

Work Promotion vs. Health Promotion: Aligning Your Services With the Needs of the Organization and Its People

Today's business realities mean meaningful profit and meaningful employment are interdependent. Work promotion, not health promotion, will meet the challenges of the millennium.

By George Pfeiffer

Though the U.S. economy has experienced a resurgence during the past decade, management still must address serious issues to not only stay competitive, but have a competitive advantage into the next millennium. Issues such as the shift from an industrial-based to a service-based economy and, perhaps, to a network economy (the World Wide Web); a limited labor pool; volatility within emerging foreign markets; heightened investor expectations; changing workers' attitudes and expectations; and rising overhead costs in raw materials, capital equipment, salary and benefits, and health and disability claims pose challenges to an organization's health and profitability.

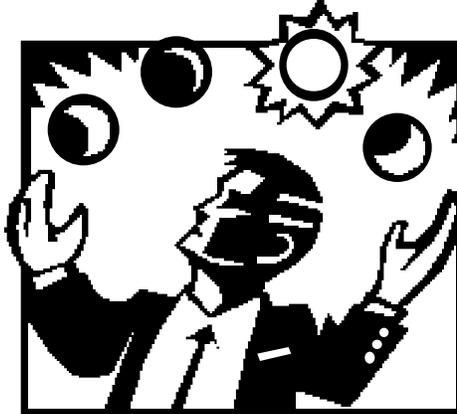
For an organization to develop competitive advantage, it needs to focus on a number of key goals:

- Providing innovative products and services;
- Expanding market share;
- Demonstrating a positive return on investment (ROI) on business decisions;
- Managing costs;
- Demonstrating profitability; and
- Increasing the value of its human capital.

No matter how well an organization maintains its competitive advantage through its financial performance, a central core of human capital will always remain. People will remain the core asset of every sustainable, competitive organization. To this end, the

ability to attract, retain, protect, motivate and renew key people is perhaps the most critical success factor of best-in-class organizations.

In this article I will discuss key concepts in optimizing human capital through what I call work promotion initiatives and their application to worksite health promotion and related human-resource functions.



Work Promotion and Work Ecology

An organization's long-term health and competitiveness is not only based on how well it adapts and relates to a changing marketplace, but how it relates and supports the needs of its human capital.

Worksite health promotion can play an important role in the productivity equation if — and only if — it positions its services not as an end in itself (improving individual health), but as a means of contributing to two primary, interconnected goals:

- Enhancing the profitability of the

organization and

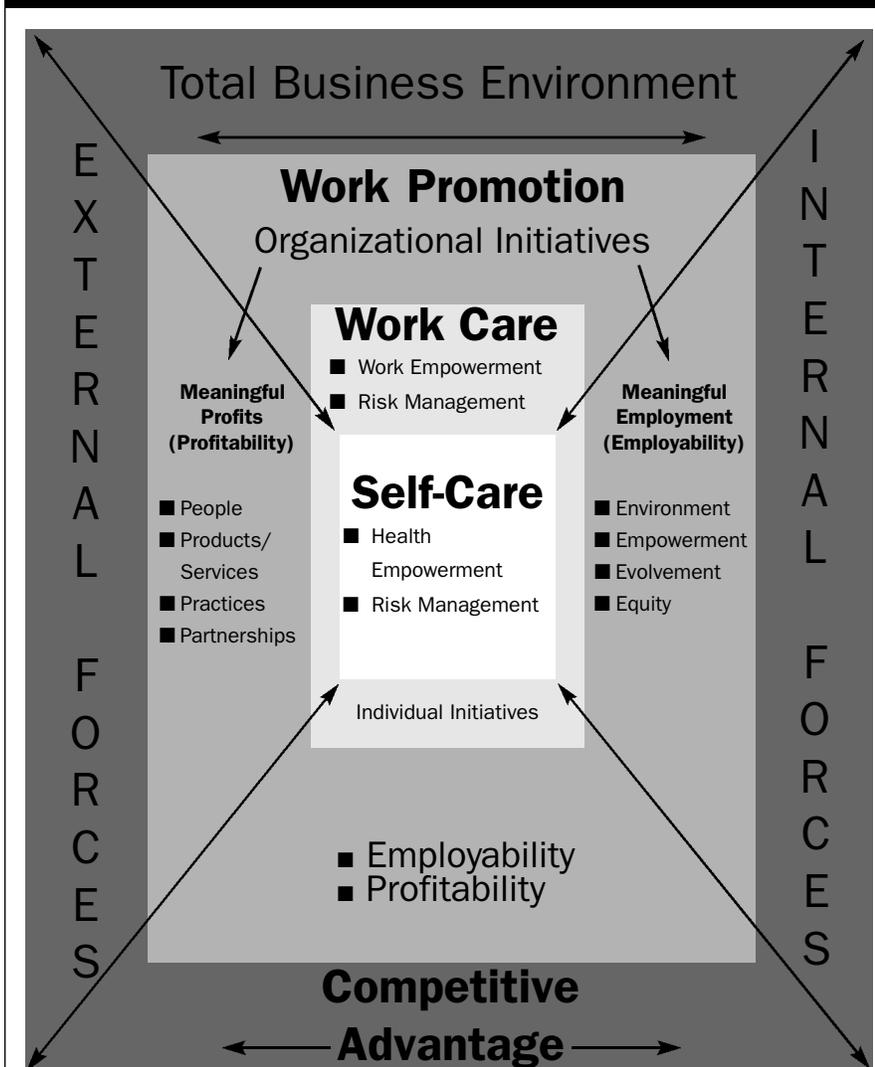
- Enhancing the employability of the worker.

