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Viewing Corporate Wellness Programs as Systems

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Viewing Corporate Wellness Programs as Systems

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Abstract

Although interest in corporate wellness continues to increase in workplaces in various countries, many businesses still consider employee wellness as unrelated to the organisation and its functions. Some continue to view wellness as having little or no financial impact on an organisation and, therefore, do not consider it to be part of the overall organisational system. This paper argues that wellness programming should be analysed as both a freestanding system and also a subsystem of the overall business. By viewing it through the general systems theoretical lens, the wellness system can find its place and be ultimately seen as integral within the overall organisational system.

Introduction

Although interest in corporate wellness programs continues to increase among many employers in various countries (Ho, 1997; Martinez, 1999; Leonard, 2001), the majority of businesses still consider wellness as an element or component not related or directly associated with the organisation and its functions. Wellness continues to be viewed by some as a program that has little financial impact on an organisation and, therefore, is not considered part of the overall organisational system (Goldstein, 1992;

Schafer, 1996). This paper argues that wellness programming should be analysed as both a freestanding system and also a subsystem of the overall business. In addition, it argues that by viewing it through the general systems theoretical lens, the wellness system can find its place and be ultimately seen as integral within the overall organisational system.

First, a brief review of the general systems theoretical framework is presented. Second, wellness and its programs are described and discussed. Third, the many problems, issues and challenges inherent in corporate wellness programs are investigated and analysed as they relate to the actual system by considering and understanding the following:

1. corporate wellness training cost-benefit;
2. stakeholders, true cost and benefits;
3. the strategic link;
4. inputs, processes and outcomes;
5. systems change; and
6. curriculum, instruction and learners.

Fourth, the reasons why wellness programs should be viewed as part of the overall organisation are discussed. Finally, an ideal framework for viewing wellness as part of the overall organisation is presented.

Theoretical Framework

General Systems Theory (GST) provides a strong theoretical framework for this paper. According to Skyttner (1996: 24), GST "deals on an abstract level with general properties of systems, regardless of physical form or domain of application". GST was founded on the assumption that "all kinds of systems (concrete, conceptual, abstract, natural or man-made) had characteristics in common regardless of their internal nature" (Skyttner, 1996: 24). Many theorists, such as Bertalanffy and Litterer, have formulated the characteristics or hallmarks of the GST (Skyttner, 1996). These include interrelations and interdependence of objects and their attributes, holism, goal seeking, transformation process, inputs and outputs, entropy, regulation, hierarchy, differentiation, equifinality and multifinality. These characteristics provide a foundation for the notion that viewing wellness as a subsystem can influence its overall effectiveness. For example, the GST

characteristic of hierarchy states that one system may be contained within another system. Systems are generally complex wholes made up of smaller subsystems, which are sometimes referred to as the "nesting of systems" (Skyttner, 1996: 33).

It is important to understand what a system actually is. A system is an entity that has a purpose, function or goal. A corporate wellness program has these characteristics. In addition, a system is comprised of parts that work together and interact with the outside environment. Of course, the purpose of a system is to provide some kind of output. Ruona (1998: 890) defines a system as "a collection of elements where the performance of the whole is affected by every one of the parts and the way that any part affects the whole depends on what at least one other part is doing". So, an effective corporate wellness program performs by providing an output that is valued by the organisation and fulfils or accomplishes something that is expected. It is also composed of a collection of elements that are dependent on each other to affect the corporate wellness system as a whole.

Swanson (1997: 7) explains that systems theory recognises "purpose, pieces, and relationships that can maximize or strangle systems and subsystems". A corporate wellness program is not only a contemporary system in today's corporate world, but is also a subsystem in the overall corporate system. Understanding and analysing a wellness program's purpose, pieces, relationships and roles helps to identify and address issues, challenges and possible solutions. One of the major struggles corporate wellness has is its tendency to operate as a separate system and not as a subsystem in the larger organisation. Many existing wellness programs do not even attempt, let alone succeed, in linking themselves to the overall corporate system. This struggle also extends to the corporate wellness role as a subsystem in other systems. Travis (1998) and Stokols, Pelletier and Fielding (1995) argued that corporate wellness programs are also subsystems in a truly integrated healthcare system. The scope of this paper, however, is limited to its relationships with and within a corporate setting.

Workplace Wellness

To understand the system of corporate wellness programs, one must first understand what wellness is and how it fits into the workplace, what its benefits are, and why organisations should take responsibility for assisting employees in this area.

