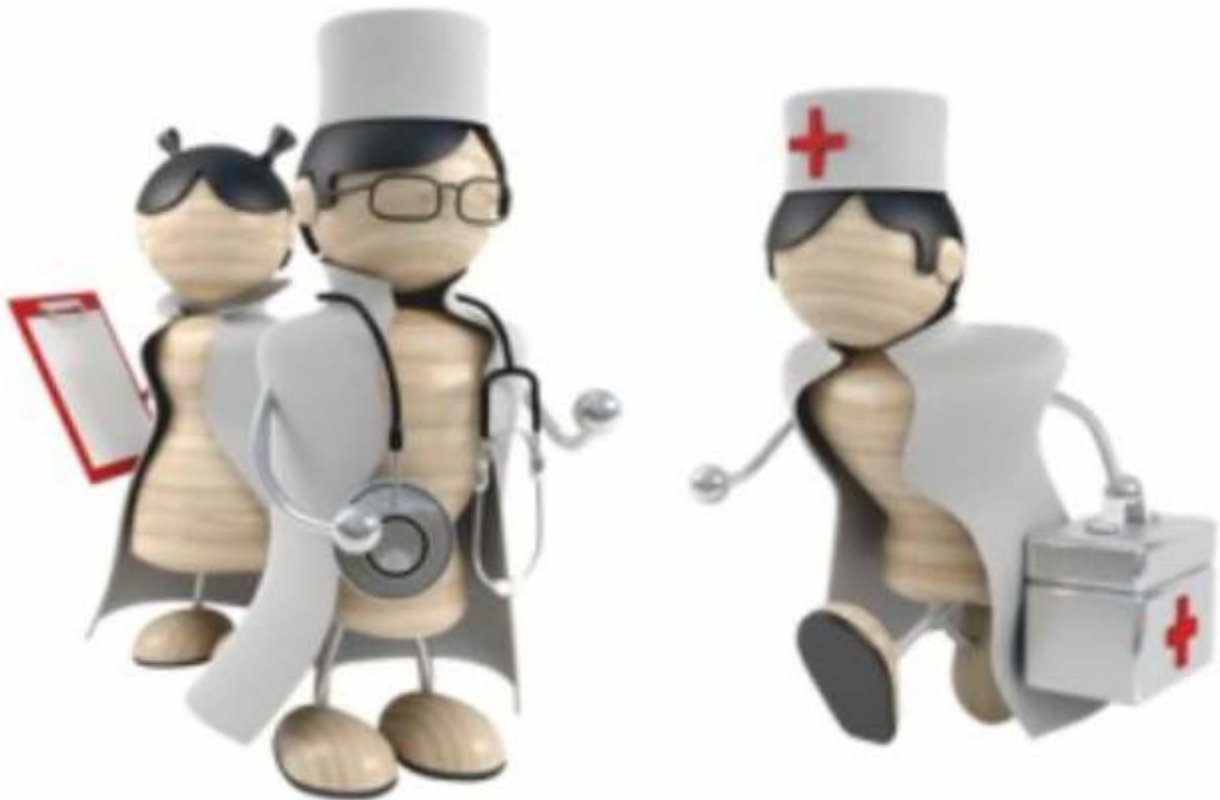


Making Preventive Healthcare A Corporate Culture



Healthcare-The Need of the Hour More Than Ever.

The last few decades have been a witness to immense changes in the occupational environment. Amidst all these changes, one fact has remained constant-the fact that the growth and success of a company largely depends on its employees. However, in the current competitive environment, people are so caught up in achieving targets and meeting deadlines that they forget to take care of and maintain good health.

Confined to a desk or being in the field all day long, employees often push themselves to a point where they are physically exhausted and stressed. Working professionals lead a life characterized by poor food habits, little to no exercise, minimum sleep hours and therefore high levels of stress. All this is fueled by hours of staring at computers and powered by junk food, which weakens both-the body and the mind. Incorporating healthy habits like eating salads, work place exercise etc., often takes a back seat. The result-a growing trend of health conditions like



obesity, diabetes, hypertension and spondylitis. These problems are seriously affecting the health of corporate executives today. Much of these are due to lack of sleep, family and work related stress, poor lifestyle choices and long working hours. Professionals often ignore the signals their bodies send them and pay no heed to their physical and emotional wellbeing. These signals should not be ignored.

The common signals that the body sends out and what we need to watch out for are:

- a) Heart Ailments-Result of junk food and no exercise and stress
- b) Hypertension-Stress and lack of rest
- c) Diabetes-Lack of exercise, poor food habits

The workplace has a powerful effect on people's health. Satisfied employees are more productive and tend to be healthier. When employees feel that the work environment is negative, they feel stressed. Stress has a large impact on an employee's mental and physical health and adversely affects the productivity of the company. Companies wish to attract and retain good workers, have leaders who understand the connection between employee satisfaction and employee health, and believe that workplace wellness is a business strategy. Their management practices include making reasonable demands on time and energy, involving employees in decision making, rewarding work well done, openly communicating, and providing support to balance work and home life.