Profitability is the capability of an organization to optimize value by managing growth — revenue — and expense. Employability, on the other hand, is the ability of individuals to increase their value through acquisition and expansion of transferable work-related skills throughout their working lives. It's also having the mental and physical capabilities to work beyond minimal requirements; health is the platform for lifetime performance.

Within this context, worksite health promotion initiatives are not health promotion per se, but "work promotion" activities. Work promotion can be defined as organizational supports and activities that protect, support and enhance human capital in the fulfillment of meaningful employment and meaningful profits.

In turn, work promotion is part of a much broader concept called work ecology: the interactions between the organization, individuals and work groups within the total business environment. (Refer to Figure 1.) Work ecology strives to create and sustain balanced performance systems that not only benefit the organization and its employees, but its customers and stockholders and the communities they serve, without directly or indirectly harming those relationships.

FIGURE 1
Work Ecology Model



Self-care and work-care initiatives are subsets of work promotion. Both address individual factors that influence competitive advantage. Work promotion is the integration of enabling factors that contribute to meaningful employment and meaningful profit within the total business environment — work ecology.

**Self-Care and Work Care:
The Care and Feeding
of the Working Person**

Traditionally, one of the primary objectives of worksite health promotion has been to improve the self-care skills of individuals. Here self-care is defined as accepting greater responsibility for the maintenance of one's health through appropriate decisions and actions.

Self-care programs have been

shown to provide significant personal and organizational benefits such as enhancing health status, lowering and managing health risks, and reducing inappropriate medical costs. Within the work promotion model, self-care is part of a broader skill set. These broader work-care skills are a repertoire of competencies that working people develop and improve throughout their working lives. Where self-care focuses

on health-related decisions and health empowerment, work-care skills focus on job-related decisions and work empowerment. The organization benefits by having a more dynamic, dedicated work force that's focused on creating competitive advantage. In turn, individuals have an empowering work environment that encourages self-renewal and employability.

Making a Living, Making a Life

Work plays a powerful role in defining who we are and how we perceive ourselves. In fact, making a living is not much different from making a life. For work not only provides the means to sustain life, it also supplies a deeper meaning to who we are. It validates our existence.

Yet how work fits into our lives, and the benefits of the fruits of our labor, have come under extreme scrutiny and skepticism among today's work force. This comes in light of corporate downsizing; the apparent absence of job security; the blurred lines between work life and personal life as a result of long hours, telecommuting, the responsibilities of caregiving, excessive overtime, travel and competitive pressures; and greater depersonalization. Employees realize that being a good performer doesn't necessarily mean job security. In fact, the lifetime employment that many of the previous generation enjoyed has been replaced by serial employment. Workers will be employed by a number of companies before they retire. Yet, in spite of this, what people do is so important to defining their lives that, according to one survey, most individuals would continue to work if they were financially independent.