Wellness is the "process of living at one's highest possible level as a whole person" (Schafer, 1996: 33). It is the "integration of many dimensions, including emotional, intellectual, physical, spiritual, and social, that expands one's potential to live and work effectively and to make a significant contribution to society" (Corbin & Lindsey, 1994: 233). Each of these wellness dimensions is essential to creating individual wellness (see Table 1). Wellness in the workplace refers to all programs and interventions an organisation provides to employees that can assist the latter in improving themselves in any of these dimensions. Programs include such interventions as communication and awareness training programs, screening and assessment programs, education and lifestyle programs, and behaviour change and support systems. A more comprehensive list can be found in Table 2.

Many wellness program components include various training and development interventions. Rothwell, Sullivan and McLean (1995: 31) defined training as a short-term change effort intended to "equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to perform their jobs better". They defined development as a long-term change effort intended to broaden individuals through experience and to give them new insights about themselves and their organisations. The goals of both training and development are to produce and sustain change. The elements (see Table 2) of an effective wellness program are intended to produce and sustain change. So, for the purpose of this paper, corporate wellness is defined as a system within a workplace environment that has goals and objectives related to assisting and enhancing an employee's emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual wellness. In addition, this corporate system and its elements must have a direct or indirect link to increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee so that his/her job responsibilities can be more effectively carried out. Even though this may sound like a broad mandate, it only focuses on efforts within the workplace environment. Of course wellness programs are also considered a subsystem of a larger community wellness training system (Pronk & O'Connor, 1997; Travis, 1998).

An overall healthy organisation takes an integrated view of wellness and the organisation. Four elements in particular are critical. These are the impact of the employee's lifestyle on his or her own health; the impact of the work environment on employee health; the impact of employee health on the organisation's profitability; and the impact of the larger environment,

family, peers, leisure, employee health and organisational profits (Cooper & Williams, 1994).

Why should an organisation take an interest in employee wellness? The decreased individual wellness in the US population is a great concern. The Surgeon General, along with the Department of Health and Human Services, stated that seventy per cent of all illnesses are lifestyle-related. It is also believed that half of all medical costs are attributable to illnesses that could be prevented (Cox, 1998; Waters, 1998).

The Wellness Councils of America (1999) stated that some of the major reasons businesses should consider developing and offering wellness training and programs include the increasing health care costs, increasing employee stress levels, expansion of the working week, increasing workplace diversity, increasing technological advancements and the possibility that most illnesses can be avoided. Research has shown (for example, Patton, Grantham, Gerson, & Gettman 1989; Connors, 1992; Stokols, Pelletier & Fielding, 1995) that health and fitness programs can benefit the organisation in numerous financial and non-financial ways including reducing illness and absenteeism, lowering health insurance premiums, increasing productivity, improving morale, reducing staff turnover and increasing recruitment potential. Personal benefits for employees include increased energy, increased coping skills, greater ability to manage personal lives and improved interpersonal interactions. Schafer (1996) reported that the personal benefits of wellness also include "minimal frequency of illness, low illness risk, maximum energy for daily living, enjoyment of daily life, continuous development of abilities, contribution to well-being of those around you, and contribution to the common good in the larger environment" (Schafer, 1996: 36).

Table 1: Employee Wellness in the Workplace - Dimensions and Definitions

Emotional Wellness	Intellectual Wellness	Physical Wellness	Social Wellness	Spiritual Wellness
Includes an employee's ability to cope with daily circumstances; to deal with personal	Includes an employee's ability to think clearly, independently and critically; recall	Includes an employee's ability to attend work consistently and to function effectively in meeting its	Includes an employee's ability to successfully interact with others and to establish	Includes an employee's ability to establish a value system and act on that system of

Emotional Wellness	Intellectual Wellness	Physical Wellness	Social Wellness	Spiritual Wellness
feelings in a positive, optimistic and constructive manner; to remain aware of own emotions at any given time; and to maintain a relatively even emotional state with moderate emotional responses.	information; reason and learn; be open to new ideas; and to use information to enhance the quality of daily work and optimise work day functioning.	demands. This includes efforts in and outside of work to follow and maintain good physical health by including regular exercise, proper nutrition, consistent and adequate sleep, non-abuse of alcohol and drugs, practice of safe sex and having regular medical checks and healthcare screenings.	relationships that enhance the quality of work life for all people in the interaction (including self); to practice empathy and active listening; and to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the common good of the organisation.	belief as well as to establish and carry out meaningful and constructive life goals. If not clear in these respects, the employee is at least attentive to the importance of values and goals and is on a continual quest for clarity.

