



## Engage workers through welfare

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Most of us have heard and understood the vital connection between employee satisfaction and engagement and the impact this may have on employee turnover. Additionally, all organizations are in the pursuit of success which requires a strong will to succeed by the employees as well. However, the will for employees to succeed within your business stems from your ability to motivate and inspire them. Even if you are the only employee, you must be constantly fueling your passion. However, while all of this is true, a major part of this dynamic process is the welfare of your staff. Employees' welfare is very much tied to their sense of belonging and will thrive within your business.

Employee welfare is defined by the International Labour Organisation as *anything that is done for the comfort and improvement of employees and is provided over and above the wages.*

*This can range from items as basic and proper washroom facilities and a lunchroom to mental health days and flexi-work schedules.*

This definition was selected as most entities believe that a good salary or a salary is the basis of generating employee satisfaction. While wage is very important to an employee it only has the ability to fulfill the basic need of an employee according to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. An employer should aim to ensure that employees are in their company for the right reasons. London Business School in a research study championed by their Nader Tavassoli was able to prove that companies with great work environments, great brand awareness and presence attract the best CEOs. Moreover, these CEOs are paid marginally less than their counterparts. When they asked the CEOs why they would work for less than their counterparts, they noted that the value the organisation brought to their development was worth much more than the percentage increase in salary.

As a health and safety professional, I always share with my management teams the importance of curating the right culture and environment with their businesses. In safety and health, employee welfare programs and facilities can be used as a measure of a company's understanding of the reduction of psychosocial risk. Let's look at this example together. XYW and Co. operates a 24 hour business. During the passage of severe weather systems the employees who are already at work are required to stay at work until the system passes. This may mean working a triple shift or maybe for 2 days straight. However, the company does not provide basic shelter in place supplies such as food items, a place to rest or proper shower facilities. Can you begin to fathom how these employees may feel while working during this period? Errors can be made that are potentially fatal, the employees are fatigued and stressed; all of which could have been avoided. Employees may negate to execute their duties because they were not prepared in advance to stay and are now hungry or risking themselves to seek food at a time they should be thinking about their safety.

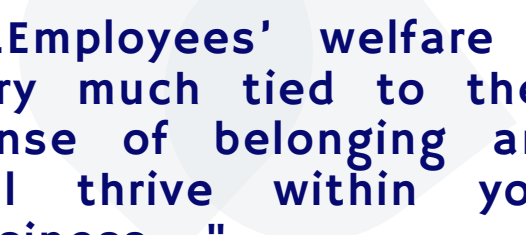
Welfare programming in businesses starts with the simple step of planning and organising for all eventualities of the business. Hurricane season is certain to occur each year. Therefore it is essential to plan in advance for your operations. Even if you are not a 24 hour business.

Having policies in place which takes into consideration the exit of your employees when a weather system is pending; who will secure the building; and how do we communicate during weather systems, can show that your business cares. If you are located in a busy area, this may mean allowing employees to leave in advance of the government issued closure time to avoid being stuck in traffic especially for those who have to utilise the bus system or those who live far away.

Once you have planned and incorporated the welfare facilities, you must ensure that and verify they are reaping the results you intended. For example, you provide items in your kitchen for employees who are asked to remain at work/shelter in place but you didn't seek to provide vegan options even though you have three employees who are vegan. These employees are not benefiting from the program and can feel ostracised for their health choice. Moreover, if these employees if influential can also sow seeds of negativity within their co-workers.

Once you have planned and tested your system or facilities, you must then aim to remediate or fix any of the concerns that arose. This ensures that you can improve the welfare program to meet the needs of all employees. One may say that you are not required to please all of your employees, I beg to differ where welfare is concerned, each employee is owed the basic duty of welfare facilities and programs. The right to these basic welfare facilities is entrenched in the Safety and Health at Work Act sections 6 (5), 6 (6) (e) and 57 to 66.

Providing for the welfare needs of your employees not only increases engagement and morale but better their physical and mental health, thus promoting a healthy work environment. Therefore, remember to initiate the cycle of welfare programming: plan for the activities and facilities, inform employees and execute the required steps, check to verify that it is working and finally make any modifications necessary to reach its intended purpose.



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