Despite their dissatisfaction with these trends, today's workers cannot ignore the new realities of employment. First, they need to protect their livelihood (employability) by maintaining proper work-care skills. Second, they need to protect their physical and mental capabilities through appropriate self-care prac-

tices. And third, they need to understand the economics of employment: Without growth and profit an organization cannot survive.

We Exist to Make Profit

A number of years ago, a very well-known Fortune 500 company presented its new mission statement in the form of bulleted pronouncements of purpose. Heading the list was the statement “We exist to make profit,” a bold, direct statement that was later replaced by the friendlier — and perhaps more politically correct — statement “We exist for our customers.” Yet the serious reality of business — any business — is that, without adequate (meaningful) profit, an organization cannot sustain itself, let alone grow. Therefore, within the work promotion model, the organization’s primary objectives are the attainment and expansion of meaningful profit and competitive advantage in alignment with the organization’s mission and goals.

On the other hand, there’s another dynamic that drives an organization: the employees’ need to have meaningful employment. As an organization measures the effectiveness (value) of its business decisions by the return on investment (ROI), individuals assess their personal return on investment (PROI) almost every working day. PROI is the measure of meaningful employment (the experience of work). In other words, do the attributes of the work environment and the investment employees make outweigh the sacrifices — personal time, travel, overtime — and risks — constant performance pressures, perilous work conditions, lack of job security?

When faced with a negative PROI, the employees are not “into” their jobs. The indicators of a negative PROI include

low presence, poor work quality, low output, apathy, tardiness, extended sick days and poor morale.

Within the work promotion model, the employability needs of the individual and the profitability needs of the organization are concurrently managed.

Where self-care is health empowerment, work care is work empowerment ...

Increasing Value:

Manage Expense By Managing Risk

In the three decades I have been involved in worksite health promotion initiatives, I haven’t seen any evidence that health promotion directly affects the revenue side of the income statement.

In fact, it’s an overhead expense. Yet organizations that offer comprehensive employee support services (health promotion, employee assistance, work and life programs, the “corporate university”) are making a very strong statement in how they view and value their human capital — not only to their employees, but to potential prospects, customers and their competition.

However, health promotion does have more tangible measures of value. For example, most demand-management programs consistently demonstrate cost savings. Fitness-center participation correlates with reduced health claims, lower absenteeism and, perhaps, better job performance. Industrial-athlete and job-hardening programs reduce the risk of repetitive motion injuries and/or get injured workers back to work sooner. Yet this data is often ignored or dismissed by management since it’s not strongly linked to business goals and is not part of an integrated risk-management strategy.

The management of risk and its related costs is the most expedient way to better align with the profitability goals of the organization. Health promotion managers need to be part of a human-capital team that is composed of human resource-related functions (human resources, benefits, employee assistance programs, training and development, occupational health and safety, and work-family initiatives) whose primary responsibilities include the identification of risks to the business. Risk within this context is not limited to occupational hazards and clinical health issues, but includes factors that influence the organization’s ability to attract, retain, protect, motivate and renew its human capital. (See sidebar on page 20.)

The Work Promotion Model:

Two Perspectives

Within the work promotion model, meaningful profit and meaningful employment not only coexist, they are interdependent. Employers and employees have a social or moral contract with each other in which each side is mutually responsible for the success of the other.

In their book *The Individualized Corporation*, Sumantra Ghoshal and Christopher Bartlett view this agreement as follows: “In this new contract, each employee takes responsibility for his or her ‘best in class’ performance and undertakes to engage in the continuous process of learning that is necessary to support such performance amid constant change. In exchange, the company undertakes to ensure not the dependence of employment security but the freedom of each individual’s employability. It does so by providing employees with the opportunity for continuous skill updating so as to protect and enhance their job flexibility within the company and their opportunities outside. At the same time, companies ... must strive to create an exciting and invigorating work climate.”

As Figure 2 illustrates, this milieu



of performance is depicted as two pyramids with four interrelated levels that meet at their apexes.

**The Organization’s Perspective:
Meaningful Profit**

As outlined, the organization’s primary goal is to produce and sustain meaningful profit that is aligned with the organization’s mission and goals. To attain this goal, four interrelated enabling factors must work in synchrony.