Source: Adapted from Corbin and Lindsey (1994), Schafer (1996) and Travis (1998).

Table 2: Examples of Wellness Programs in the Workplace

Communication and Awareness Programs	Screening and Assessment Programs	Education and Lifestyle Programs	Behaviour Change and Support Programs
AIDS education	Blood pressure checks	Adult enrichment classes	Anger management
Assertiveness training	Body fat checks	Cooking classes	Buddy systems
Communication skills training	Breast cancer screening	CPR and First Aid	Cafeteria/vending machine
Community service opportunities	Cholesterol testing	Disease-specific classes	Changes
Conflict resolution	Fitness assessment	Financial planning	Contests
Effective listening skills training	Flexibility assessment	Finding balance	Improved lighting
Feedback skills	Health risk appraisal	Fitness classes	Improved air quality
Individual coaching/counselling	Hearing screening	Health fairs	Incentives for change
Job hazards training	Immunizations	Literacy classes	Incentives for participation
Lowering blood pressure	Nutritional assessment	Lower back program	Include family members
Lowering cholesterol	Personal wellness	On-site fitness facility	Individual counselling
		Organisational skills	

Communication and Awareness Programs	Screening and Assessment Programs	Education and Lifestyle Programs	Behaviour Change and Support Programs
Medical options and self-care	profile	Osteoporosis education	Managing depression
Personal goals & missions	Posture	Prenatal education	Non-smoking policies
Proper nutrition	assessment	Recreational activities	Mental health help
Seat-belt awareness	Repetitive motion analysis	Relaxation classes	Personal training
Work injury prevention	Skin cancer screening	Self-help materials	Smoking cessation
Women's wellness issues	Vision screening	Sports leagues	Stress management
		Sports specific education	Substance abuse support groups
		Time management	Other specific support groups
		Walking/running groups	Weight management
			Work-family programs

Source: Original Table.

Many would agree that wellness is ultimately an individual's responsibility, and an organisation may argue that it is the role of the individual to seek these resources outside of the work environment. However, research suggests that as the support systems expand, individuals are more likely to undertake a wellness change effort or intervention. There is strong evidence to suggest that unless active wellness training programs are convenient, many individuals will not participate (Stokols, Pelletier & Fielding, 1995) and many employees will participate in programs solely because they are located on-site. Pelletier (1994: 17) stated that "individual efforts are necessary but insufficient for optimal health. We need to create approaches and systems in economics, environment, politics, and in the delivery of medical care that elicit and sustain individual strategies". Results of one study (Zimmerman & Connor, 1989) suggested that wellness behaviors may be positively influenced by significant others (for example, co-workers) during the course of the change process, and Travis (1998) believes that personal behaviour is deeply linked to social and cultural norms. Bandura's (1977) social learning approach is one of the most familiar models of change used in the health field. This theory assumes that change is promoted by exposure to role models. The changing of norms in the workplace may assist employees in preparing themselves for similar

change. Thompson & Kinne (1990: 48) stated that "clearly, the individual cannot be the only source of system change".

Issues and Challenges

There are numerous issues and challenges relating to corporate wellness programs. The following section addresses them as they relate to: cost-benefit; stakeholders, true cost and benefits; the strategic link; inputs, processes and outcomes; systems change; and curriculum, instruction, and learners. These elements are used for investigating work systems that prepare employees to improve overall work performance

Cost-Benefit

As corporate wellness programs are often considered non-job-specific interventions, it is often difficult to tie their benefits to the financial bottom line of the organisation. This is probably the greatest challenge this type of intervention confronts. Many organisational leaders, training consultants, and others believe that unless there is a cost-benefit clearly and distinctly proven, training and other interventions should not be offered. Alternatively, Ilgen and Pulakos (1999) suggest that what is most critical to performance effectiveness in work organisations is the linking of human beings to the production process. They state that the three key human resource processes that link people to production are staffing (human knowledge, skills, abilities and dispositions), motivation (the willingness to perform job duties effectively) and employee learning (continuous learning which will ensure that employees develop skills required to meet changing technological or other demands in today's work environments). It is through proposing possible benefits in these areas that wellness programs can defend and promote their importance and worth in the workplace.

