

# SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

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# The business sense behind health and safety

How Occupational Health and Safety is starting to occupy our thinking



A healthy employee makes for better performance. Everyone understands this. There are two aspects to health and safety in work place – the role of the employee and that of the employer. Health and safety are no more nice to have – they are vital for business. As competition heats up and customers demand instant gratification, organizations where health and safety standards are implemented will walk away with the business. Darryl Judd, COO Logistics Executive writes on the importance of health and safety in the workplace, and how they make business sense.



**Darryl Judd,**  
COO, Logistics Executive

No one bats an eyelid when terms like “logistics” and “safety” are lobbed in the same sentence. For decades, there have been certain members of our supply chain and logistics workforce that have been identified as more prone to risk than others. Examples include long-haul, truck drivers, shift workers who have to adapt to physiological disruptions and now FIFO workers whose alienation from home and family, and changing routine increase their susceptibility.

Due to the increasing prevalence of a variety of illnesses from Depression to Diabetes Mellitus in the larger workplace, there is a need to own, grow, and develop the awareness of health and wellbeing across the entire industry.

Furthermore, there is a need to recognise that any workforce can be susceptible to illness and that there is a responsibility to own this through awareness and implementation of health interventions by employers across industries, geographic boundaries, and occupational segmentations.

Though conditions at work have immeasurably improved over the last century, factors such as the increased pace of change, the growth in an aging working population and the extension of geographic boundaries and technology in our daily lives have challenged us all.

Through simple measures and reasonable adjustments, most employers can circumvent the pitfalls



little cost and have enormous benefit in ensuring these members of the workforce remain healthy and active. Measures could include heart and diabetes tests that are aimed more towards keeping people healthy and decreasing the likelihood of illness occurring in the first place.

Health is not just an individual but a common responsibility and something we all need to share and illness needs to be shared. Some afflictions like Depression are very common, yet highly stigmatised. In fact, depression has a higher incident rate amongst males who are supposed to be the highest achievers in our workplace. Yet it is stigmatised as “not a real illness” and “a sign of weakness.”

The Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA) 2006 Stress & Anxiety Disorders Survey found that employees said that these issues interfered with their relationships

with people at work. Employees stated that stress and anxiety most often impacted their workplace performance (56 percent) relationship with coworkers and peers (51 percent), quality of work (50 percent) and relationships with superiors (43 percent). Yet due to the fear of stigma, mental

health problems are not addressed and therefore exist as a negative undercurrent in most workplaces that lead to high workplace absenteeism and attrition rates.

It is interesting to note that even though health issues resulting from aging and mental health seem very different, they can both be effectively managed in the workforce, using similar strategies.

Bottom line is good health management is good for business performance, helps avoid the costs

involved, lessens the impact on service delivery, and the consequences on individuals and teams. This approach is holistic and usually not costly. It includes:

- Sustained leadership from management
- A proactive occupational health management and promotion
- Training, awareness and support for staff
- A close understanding of workforce vulnerabilities through data and systems that enable managers to target potential problems.

Employers can also seek the help of governments in tackling these issues as most governments around the world now offer resources with an emphasis on promoting health improvement and wellbeing strategies in the workplace that build on the Bangkok Declaration (World Health Organisation, 2005). This advocated promotion of health through empowering individuals to manage their own health through the workplace.

In conclusion, it cannot be overstated that improvement starts through awareness and acceptance. Simple measures can be put in place that significantly improve productivity and workplace morale. If leaders value mental health and appropriate resources are available in the workplace, there are proven, real benefits to business. Policies, Practices, training and programs that help employers identify risks and encourage employees to speak up and ask for help, will greatly lower the incidence of mental health conditions and increase productivity.

Creating a healthy workplace is the best way to position ourselves, our staff, managers, and our colleagues to better meet change and deliver in all situations and succeed, now and into the future. 



and capitalize instead on the benefits that these change factors can bring to their workplaces.

It all starts with awareness.

If we take the example of an aging population, it is clear that an older workforce will probably have a greater need for health interventions. The benefits of diversity and experience that an aged population offers is highly sort after and hugely enriching for the workforce. Simple measures in the workplace, such as health surveillance initiatives present