



Vitality

An EFAP Newsletter for Human Resource and Occupational Health Professionals, Program Administrators, Supervisors, and Key Personnel



Tips To Creating a Healthy Workplace

A healthy workplace weighs the merits of a range of considerations including mental and emotional qualities as well as safe and nurturing environments for all employee types.

A healthy work environment is crucial to the success of both your team and organization. Employees returning to work after treatment for an addiction or mental health disorder in particular, benefit from a well-executed strategy dedicated to creating a positive and thriving workplace.

Investing in employee success through mentorship

"At its core, being a mentor is being a trusted advisor. It may encompass a range of topics or areas, however at its core; it's making yourself available to support and advise someone and deliver their needs in ways that make sense to them, always keeping their best interests in mind."

Mentorship is one of the very best ways to foster a positive and productive work environment. Engagement of employees to lead by example, sharing their experiences and learnings to support their peers creates a culture of shared success and teamwork.

Often, finding the time and the efforts required can be challenging, however the value extends to all vested parties, mentor, mentee, and organization. Recognizing this value enhances enthusiasm, buy-in and results. So, why embrace mentoring?

- **A safe space to adapt and learn.** Developing new skills and techniques without risk, receiving valuable feedback, insight and support, without fear of criticism is an opportunity to pass along wisdom and strengthens experience and expertise within your team and organization. This form of communication between different levels of management to employee helps to foster stronger relationships and a healthier workplace.



- **Employee engagement.** Productivity and quality of work lowers when employees are not invested, impacting relationships with clients/customers and management. Indeed, unengaged employees cost businesses over \$500 billion annually.²
- **Identifying - and growing - leaders.** Mentors further their leadership skills and insights by reflecting on and articulating their own experiences.³ Through observation, you gauge reaction and learning, identifying growth and inherent strengths creating a larger pool of promotable employees while highlighting opportunities for development.
- **New insights** into company policies, politics, processes and culture by seeing them through the fresh eyes of a mentee.
- **Attracting the right employees.** Mentorship shows a willingness to invest in nurturing real connection. This brings in workers looking to better themselves – and those wanting to contribute at a holistic level for the betterment of the organization.⁴
- **Retention.** Mentorship is a form of active, engaged training with the potential for new possibilities and professional growth. A Dale Carnegie Training Center study shows 40% of poorly trained employees leave companies within their first year, usually due to poor training and general dissatisfaction with their status in the company. This employee turnover costs businesses \$11 billion, annually.²
- **Happiness!** Helping others - and being helped by someone excited to do the same - boosts mood and morale.

Tips for strong mentorships

- **Find the right mentee.** Someone who is honest, flexible, willing to act in pursuit of goals, and open to learning and feedback.³
- **Give face-to-face feedback** that's specific, direct and sincere.
- **Set clear expectations.** How long will the mentorship last? What results are expected? How will they be achieved? How will both parties communicate about what is and isn't working? When will progress reviews happen? Set realistic parameters and stick to them.

- **Share experiences.** Your candor about challenges and triumphs allows mentees to learn from your experiences and apply those lessons to their own journey.
- **Model behaviour.** Be conscious of how you represent your own work ethic, values, standards, style, attitude, methods and procedures. Model the behaviour you want to see.
- **Look for opportunities** like classes, tasks or new positions that will encourage the mentee to use and grow newfound skills.
- **Acknowledge and celebrate** milestones and achievements to build focus and confidence while motivating, inspiring and reinforcing good behaviour.

Inclusion and diversity to strengthen the workplace

77% of executives strongly support diversity initiatives. But just 40% of employees feel their organizations are truly diverse and inclusive.⁵

Companies with gender, ethnic and racial diversity are at least 15% more likely to experience above-average financial returns.⁶

Diversity in the workplace includes:

- Age/generation
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Personality type
- Race
- Religious affiliation
- Sexual orientation
- Thinking/learning style

Business-related benefits of diversity include improved innovation, better decision-making and more effective utilization of the workforce.⁵ As important, is leveraging diversity with inclusive practices and an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome, safe, free to be themselves⁷ and where robust opinions and collaborative thinking are embraced. The payoff is higher engagement, contribution, and healthier work atmosphere.