Richardson (1998) offers another perspective by explaining that there is a common belief that economic evaluation is hostile to health promotion and that the requirement for health programs to be cost-effective will result in a biased allocation of funds in favour of programs that can demonstrate short-term benefits as defined by inadequate outcome measures. He warns that potentially beneficial projects may be jeopardized by premature economic or non-economic evaluation. Satisfaction and well-being may be derived directly from the characteristics of a wellness system and the limited evidence available suggests that this is a quantitatively

important issue. Richardson also claims that "there is the potential for increasing both individual health and social welfare by systemic change and the modification of social institutions" (Richardson, 1998: 247) and states that:

In principle, economics purports to measure the benefits of health programs. In practice it cannot do this. Health program outcomes are too diverse and complex for the simple measure required in economic evaluation, especially when equity is a social objective. These problems are particularly acute in the case of health promotion programs where the benefits of healthy life cannot be easily quantified. Health promotion activities are often aimed at achieving attitudinal and behavioral changes in the society at large and the benefits of these extend far into the future. Discounting in economic analysis reduces the present value of these future benefits to such an extent that important programs may appear to be poor value for money. Worst of all, the requirement that all programs should be cost effective as defined by the present tools of economic analysis will result in the distortion of programs towards those that can demonstrate short-run benefits as defined by inadequate outcome measures. In effect, economic evaluation will endorse the treatment of easily defined acute diseases at the expense of less easily defined programs aimed at the promotion of health.

The debate and challenges continue on this issue, but what is clear is that even though some may feel that wellness programs should not need to be justified, the only way this system/subsystem will even be considered for implementation in most corporations today is if the cost-benefit to the organisation as a whole is demonstrated. In addition, ongoing measurement of the program's success typically is, and will continue to be, important for the continuation of such interventions. Stokols, Pelletier and Fielding (1995: 1140) state that by using a wider array of measurement strategies "future evaluations of corporate health programs will be better able to test hypothesized links between behavioral and environmental interventions at the worksite, physiologic and psychological processes, and disease or wellness outcomes". These need to be broader-gauged program evaluations that "consolidate previously disparate measures of the health impacts of

worksite interventions (for example, biomedical, behavioral, and psychosocial indexes of employee health)" (Stokols, Pelletier & Fielding, 1995: 1140).

Stakeholders, True Cost and Benefits

Determining stakeholders and understanding the true costs and benefits of supporting the system are additional elements that can be used to investigate systems. After discussing cost-benefit it is clear who the primary stakeholders are (owners, workers, customers, investors, communities and more). For a wellness program of any size to be successful, a corporation needs to provide an environment that encourages change. Connors (1992: 68) explains that "wellness has to have the support of top management, both philosophically and financially, and the wellness program has to be integrated into the worksite". Previously, the importance of measuring the results of these programs was discussed. For these programs to be successful, the stakeholders' needs must be supported and met.

Usually the organisation makes the original and ongoing major investment in wellness programs. Sometimes the employees pay for classes, services, facilities, and programs. The wellness industry encourages that these wellness benefits be open to all employees and many even include opportunities for spouses, children, and significant others. The employer is usually expecting some type of job-specific benefit from offering these types of training, programs and services. Examples of benefits include employee retention and recruitment efforts. As explained previously, many of the benefits for the organisation are difficult to measure and others are nearly impossible without trained researchers/evaluators on staff. Benefits to each individual, however, are not as difficult to measure or observe. There is vast research in many areas of wellness (for example, exercise, nutrition, stress management, time management and communication). After starting a wellness program, even within a matter of weeks some individuals can begin to attest to wellness improvements and benefits. Many of these improvements can be measured. However, the challenge is to connect the benefits for the individual to the benefits for the organisation.

The Strategic Link

Another element used to investigate a system is the possible or probable link or links it may have to corporate strategies and goals. Gill

(1995) argued that an organisation that is working towards high performance in its employees must take a proactive role that integrates learning into all aspects of corporate life and that training events (in general) and their outcomes (for example, reduced illness and absenteeism, increased productivity, lower health insurance premiums, increased energy) must be clearly linked to business needs and strategic goals. Gill further added that training must maintain a strong customer focus and that it must be managed with a systems view of performance in the organisation, and explained that all training processes must be measured for continuous improvement. This, of course, is no easy challenge.

Rothwell, Sullivan and McLean (1995) agreed that all performance improvement interventions need to have a strategic plan. This plan needs to be directly linked to the organisation's mission and strategic goals. Improving the performance of employees in a variety of ways should be included in the strategic goals and objectives of the overall organisation as well. If this does not occur, the system may not become engrained into the organisation. Haltom (1995) explained that most wellness training programs in the past were neither board-based nor cost-effective because they were not set up from the start to measure results, and they tended to appeal to already healthy people. In addition to those already mentioned, there are a number of other wellness areas that should be used to link wellness programs to business goals, such as managed mental health and employee assistance programs, work and life, worker's compensation and disability, corporate giving programs, compensation, safety initiatives, food service and training initiatives.

