

## *The Basics of Health & Productivity Management*

When it comes to the level of competition that currently exists in our capitalist society, as well as the competition that also exists in what is increasingly becoming a global economy, every company is looking for an edge – an edge that will make them just a little better, stronger, and more resilient than the other guy.

With that in mind, it's no surprise that new and more aggressive programs are being developed to give companies that edge. One of the latest initiatives in this area is that of health promotion, and one of the programs most directly tied to that initiative is called Health & Productivity Management (H&PM). This strategy, which strives to ensure the growth of productivity within organizations, is gaining more popularity with each passing year.

### *Definition and differentiation*

Let's start with a definition of H&PM, one devised by the Institute of Health and Productivity Management (IHPM). It is "the integrated management of health and injury risks, chronic illness, and disability to reduce employees' total health-related costs, including direct medical expenditures, unnecessary absence from work, and lost performance at work (*presenteeism*)."

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**Are Your Employees Healthy & Productive?**

## *Align Structure with Goals for Higher Performance*

Customer focus combined with proper alignment of vision with strategy, structure, people and processes is the best way to outperform and outlast your competition. When these critical components are in harmony, results are astounding. To sharpen your competitive edge, look at what keeps you from getting results you deserve.

Whether you are a group of one or many, the way you structure your organization can make the critical difference between simply satisfied and overwhelmingly loyal customers. That significantly affects revenue and profit.

The best organizations deliberately make the most of their resources...in this case people. Winning companies define clear roles and responsibilities and their customers (internal and external) find them easy to work with. How about you? Does your structure make it easy, or difficult, to create loyal customers and get great results?

You can have outstanding people and motivate them toward action, but if structure restricts innovation and higher levels of productivity, improvements are temporary at best. Structure can either help or hinder your ability to react to the changing needs of the customers you serve. You cannot change the world in which you do business, but you can create a structure to best respond to your own market.

### *Definition*

*Structure is different from culture and different than process. Structure is about roles and reporting relationships; process is about rules and procedures; and, culture is about attitudes and behavior.*

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Culture influenced how your current structure evolved and will affect your ability to successfully implement changes.

A great tool for evaluating and improving your structure is a simple organizational chart. If yours is out of date or nonexistent, the exercise of creating it will be enlightening. Include relationships with outside suppliers, contractors and anyone else you count on to provide goods and services to your customers. Once the picture is clear, you can begin to see where you may be out of alignment and what stands between you and the ability to excel.



### **Assessment**

In many organizations, a group of people creates strategy, another focuses on getting and keeping customers, another manages people, while still others run internal systems. At times, it may seem they are separated by walls ten feet high and ten feet thick because, even in small organizations, the right hand literally doesn't know what the left hand is doing. What is your inter-departmental strategy? Does it take an Act of Congress to get something done? How satisfied are employees with their ability to function and what impact does dissatisfaction have on client service?

Great indicators of mis-alignment are “work-arounds.” When individuals bend or ignore standard reporting and decision-making procedures, it signals a problem. It's common to have people working at cross-purposes without even recognizing it. This leads to competition between individuals and functions, mis-allocation of resources, lost productivity, customer complaints, poor morale, duplicated effort, pass the buck mentality, absenteeism, employee turnover, stress, loss of clients, lower profit...have you had enough? Let's turn to solutions.

### **Alignment**

The best thing for yourself, your organization and those you serve is a regular check up. The org chart is a great place to start. One of my long-time, favorite book recommendations is Michael Gerber's *The E-Myth Revisited*. Gerber popularized the phrase, “work **on** your business, not **in** it.” Although written over a decade ago, the concepts are still strong, the message straightforward, and the lessons on systematizing your business are practical and applicable.

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Whether it's been a few years or you've never read it, try reading it twice within a couple of weeks. The repetition will add to the value.

For additional insight into your own structure's effectiveness, professional organizational assessments range from simple to extremely complex. Once obstacles are identified, the solutions may not be hard to find.



