

Promoting wellbeing at work – Where to start?

For many years now, workplaces in Australia have developed systems aimed at protecting and ensuring the physical health of employees at work. The new wave of health and safety research shows that protecting and enhancing psychological health at work is the next frontier. There is significant evidence that a physically safe workplace has positive impacts on productivity. But there is a growing body of research that demonstrates that psychological wellbeing is just as important for ensuring sustained productivity over time. Wellbeing is increasingly being recognised by employers as an important aspect of work life and worth investing in. The following strategies are designed by APS Organisational Psychologists to help you to promote wellbeing in your workplace.

Build on existing programs

Starting a wellbeing program at work does not need to be a costly exercise. By thinking outside the box, most workplaces can identify existing programs that can be easily built upon to convey the wellbeing message. Think about the current mandatory OHS and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activities – how can you build on them?

Deliver wellbeing through relationships

Relationships at work are an important determinant for ensuring wellbeing at work. Help staff develop constructive workplace relationships by creating opportunities for them to engage with each other in meaningful ways. Provide clear definitions of what is appropriate behaviour and make it real by using examples that are directly taken from the workplace.

Emphasise behaving ‘well’

Wellbeing is a practice – it is demonstrable and measurable. Educating staff about their legal responsibilities and how to behave appropriately can reduce the likelihood of psychological harm through bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Systems and processes are not enough

Like speed signs and lane markers, policies, processes and systems help direct staff in their work, but they cannot ‘do’ the behaviour for them. Organisations cannot expect that systems will ensure staff wellbeing without helping staff understand how to apply the guidelines.

Go beyond the law

Organisations have the opportunity to help staff perform beyond their legislative responsibilities at work. Explaining the intention behind the law and how it impacts on day-to-day workplace practices and interactions is an effective way of creating a culture for promoting wellbeing. This means placing the staff members at the centre of the workplace equation.

Drive wellbeing through culture

People learn best from others they identify with – their colleagues can be a powerful medium for changing behaviours. Organisations can increase the likelihood that desired messages will be adopted if they designate a group of their own staff to model and teach appropriate behaviours to other staff. Bystander interventions are also very powerful and can alter behaviour right at its nexus when coming from staff on the spot at the moment it occurs.

Seeking professional assistance

An APS Organisational Psychologist has expert knowledge and skills in the science of people at work. Members of the APS College of Organisational Psychologists typically have six years of university education, as well as experience in helping individuals and organisations to increase their performance, resolve problems and increase their wellbeing at work.

If you are interested in improving wellbeing in your organisation, talk to an APS Organisational Psychologist today. Visit www.findapsychologist.org.au and select the Advanced Search function to find an APS Organisational Psychologist near you.