Creating a Healthy Workplace Environment towards improve the employee productivity

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Abstract: A healthy workplace environment play a vital role in an organization, when it comes to maintaining a positive outcome in a stressful atmosphere. The healthy workplace environment is mostly influenced by workplace culture, safety, working environment etc., Healthy environment will make people to work well, feel appreciated, acknowledged and rewarded. There should be kindness and understanding when employees face challenges such as accidents, illnesses, personal tragedies and natural disasters. People will usually go the extra mile for others when they are treated well and with understanding, compassion and respect. A healthy workplace environment improves productivity and reduces costs related to absenteeism, turnover, workers' compensation and medical claims.
Keywords: Employees, Healthy Workplace Environment, Productivity, Culture.

1. HEALTHY WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Healthy does not only constitute as needing medical attention, it could also be the outlook of the workplace and even the surroundings. There are four aspects to look into when creating a healthy workplace environment:

2. WORKPLACE CULTURE

As mentioned in one of our blog, creating a Happier Corporate Culture, every working place has their own corporate culture that determines its value and it usually creates a standard that employees generally follow. When a management have created a positive workplace culture that is being practiced by employees as well as management, the environment of the workplace tends to be healthier as everyone would have nothing to be upset or unhappy about. A great work place culture can keep employees productive and even help the management to retain the best employees and happy workers are also more likely to stick around.

3. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

A healthy workplace environment also involves the physical environment of the office or workshop and the occupational health & safety of your employees. Reduce the worry of your employees by looking into the safety of the workplace.

Simple things such as ensuring that all electric cables are covered or taped down with a cable tray to prevent employees from tripping over them are one of the issues, which employees should not be worried about. Nobody wants to sit underneath a cracked ceiling! So, allow the employees to come to a safe workplace environment.

4. HEALTH AND LIFESTYLE PRACTICE

Employees will care for the company they are working for if they know that they are being looked after. Employees are the best asset of every organisation, and putting effort into employee wellness can encourage better teamwork, increased productivity and reduce sick leave and workplace accidents.

The management can help their employees to develop and maintain healthy lifestyle practices and drop any unhealthy and/or risky habits that they may have. Having weekly yoga sessions or evening runs with the team are one of those activities that promote and encourage a healthy lifestyle.

5. SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Everyone has personal problems and it is only human that some personal emotions get brought into the workplace. Try not to ignore them but instead, find the core of the problem and be a supportive employer by showing concern. An employee may come in to work depressed due to a passing a loved one or they had a terrible weekend.

As an employee, show compassion and be there for them. The management do not need to sit by them the whole day, but by dropping an email, saying your doors are always open for them, shows that you not only care about the progress of the company, but they also care about the well-being of your employee. Remember that a supportive workplace culture is the foundation of a healthy workplace environment.

6. WAYS TO CREATE A HEALTHY WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

A happy (and healthy) employee is a productive employee. People who enjoy their jobs are more likely to engage thoroughly with their work. As an employee, it is always in your best interest to keep your staff happy; otherwise, resentment could start to impact on the quality of their work or they may even consider leaving.

Here are some ways that you could create a healthy workplace environment:

- ***Promote Wellness***: The management can encourage health and wellness of their employees by having a weekly exercise program such as a yoga session before the start of their work day or an aerobics class after work. This not only encourages a healthy lifestyle among your team but also give them the opportunity to get to know their workmates better.
- ***Engage With Different Personalities***: Every workplace has a combination of characters, and what works to motivate a particular employee, may not necessarily help others. Get to know their employees and find out whether a hands-on approach or more independence will help them.
- ***Fair Employee Policy***: This should apply to all employees regardless of their position or designation in the company. If a supervisor

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constantly misses deadlines, they should take it as seriously as they would with a junior employee. If the management policy changes, ensure everyone knows about it.

- *Eat Healthy*: Healthy eating is not about strict dietary restrictions, staying unrealistically thin, or depriving yourself of the foods you love. It is about feeling great, having more energy, improving your outlook and your mood. Another great way to create a healthy workplace environment is by eating healthy, and no – skipping lunch break because employees are busy is not a good excuse. Try catering a healthy lunch meal such as salads or sandwiches. They could also provide a bowl of fruits for snacks.

- *Team Building Activities:* Team building activities not only bond employees closer but also motivate them, creating a positive workplace environment. These activities help improve internal communication and productivity, boosting morale at the workplace and in helping employees get to know each other better.

- *Break Time:* Another great way to create a healthy workplace environment is by encouraging your employees to take a quick 5-minute break from their desk. Regular breaks will assist to relieve muscle fatigue, eyestrain and to restore the level of concentration. There are a couple of apps that you can permanently install on your employees' desktop, which reminds them take to a break and stretch.

- *Clean And Comfortable Office*: Working in a clean and comfortable office can have tremendous effects on the interactions among colleagues. Even if office does not get the sunlight, try to make an effort to provide a relaxing atmosphere with comfortable furniture, working equipment and add a few work lights to make it brighter.

Ethical Decision-Making and Leadership in the Workplace

Good manager will have model ethical behaviour. If a corporation expects its employees to act ethically, that behaviour must start at the top, where managers hold themselves to a high standard of conduct and can rightly say, "Follow my lead, do as I do." At a minimum, leaders model ethical behaviour by not violating the law or company policy. One who says, "Get this deal done, I don't care what it takes," may very well be sending a message that unethical tactics and violating the spirit, if not the letter, of the law are acceptable. A manager who abuses company property by taking home office supplies or using the company's computers for personal business but then disciplines any employee who does the same is not modeling ethical behaviour. Likewise, a manager who consistently leaves early but expects all other employees to stay until the last minute is not demonstrating fairness.

