

LēadTM

Issue 18

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Lead™



...the Harvard Business Review conducted an analysis back in 2012 on hundreds of studies showing that happy employees achieved on average 31% higher productivity, 37% higher sales, with creativity three times higher.”

It is said that North American workers ‘live to work’ vs. ‘work to live’. This habit over time may create a work-life imbalance, leading to potential health issues among our working population. Given the corresponding health risks that come with overwork, extra hours may lead to increased absenteeism, decreased morale and eventually sick leave and/or increased turnover. While having employees work extra hours on a consistent basis may be the norm in our culture, the negative impacts of overwork are very costly to organizations.

As more studies come to light, we are provided with unavoidable proof that happy (and healthy) employees work harder and are burdened with less stress. As cited in *Futurity*, “Economists carried out a number of experiments to test the idea that happy employees work harder. In the laboratory, they found happiness made people about 12 percent more productive.” And further, *Forbes* magazine reported that the *Harvard Business Review* conducted an analysis back in 2012 on hundreds of studies

showing that happy employees achieved on average 31% higher productivity, 37% higher sales, with creativity three times higher. Based on these findings, it is hard to ignore the positive impact that happy employees have on the overall productivity of an organization. However, happy doesn’t always mean healthy. Employees with healthy habits bring their own benefits to a workplace. As reported by *Business News Daily’s* report on a survey conducted by HERO (Health Enhancement Research Organization), healthy employees – who ate healthily and exercised regularly – reduced company absenteeism by 27%. If happy and healthy employees are increasing productivity, thinking more creatively and coming into work more often, as an employer we can’t help but wonder: what responsibility do we have to keep our employees happy and healthy and how can this be accomplished?

Given our cultural tendency to work extra hours, employers can balance the scales by making an investment in strong health and wellness programs. As an

employer, we all have a responsibility to provide a safe and well-maintained workplace; it’s the law. But companies stand to benefit even more by supporting the health and wellness of their employee population to an even greater extent.

At Adecco, in addition to a comprehensive health plan, an employee assistance program and our global “Win4Youth” program, we have recently introduced a quarterly health and fitness benefit enabling employees to expense fitness club memberships and/or wellness programs such as nutrition or smoking cessation programs. We continue to look for new ways to add more balance in our fast-paced work environment.

In this edition of LEAD, we have put together a talented contributor team on health and wellness and we hope you find the articles informative and helpful in your pursuit of creating a healthier workplace. ■

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Peter Andersen is an independent consulting economist specializing in applied economic forecasting. He obtained his doctorate in economics from Harvard University. Peter provides strategic economic advice to management through boardroom meetings, video conferencing, economic reports, email commentary, and telephone calls. He is a regular keynote speaker at industry conferences in Canada and the United States. In addition, Peter taught financial economics as well as money and banking at the University of Texas at Austin from 2001 to 2010.



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Christine Thomlinson is a founding partner of Rubin Thomlinson LLP, a boutique law firm specializing in employment law and human rights issues. Christine is a trusted advisor to senior human resource professionals who recognize employees as an integral part of their business. She is known for her high capability to think strategically, and her ability to find practical, often innovative, legal solutions to her clients' challenging workplace issues. Christine has also been selected by her peers as one of the Best Lawyers in Canada specializing in labour and employment law.



