

Engaging Your Employees

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Objectives

1. Analyze methods to reduce employee stress.
2. Describe strategies to reward employees.
3. Demonstrate effective modes of communication.

I. Stress Management

Finding Balance

In Dr. Stephen Covey's legendary book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Habit 7 is "Sharpen the Saw." Sharpen the Saw means preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have -- you. It means having a balanced program for self-renewal in the four areas of your life: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Examples of activities for the four components:

- **Physical:** Healthy eating, exercising, and resting
- **Social/Emotional:** Making meaningful connections with others
- **Mental:** Learning, reading, writing, and teaching
- **Spiritual:** Spending time in nature, expanding your spiritual self through meditation, music, art, prayer, or religious service

Wellness Programs

An analysis of the literature on costs and savings associated with workplace wellness programs found that medical costs fall by about \$3.27 for every \$1 spent on wellness programs, and that absenteeism costs fall by about \$2.73 for every \$1 spent. Wellness programs have the potential to significantly impact employers' bottom lines. (Source: Baicker K, Cutler D, Song Z. Workplace wellness programs can generate savings. *Health Aff.* 2010;29:304–311.)

- Form a "Wellness Committee" with various employees representing different departments to plan wellness events. Select employees from dietary, housekeeping, nursing, etc. Be sure the aides are represented on the committee!
- Plan events, such as: Lunch'n'learns (bring in local speakers from community organizations), Health fairs / health screenings, Smoking cessation programs, Discounts to local gyms and Wellness walks
- Great resources & toolkits to help you start an employee wellness program: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Healthy Worksite Program -- <http://www.cdc.gov/nationalhealthyworksite/index.html>

I. Stress Management

Therapeutic Humor

- **Health Benefits of Laughter**
 - Neuroendocrine System (Stimulates release of endorphins, decreases level of cortisol)
 - Cardiopulmonary System (Decreases Blood Pressure, produces an exercise-like effect)
 - Immunological System (Increases level of antibodies, increases activity of natural killer cells)
 - **Putting Humor to Work!**
 - Laughter Log (Diary of humorous events)
 - Humor File (File of laughter-producing items)
 - Humor First Aid Kit (Collection of fun props)
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II. Rewarding Employees

No-cost Rewards

- A handwritten note is powerful! Considering how much is done through email and texts, a handwritten note is very meaningful. As an alternative, write a note to their family mentioning how much you appreciate their contributions to the organization.
 - Have each employee write something positive about the person on a piece of paper or scrapbook page. Put all the positive thoughts together and give them to the employee in a gift box or frame.
 - Have a spontaneous "thank you" visit from an administrator.
 - Name a room after them!
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Low-cost Rewards

- Bouquet of beautiful flowers.
 - Find something they like to collect, such as dolls or model airplanes, and give them one for their collection.
 - Provide tickets to a concert, show or other event (that they have an interest in).
 - Give them a small gift card for their favorite store, gas station or restaurant.
 - Get a book or CD for them by their favorite author or artist.
 - Donate to a charity that is important to them. For example, if one of their family members is a breast cancer survivor, make a donation in their name to a breast cancer charity.
 - Give them a subscription to their favorite magazine.
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III. Effective Workplace Communication Tools

Get Employee Input!

“What do you think?” Four important words that dramatically changes an organizational culture! Constantly survey employees on a variety of topics from the workplace culture to resident / patient care.

