



TIPS FOR IMPROVING ABSENTEEISM

Absenteeism is expensive for the company and disruptive in your department. It is estimated that absenteeism costs more than \$30 billion annually in increased benefit expenses, lost production and sales, and overtime pay. What are some ways you can effectively reduce absenteeism?

Positive Philosophy

Try and find out why your employees are absent. If they are having transportation problems, look for carpools to alleviate their problem. If it is child-care, refer them to a community agency. If the cause is personal, refer them to your employee assistance program (EAP). By listening and trying to help them solve their problem, you show that you care about them and their attendance.

Rewards for good attendance are more effective than punishment for bad attendance. As a manager you can start by setting a good example. It is your job to help your staff members see how important they are to your department and to your company as a whole. Set departmental productivity goals. For the department to achieve, each individual must also achieve. When

people do achieve, rewards such as pay raises and promotions can follow. Because they feel part of the team and see an achievable goal, they will improve their attendance.

Let your staff know that attendance is part of each performance appraisal. Reliability is linked to attendance. Offer praise for every employee with good attendance so they know you value it. Give a reward when possible. With poor attendance, set corrective goals for the next appraisal with input from the employee.

When you emphasize that no level of absenteeism is acceptable, you will have better attendance. You know that perfect attendance is not realistic, but if you state a number of acceptable absences, employees will often take that number off without being sick.

If job boredom is getting them down, try and regroup job tasks. Your staff may be able to give you some innovative ideas.

If working conditions are a cause of high absenteeism, do what you can to improve them. More lights or a better air conditioner may be all you need.

Make your staff aware of your company's policy on absences, both excused and unexcused. They need

to tell you when they will be gone and report to you when they return to work. They need to know that you will follow through with disciplinary action when necessary.

Innovative Ideas

To implement new ideas and generate enthusiasm, it will take involvement of the employees, supervisors and the administration. Promoting the program internally will generate enthusiasm for participation. Changing the rewards on a regular basis will keep the program fresh. Follow-through and praise are essentials for success.

Good attendance can be announced at staff meetings and organizational functions. The good news can also be mentioned on bulletin boards. Each month there can be an "employee of the month" drawn from the perfect attendees. Names of those with perfect attendance could be put in a drum and a winner selected. The winner could receive money, dinner tickets or time off. Winners' names could be announced over the loudspeaker and articles and pictures of them posted on a bulletin board. They can also be mentioned in the company newsletter.