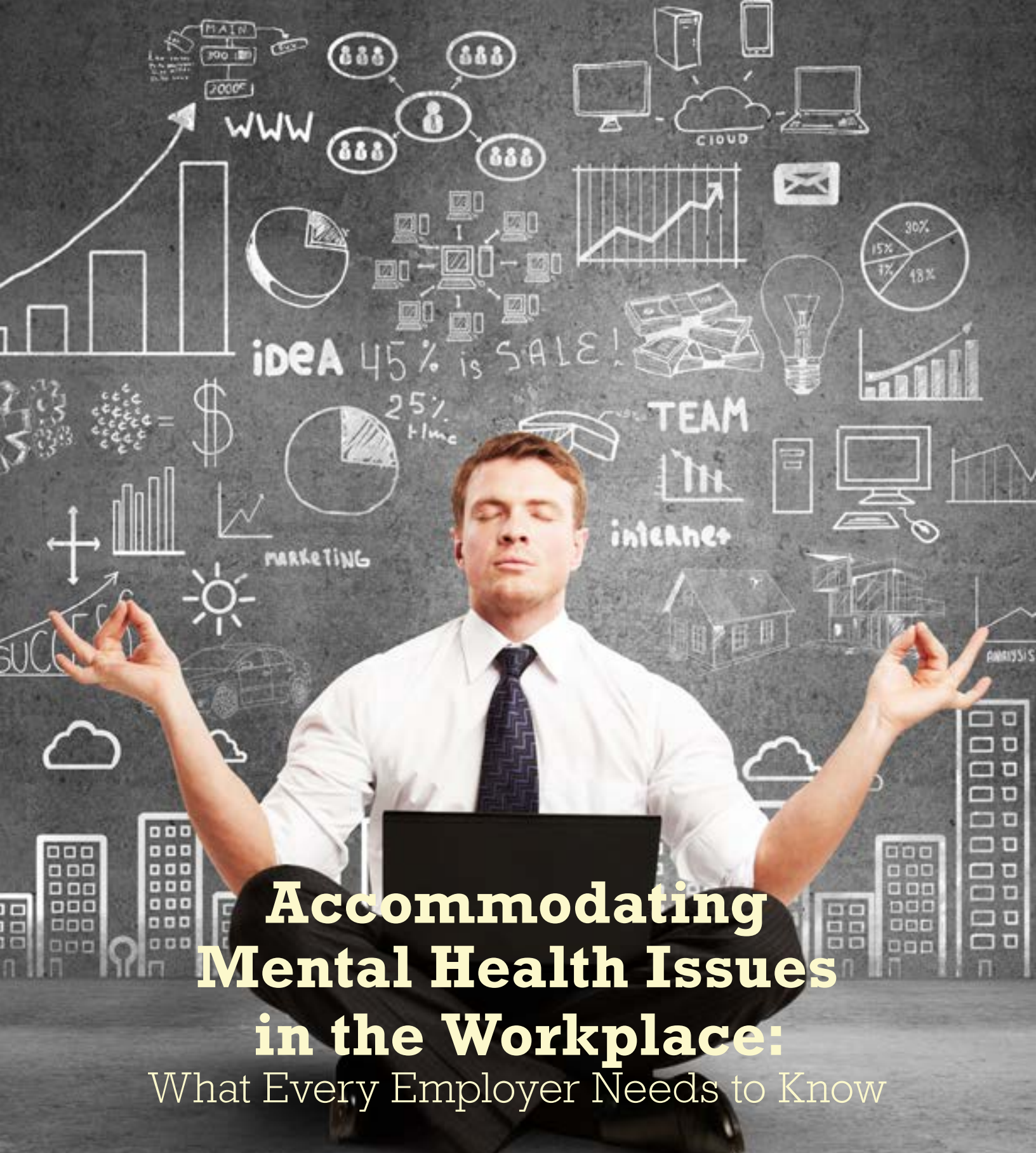
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Bruce Levitt has been president and CEO of his family-run business Levitt-Safety Limited, Canada's leading specialist distributor of industrial Safety and Fire Protection equipment and services, for over 20 years. Prior to his current role, he worked for two years at Orr Safety Corporation in Louisville, Kentucky as Instrumentation Marketing Manager and Advertising Manager. He has had frontline and management experience in a variety of roles including sales, marketing, customer service and operations. In addition to an MBA in International Business and Marketing from Dalhousie University, where he won the Award for Academic Excellence, Bruce has a BA in Economics from the University of Western Ontario and a bilingual education (English and French) from the Toronto French School.



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Suzanne joined Ubisoft in 2004 and has been immersed in the creative industry ever since. At Ubisoft, she built the recruiting, internal mobility and international mobility teams, before taking on the role of Director of Culture & Special Project. Today, she is the Director of HR's Innovation Atelier. Sue is passionate about creativity, people and business, and how they can come together to create a memorable experience. She started in the telecom industry, working for recruiting agencies, Nortel, and Global Crossing. She holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Saskatchewan and a Graduate Certificate in International Business from McGill University.



Accommodating Mental Health Issues in the Workplace: What Every Employer Needs to Know

By Christine M. Thomlinson

Legal

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT IF every employee you hired never got sick and always performed at their peak? Sadly, that's no employer's reality. Wouldn't it also be great if every employee could rely on their employer to provide them with the support that they need when they're sick, no matter how long, and no matter the consequent effect on the business? That's also no employee's reality.