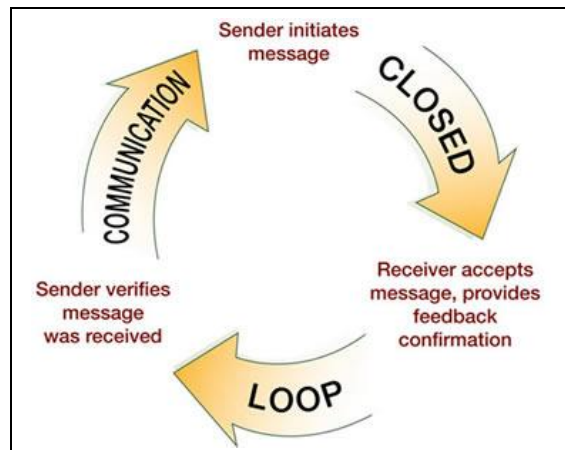
- Anonymous surveys (“Pencil and paper” surveys, online surveys, e.g., SurveyMonkey)
- In-person groups (e.g., Lunch with a group of employees)

III. Effective Workplace Communication Tools

Effective Listening Skills

Check Back / Closed Loop System

Let people talk uninterrupted (mute yourself)
An occasional nonverbal or brief statement is fine such as, “mmm-hmmm” or “Go on.”
Repeat back to be sure of understanding



Avoid “why” Questions

- Toxic Why version: “Why you didn’t help Mary Smith sooner?”
- Effective Non-Why Version: “What was happening which led Mary Smith to not get help sooner?”

Use “I” language, not “You” language

- Toxic “You” Version: “You did not assist Mary Smith when she said she needed help going to the bathroom.”
- Effective “I” Version: “I am concerned Mary Smith did not get help going to the bathroom. Let’s talk about how we can prevent this from happening in the future.”

Handling Conflict

General Principles

- Conflict will always be present. We could never eliminate conflict. People have different viewpoints and this will lead to differences of opinion. Conflict could be a source of growth and strength.
- The goal is conflict resolution, but in some cases we must accept conflict management. At times, we must “agree to disagree” and accept this fact. However, this scenario doesn’t always work. There are times, where we can’t manage the conflict, we must resolve it.

Steps

(Information from Mind Tools Company)

Step 1: Prepare for Resolution

- Acknowledge the conflict. Admit there is a conflict! The conflict cannot be resolved until we accept the fact there is an issue. The team must never ignore the issue for it will only grow and become even more challenging. Catch it early.
- Agree to a cooperative process. Each member of the team must be willing to move toward resolution. This means putting the team first, and may involve setting aside individual opinions or ideas for the time being. Work toward the good of the team.

III. Effective Workplace Communication Tools

Handling Conflict

Steps

Step 2: Understand the Situation

- Clarify positions. Each team member needs to clearly state his or her position. This is a vital step. Often openly discussing the different positions can help everyone view the entire spectrum of ideas and begin the resolution process.
- Analyze in smaller groups. Break the team into smaller groups and carefully review each option, listing pros and cons. Use constructive language! Simply stating the idea is a horrible waste of time is not helpful. Remain open rather than critical.
- Convene back as a team. This is a time for each subteam to discuss their thoughts and plans. This process can go a long way in moving toward resolution.

Step 3: Reach Agreement

- At this point everyone understands all the options and has seen the pros and cons. With all the information on the table, it is easier to reach an agreement on how to move forward.
- Follow-up plans need to be planned. What will happen next? Who is responsible for what action?
- Also, be sure to acknowledge the contributions of all team members. This builds team cohesiveness and can avoid future problems within the team.

NOTE:

If there is still conflict and resolution is not reached, it may be time for negotiation, potentially blending possible solutions. This is known as conflict management. Some teams may decide to have a vote.

Resources

Covey S. (1989) *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. Simon & Schuster, New York, NY

Glanz, B. (2002) *Handle with CARE: Motivating and Retaining Employees Creative, Low-Cost Ways to Raise Morale, Increase Commitment, and Reduce Turnover*. McGraw-Hill, New York, NY

Grover, S. M. (2005). *Shaping Effective Communication Skills and Therapeutic Relationships at Work, The foundation of Collaboration*. AAOHN Journal, 53(4), 177-182.

Spiegelman, P. & Berrett, B. (2012) *Patients Come Second: Leading Change by Changing the Way You Lead*. Greenleaf Book Group, Austin, TX