Meaningful People

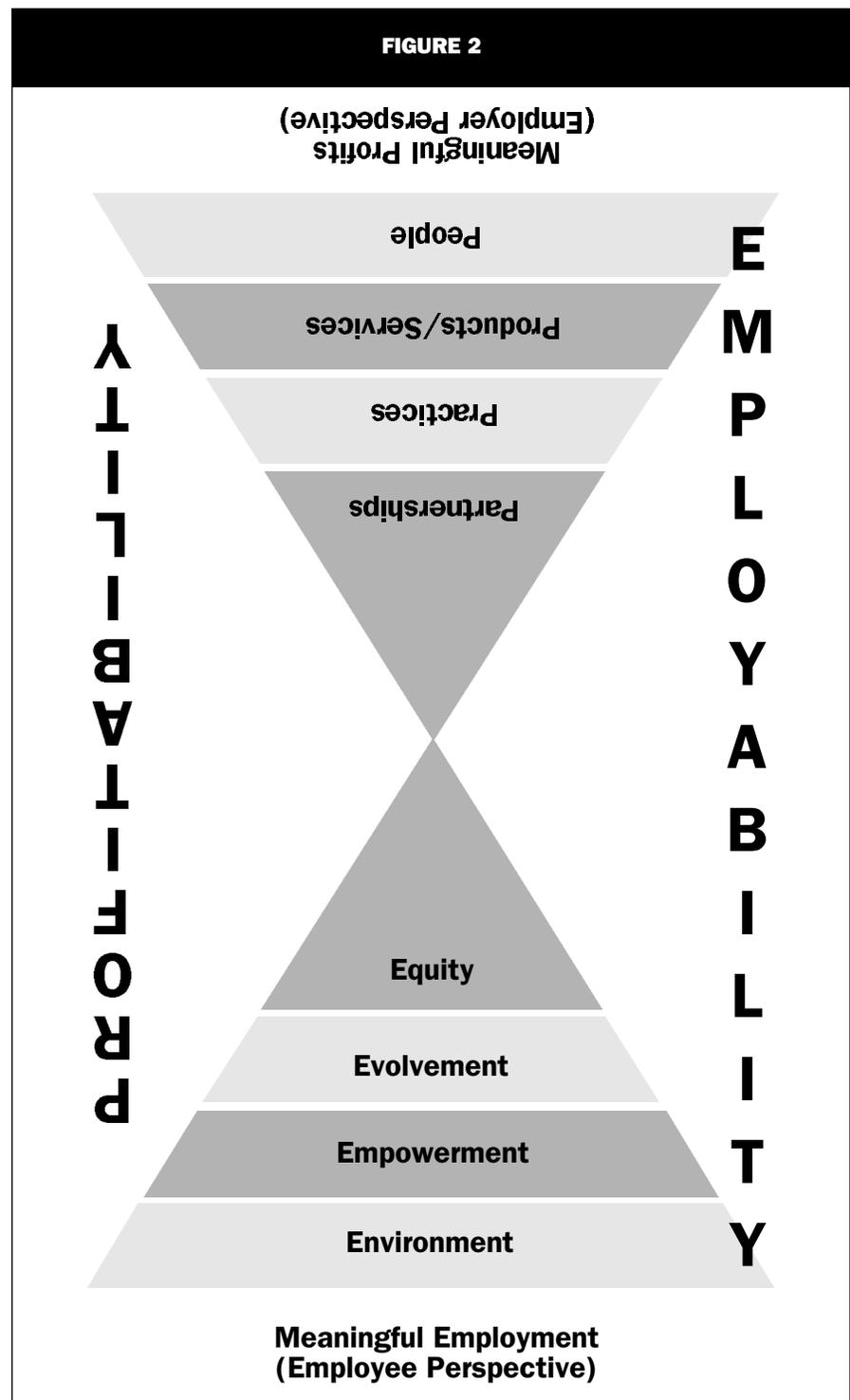
Be it a two-person shop or a multinational corporation employing tens of thousands of workers, having the right people with the right competencies and unified focus is the foundation of any successful enterprise. It is people who bring value to the organization, contributing individually and as a group to its short-term and long-term success.

