

Making it Personal

The Role of the Leader in Health Management

By Michael F. Campbell

(Editor's Note: Last of a five-part series)

This series began with the March-April issue of *BizVoice*® looking at the drivers behind rising health care costs and wellness as the answer to helping control those costs. We then talked about making changes in how we view the challenge of tackling these out-of-control expenditures.

The July-August issue discussed the many facets of wellness, concluding with expanding our view to look at all health and productivity management. In the most recent issue the very difficult subject of behavior change was covered, leading us to our current topic of the role the leader plays in wellness.

Health care costs have led many employers to drop their health care benefits altogether. A far greater number have chosen to shift costs to the employees or switched to the popular consumer-driven Health Savings Accounts. Others have joined purchasing cooperatives, professional employer organizations and trade associations to collaborate health care buying power.

A growing number of companies have considered wellness in some form and a few have implemented programs. Zeroing in on technology, quality of care and outcome-based medicine consortiums have been created to bring about reform and legislation. Regardless of these and many other valiant efforts, without a global business strategy of health and productivity management for each company, there is no solution.

Leading the way

The personality of any company emanates from the top and ultimately creates the culture of the organization. Surveys have revealed the employee population for many companies to be angry and frustrated. Discord, lack of trust and motivation through fear lead the list of adversities that drives the lives of many employees today. According to Dr. Paul Stultz, author of "The Adversity Quotient," better than 90% of all physician office visits are due directly or indirectly to stress.

The CEO/president/owner/chairman has within his or her grasp the ability to positively impact this picture. Those who have come to embrace the philosophy that you "manage systems and lead people" have begun to make strides in creating a healthy culture. A great many who aspire to leadership are personally driven by anger, stress, guilt, worry, fear and anxiety. Peace of mind is dramatically missing. This is why I strongly believe the beginning of true health and productivity management for any organization begins with the leader getting his or her act together on the basics.

One such leader is Kathy Reehling, president/CEO and majority owner of Crew Technical Services of Indianapolis. Not only have we witnessed Kathy "having her act together" in



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basic principles to lead by, but some could say she helped write the book. Few organizations that we work with have employees that handle the routine of the daily "job grind" as well as the staff of Crew Tech. Flexible work schedules and a family friendly environment are basic to this company. Heading the list on Crew's "14 Commandments" is a clue to the reason for this healthy corporate culture – "Smile and Have Fun."

Jim Collins, author of "Good to Great," cites two things in common among the leaders of the top 11 companies he studied – "humility and doing the right things." The followers of this type of leader know exactly

what is expected of them and their work environment is non-threatening. The health and productivity of a population begins in this most unlikely of places.

Don't misunderstand, I am not saying it is the responsibility of the leader to "take care" of his/her followers, but to lead by example, motivate and empower them to do the right things and make the right choices. In other words, you can give a man a fish and feed him for a day, or you can teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.

Making the next move

The Wellness Councils of America and the Wellness Council of Indiana have a well established certification process for becoming a well workplace employer. The first item on the certification list is top management support and buy-in. Without that person in charge role modeling and emulating the basics of health and productivity in his or her personal life, the entire process breaks down.

In June of 2005, Pitney Bowes joined 18 other companies and The Partnership of Prevention to encourage Fortune 1000 companies to make health a CEO issue. Michael Critelli, CEO of Pitney Bowes, said, "We've got to create a culture in which healthy employees and families are valued. It does start with the CEO."

We are facing an enormous challenge in health care and the associated costs that are putting some employers out of business. We have established that modifying behavior and changing lifestyle is the answer. My hope is that we also realize our companies' leaders have the ability to impact their cultures, which in turn will be the conduit to empower change in the lifestyles of those they lead. However, we must remember that the program is not the sole instigator that brings about change. People buy into the leader before they buy into the mission statement.

INFORMATION LINK

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