for diabetes, high cholesterol, heart disease and other common health issues, and provide information for preventing these conditions.

Host health and wellness fairs for employees featuring a range of vendors who provide related products, services, demonstrations and information.

Form walking or running groups, and incentivize participation in 5Ks, 10Ks and other events.

Offer healthy snacks at work, order healthy lunches for the office once a week, and host monthly healthy potlucks.

Provide physical activity breaks for employees, and use them yourself. When the boss is taking time to be active and healthy, employees are more likely to follow suit.

Invite yoga instructors to come onsite to hold yoga classes for staff.

Offer employees opportunities to join smoking cessation classes.

Provide employees with ergonomic desks, chairs, keyboard, mice, back supports, and other aids to improve posture and prevent repetitive task injuries.

Start a community garden at work and encourage employees to help plant, tend, and harvest it.

Purchase wearable fitness trackers for employees to count daily steps, monitor sleep, and track activity.

Enlist employees in sleep, nutrition, weight loss and fitness challenges, and reward those who participate.

Each of these wellness initiatives can certainly help you and your employees along the path towards living a healthier life and having an even healthier bottom line.

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