The proper balance lies somewhere in between thanks to a Canadian legal system that provides human rights protection to employees who are considered to have a "disability". According to human rights law, employers have a duty to accommodate these employees. This means they have to be given support and assistance, but it also means that there is a limit to how far an employer has to go to provide this service.

Employers have been dealing with accommodation requests from employees with physical disabilities for many years, such that there are now whole industries offering creative solutions to allow employees with physical disabilities to often fully function in the workplace with necessary accommodation, and much of the time with minimal, if any, impact on the work of their fellow employees.

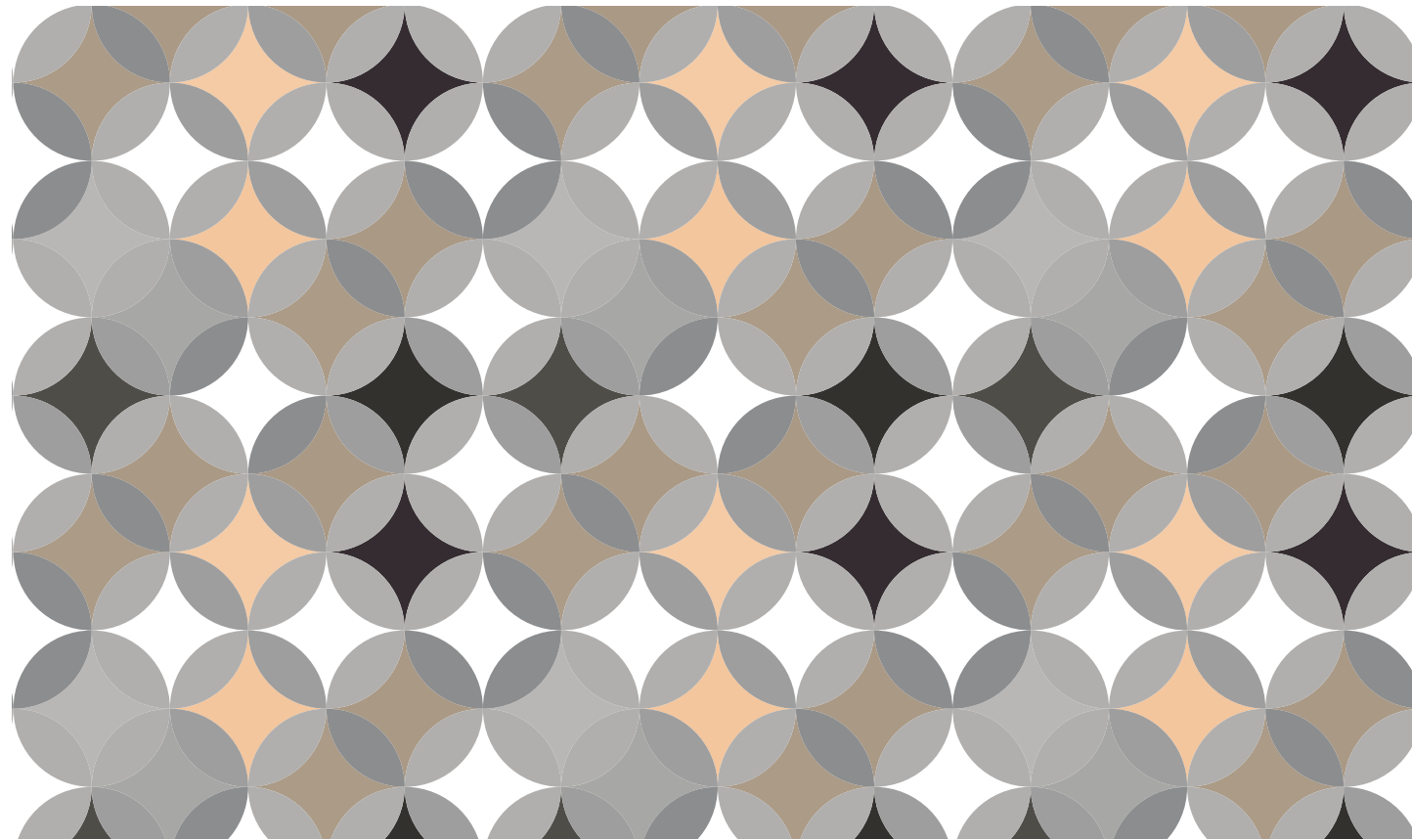
Where things have become increasingly more complicated is with the accommodation of mental disabilities in the workplace. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, in a given year, 20% of Canadians experience a mental health problem, and that in any given week, at least half a million Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems. A significant number of Canadians are struggling with mental health issues and many of these are struggling with these issues in their workplace. The calls we receive from our employer clients remind us daily that the mental challenges that these employees face are having an impact on the work they do and, frequently, on the business as a whole. Employers find themselves trying to strike the right balance between supporting the employees who require assistance while still effectively running their business, all the while remaining compliant with human rights laws.