### **Questions to Ask Yourself and Your Team**

- ✓ Are the right people in place to answer customer questions?
- ✓ What is the response time for customer inquiries?
- ✓ Are we flexible or burdened with bureaucracy and lengthy approval processes?
- ✓ Is it easy or difficult to place an order?
- ✓ Are invoices correct and easy to understand?
- ✓ How do we react when we make a mistake?
- ✓ Do departments work together smoothly or is there a silo mentality?
- ✓ Are there measurements in place to determine if customer needs are being met?
- ✓ What functions and activities add ZERO VALUE to the customer?
- ✓ Are front line employees and contract service providers equipped to resolve client issues quickly?

**BOTTOM LINE: DOES YOUR STRUCTURE ALLOW YOU TO DO THE RIGHT THINGS RIGHT?** When the answer is no, it's an opportunity to increase revenues, customer loyalty and profit. The better you understand customer needs, wants, and expectations, the greater your ability to structure your organization to create a true competitive advantage.

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*Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.*

– John F. Kennedy

*To will is to select a goal, determine a course of action that will bring one to that goal, and then hold to that action till the goal is reached. The key is action.*

– Thomas Hanson

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**H&PM has two focuses:**

1. Health problems that are potentially preventable, especially those that could impact the company in an economic fashion
2. Sub-par performance in the workplace, with an emphasis on lost productivity due to “presenteeism.”

Many characteristics make H&PM unique from other health promotion initiatives. These characteristics stem from the fact that this is a **comprehensive** approach to productivity management through health promotion. In addition, this is a thoroughly pro-active program; one built on commitment and designed to reach out to employees, as opposed to many of the traditional models that currently exist. Below are some of the specific traits that make H&PM different.



- **Prevention** – This is perhaps the major thrust of H&PM, its central platform, so to speak. It involves three levels of prevention: primary (precaution), secondary (early detection), and tertiary (impact reduction).
- **Integration** – The activities within H&PM are designed for integration, meaning that they are both linked and compatible with one another. In keeping in step with its comprehensive focus, H&PM involves internal integration, intra-organizational integration, and external integration.
- **Systems-oriented** – In order to address all of the potential management and productivity risks, an H&PM program emphasizes the use of systems to ensure a comprehensive (and ultimately more effective) approach to problem solving.
- **Economically focused** – The focus of an H&PM program isn't just on the company's economic interests, but on the employees', as well. If the cost savings realized from the implementation of the program is passed to the employees, they'll have more of a stake in maintaining the program's existence.

### ***Commitment is key***

Although this represents a brief overview of a Health & Productivity Management program, there are many more details involved. The number and extent of those details depend upon the company utilizing the program, the industry in which the company operates, and the people that the company employs. However, regardless of those variables, what needs to be constant in all instances is a **pro-active commitment** to carrying out the program's initiatives. Without that commitment, success is almost impossible.

Now that we've discussed the basics of Health & Productivity Management, what makes this type of program so important? Why should companies and other organizations consider implementing an H&PM initiative? In our next issue, we'll answer these questions and others as we further analyze what H&PM programs have to offer.

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# ONE MINUTE IDEAS

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## 10-Minute Organizing Tasks

When you have 10 minutes to spare, tackle one of these tasks:

- ◆ Read a brief article or report
- ◆ Organize your work area
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- ◆ Relax by breathing deeply

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## *Something is Holding Me Back Professionally. How can a coach help?*

The best coaching “answer” is a question. A good coach asks questions to help you do, be and give your best with the right intention. Consider the following “self-coaching” questions. Maybe it’s time to hire a coach.

How are you driven by what might be possible? What do you really want? What risks are you avoiding? How much of your life is compared to what others expect? What truth lies in others’ perceptions? How do you know? What are you willing to learn or unlearn? If money was not an issue, to what one thing would you dedicate yourself? How would your life be different if you pursued just one important “dream deferred”? What’s stopping you? What if you don’t pursue your dreams? What is important?

Four potential ‘beings’ exist in all of us. We can be **Explorers**, searching who we are for who we can become. We can be **Sophisticates**, fooling ourselves into believing we have all the answers. We can be **Prisoners**, living to the expectations of others and not our own. We can be **Vacationers** – anything we’re doing beats taking a risk. Listen to the questions you may be asking yourself. What could you explore today that might take you to the edge of your potential?

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*"We must walk consciously only part way toward our goal, and then leap in the dark to our success."  
– Henry David Thoreau*



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