Steps to fostering diversity and inclusion

- **Drive accountability** by providing clear steps, encouragement, and tools for employees to report bias at work.
- **Invest in diversity and inclusion training** to develop awareness and sensitivity while introducing new skills and tools to deal with issues that may arise.
- **Encourage authentic relationships and trust building** by nurturing an environment where sharing cultural aspects and personal experiences are welcomed.
- **Use the term, "partner"**, a non-gender-specific, more inclusive term when referring to spouses.
- **Welcome respectful debate and honesty.** According to Dr. Rohini Anand, "leaders in diversity and inclusion should reward employees who voice unpopular opinions or unexpected suggestions. Smart, successful teams understand that differing opinions spark innovation, a crucial part of high performance."⁶
- **Open safe channels of communication** for feedback and concerns and to facilitate resolutions.
- **Employ team building - and expanding - activities** focused on seeing things from another's point of view. Include other departments to widen your employee's support network and at-work community. Diverse perspectives and situational interpretations cultivate empathy, multiple resolutions, and positive mental health.

Creating a global community at work: how it benefits everyone

"Our success is due to our vibrant community where people are loyal to one another and their collective work, everyone feels they are part of something extraordinary, and their passion and accomplishments make the community a magnet for other talented people." – Ed Catmull, President, Pixar

A global community cares for its work, colleagues, and its place in the world, geographic and otherwise. Perhaps most importantly, that same community is, in turn, inspired by this caring.⁸

When your workplace becomes a global community unto itself, your employees are gifted with this inspiration, and like investing in mentorship, inclusion and diversity, there are benefits to be had by all in the relationship...both in and out of the office.

Two sure-fire ways to bolster that invaluable sense of global community: growing external community support and social consciousness.

External community support and social consciousness

Pro-social behaviour, also known as, doing something for another, positively affects those engaged in it and, in turn, their workplaces.⁹ This cycle breeds a sense of pride, and goodwill, and employees are more likely to share their own experiences with their colleagues.⁸ The insights and enthusiasm generated by sharing may lead to other initiatives and higher productivity. Fortuitously, external community support, as well as the life experiences and personal interests of your employees, often present opportunities to deepen social consciousness at work. For example, an employee with a family member who has battled addiction may feel a strong connection and wish to give back to the facility that helped them overcome their illness. Sharing their story - or their passion for the cause - with their workplace community builds and spreads trust, understanding, compassion and a real, personal desire to help. The same can be said for other worthwhile social causes and issues: mental health, abuse, civil rights, equal opportunity, etc.

When possible, integrate the interests and activities of your employees into the fabric of the workplace for a more satisfying, multi-dimensional global community.

Volunteerism to enrich your workplace community

The best combination of external community support, social consciousness and growing your global community? Volunteerism.

Two-thirds of Canada's volunteers are members of the paid workforce, most of whom are full-time employees.¹⁰

The benefits of volunteering to individuals, employees and those who volunteer together carry over into the workplace and may include:

- Improved mental health and overall well-being. Meaningful connection and the sense of purpose associated with volunteering help alleviate symptoms associated with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and low self-esteem. Volunteerism reduces stress, increases happiness and produces well-rounded individuals.¹¹
- A break in routine to focus on the needs of others.
- A sense of contribution and fulfilment that can relieve tension and evoke optimism.
- Social connections with other volunteers and strengthened community bonds.
- Gaining new, often transferable, interests and skills that benefit the individual, team, organization and global community.
- Developing a corporate culture employees are attracted and committed to.
- Increased positive visibility and reputation development for the company.
- Increased social awareness around community needs and issues.

Looking to build successful volunteer initiatives and engagement in your workplace global community? Try:

- Focusing on the hobbies, interests or social causes employees have expressed interest in to create immediate momentum and excitement.
- Sponsoring a variety of volunteer opportunities so employees can get on board with those that resonate with them.

- Involving the full team in planning.
- Finding creative and thoughtful ways to recognize volunteers.
- Respect the wishes of employees not interested in participating.

Everyone gains from mentorship, inclusion, diversity and a socially active and aware global community - how will you incorporate them into your healthy workplace?

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