Inputs, Processes and Outcomes

An open system, such as the one being discussed, includes inputs, processes and outputs. The primary input in a corporate wellness program is usually the employee choosing to participate in an aspect of the program. Travis (1998) stated that the challenge for these types of programs is to motivate voluntary participation. He suggested that one way is to provide economic incentives that reward those who improve their wellness levels. The input in this system is on an individual one-by-one basis.

The primary outcome or output of this system is increased organisational effectiveness. It is expected that by providing workplace wellness training that overall employee wellness (physical, emotional,

intellectual, social and spiritual) will increase (Connors, 1992; Corbin & Lindsey, 1994; Wellness Councils of America, 1999). Because of this, individuals should exhibit improved ability to meet organisational demands and challenges and, in turn, should improve their job performance. As individuals improve job performance, the performance of the organisation should also be improved. The challenges are to create this link in the minds of organisational corporate leaders and to continue research in the area of workplace wellness.

Because of the complexity and differences between programs, the specifics of the process elements in a corporate wellness program are not fully addressed in this paper. Wellness literature (for example, Voilker, 1998; Waters, 1998) does compare wellness systems between corporate organisations. The flexibility of such systems is actually one of the most compelling benefits. The breadth and scope of the system can range from a human resources staff member arranging to offer one outsourced stress management series to a full in-house fitness and health facility with numerous employees (for example, director, psychologist, medical consultant, personal trainer, fitness instructor, health educator, recreation specialist and registered dietician). To date, most corporate wellness programs have been limited rather than been comprehensive in scope (Stokols *et al.*, 1995). However, especially in the past ten years, this has begun to change. Corporate wellness programs will, it is hoped, continue to be enhanced and increased as companies expand their efforts to reduce employee health cost through managed care, health risk appraisal, mental health counselling and medical surveillance programs.

As a subsystem in an organisation, wellness programs may be technically linked to human resources, accounting, management, internal marketing and other line departments. However, unless it is directly linked to the organisation's mission and goals, it will remain only a support system that can be eliminated if the organisation begins to financially struggle. In a motivational and recruiting role, this subsystem should be linked to all departments and individuals within the organisation.

Systems Change

Pronk and O'Connor (1997) offer a population health improvement model that employs a systems thinking perspective. Their seven steps are: set goals, assess willingness to participate, assess health risk and health

status, assess readiness to change, provide worksite interventions, evaluate and modify goals. The cycle then continues back to step one if needed. The authors note that this circular and continuous model can be used at the worksite for improving employee wellness. It is consistent with other open system models where feedback is an essential component of the ever-changing system.

Effective corporate interventions have ongoing measurements to assess employee interests, needs, attitudes, and opinions on existing as well as proposed offerings. Attendance and registrations for many services and classes can even be considered assessments in and of themselves if marketing and scheduling conflict variables are controlled.

Curriculum, Instruction and Learners

Because the participants of this type of corporate program are usually volunteers, the curriculum offered and the educators or trainers in the system are of great importance. As illustrated in Table 2, the curriculum can range widely. In the past fifteen years, behavioral modification training for stress management, time management, weight management, anger management, smoking cessation, physical fitness, personal nutrition and assertiveness have become widespread. Effective behavioural- and lifestyle-change programs are offered in a series of sessions so employees can make changes during the course of the class and receive support from the instructor and group. This curriculum is designed to help employees make changes at work and at home.

One of the challenges the wellness industry faces is the number of non-professionals teaching these types of courses (Cox, 1998). Many corporate wellness coordinators are not educated in wellness programs and issues and therefore cannot be completely relied on to hire qualified and knowledgeable instructors. There are many professional certifications and degrees that show one's credentials, and effective instructors are excellent teachers, motivators and supporters. Choosing the right instructor can make a tremendous difference in the success or failure of wellness training. Another important element is that the learners are able to relate the concepts presented to them into their own lives and situations. Dewey stated (1915: 369) that "learning is not the work of something ready-made called mind, but that mind itself is an organisation of original capacities into activities having significance". In this type of training the learner must be able to

immediately know how to put the information to use, have confidence in his/her skills and feel motivated to do so. The instructor, environment and support system play a major role in this challenge.