Having seen many of these types of cases, we have set out below some of the most important things for employers to know about accommodating employees with mental health issues:

You May Have a Duty to Accommodate an Employee Even When They Don't Tell You They Have a Mental Health Issue

Yes, you read that correctly. As counter intuitive as it might seem that an employer would ever be required to accommodate someone who has not identified a mental health issue or specifically requested any form of accommodation, this is what the law requires in certain circumstances. The concept of constructive notice arises when an employer is in possession of information about an employee that may be sufficient to give the employer at least some idea that there may be a mental health issue at play. In these cases, human rights law makes clear that employers have an obligation to make the necessary inquiries into whether something may be going on with the employee that may be causing the workplace problem in question.

Consider, for example, the employee who is coming to work late, missing client meetings and there are rumours that he has come to work with bloodshot eyes, smelling like alcohol. Alcohol addiction is considered a "disability" under Canadian human rights law. Even if the employee in this case had not come forward acknowledging the addiction and seeking help, the employer would have a very difficult time justifying taking any disciplinary steps relating to the performance problems, without first making inquiries into the reason for the issues. The purpose of such an inquiry



would be to confirm whether an addiction exists. If this is confirmed, the employer would then consider what might be required to accommodate the employee in the current circumstances. The obligation to make these types of inquiries takes on even more significance with employees with mental health issues, since the issue itself may be interfering with the employee's ability to self-identify or request assistance.

Employers are Only Required to Accommodate up to the Point of "Undue Hardship"

Employers are often reluctant to offer any form of accommodation because they are concerned about "setting a precedent" or think that they're going to be stuck in a certain modified arrangement forever. In fact, the duty to accommodate is not infinite and comes to an end at the point at which the employer experiences "undue hardship." This term itself is significant insofar as it is intended to reflect the fact that employers are expected to experience some hardship in the accommodation of employees.

Employers should also be aware that proving "undue hardship" means satisfying a very specific legal test and this should really only be done with the advice of legal counsel with experience in human rights matters. Finally, what represents undue hardship for a small, family-owned business will not be considered undue hardship for a large, national organization and so the size and ability of the organization to provide accommodation will be an important consideration when determining how far an employer may need to go.

The Process that You Follow is at Least as Important as the Outcome (at least in Ontario)

Although the cases are not completely consistent across the country, in Ontario at least, there is a requirement to both accommodate employees (1) procedurally, by making all of the necessary inquiries into both their medical status (in order to fully understand their specific abilities and restrictions) and options for other work or modifications to work, and (2) substantively, by making decisions about whether an employer can provide accommodation short of undue

“ in a given year, 20% of Canadians experience a mental health problem, and that in any given week, at least half a million Canadians are unable to work due to mental health problems.”

hardship only after all of the procedural information has been explored and obtained. There are many more employers who actually fail in their duty to accommodate by not making sufficient inquiries at the procedural stage than there are those that make the wrong call as to whether or not their final decision on accommodation represented undue hardship.

In addition, and again in Ontario at least, employers can be assessed damages for a failure to meet the procedural duty even when it is determined that, regardless of whether they had done so earlier, the substantive duty would have otherwise been satisfied. For example, in a recent decision involving a custodian for a school board, the board was ordered by the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario to

pay \$3,000 in damages because it did not make sufficient inquiries into the custodian's medical information in order to fully assess his ability to return to work. This decision was made even though it was later confirmed that the board did not actually have a substantive duty to accommodate the custodian based on the medical evidence that was presented at the later hearing¹.