This attribute is echoed by Ghoshal and Bartlett: “In companies that focus on knowledge-based competition, top management recognizes that it can obtain sustainable competitive advantage by routinely recruiting people who are a little bit more skilled, motivated or intelligent than the pool their competitors attract. In essence, they become passionate collectors of people.”

As collectors of people, progressive organizations intuitively understand that a work force that is healthier — in body, mind and spirit — equals lower exposure to unnecessary risks and their associated costs. In turn, a healthier work force equates to greater productive value by reducing the preoccupation with illness and disease: the stressors related to work-life issues and occupational threats that distract and impair people’s ability to do their jobs.

Meaningful Products and Services

From the minds and hands of an organization’s people come the innovation and effort to produce products and services that meet specific needs and have a perceived value by the market-



place. However, a key success factor of a sustainable organization is its ability to “continuously renew” itself, according to Ghoshal and Bartlett, through innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit.

To human capital managers, developing and marketing work-care products and services that meet the needs of their internal customers, including employees, work teams and the organization, are often uncoordinated and

redundant with other human capital initiatives. For example, different departments do a part of a common initiative, such as back education, stress management or ergonomics, or fail to recognize cross-marketing opportunities to increase compliance. This lack of coordination results in a lost opportunity to pool resources and increase efficiencies so that internal products and services are more effective in meeting end-user needs.

Meaningful Practices

Organizations can have meaningful people and meaningful products or services, but unless there's a process that maintains excellence (quality) and efficiencies (costs), even the best companies can quickly lose customer loyalty and market share. Successful organizations embrace and follow the concept of best practices — policies, systems and processes that strive to improve overall quality by:

- Decreasing the time to create and commercialize products;
- Reducing defects and errors;
- Improving customer support; and
- Reducing product costs.

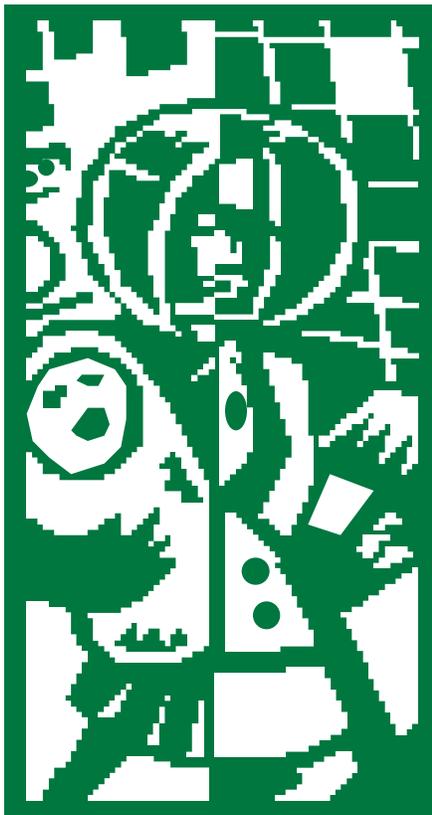
A primary tool in best practices is benchmarking — studying not only the competition and customers, but unrelated businesses that are recognized as the best of the best and that might suggest ways to improve a specific function such as distribution, product fulfillment or telemarketing.

Human capital managers are using best-practices methodologies in areas such as redesigning benefit plans, improving job safety, influencing inappropriate medical utilization, developing new recruitment and retention strategies, and designing new training programs that focus on core competencies.

Meaningful Partnerships

The last level, from the employer's perspective, is the creation, expansion and maintenance of meaningful partnerships. These relationships are internal and external to the organization. They include the interactions of:

- Employees;
- Work teams; and
- The organization with its customers, vendors, shareholders, the community and government entities.



As discussed earlier, developing products and services that serve the needs of internal customers is a critical success factor for human capital managers. Key attributes of meaningful partnerships between human capital functions and its end users include:

- Meeting customer needs;
- Easy access to products and services;
- A level of trust and comfort between involved parties;
- Guaranteed confidentiality;
- Demonstrated credibility and professionalism;
- Genuine caring and empathy; and
- Appropriate follow-up.

Maximizing the value of each level of this model not only improves the likelihood of business success by better positioning and improving the value of

the organization's human capital, it improves the likelihood of employees developing their capabilities.

