

HEALTHY EMPLOYEES – HEALTHY BUSINESS

The background:

Absence, Health and Wellbeing

As a business we experience relatively high levels of sickness absence, and very high amounts of Private Appointments (Doctors, Hospital) attended by staff during the working day. This suggests that our employees are not experiencing general good health & wellbeing (see data on page 3).

As a result the business suffers through efficiency and productivity losses, hidden impacts such as low morale and motivation, and we have an additional risk in that our workforce has a high number aged 50+.

Having a poor diet during the working day is a significant contributor to being unhealthy. A study of more than 500 staff in 2007 by recruitment website CareerBuilder.co.uk found that:

“Half of UK workers had gained weight in their current jobs and more than 10% of those surveyed admit to having gained more than a stone-and-a-half in their present role”.

1. We can help our employees by making changes...

- to the Canteen Menu
- to the Vending Machines on site
- to Overtime Policy to reduce absenteeism on all levels

2. We should also consider developing a Health & Wellbeing Policy for the business which would include...

- focus on Healthy Foods made readily available
- incentivise employees to eat healthily at work
- facilitate employees who wish to Cycle to work

3. There are many benefits of creating a healthier workplace, which include...

- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved communication & morale
- Increased motivation and productivity

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Absence at our Business

Study of Planned & Unplanned Absence

January to August 2013 (Operations Department & Customer Service)

This sample study covers 227 members of staff over 32 weeks (160 working days):

Total Days Sickness Absence: 810

Total Private Appointments (Doctors etc) in Work Time: 778

Total Days taken as Unpaid Leave: 415

Sickness Absence Data

40.5% of staff took no time off sick in this period

59.5% of staff (135 people) accounted for 810 days of sickness

Private Appointment Data

81.5% of staff attended a Private Appointment during a working day

This accounts for 1,115 hours of lost productivity

Unpaid Leave Data

33.5% of staff took Unpaid Leave in addition to their annual leave entitlement

This accounts for 3,321 hours of lost productivity

In all cases, our current Overtime policy encourages high levels of Sickness Absence, Private Appointments and/or Unpaid Leave – because staff can make up for any losses through regular and lucrative overtime.

The loser, on every level, is our Business

How our Business can promote healthy eating:

Adults can spend up to 60% of their waking hours in a work environment. Work provides an opportunity to positively influence eating habits by increasing the accessibility of healthy foods in work canteens, and also by increasing awareness of healthy eating and its role in determining health.

We have the opportunity to provide healthy, nutritious food at affordable prices – good for our staff, good for business.

We should encourage our staff to eat:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- plenty of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods – choose wholegrain varieties whenever we can
- some milk and dairy foods
- some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
- small amount of foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Why bother with healthy eating at work?

- We consume at least a third of our daily calorie intake while at work
- What we eat and drink affects not just our health but our work performance too
- If we don't eat regular well-balanced meals or drink enough water, we may get headaches, feel sluggish or have difficulty concentrating
- Improving access to healthier food and drinks at work will help individuals to maintain a well-balanced diet
- A healthy workforce is more alert and productive – so both employers and employees will reap the benefits!

Eating a healthy well-balanced diet at work can help to:

- boost concentration, reduce tiredness and improve performance
- improve mood, energy levels and self-esteem
- reduce the risk of ill health, including heart disease
- reduce anxiety and stress

Facts and Ideas to consider:

Figures show that UK staff took 180 million sick days in 2009 - an average of 6.4 days each. The average number of sick days taken was found to be higher per person in the public sector than in the private sector.

Larger firms were also revealed to have higher absence rates than small ones. Staff absence (planned or unplanned) has a significant cost to businesses in many ways. Investing in health initiatives for the workplace can be a cost-effective way to boost staff health and morale, as well as reduce absence. Here are a few ideas on what we could do to help our staff and our business...