As much as some of the above obligations may seem onerous for employers, their purpose is to allow employers to try and level the playing field for employees who have often been historically disadvantaged in the workplace. When the process of accommodation is undertaken in good faith by both employees and employers, it represents an opportunity for

people to put their respective heads together, with the assistance of external information and experts if necessary, and explore creative solutions. Such solutions ideally have the effect of allowing persons with disabilities to contribute to the workplace in the most meaningful way. Wouldn't that be great? ■

¹ *Lee v. Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board*, 2014 HRTO 1212 (CanLII).



The Benefits of Building a Culture of Health & Safety

AN INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE LEVITT
BY ADECCO

“The biggest risk is complacency. When safety statistics look good, we become complacent knowing nothing has happened...”

What are some of the common challenges related to health and safety that your clients are facing today?

Onboarding and engagement of new employees is a prevalent challenge in the industry. If you look at safety statistics, the most at-risk people are younger workers and those that are new to the organization due to the fact that they haven't been trained or transitioned yet into the company's programs. One of the drivers is the transition of baby boomer employees leaving their jobs and being replaced with younger, unfamiliar workers.

Another issue that can be found in the workplace is a struggle to keep up with and to adapt to regulatory changes in health and safety. Sometimes employers don't have the internal resources to stay on top of things, or the time to meet all the requirements even if they know that legislation has changed.

Budgets are another area that raises some challenges for employers looking to implement programs. When I have discussions with people in the business world, and I bring up the topic of safety, the response tends to overwhelmingly turn to a focus on how it is a fantastic industry because people always have to spend money on safety programming and equipment. This is true to some degree, but if companies aren't making money, safety programs and

other initiatives become a nice-to-have because ultimately, they need to show a return on investment to their stakeholders, and so that money goes into other channels not health and safety.

What role does the ministry play in ensuring employers continue to remain progressive in their approach to health and safety? Can you comment on any recent legislative changes that you feel have positively impacted the safety of employees?

The change to training requirements is a prevalent issue in the health and safety industry at the moment. There are now Occupational Health and Safety training regulations that ensure employers and employees go through an online training module to familiarize themselves with their rights and responsibilities. This training, in my mind, is an effective reminder that there are a lot of regulations in place to help you do your job effectively, and that as an employer, they exist to demonstrate what you need to do and what not to do in the workplace.

When we start looking to the immediate future, another legislative change that we will be seeing in the next few years is a transition from the standard way we mark and warn about hazardous goods (WHMIS) from individual countries using their own safety data sheets and symbols to a global approach through the creation of a GHS (Global Harmon-

ized System). I hope that this is the start of a bigger trend where we begin to recognize that something that is toxic in Canada is just as toxic everywhere else. Eventually employers will use the same symbols for each hazard around the world along with the same safety data sheet formats. This will make it easier for suppliers to go to market because they won't need different stickers depending on where the products are going.

The Ministry of Labour in Ontario is also publicly announcing safety blitzes. This means that inspectors will be coming to sites to look for infractions, which is a good way for the Ministry to say they're looking at the big data and are concerned with the incident levels in a certain industry or a certain hazard. It gives employers the opportunity to implement changes if they need to be made, ultimately providing a safer environment for employees through a drive down of hazards and incident rates.

There are notable differences between high risk and low risk occupations and businesses, however, no business is without risk altogether. What are some of the common health and safety risks that every employer should be aware of?

The biggest risk is complacency. When safety statistics look good, we become complacent knowing nothing has happened; this is a trait of both



employers and employees. If someone is carrying out an action they do on a daily basis, and something they've done a million times before, no one thinks something bad will happen if they stretch a bit too far but when something does happen, the reality of our complacency sets in.

Another risk that is prevalent in almost all businesses is in daily driving, which is a risk area that we don't often give a lot of thought to. Whether you are in a high risk occupation or not, fatalities while on the road are a present risk. I unfortunately witnessed the aftermath of a company that had an employee killed in a highway traffic accident, and that was a wake-up call for the company to the dangers of driving. In order to do business, a lot of companies need to demonstrate a good safety record and when all of a sudden there is a fatality on record, it is damaging. Driving is something that we often take for granted but accidents can happen so it is something we all need to pay close attention to.

In your blog, you wrote a compelling piece on businesses creating a culture of safety. Do you have any advice for employers who are looking to create a culture of safety? Where would they begin and what steps would they take to make sure that they are addressing the key issues within their organization?