The Employee's Perspective: Meaningful Employment

As reported in the January 1998 issue of *Fortune* magazine, The Gallup Organization conducted a survey of 55,000 workers on the correlation between job attitudes and company performance. Four key attitudes were found to have the strongest correlation with profits. Workers:

- Feel they are given the opportunity to do what they do best every day;
- Believe their opinions count;
- Sense that their fellow workers are committed to quality; and
- Make a direct connection between their work and the company's mission.

This survey reinforces the value of meaningful employment and its association with meaningful profit. Meaningful employment is simply feeling connected to your work.

Studs Terkel, in his book *Working*, addresses the concept of meaningful employment another way. He describes it as "about a search too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor. In short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying."

The factors that contribute to meaningful employment and employability are meaningful environment, meaningful empowerment, meaningful evolution and meaningful equity.

Meaningful Environment

To the average worker, the foundation of meaningful employment is belonging to a meaningful work environment. A meaningful environment is more than an attractive place to work; it's what Ghoshal and Bartlett call "the smell of the place" — in other words, a work atmosphere that is either fresh and bright or oppressive and energy sapping. A person's place of work can be a crucible in which ideas and energy react

to create new opportunities or a furnace that burns away initiative. Ghoshal and Bartlett illustrate this concept thus: "Whether described as culture, climate or context, it is the smell of the place that prevents companies from creating the capabilities of entrepreneurship, learning and self-renewal."

Human capital managers are, to a great extent, the custodians of the environment. Beyond policies and procedures, human capital managers can influence how well people feel about their work and the company through the environmental supports the organization provides. As Judd Allen points out in "Lifestyle Change Success Rates: Our Greatest Challenge," published in the spring 1997 issue of *AWHP's Worksite Health*: "Health promotion programs can rebuild the work climate by creating opportunities for people to get to know and to care for one another. Further, health promotion program principles can reaffirm the organization's commitment to mutual respect and caring."

Meaningful Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is an important factor for meaningful employment. Empowerment can be defined as the latitude to exercise decisions within an employee's work role. Empowerment is not only organizational license to take ownership of a job, it is the capability to take ownership. The attitudes and skills must be in place. Besides technical training, work-care initiatives try to provide empowering experiences to individuals by expanding core competencies such as problem solving, conflict resolution, interpersonal communication and teamwork.

Perhaps there's no greater area for empowerment to manifest than through personal health. Self-care activities are empowering abilities that demonstrate self-mastery and are transferable to other areas of one's work and life. And self-care is not limited to achieving optimum health; it involves taking control of decisions regardless of where one is within the health-care continuum.

Meaningful Evolvement

Our work, what we do, ideally, evolves over the course of our career: We go from apprentices to tradespeople to masters. E.F. Schumacher calls it "perfect(ing) our gifts." In turn, the feeling that "I make a difference (because of my skills)" is perhaps the strongest predictor of job satisfaction. Therefore, providing the opportunity for continuous learning is a major factor for not only protecting people's skills, but enhancing employability. Within health promotion, the evolvement of the physical self is a self-affirming experience to many employees who haven't paid attention to their physical needs. And it further reinforces self-management and personal empowerment.

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Meaningful Equity

The last factor within this model is meaningful equity. Equity has many definitions within the workplace. First, it can mean literal ownership through different stock or gain-sharing plans. Second, it means a level playing field, an environment of fairness and trust. Third, equity is a product of empowerment and evolvement — it's a positive PROI that says: "My work has value."

Finally, there's another dimension of equity that is often not discussed within business circles, but is perhaps a major factor in the dissonance between people's work and personal lives. It's the perceived absence of

spiritual equity. Matthew Fox, in his book *The Reinvention of Work* eloquently discusses the rift between work and life: "Life and livelihood ought not be separated but to flow from the same source, which is Spirit, for both life and livelihood are about Spirit. Spirit means life, and both life and livelihood are about living in depth, living with meaning, purpose, joy and a sense of contributing to the greater community. A spirituality of work is about bringing life and livelihood back together again."

Work promotion initiatives can contribute to all dimensions of equity by initiating supports that protect and enhance the quality of work life.