Another responsibility business owes the workforce is **transparency**. This duty begins during the hiring process, when the company communicates to potential employees exactly what is expected of them. Once hired, employees should receive training on the company rules and expectations. Management should explain how an employee's work contributes to the achievement of company-wide goals. In other words, a company owes it to its employees to keep them in the loop about significant matters that affect them and their job, whether good or bad, formal or informal. A more complete understanding of all relevant information usually results in a better working relationship.

Workplace Safety Under The Occupational Safety And Health Act

The primary federal law ensuring physical safety on the job is the **Occupational Safety and Health Act** (**OSHA**), which was passed in 1970. The goal of the law is to ensure that employers provide a workplace environment free of risk to employees' safety and health, such as mechanical or electrical dangers, toxic chemicals, severe heat or cold, unsanitary conditions, and dangerous equipment. OSHA also refers to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which operates as a division of the Department of Labour and oversees enforcement of the law. This act created the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), which serves as the research institute for OSHA and enunciates appropriate standards for safety and health on the job.

Employer obligations under OSHA include the duty to provide a safe workplace free of serious hazards, to identify and eliminate health and safety hazards , to inform employees of hazards present on the job and institute training protocols sufficient to address them, to extend to employees protective gear and appropriate safeguards at no cost to them, and to publicly post and maintain records of worker injuries and OSHA citations.

A Workplace Free of Harassment

Employers have an ethical and a legal duty to provide a workplace free of harassment of all types. This includes harassment based on sex, race, religion, national origin, and any other protected status, including disability. Employees should not be expected to work in an atmosphere where they feel harassed, prejudiced against, or disadvantaged. The two complaints most frequently filed with the **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC),** which strives to eliminate racial, gender, and religious discrimination in the workplace, are sexual harassment and racial harassment. Together, these categories made up two-thirds of all cases filed during 2017. More than thirty thousand complaints of sexual, gender, racial, or creedal harassment are filed each year, illustrating the frequency of the problem.

The EEOC enforces Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (CRA) of 1964, which prohibits **workplace discrimination** including **sexual harassment**. According to EEOC guidelines, it is unlawful to sexually harass a person because of that person's sex, either through explicit offers in exchange for sexual favours (known as quid pro quo) or through actions at a broader more systemic level that create a "hostile working environment." Sexual harassment includes unwelcome touching, requests for sexual favours, any other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature, offensive remarks based on a person's sex, and off-colour jokes. The harasser can be the victim's supervisor (which creates company liability the first time it happens) or a peer co-worker (which usually creates liability after the second time it happens, assuming the company had notice of the first occurrence). It can even be someone who is not an employee, such as a client or customer, and the law applies to men and women. Thus, the victim and the harasser both can be either a woman or a man, and offenses include both opposite-sex and same-sex harassment.

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Although the law does not prohibit mild teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not serious, harassment does become illegal when, according to the law, it is so frequent "that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it is so severe that it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted)." It is management's responsibility to prevent harassment through education, training, and enforcement of a policy against it, and failure to do so will result in legal liability for the company.

7. A SATISFIED WORKFORCE

Although the workplace should be free of harassment and intimidation of every sort, and management should provide a setting where all employees are treated with dignity and respect, ideally, employers should go much further.

Most people spend at least one-third and possibly as much as one-half of their waking hours at work. Management, therefore, should make work a place where people can thrive, that fosters an atmosphere in which they can be engaged and productive. Workers are happier when they like where they work and when they do not have to worry about childcare, health insurance, or being able to leave early on occasion to attend a child's school play,

Happy employees are more productive and more focused, which enhances their performance and leads to better customer treatment, fewer sick days, fewer on-the-job accidents, and less stress and burnout. They are more focused on their work, more creative, and better team players, and they are more likely to help others and demonstrate more leadership qualities.

Good advice to management includes making work fun. Allow people to joke around as appropriate so that when mistakes occur they can find humour in the situation and move forward without fixating simply on the downside. Celebrate accomplishments. Camaraderie and the right touch of humour can build a stronger workplace culture. Encourage exercise and sleep rather than long work hours, because those two factors improve employees' health, focus, attention, creativity, energy, and mood. In the long run, expecting or encouraging people to regularly work long hours because leaving on time looks bad is counterproductive to the goals of a firm. Accept that employees need to disengage sometimes. People who feel they are always working because their management team expects they must remain in touch via e-mail or mobile phone can become tremendously stressed. To combat this, companies should not expect their workers to be available around the clock, and workers should not feel compelled to be so available. Rather, employers should allow employees to completely disengage regularly so they can focus on their friends and families and tend to their own personal priorities.

8. CONCLUSION

A company and its managers need to provide a positive workplace at which employees want to work, free of safety hazards and all types of harassment. Perks and benefits also make the company an attractive place to work. Yet another factor is managers who make employees feel valued and respected. A company can use all these tools to attract and retain top talent, helping to reach the goals of having a well-run company with a satisfied workforce. It is ideal, when it comes to maintaining a positive outcome in a stressful atmosphere. Deal with problems as soon as possible and regularly ask for feedback on how your workplace could be improved. Philosophers Aristotle and Immanuel Kant said taking ethical action is the right thing to do. The decision to create an environment in which employees want to come to work each day is, in large part, an ethical choice, because it creates a healthy environment for all to encounter. However, the bonus comes when a satisfied workforce fosters increased quality and productivity, which leads to appreciative customers or clients and increased profitability. There is a financial payoff in that a well-treated workforce is also a productive one.