I'm a firm believer that if you are going to create a culture of safety, the mentality has to start at the top of the organization and work its way down. If the CEO isn't committed to a culture of safety, it is unrealistic to think that they are going to be able to pass that message along to their employees. Part of being in a role of authority is being highly visible in all discussions on safety, and practicing what you

preach. If you as the CEO or member of management talk the talk but dismiss immediate issues, your actions speak far louder than your words. You have to live by your principles and as a manager, if you don't think safety applies to you, employees will view your lack of action as hypocritical.

Another big part of a culture of safety is based on an employer's understanding of their base line. When in charge of employees, it is important to ask yourself: what do my people think of safety today? At Levitt-Safety, we issue a company-wide survey to provide management with an idea of our employees' attitudes towards safety. To me, safety is more about the mental aspect than the physical. What I mean by this is that it is important to instill a mentality about how people think and react in the moment, and whether or not they think about doing something safely before they do it. If an employee mentally prepares for a situation by going into each task with a safe approach in mind, the outcome will be different than someone who disregards safety altogether.

How can an employer measure the success of their health and safety initiatives? Do you recommend any tools, software or guidelines to track progress?

Surveys play a vital part in any assessment. It is important to survey often in order to gauge how things are evolving, and we practice this approach by surveying our clients to provide an annual evaluation that tracks progress and identifies pain points that need attention and if things are continually improving.

In Western Canada, and spreading across the country, there is a program called COR (Certificate of Recognition) which conducts periodic audits that reveal the strengths and weak-

“...it is important to instill a mentality about how people think and react in the moment, and whether or not they think about doing something safely before they do it.”

nesses within safety programs. Whether a workplace is being assessed using the COR criteria or another standard, having an audit done periodically is highly beneficial for self-improvement.

A final tool to utilize is a Learning Management System (LMS), which applies to business beyond safety, as they can be used to list the training needs for various roles and jobs in order to develop a gap analysis of what is missing from a number of business lines, including safety and leadership.

According to research, if employees feel protected and physically safe, employers see an increase in employee job satisfaction, job commitment and job performance. Do you agree with this statement? If so, based on your knowledge, has Levitt-Safety noticed any direct correlation between properly implemented safety programs and an employer's recruitment and retention rates?

When it comes to recruitment, being seen as a safe employer is beneficial because it would be hard to believe that candidates are willing to work somewhere that isn't safe. This fear of an

unsafe environment would eliminate a potential pool of candidates, so in terms of recruitment it is more about avoiding the negative perception of safety. On the retention front, employees that recognize that they work in an unsafe environment are more likely to look for a new career because their safety is being jeopardized.

However, I believe that when it comes to retention and recruitment, safety programs can add the most benefit to employee retention. When an employer has a good safety program in place, it is typically representative of other properly implemented programs such as HR programs, benefits, effective communication and strong leadership. These elements are not in place without a strong foundation in all business areas. Health and safety then becomes a key cog in the bigger picture: all work together to make a company an appealing place to be which in turn drives the need and want for employees to stay.

Can you share a success story from an employer that has implemented a safety program and is now benefitting from its use with employees that are more engaged as a result of their actions?

Within our own organization, I have been President for approximately 20 years now and I have to admit that for the first half of my tenure, I fell into a complacent mindset by assuming that all employees worked safely since we specialize in safety equipment and programming; when I surveyed my employees to find out if they practiced safe habits on the job, the answer was “no”. At the end of the day, I shoulder the blame for the fact that safety wasn't something that I talked about in the context of our own company. I just assumed that it would be something they'd take to heart as they worked in the industry every day.

We then found ourselves with periodic increases of lost time injuries and higher recordable incident rates than I was comfortable with. So six or seven years ago, after a few years of lost time injuries in a row, I took it upon myself to change my approach and to change our culture within the organization. It has become very much a part of something I now talk about all the time. We survey employees internally on a regular basis, and are starting to get COR registered locations in different provinces across the country. Due to these efforts, we are seeing a difference in performance in

“...it is important to look into a near miss to see what one can learn to prevent these occurrences from happening again.”

the places that are registered in COR vs. the ones that haven't in terms of safety outcome and our survey results. All of this has tied into fostering a culture of safety, which is an overall culture of communication and change management of appropriate leadership. Going beyond the safety metrics, employee engagement and turnover has also improved. Was that truly because of safety? It is hard to say, but it all fits part and parcel into an effective leadership system and culture of safety.

