

Integrated Wellness – Four steps to optimise your Organisational Sustainability

The World Health Organisation Country Profile report in 2014 indicated that South Africa is the 3rd most obese country in the world. Raising even more concern is the fact that 43% of people between the ages of 30 and 70 died as a result of lifestyle diseases. This is the category of people which employers rely most on to be economically productive and contributing to the sustainability of our organisations and country. This trend is not unique to South Africa. Worldwide, organisations are faced with the dilemma where these diseases of lifestyle play a major role in employee illness and absenteeism, reducing levels of workplace morale, engagement and productivity.

It is true in most industries that a company's biggest asset is its people. This biggest asset often also attracts the biggest cost and in the world of Employee and Organisational health and wellness, the cost associated with promoting and maintaining health and managing the consequences of poor health, are often driven by four main factors:

- Medical Aid inflation, which has, on average, been double the salary increase % of employees over the last few years;
- Medical Aid inflation is largely driven by the prevalence of NCD's (non-communicable diseases) such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol etc.;
- Sick leave is a direct cost to the company in terms of productivity loss. The associated indirect cost is often overlooked;
- Companies often manage the promotion of Health and Wellness in a fragmented manner, using multiple service providers and allocating ownership for different processes to various people within the business.

Given the continuous upward trend of both medical aid inflation and NCD prevalence, organisations should take serious cognisance of how they view, manage and monitor Integrated Wellness as a sustainable strategy to ensure lowered cost associated with health and wellness, optimise profits of the organisation and remain a responsible employer.

But where to start, or continue to focus the often scarce resources to tackle this huge task? The following four steps could be a good start:

1. Be clear on your organisation's view or philosophy around health and wellness. Is it something you do because the law requires it of you, because you believe it's the right thing to do for employees or because you have a solid business case for how health and wellness is promoting and supporting the organisation's strategy and sustainability?
2. Apply the benefit of "Big Data analytics" to the process of articulating clear business goals and monitoring the impact of your health and wellness services in the organisation. This implies a process of combining a variety of data sets that are likely to sit all over the organisation, and examining this combined data sets to uncover hidden patterns and unknown correlations, to produce useful business information. The various data sets would relate to both the cost side of the spectrum (for instance the four factors mentioned above), as well as information on the impact of health and wellness interventions over time.

3. Approach the solution design from an integrated perspective from the start. Get all the people who are involved in managing aspects of health and wellness in the organisation around one table to work towards shared business objectives, which were identified based on the Wellness Intelligence uncovered in the Big Data analytics process. This may imply compiling the team from various departments and including even external service providers such as medical aids, Employee Assistance Program providers and Occupational Health Practitioners, especially when it comes to gathering the information as required in Point 2.
4. Monitor the impact of the integrated approach through regular reporting on Health Outcomes (such as sick leave rate and NCD prevalence) vs. Health Cost

At EOH, we deliver an end to end solution to Clients who wants to utilise an integrated approach to Wellness to ensure sustainability for both individuals and the organisation.



Contact EOH Human Capital Solutions for more information on this service