

Health of staff directly linked to job performance - experts

By Guardian Reporter

TANZANIAN businesses, government agencies and social organisations have been urged to embrace workplace wellness programmes to improve productivity and efficiency.

A Dar es Salaam-based sector specialist Bhakti Shah made the call over the weekend when speaking with 'The Guardian.'

Shah said when health and well-being are actively promoted, businesses and organisations report 2.5 times better performance, organisations are seen as 3 times more likely to be productive, employees are 8 times more likely to be engaged, organisations are seen as 3.5 times more likely to encourage creativity and innovation and organisations are 4 times less likely to lose talent within the next year.

"It is vital that Tanzanian businesses, government agencies and social organisations embrace workplace wellness programmes to improve productivity and efficiency," she said.

According to the World Economic Forum report: "Wellness Imperative - Creating more effective organizations" new research indicates that wellness is an extremely powerful element that can play a significant role in employee engagement, organisational productivity, talent retention and creativity and innovation.

The specialist also cited the Harvard Business Review as enlisting six strong pillars to support strategically integrated workplace wellness programmes, regardless of the size of an organization or business. They are first, multi-level leadership - from the C-suite to middle managers to the people who have "wellness" in their job descriptions.

Secondly is Alignment which she described as a wellness programme that identifies with the company's identity and aspirations and thirdly she cited Scope, Relevance and Quality; "this takes a holistic and individualised approach which goes beyond diet and exercise.

She also highlighted Accessibility that she described as the ease of access and convenience matters. Also on the list is Partnerships that Shah, who is also the Managing Director of Impactafya, a

workplace wellness service provider based in Dar es Salaam, described as the active collaboration with internal and external partners to enhance the wellness programme adopted by a given organisation.

Finally, she emphasised Communication saying; "Wellness is a mission and a message to be delivered with sensitivity, creativity and diversity."

She said according to a joint WEF/WHO report, Dow Chemical (a US based firm) directly links the health of its staff to its business goals.

"The Mission Statement of Dow's Employee Health Programme states that - Dow businesses have a competitive advantage through health," she pointed out.

According to her, the firm's integrated health strategy focuses on all employees, retirees, and family members and provides 3 main outcomes—health status improvement, positive net value for the company such as improved cost-effectiveness and finally, high perceived value that relates to improved recruiting and retention of employees and employee morale.

She cited Dr Catherine Basse, the Global Director for Health at Dow Chemicals who notes that between 2004 and 2008, employees at Dow Chemicals that were considered high-risk, reduced their risks by 15 percent, while low risk employees reduced their risk by 18 percent and that between 2004 and 2010, the firm's health strategy saved more than US\$100 million in U.S. healthcare costs.

"Dow Chemicals has demonstrated that a comprehensive approach to employee health is not only possible, but can be highly successful," she summed up.

The sector expert emphasised that successful programmes help employers develop and maintain a healthier, more productive workforce as well as a culture that support healthy lifestyle behaviours.

Providing resources and benefits to employees not only encourages participation, but keeps them actively engaged. The key is developing a corporate wellness programme that's embedded in the corporate culture, creating opportunities to meet the needs of the employees, no matter where each individual sites in the company structure.