

Supportive Environment



You believe that employee health and wellness is a stewardship issue and you've done some organizational self-examination around how your employees are doing in their personal health and wellness. Great! Now, let's take the next step and start to look at some specifics about how your workplace impacts the health and well-being of your employees. We all want our employees to take actions that will help them to live a healthy lifestyle both at work and at home. But remember this:

*"It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and physical environment conspire against such change."
("The Future of the Public's Health in the 21st Century," Institute of Medicine)*

The purpose of evaluating the work environment is to determine if the conditions at your workplace are helping or hindering employees in staying well as they serve well.

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

Roman 14:13

In *Romans 14*, Paul gives instructions about how believers are to live together as they live out their personal convictions. As believers, we are to create an atmosphere of acceptance. And we are to live with others in such a way that our actions do not create a barrier to others living according to their convictions and doing what they believe is best for them to do.

Let's assume that the majority of your employees understand that living a healthy lifestyle is an important aspect of honoring and serving God. Would they say that investing their time at your workplace is a benefit or a barrier to them in living out that conviction?

Evaluating the work environment to determine the level of support it provides in helping employees to stay well as they serve well involves looking at three key components:

1. Physical environment
2. Workplace policies
3. Workplace culture & customs

Here are descriptions of each of the environmental components along with some questions that will help you evaluate how supportive your work environment is in helping your employees make healthy choices as they go about their duties.

Environmental Component	Sample Questions
<p>Physical Environment - Characteristics or resources associated with employees' workspace that impact their health in a positive or negative way.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does my workplace have a readily available source of filtered drinking water for employees? 2. Does my workplace give employees access to a convenient and safe place to get some kind of exercise during the workday? 3. Does my workplace provide all employees with convenient and adequate access to appliances needed to eat healthy meals prepared at home? 4. Does my workplace provide all employees with adequate access to quiet space where they can go to focus and reflect on their work? 5. Does my workplace provide an easily accessible platform that enables employees to easily get information and access to employee health and wellness benefits throughout the year?

<p>Workplace Policies - Formal and written workplace declarations or directives that impact employee health in a positive or negative way.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does my workplace have a formal policy about foods served at organizational meetings? 2. Does my workplace have a formal policy about leaving the workspace to exercise or use a breast pump? 3. Does my workplace have an organizational statement on mental/emotional health? 4. Does my workplace have a policy about the use of sick days for employee well-being pursuits? 5. Does my workplace have a policy about after-hours work-related communications (internal & external)?
<p>Workplace Culture & Customs- Informal and unspoken organizational attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that impact employee health in a positive or negative way.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do the leaders at my workplace model good health practices and a healthy work/life balance? 2. Do employees at my workplace normally take morning/afternoon/lunch breaks away from their designated workspace? 3. Do employees normally bring donuts or baked goods into the workplace as part of celebrations or weekly routines? 4. Do employees at my workplace normally fully utilize their vacation time for an interrupted period of time where they are disconnected from work? 5. Do employees at my workplace normally feel that they need to hide or apologize for personal issues that have an impact on their work life?

How do you, as a leader, get answers to these questions about the impact of the workplace environment on employee health and wellness?

1. Ask employees to fill out a workplace wellness culture survey
2. Ask your employee wellness committee to evaluate the impact of workplace policies on employee wellness and make recommendations to leadership based on their evaluation
3. Ask your employee wellness committee to make a list of the unspoken workplace culture/customs that may have a negative impact on employee health and ask them for suggestions on how to encourage a different way of thinking and being in your workplace

Source:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK221239/>