

Vitality!

EFAP NEWSLETTER



Human Solutions™

Better health means better business

Canadian companies are taking the lead in establishing employee health initiatives, turning wellness into a competitive advantage.



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It wasn't all that long ago that industries had to be persuaded to consider the benefits of providing a safer workplace for their employees.

The standard precautions that we see in place today – proper materials handling, first aid training, improved ergonomics, rules governing the use of protective equipment – are the result of a combined effort that took place over several decades.

The impetus to ensure better workplace safety came through a cultural change driven by enlightened employers, labour negotiations, and government policy. Today, the benefits are obvious. Statistical reviews reveal lower injury rates, fewer accidents, and improved working conditions for millions of people.

Employees reap the benefits of safer working conditions, but so do companies, in the form of reduced employee leave and improved productivity. Safety, it turns out, is good business.

Health promotion is also good for business. Better overall health, proper management of existing health concerns and workplace satisfaction improves morale, reduces employee turnover, raises productivity, lowers health benefit costs, and strategically positions the organization as an employer of choice.

Investors and other shareholders also appreciate the long-term strategy of promoting, supporting and retaining the organization's most valuable asset: the people who make everything happen.

The general concept of workplace health promotion is now gaining the momentum it needs to become as established and accepted as workplace safety is in our business community.

Industry leaders view employee health as a corporate mandate

There are numerous examples of companies making a concerted effort to establish comprehensive health and wellness programs and reaping the benefits.

Vancouver International Airport Authority

Vancouver, British Columbia

The employee wellness program at Vancouver International Airport Authority has many tangible and intangible positive results and there are some strong indicators that show that both the company and its employees are seeing the benefits, including:

- 43.61% are currently registered into their wellness program for 2006;
- Total absenteeism decreased from 4.07% in 1999 to 3.08% in 2005;
- Workers Compensation Board (WCB) injuries decreased from 22 in 1999 to 2 in 2005; and
- WCB 'days lost' decreased from 223 in 1999 to 7 in 2005

Along with reducing total absenteeism and decreasing WCB 'days lost', the Wellness Program "Fitness and Balance" helps to create a healthier and more satisfied group of employees with a high level of commitment to the Airport Authority.

DOFASCO

Hamilton, Ontario

Dofasco has achieved better business results over time, simultaneous with the implementation of an integrated Healthy Workplace strategy. The frequency of lost-time injury dropped by more than 76 per cent between 1995 and 2005. Injury insurance costs, of course, declined dramatically. Other key results are as follows:

- Lost time injury rate (per 200,000 hours worked) decreased from 4.5 injuries in 1995 to 1.05 injuries in 2005
- Occupational working time lost (per 100 hours worked) decreased from 0.53 days lost in 1996 to 0.51 days lost in 2005.
- The number of non-occupational musculoskeletal injuries (per 200,000 working hours) decreased from 2.6 in 1995 to 1.4 in 2005.
- Injury insurance payments were reduced by more than \$3M from 1997 to 2005. Premiums (per \$100.00 of payroll) were reduced from \$4.71 in 1995 to \$ 2.16 in 2005.

While these results had an impact on absenteeism and are made more tangible by the study of occupational injury, such results were achieved not so much by improving traditional occupational health and safety processes, but by improving the overall health of the workforce and employee engagement.

"Wellness may sound like a soft issue for some, but there are very real financial consequences to not addressing the stress employees feel as they try and meet the demands of work, family and life in general. Employers that help employees integrate work and family needs will not only retain more of their workforce, but also attract new recruits looking for companies with a people-first agenda."

Jim Rager, Vice-Chairman

Source: National Post, Wellness at Work supplement, January 2002

Trillium Health Centre

Ontario

Trillium Health Center is using the Healthy Hospital Employee Survey developed for the Ontario Hospital Association. It assesses progress toward supporting employees to improve their own health and well-being and creating a high quality workplace. The survey is conducted annually and results are used to plan actions that will bring about improvements.

In terms of Survey results, in the 3 years it has conducted this survey, Trillium has achieved improvements in work satisfaction, assessment of training and professional development opportunities, perceived quality improvements, and overall satisfaction with Trillium as a place to work. Trillium's scores in these areas are consistently higher than the survey's provincial benchmarks for all staff and for nursing staff.

Trillium has been consistently below the provincial (Ontario Hospital Association) annual sick day average for hospitals. Since 2001, the overall utilization of paid sick benefits has significantly improved, in comparison with the OHA benchmarks.

Health is a matter of choice

Unlike formal safety procedures, the health and wellness of an employee cannot be imposed by the employer. Well being is, for a large part, a matter of choice.

Indeed, some 50 – 70% of all diseases and medical problems are caused by lifestyle. In other words, over half of the sick days and the many hours of productivity a company loses to absenteeism could have potentially been avoided through better lifestyle choices.



Consider these Canadian statistics:

- 1 in 6 Canadians are obese.
- 56% of adults in BC aged 18 and older are not active enough to achieve optimal health benefits. (British Columbians are often rated as having the healthiest lifestyles in the country).
- 71% of all working adults have poor nutrition.
- 63% don't exercise enough.
- 61% experience high stress.

Health is a personal responsibility, but the choices employees make have a direct impact on the well-being of an organization.

We want to hear from you.

Do you have a comment or suggestion about the *Vitality!* newsletter? A story idea or topic you'd like to see addressed in an upcoming issue? Send us an email at vitality@humansolutions.ca or call your Account Manager.

Back issues

Back (archived) issues of *Vitality!* are available from the Member Services area at www.humansolutions.ca.

“We know enough about the connections between work environments, employee health and productivity to give much higher priority to creating healthy organizations and to justify investments in pursuit of this goal.”

Dr. Graham Lowe

Source: *Healthy Workplace and Productivity; A Discussion Paper; Economic Analysis and Evaluation Division, Health Canada, April, 2003*

New developments

Two companies become a vital new entity

Wilson Banwell Human Solutions™ and **PROACT EAP™** have merged to become one company under a common banner: **Human Solutions™**.



Human Solutions™

By combining the heritage, experience, and strengths of our two companies into one, **Human Solutions™** becomes the leading provider of employee, workplace, and organization health solutions.

Human Solutions™ is inspired by the complexity of our customers' business requirements and human capital challenges, and it is dedicated to the same ideals that have driven Wilson Banwell and PROACT for more than a quarter of a century:

- a commitment to promoting employee and employer health,
- best-in-class evidence-based practices,
- innovative products and services designed to solve your toughest people challenges, and
- customer focus.

For more information contact your Account Manager or visit the Human Solutions website: www.humansolutions.ca.

Health Work & Wellness Conference 2006

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Health Work & Wellness Conference and **Wilson Banwell Human Solutions™** is a major partner.

This year's conference, which takes place October 11–14 in Vancouver, BC, will focus on taking a strategic leadership approach to helping create healthy, high-performing organizational cultures.

Several leading organizations will present best practices in strategic planning, engaging senior management, developing healthy leaders and successfully implementing their plans.

For more information about the conference, visit the conference website: www.healthworkandwellness.com.

About *Vitality!*

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For more information on issues presented here feel free to contact your EFAP provider.

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