To be able to help an employee, it's crucial to demonstrate awareness of work related health issues, recognition and early identification of health ailments. Providing education and motivation to improve individual health can produce valuable rewards for both employees and employers.

The benefits of corporate wellness for an employer includes

- Lower healthcare costs
- Greater ability to attract and retain employees
- Increased productivity
- Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism

Presenteeism is the measurable extent to which health symptoms, conditions, and diseases adversely affect the work productivity of individuals who choose to remain at work.

The benefits of corporate wellness for employees are

- Decreased rates of chronic diseases
- Lower stress levels
- Improved health and well being
- Reduced personal healthcare costs

Preventive Healthcare-The Route to Corporate Wellness

The easiest way to achieve 'corporate wellness' is by introducing preventive healthcare as a part of the corporate culture. Preventive healthcare refers to the measures taken to prevent diseases rather than treating them. One way to achieve this is by advising employees to go for routine checkups even if they are healthy. This is because lifestyle diseases are asymptomatic in nature. The ASSOCHAM report on 'Preventive Healthcare and its impact on the Corporate Sector' states that, "One rupee spent on prevention saves Rs. 133 in absenteeism costs and Rs. 6.62 in healthcare costs." This report further states that preventive health check-ups can have a significant effect in minimising absenteeism and can have relative economic impact in corporate organisations.

Organizations bear a responsibility in generating awareness of the positive role of preventive health care and boosting employee performance. It is high time



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About the Author...

Mr. Amol Naikawadi, the Joint Managing Director of Indus Health Plus is a man with a two-fold vision to make preventive healthcare a way of life and to make quality healthcare 'Accessible, Available and Affordable' to the common man. He is one of the architects of Indus Health Plus - the pioneers in comprehensive and qualitative preventive health check-ups and diagnostics. Indus Health Plus has set up its operations in 98 centers, across 65 cities in India, expanding its reach to Metros, Tier-II as well as Tier-III cities living up to its motto on a daily basis. A Chartered Accountant by profession. Mr. Naikawadi is the proud recipient of the Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship Awards.



that corporate management starts supporting and encouraging the cause of preventive healthcare practices. Preventive healthcare measures should be a part of the overall company strategy in building a healthy workplace.

Offering preventive health care facilities to their employees as a part of their CTC or corporate social responsibility can help boost profits, enhance productivity, and bring down employee expenditure on healthcare insurance. The tax benefit of Rs. 5000 available on preventive health check-ups will be an incentivizing factor.

One cannot dictate to employees, but employers have an opportunity to help them embrace healthier behaviors.

The final outcome of all these measures is not only a strengthening of the organization's culture but enhanced employee loyalty and a marked reduction in the overall health care costs-spends by the employer and the employee.

What more can an organization want!

Healthcare initiatives can be used to drive and reinforce healthy behaviors bringing benefits to the employer, the employee, and to the community.

Steps to ensure good health of employees:

- **Employee Assistance Programs:** These programs can help address social and emotional factors that impact wellbeing.
- **Preventive Healthcare services:** Such services can include screenings, immunizations and a personalized prevention plan.
- **Consumer medical decision support:** This is a program that offers employees in-depth, objective, personalized, and current information on all medical conditions. Employees receive the information, tools, and support they need through integrated web, phone, and print-based materials.
- **Involvement of participants' health care providers:** It is designed to make the providers partners in improving employees' health.
- **Program integration:** This program combines the diverse wellness program components into a unified and coherent program. It offers the best possible health solution to its employees when integrated with related benefit programs.
- **Healthy habits:** Employees often binge on junk food and aerated drinks to satisfy their cravings. Employees can correct it by replacing these unhealthy foods with fresh food, fruits and juices which they can avail from the cafeteria at the office.
- **Stress buster:** Stress alone consumes employees from within, reducing their love for their work and enjoyment of life; hence, stress is a great cause for concern. While an employee's personal life cannot be changed, effective changes to his/her professional life will make a lot of difference. Team leaders should set aside time for team outings, a fun Friday etc., to help employees unwind and relax.
- **Positive work environment:** What helps is a positive work environment where employees do not experience undue stress, where teams are encouraged to work efficiently and voice their concerns freely.
- **Wellness Centre:** Corporates should offer wellness centre services through trained nurses, doctors and counselors. Employees can seek opinions about their health issues, work life balance etc. Employee's should also offer counseling and coaching to employees through interactive communication, helping to alleviate work-related stress.