As the workforce evolves, are there any important trends emerging in the Health and Safety industry when it comes to preventative techniques and equipment that you believe we will see more of in the years to come?

Safety Management Systems and software are useful for tracking purposes. In particular, there is a trend of people paying attention to not just where accidents are but where the near misses are too. Near misses are something that a lot of organizations forget about, as there are probably 100 near misses for every accident, and although they did not result in an incident, it is important to look into a near miss to see what one can learn to prevent these occurrences from happening again.

Learning Management Systems have also gone from not existing to then being really expensive and only affordable to larger organizations. Now, they are readily available and affordable for virtually any organization. As a result of the growing popularity of Learning Management Systems, we are going to see more and more people tracking gaps in training, as well

as employers participating in more online training. Although there are pros and cons to online training modules, it is still a very viable solution to some employer training needs.

The final area would be, broadly speaking, the evolution of the safety at heights industry. As more people are being conscious of the risks, safety at heights products are favoured universally by employers and they are stepping away from traditional ladders in favour of proper equipment for work at heights. At Levitt-Safety we promote something called a LOBO work platform, which can be used by employees to properly access items that they'd traditionally use a ladder for. This item has grown in popularity due to the fact that safety at heights is one of the fastest growing segments within the hardware industry. Another result of this shift to a focus on safety at heights is an increased focus on "things" in addition to people. For example, tools being used at heights are being tethered because if it drops and someone walks under you, this is a serious issue. People never used to think about that, and today it is more and more common. ■

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Meeting Stakeholder Needs

By Peter Andersen PhD



“ A well-designed capital structure strategy can add substantial value to shareholders. ”

ANY COMPANY THAT PROVIDES STAKEHOLDERS WITH financial assets, that are not otherwise available to them, is making a smart move.

An obvious example is the use of pension promises. They are actually claims/obligations that the company provides, and are a valuable asset for any employees ranging from CEOs to top managers and on down the company organization chart.

Health and wellness benefits fall into the same category. The key point is that such opportunities may not be available elsewhere, and if they are, they would only be available at a higher cost. There is a payoff to the corporation from doing this.

The objective for corporate management is to maximize profits, right? Not really. What profits are we talking about? This quarter's profits, next quarter's or next year's profits? We could keep on going. There are many possible periods in the production process and how can we pick such an unambiguous profit maximization rule? The answer is that we cannot.

In addition, if we are talking about future profits, we have to remember that future revenues and expenses are uncertain. This means that we have to assign probabilities. In other words, future profits can only be described by a probability distribution.

There has to be a better objective for corporate managers, and there is. The answer lies in the shareholder wealth maximization rule. The simple target for managers is to try to maximize shareholder value, which lies in the market value of the company's shares. There is no ambiguity, or lack of definition, about the current stock price.

Of course in order to do this, we will need a well-functioning stock market. If we did not have one, how could corporate managers obtain the preferences of the various shareholder owners of the firm? This would be impossible if there are many owners.

The stock market makes it possible to make decisions that are in the best interest of all the owners. It also shows how well management is doing by observing the company's stock price, and the price of similar firms.

How does this relate to pensions and health and wellness benefits? In theory, a company's share price is determined by its earning power and risk of its underlying real assets. This includes such things as expected earnings and dividends, as well as the risk-adjusted discount rate, which allows one to calculate net present values and the value of a share of stock. There is more to it than that, however. A firm's capital structure (its mix of debt, equity and other financial arrangements) can also affect its share price.

Financial promises (such as pensions, health and wellness benefits) that are made to stakeholders are actually capital structure decisions. In effect they are claims (debt) offered by the company. A well-designed capital structure strategy can add substantial value to shareholders.

The choice of financing can reduce taxes and other costs. It can also be important for incentives. By providing stakeholders with such financial promises, a firm can add value without changing the size and shape of its operating assets.

The key thing is to promise benefits that truly satisfy the important needs of a firm's employees. There might be up-front costs, but it is the long-term expectations that will be worth the investment. By meeting stakeholder needs, a firm can lower the expected present value cost of labour services. In the end, the result should be a premium on the share price.