As stated, the learners are most often not selected but make a personal choice to participate in this type of training. Some may be counselled by their personal physician to participate, while others may be encouraged by their supervisor or a human resource contact (Ganster, 1995; Haltom, 1995). The ultimate decision, however, is left to the individual. The ongoing recruiting subsystem is successful through continued marketing, motivation, leadership, support and word-of-mouth from previous participants. Even programs presented for employees free of charge by their employer may still require this form of recruitment. Volunteers who have higher levels of readiness for change are typically those who participate and can make permanent changes (Barrett, 1997; Hanpacher, Morgan & Griego, 1998). Increased employee overall readiness for change may increase participants. The reverse may also be true. By increasing an employee's wellness level, he/she may actually improve in readiness for change levels. Pertinent and effective curriculum, professional and knowledgeable instructors, and motivated learners are all essential elements in the ongoing success of the corporate wellness training system.

Wellness Program Framework

As previously stated, one of the major struggles corporate wellness has is its tendency to operate as a separate system instead of a subsystem within the overall organisation. So why should the wellness program be viewed as part of the overall organisation? The research previously discussed does support the finding that improved employee wellness does impact the organisation's bottom-line. However, until wellness programming is viewed as an essential element of a successful organisation, many corporate managers and leaders will remain unconvinced of its link to their business operations.

How can this problem be resolved? The GST provides a framework for answering this question. Wellness programming must be presented and viewed as a subsystem within the larger organisational system. The GST characteristics (Skyttner, 1996) provides a framework for these systems:

1. The interrelationship and interdependence of the wellness program and its attributes to other subsystems and the organisational system must be clearly articulated and documented (interrelationship and interdependence);
2. The wellness program leader or leaders must clearly articulate and achieve a goal or final state to be reached through systemic interaction (goal seeking);
3. The wellness program subsystem must demonstrate useful and effective inputs and outputs that directly and indirectly correspond to the inputs and outputs of the organisation as a whole (transformation process);
4. Because the wellness program is part of an open system, future scenarios should be explored so that adaptability and flexibility can be designed into this subsystem (inputs and outputs);
5. The interrelated elements of the wellness subsystem must be regulated in some way so that its goals can be realised. Methods of evaluation should be designed and implemented at the beginning of a wellness program so that feedback is a requisite of effective control (regulation);
6. The hierarchical structure of a system and subsystem should always be considered. As previously addressed, systems are generally complex wholes made up of smaller subsystems (hierarchy);
7. It is important to ensure that the wellness program is clearly visualised as a specialised unit performing specialised functions in the complex organisational system (differentiation); and
8. Open systems have equally valid alternative ways of obtaining the same objectives. Ensure that wellness clearly provides these alternative options when organisational leaders are looking for different methods of meeting organisational goals (equifinality and multifinality).

The GST characteristic of hierarchy also guides a resolution regarding the prescription of where the wellness system should fit into the organisation. For example, the corporate wellness program is often considered a unit or part (subsystem) of a health benefits program within a

company. Health benefits are found within a compensation (monetary and non-monetary) program. Compensation is a primary unit of the human resource subsystem of most organisations. Finally, the human resource department is now considered an important and strategic subsystem within the company. This is an example of GST's hierarchical characteristic at work.

Implications and Conclusion

Managers and organisational leaders should consider the wellness programming research, which supports the notion that wellness programming can reduce costs in various ways. The wellness program systems framework can assist managers in designing and redesigning wellness programs so that they become integral subsystems within the organisation. This framework provides guidance for long-term and sustainable program development and implementation.

Wellness research is continually being conducted within the health arenas. However, less is being initiated within the business environment. It is suggested that more joint (health and business) research be conducted on the subject of the effectiveness of workplace wellness. Research should focus on the effectiveness of specific interventions (see Table 2) and their relationship to business results. Finally, future research should explore the systems view in relation to wellness programming. This research should provide sound suggestions related to the design of stable, long-term, and successful corporate programs.

Wellness program systems have been shown by many to be effective for individuals and organisations. Wellness programs are not only considered systems but are also an integral subsystem within an organisation. A wellness program systems framework is suggested to assist wellness leaders in designing integral long-term wellness programs.

Wellness programs in the workplace continue to increase every year. Connors (1992: 68) claimed that "studies have consistently shown that healthy people make healthy companies. Healthy companies are more likely to make healthy profits and to have healthy returns on their investments". This may seem simplistic, but the logic is worthy of consideration. If this system is implemented and effectively managed in an organisation, the

formal and informal results will demonstrate performance improvements in individual employees as well as with the organisation as a whole.

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