

MERAKI HR

# 5 Tips for Creating a Happy and Healthy Workforce



Emma Browning

Meraki HR Solutions Ltd

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### Introduction

As an employer, you have a responsibility to ensure that your staff are healthy, happy, and productive, and this is even more important now than it's ever been!

Not only are there many business benefits to adopting this approach – there's a moral obligation to do so, and the companies that can cement best practices into their everyday working environment, whether that's while their teams work remotely or during these challenging times, they will undoubtedly reap the benefits when its business as usual!

Need a little further incentive? Focusing on health and wellbeing could lead to:

- Boosted productivity, and in turn, profits
- Increased motivation and morale amongst your employees
- Higher retention rates
- More successful recruitment practices, due to an improved employer brand

It's estimated that around 30 million working days are lost each year thanks to illness and injury, and this can cost businesses £495 per employee per year. But it's not just the £ cost of people being absent, there are many other knock on effects of people being absent that have the biggest impacts, such as the impact on team morale, company culture, the service you are able to provide to your customers with a smaller team, the quality of work produced by staff who are covering other teams members work is likely to be reduced. The list goes on.....

It's a strain that many small businesses simply cannot handle. The statistics available all indicate a growing problem for employers, and the key message here is that it's not something that you can afford to ignore for any longer. You need to do your bit, in line with societal trends, government initiatives, and even schemes from the NHS.

But what can you do, in the most practical of terms? Paying lip service to health and wellbeing isn't enough – you need to translate your intentions into solid workplace

practices that bring about positive change and strengthen your position as an exemplary employer.

In this guide, we discuss five tips for making wellness work for your business.

## 1. Promote physical activity

These days, many of us could benefit from moving a little more. If most of your staff are office-based, inactivity could be a real problem that leads to mid-afternoon slumps and muscular-skeletal problems.

So, what can you do to get people moving again? The options are endless with this one. Encourage workers to cycle into the office. Organise an activity to be held during break times. Remind people of the benefits of using the stairs instead of the lift. Team up with local gyms and health and fitness clubs to offer discounted memberships for your staff. Get creative, and don't be scared to try new things.

Standing desks are also extremely popular at the moment, and many forward-thinking businesses have started to introduce them into the workplace. AOL, Facebook, Google, and Twitter are just a few of the companies that have jumped on the bandwagon, with some citing workplace wellness as a key motivator. These are businesses that are known for being innovative with their people practices, so you could certainly learn a thing or two from the way they do things. Allegedly, Winston Churchill even had a standing desk way before his time!

Be careful though if you decide to start bringing in standing desks for those who have requested them. It could lead to employees who opted out of the perk to suffer from 'standing desk envy' – a term coined by Wall Street Journal.

## 2. Put healthy eating back on the menu

Exercise and activity won't make too much difference if healthy eating problems are at play. Staff need the right fuel to get them through the day, but all too often, there's a tendency to fall into bad habits and start reaching for the biscuit tin.

So what can you do to help? Make sure that healthy options are offered in the canteen, and identify these healthier choices on the menu. Consider offering free fruit at break times. Survey your vending machines and make sure that they aren't just crammed full of chocolate and crisps.

Small tweaks can often make a huge difference, so start by tackling the issues that you know you can deal with right away.

### **3. Consider mental health issues**

Mental health is still often a taboo subject, but this desperately needs to change. CIPD suggested that the culture of silence around mental health in the workplace is costing the UK economy £70 billion each year.

Stress is a key mental health issue that's worth mentioning here. Have you fully assessed the impact that your existing working practices are having on your employees, and have you considered where improvements could be made? Flexible working hours, for example, could really help you to give staff an element of freedom and choice, which often leads to reduced stress levels and happier employees.

Take mental health seriously, and work to reduce the stigma. Ensure your line managers are fully equipped to handle sensitive matters, and have systems in place so you can deal with confidential information in line with the correct protocols.

### **4. Tackle existing negative behaviours**

Smoking, alcohol, and substance misuse can sometimes cause problems in the workplace. Here, it's really important to be proactive rather than reactive.

If you have a designated smoking area, ensure that it's screened to minimise the impact of passive smoking. Ensure that everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities when it comes to smoking, so they know things like when they can take smoking breaks.

Have policies in place that include a code of conduct addressing drinking and taking drugs at work or being under the influence of such substances. When appropriate,

seek help from experts in the field. It's a sensitive issue to deal with, and you need to make sure that you handle everything correctly.

## 5. Effectively communicate your initiatives

You could have all the best initiatives in the world, but if your staff don't know about them, they aren't going to make any difference whatsoever. Consider the usual channels of communication that are used in your workplace and think about how you can ensure everyone is fully informed about the changes that are being proposed.

You might arrange for messages to be shared via email or your intranet system, for example, or you could take steps to have health and wellness be discussed at team meetings.

Of course, communication will be most effective if it's included from the very offset. Think about how you can involve members of staff in focus groups where they can share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas on the health and wellness initiatives that you have in mind. They'll often be able to provide you with a wealth of information about the practical issues that you hadn't even stopped to consider.

Get feedback as time goes by and be sure to act upon it. You might hit the mark first time, but you can only improve if you're committed to working in collaboration with your employees.

## Summary

Some of these initiatives may seem remarkably simple, and the truth is that they are. Making a commitment to promoting health and wellbeing doesn't have to be difficult, but the key is often in the implementation.

Make it your mission to pinpoint the activities that you feel could work within your business, and then bring them into fruition. You might not be able to do it overnight, but the benefits will definitely be worth it.

It may be a tough economic climate out there right now, but businesses still need the best talent if they want to thrive. Ensuring that wellness is on your agenda will attract the right people and ensure that they're happy and productive in their roles.

Thinking about introducing new programmes and initiatives, but not quite sure where to start? We can help. Why not book a call with us for an initial chat about your options? You can access Emma's diary here to book a call; <http://bit.ly/CallMerakiHR>

or visit our website: [www.merakihr.com](http://www.merakihr.com) or drop us a line; [info@merakihr.com](mailto:info@merakihr.com)



We provide the perfect blend of practical and professional HR solutions that work for your business and for your bottom line.

Working with us will enable you to improve employee engagement, your culture, people processes and procedures, which in turn will help you to deliver your business goals. And we do it all with our special touch of meraki.

Your people are your greatest business asset. Knowing how to recruit, manage, develop and retain them is key to your success.