Offering pensions and health and wellness plans to employees could therefore have a positive effect on a firm's stock price and would, as a result, be in the best interest of its owners. ■

Getting a Glimpse into Gym Ubi

with Suzanne Boutin of Ubisoft Montreal

SINCE 2004, UBISOFT'S MONTREAL OFFICE HAS been turning heads with Gym Ubi, a health and fitness facility designed to cater to their employees. This initiative stems far beyond creating a gym; it was an investment into a wide range of activities that would cater to their employees' specific needs.

From meditation and yoga to fencing and badminton, Ubisoft Montreal has it all. However, their support of staff doesn't end there. According to Suzanne Boutin, Director, HR's Innovation Atelier at Ubisoft Montreal, "For us, the Ubi GYM is a realm of services that are given by a staff of professionals that goes far beyond the infrastructure with weights and exercise machines."

With every investment, there is always the uncertainty that it will not pay off in the end. For Ubisoft Montreal, success was measured through the ever-increasing participation levels of their employees. It increased so much so that the company took it upon themselves to build an even bigger gym in January of 2015. Nearly 50% of their workforce now takes part in the services provided by the office gym.

In addition to over 25 activities and sports that are organized for all staff, Gym Ubi possesses an impressive on-site support network of kinesiologists and personal trainers that customize plans for a diverse workforce. Recognizing that there is no "one size fits all" approach to health and wellness, Ubisoft's implementation of this fitness initiative brings with it the benefit of an array of options to suit the varying needs of their team.

An added benefit is the prevention of work-related ailments in the workplace, as Ubisoft Montreal works diligently to incorporate ergonomics into personal training sessions that address work-related health issues. When asked about the role ergonomics plays in the incorporation of the office gym, Suzanne relates it all back to being flexible and accommodating. As stated, she remarks that "We quickly realized

Exclusive

that work-related ailments also need to be addressed. That's why we've invested in in-house workstation-optimization specialists who are available for employees from their first day onward. The specialist, when called upon, analyzes the employee's workstation and adjusts it on the spot. We also provide specialized equipment, if need be, such as computer screen risers, special chairs, footrest devices and more."

However, organizations cannot simply be reactive to the ailments that their employees are faced with as a result of their physical environment (both work and home related). As such, preventative techniques are implemented to target areas before these common ergonomic issues amplify. Ubisoft Montreal is adamant about communicating their proactive training techniques to candidates and new hires to ensure that the on-site trainers provide each employee with individualized exercises. As not every employee is faced with the same issues, customization is essential to success.

The notion of implementing and managing a health and wellness program keeps coming back to the idea of creating a place to develop an employee's potential, which is something that this Ubisoft office reinforces even on a candidate level. They believe that entertaining and enriching the lives of their players is at the core of their culture. "Gym Ubi is merely an extension of this philosophy. As soon as we start speaking with prospective candidates, Gym Ubi and its array of services become an important part of the package. Gym Ubi is positioned as a lifestyle benefit, and it happens to be significantly attractive to future employees as well."

Are their efforts paying off? According to Suzanne, "Study after study scientifically shows that physical activity helps concentration, stimulates creativity, decreases absenteeism, increases retention, and increases physical and mental health – all of which are major factors in our studio's

success and ambitions. At the end of the day though, it's not just about productivity; it's about our people and about our culture."

In her own words, Suzanne takes us through why Gym Ubi is so much more than a physical space for training. "The whole reason for its existence is to promote physical, mental and social health, which in turn fosters creativity and productivity at Ubisoft Montreal. Ubisoft is a friendly and creative environment, and it takes a lot of people working closely together to create memorable gaming experiences. In many ways, Gym Ubi contributes to building a community. When you sweat together, play together, win and lose together, you also grow stronger as a team together. In that respect, the informal gatherings created by the gym are also great for fostering the exchange of best practices and expertise between employees. A team manager on one of the 10 hockey teams told me that post-game locker-room time has created a unique opportunity for breaking down communication silos across our various teams. Employees from all backgrounds can openly and casually exchange about what's happening on their respective teams, ranging from problem-solving methods to productivity measures."

Ubisoft Montreal sees beyond the padded floor and basketball hoops to the service they're providing their employees with. Employee health is important, and their pursuit of a healthy workplace has evolved into a revolutionary approach to not only retain, but to attract potential candidates with an environment that puts employees' health concerns in the forefront. ■





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