Putting the Model to Work:

Developing a Human Capital Team

The above model presents a framework for optimizing human capital and the overall value of the organization. Because this model is multidimensional, it needs to be multifunctional. Health promotion managers cannot function within a program vacuum; they need to be strategically aligned with related human resource functions through the development of a human capital team.

The establishment of a HCT is a significant task, especially within large organizations where turf issues may derive from not only personality differences, but cultural ones. Ideally, HCT development should be sanctioned by senior management as a standing committee that operates on an ongoing basis. Its two primary goals, as reiterated throughout this article, are to enhance profitability and employability by optimizing the value of its people.

Basic Overview

- The HCT represents a cross section of managers involved in the management of human capital issues.
- Members believe that an organization's total value begins and ends with high-quality people.

- Members accept that personal effectiveness and productivity are a product of the total person.
- The team's purpose is to provide quality services that affect profitability and employability (e.g. competitive advantage). These services can be placed under three general categories whose functions are to protect, support or enhance the capabilities of individuals and work teams to make better work-related decisions that minimize risk, improve business outcomes and create an environment that encourages employability.

The First Steps of a Human Capital Team

Obviously, implementing a major shift in culture and thought is an ongoing evolution. However, getting started is often the hardest part. Here, then, are a few first steps.

- Become reacquainted with the nature of the organization's business.
- Review the organization's mission and goals and how each human-capital function fits.
- Separately audit programs on how they relate to the primary goals of profitability and employability. Assess the potential risks to the business in relation to each function.
- Develop a cross-functional matrix of program initiatives. Identify the connects (synergies) and the disconnects (redundant programs or program gaps).
- Identify programs that are most synergistic with business objectives.
- Calculate the potential exposure (risk) of targeted areas, such as inappropriate medical utilization, repetitive motion injuries or absenteeism due to caregiving responsibilities, and total costs of programs that address these risk areas.
- Benchmark comparable initiatives within sister industries and other best-in-class programs.
- Develop working relationships with operational units.

- Identify local needs and jointly develop work promotion initiatives.
- Create an integrated human capital management plan that optimizes cross-functional synergies and pools resources. Appoint team leaders based on expertise and focus.
- Have well-defined performance benchmarks that relate back to principal goals.
- Regularly monitor progress as a group and modify programming as needed.
- Keep senior management in the process.
- Work together!

Learn to Manage the Hard and Soft Sides

In this article, I outlined key concepts of the work promotion model. In doing so, I hope I have done more than just place a new spin on the "healthy employee, healthy company" argument. On that note, here are some concluding observations.

- Whenever you deal with people, you deal with the soft side of the productivity equation. What makes people dedicated to an organization goes beyond a paycheck. People, all people, want to feel valued. The trick is measuring personal value and translating it into value — that is, innovation and profit — to the organization.
- Managing revenue and expense — the hard side — is pretty straightforward until you get into the management of soft risks — areas that expose organizations to extraneous costs because of inappropriate or unnecessary actions. Getting its arms around these areas is a primary task of the HCT.
- Self-care and work-care activities should not only address risks through initiatives such as job hardening and demand-management programs, but improve employees' hardiness and

Evaluate the Total Risk Picture

There are different levels of risk — direct and indirect costs — to an organization. For example, human-capital managers need to ask themselves what the risks to the business are of:

- Hiring the wrong person;
- Inadequate training;
- Overworking employees;
- High turnover;
- Poor safety practices;
- Job burnout;
- Inappropriate job description;
- Increased tardiness and absenteeism;
- Individuals using health-care services inappropriately;
- A high separation and divorce rate;
- Increased job-related injuries;
- Losing talent to competitors; and
- A low degree of presence among employees when doing job tasks.

resilience to stress and change.

- Work promotion needs to run on two parallel tracks that may seem contradictory. Managing risk sometimes means taking difficult actions, such as downsizing, while promoting employability to the rank and file. Yet improving the employability of employees should be viewed (by employees) as an insurance annuity, for it increases value as self-care and work-care skills improve over time.

In conclusion, the credibility and efficacy of worksite health promotion programs and related human-resource functions are greater when it can be demonstrated that these activities are a coordinated attempt to promote a healthy work environment that serves the needs of the organization and its employees.

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