



the business of
**Corporate
Wellness**

In an ever changing corporate environment, the business realities of the day are dictating a streamlined approach to staffing as well as a focused effort on employee retention. The 'Employer of Choice' slogan has never rung more true as companies strive to create a culture that is conducive to recruiting and retaining key personnel, as well as maximising the efforts of the existing workforce.

By default, such a setting creates pressure, and in work terms this equates to what we more commonly refer to as 'stress'. As the corporate pressure cooker bubbles, sacrifices are made to keep the wheels churning. The 40 hour week has been stretched to its limit creating a work / life 'imbalance', as 'work' time oozes into 'life' time. We are spending more time at work than ever before, and in fact if you do a quick analysis of a typical 24 hour day, you find that work takes up 50% of your time, sleep 33% leaving only 17% for family & life. In most cases this 17% equates to approximately only 4 hours a day! Our weekends were our serenity time, but it seems work is encroaching on this as well.

How do we fit it all in? And if we can't, what is being sacrificed? It's obvious we have become time poor due to increased work commitments and staff are resorting to their sick days as a means of dealing with this issue. This is supported by a comprehensive survey conducted by Hallis which found that 42% of the Australian Workforce admits to taking unscheduled days off for reasons other than being sick.

So this poses the question - What is being sacrificed? It seems to be "our wellbeing" according to Mr Chris Rabba, Managing Director of Australia's leading corporate wellness company – Peak Health Management. "After surveying literally tens of thousands of employees, we have found that the main reason for staff not investing in their personal wellness is time, and the reason for not having the time is work" says Mr Rabba.

This brings us to the next question – What is wellness? "Many years ago, if you looked up the term 'being well' in

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the dictionary it would bring up 'absence of disease'. But today, as society has become more complex, so too the definition of wellness. It's not merely the absence of disease and hence not only about medical intervention in the traditional sense. It's also about eating well, being fit & well, being mentally well, about being spiritually well (and not necessarily in the religious context), and being financially well. Wellness today is three & four dimensional, so to achieve an ideal work / life balance we need to address all aspects of the wellness pie (low fat of course!)" says Mr Rabba.

What are the implications on employees as well as on the work environment they find themselves in? How does the health status of the individual influence the financial health of the organisation they work for? Research has shown that there is a direct relationship between the two. For example...

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To curb the negative impact increased workloads cause within a scaled down workforce, many companies are acknowledging the benefits of Corporate Wellness Initiatives. These strategies play an integral role in addressing the work / life balance issue by providing them at work. It also plays a role in reducing costs to the organisation and maximising the

bottom line. Academic studies of corporate health and fitness programs consistently show a 3:1 payback for spending in terms of increased productivity & less absenteeism.

Promoting health in the workplace can take many forms, but what makes for a successful corporate wellness strategy? "It's not just about a good health solution", says Mr Rabba. "It's about how you promote the message, it's about getting people to the message and then getting them to engage. For without engagement, the message is lost". Mr Rabba and his company Peak Health Management have been revolutionary in redefining the corporate wellness market. "The message needs to be positive without a hidden agenda to ensure engagement and to achieve the set objective. Providing a corporate wellness program just so staff can work harder / faster defeats the purpose. Increased productivity might be your objective, but it's not necessarily your strategy" outlines Mr Rabba.

Companies are also looking to corporate wellness as a means of staff recruitment & retention. It has very quickly become a people's management & culture strategy as well. We discussed earlier how staff don't seem to have 'the time' to invest in their health & wellbeing. So we bring health & wellbeing to them – at work. Providing staff with the accessibility of health initiatives at work assists not only in >

the organisation being an Employer of Choice, but also providing staff with the tools to take responsibility for their own health. So you can see that the more educated staff become about their health the more likely they are to invest in it. Peak Health Management says that on average 40% of staff engaged in a wellness program at work are inspired to make positive lifestyle changes as a result. This can only mean healthier & happier staff, which in turn will meet all objectives – be it increased productivity, staff retention or reduced absenteeism.

Corporate Wellness initiatives today go way beyond a formal corporate medical, often designed for the senior management team only. Today it's about the greater employee population and it includes initiatives such as mini health checks, massage, onsite corporate gyms, yoga classes and online wellness tools. Today it's a strategy that will encompass a variety of methodologies, services and concepts. Concepts that are in line with today's thinking.

Corporate Australia is susceptible to the same health risks as the rest of the population, and in fact mimic what is going in the world around us. Obesity is contributing to Australia's biggest killer, Cardiovascular disease and corporate Australia is not immune. In fact Peak Health Management's research shows that approximately 60% of the working population is obese or overweight. Since most of us spend most of our time at work, what a perfect place to address, educate and combat community health concerns such as this.

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preventative strategy, but are also the catalyst for corrective strategies as well" states Mr Rabba. This allows organisations the opportunity to track improvements, compare themselves year to year as well against other organisations and national / international norms. The 'work /life' balance dilemma needs intervention and more organisations are taking the responsibility on via the introduction of corporate wellness initiatives. Work / Life balance, or 'imbalance' is the root to most of the costs organisations face when it comes to staffing and productivity. Employee wellness, in its holistic form is a way to address the issue. Other initiatives that may fall under the corporate wellness banner include EAP services, onsite childcare, concept of 'personal days' and even onsite banking services all assist in making it that much easier for employees and the return to the employer is obvious. You wouldn't mind staying back that little bit longer to finish that proposal if you knew you didn't have to rush off to get to the gym, because there was one provided onsite by your employer! That can only be good for everyone!

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fast facts

24 hour day consists of:

Work 50%
Sleep 33%
Family & Life 17%

42% of the Australian

Workforce admits to taking unscheduled days off for reasons other than being sick

The main reason for staff not investing in their personal wellness is time

Academic studies of corporate health and fitness programs consistently show a 3:1 payback for spending in terms of increased productivity & less absenteeism

On average 40% of staff engaged in a wellness program at work are inspired to make positive lifestyle changes as a result

Approximately 60% of the working population is obese or overweight

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