- Promote Healthy Eating: through signage around the Lab
- Develop a Healthy Eating Policy: in collaboration with staff
- Encourage Fitness: through possible reduced price gym memberships
- Facilitate staff who would like to cycle to work: by providing somewhere secure for bikes to be kept during the working day
- Fruit Scheme: one of the most cost-effective employee benefits available. Organized schemes are available or a less formal approach could be taken, providing seasonal fruit as a cheap and tasty option. Most people don't eat their recommended 'five a day' and if staff have access to fruit at a very low cost, they are less likely to rely on other fatty, sugary snacks
- Vending Machines: change the products on sale to ensure 75% of the products are a healthy choice, reduce fizzy drinks and increase water – with water the cheaper option to pop
- Daily Healthy Meal Choices: Daily healthy special which is printed in large print at the top of the menu (see Labelling & Pricing Policy)
- Breaks: healthy breaks - no fatty hot foods on sale at all (cheese on toast, bacon rolls, sausage baps, cream cakes, doughnuts) replaced or off-set by healthy options only
- Pricing in the Canteen: designed to drive staff towards healthier choices

Labelling, Pricing & Sales Policy:

- Prices – make fatty, unhealthy foods significantly more expensive than the healthy options
- Responsibly Label all our food options with calorie details and/or a logo scheme showing the best choices
- Menu Design Change – healthy foods in big font at the top of the menu, scaling down to small print for fatty choices at the bottom of the menu
- Promote a “Healthy Choice” every day of the week
- Smoothies – always a winner, smoothies available at first break
- Bonuses – buy the healthy choice and get some FREE fruit and water
- Loyalty Cards – for every 9 healthy meals get one FREE
- FREE Healthy Meals for staff with Zero Sickness (1 meal for each month without sickness absence)

Canteen Observations

Soft Drink Dispenser

There are 40 spaces for different types/brands for drink – NONE of these currently contain plain spring water. The machine does contain a high proportion of space taken by drinks with varying amounts of high sugar content:

- Coca Cola 500ml (regular) 53 grams of sugar (17.5 sugar cubes) - Oasis 500ml 21 grams of sugar (7 sugar cubes) - Powerade 500ml 19.5 grams of sugar (6.5 sugar cubes)

All of the food on offer in the vending machines is high in fat, sugar and salt.

Break Times

The savoury food on offer is generally high in fat content (pasty based, cheese on toast) and is complimented by high fat sugary snacks such as cream doughnuts, cakes etc. It is safe to say that the real “danger zone” in the canteen is the 15 minute break period where all the “wrong” foods are on offer.

As an example, the cream doughnuts selling in the canteen (10th December) each contain around 400 calories, 27g of saturated fat and 30g of carbohydrates. A really fatty, unhealthy snack that we are promoting and encouraging our staff to eat.

- The average man should eat no more than 30g of saturated fat a day
- The average woman should eat no more than 20g of saturated fat a day

Eating a diet high in saturated fat can cause the level of cholesterol in your blood to build up over time. Raised cholesterol increases your risk of heart disease.

Foods high in saturated fat include (all regularly available from the Tempest canteen & vending machines):

- fatty cuts of meat such as bacon
- meat products, including sausages and pies
- cheese, especially hard cheese ☑ cream, soured cream and ice cream
- some savoury snacks and chocolate confectionery
- biscuits, cakes and pastries

Lunches

Generally each main meal on offer is high in fat content, and of the nature of a daily “main” meal that traditionally would be eaten at home in the evening.

In comparison, we offer Salads only on Tuesdays and Thursdays (to order only).

Sample of Menu:

Wednesday December 11th: Scampi & Chips with Beans (total 905 calories)

Scampi: average portion (10 pieces) contains 400 calories and 23g of saturated fat

Chips: average portion contains 341 calories and 17g of saturated fat

Beans: average portion contains 164 calories and 415mg salt

Note:

Eating a cream doughnut at break, followed by Scampi, Chips & Beans at lunch time would give a person 67g of saturated fat - whilst at work. This is over 200% of a recommended daily intake for a man and over 300% for a woman. The business is not acting ethically towards the wellbeing of our staff – if we are selling it, we are endorsing it.

Conclusion:

The provision of hot food and meals at work, and the canteen menu (what is cooked and how it is cooked) – needs to change. The canteen team will need support and expert advice during this challenging period, to understand why this is necessary and to achieve buy-in into the benefits (personal and corporate) of changing our eating culture at work.

It won't be easy, but it's good for business.