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Taking A New Look
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Editorial

Work the horse, but for profit's sake feed it too

Tanzanian businesses, government agencies as well as social organisations seem either ignorant of the value of workplace wellness programmes and their capacity to improve productivity and efficiency or they are simply obstinate to invest in their staff.

In age of sustainability, sustainable businesses and sustainable development, for an employer to still view staff and their wellbeing as an expense is as redundant as trying to compete in commercial farming using a hand hoe.

Both local and International experts are for work place wellness programmes. ImpactAfy Tanzania point out that when the health and wellbeing of staff are actively promoted, businesses and organisations report 2.5 times better performance, 3 times more productive, 3.5 times more likely to encourage creativity and innovation and 4 times less likely to lose talent within their next fiscal year.

Likewise, having their wellbeing catered for, employees are 8 times more likely to be engaged.

According to the World Economic Forum report titled: "Wellness Imperative – Creating more effective organisations," 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 Harvard Business Review enlists six strong pillars to support strategically integrated workplace wellness programmes, regardless of the size of an organisation or business.

They point out that wellness programmes go beyond diet and exercise taking a holistic and

in unmanaged approach.
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."

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.

Between 2004 and 2010, the firm's health strategy saved more than USD100 million in U.S. healthcare costs.

In fact, 75 per cent of high performing companies (according to ImpactAfy health experts) measure employee health status as a key aspect of their overall risk management strategy and pursue active wellness programmes to mitigate health risks and corresponding cost of health care.

Companies can turn employee wellness into competitive advantage through increased productivity and reduced absenteeism. Good businesses addresses significant problems by applying evidence based strategies that place their human resource as the most valuable asset and not the most expensive expense.

A comprehensive approach to employee health is not only possible but can be highly successful.

Wellness programmes help employers develop and maintain a healthier, more productive workforce as well as a culture that supports 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.

In this regard, prevention and early detection of both communicable and non-communicable diseases(NCDs) through simple healthy lifestyle interventions is key to promoting the development of a healthy workforce. Consider, unmanaged diabetes results in more than 8 days absenteeism per employee every year.