

Health Promotion Practitioner

Practical solutions for health enhancement programming

Is Your Culture Ready For Wellness?

Eliminate stressors to increase receptiveness

Not all organizations are ready for a wellness program, particularly if there's excessive stress that produces a negative outlook through the ranks. If people are down about things happening in the organization, it's a stretch to believe they'll get excited about your health promotion efforts, no matter how spectacular.

Here are some of the most common stressors and why you should work to reduce, eliminate, or at least acknowledge them while attempting to build your wellness program:

- Change.** The only thing that won't change in today's organizations is the fact there will always be change. But change shouldn't be fashionable; sound business rationale should be behind adding to the turbulence. Many workplaces haphazardly adopt new approaches because other employers are doing it. Don't abandon an approach completely in favor of another — without good reason.


- Uncertainty.** For all the empowerment hype in the last 20 years, many organizations still don't seem to trust employees enough to share plans until they've leaked out and generated rumors and misperceptions.

Lack of information makes employees feel dumb and suspicious.

- Politics.** Accurate or not, plenty of workers believe it's more how you play the game than the quality of your work that determines success. If employees feel politics are the road to success, they won't be motivated to produce better products or services.

- Indifference.** Downsizing has left a lot of casualties in its wake — still working for the organization. A belief the company no longer cares about employees — that they can be traded like a commodity for another stock price increase — makes them ambivalent toward anything sponsored by the employer... even your services.

A good wellness program will never cure the ills of a poorly run organization. That doesn't mean you shouldn't try. If you recognize any of these stressors at your workplace, do what you can to change them — first within your own department, then in other areas.

If you don't have an upper management champion who believes in you and your purpose, try to get one. Share any negative employee perceptions, along with your ideas for eliminating demotivators. As those subside, interest in your health enhancement efforts will go up. 

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