

WORKPLACE WELLNESS

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The growing interest in Workplace Wellness comes from the simple fact that healthy employees are happier and more effective employees. Workplace Wellness programs encourage employees to follow a healthy lifestyle at work and at home. These programs are especially beneficial to employees who are sedentary for most of the day. While most organizations that institute Workplace Wellness programs do so to reduce health care costs, they soon realize other important benefits including decreased absenteeism and increased workforce performance. Employees who participate in Workplace Wellness programs realize improved attitude, enhanced self-awareness and motivation, and long-term better health.

Workplace Wellness programs target obesity, smoking and environmental sources of physical and emotional stress. Interior designers can support these efforts by providing solutions that prevent many of the problems associated with the workplace environment, and also by providing amenity spaces that accommodate Workplace Wellness programs.

Many of the sources of stress in the workplace are related to its physical design and furnishing. Among all design issues, noise is usually the most-reported source of stress. Even low-level noise can increase stress and decrease employee motivation. The top offenders include people talking on the phone, printers and scanners, doors and the hum of air-conditioning or lighting. Problems with noise are followed by discomfort related to temperature, humidity, ventilation and lighting. Physical stress can also come from using poorly designed furniture and computer accessories. A well-designed workplace will effectively address all these issues to provide a safe, comfortable working environment.

Beyond considering how these environmental issues can be controlled to reduce workplace stress, organizations can boost the effectiveness of Workplace Wellness programs by providing on-site facilities for employees and their families. These include fitness centers with saunas and showers, outdoor walking paths, meditation rooms, as well as social spaces like coffee shops, libraries, day-care centers and game rooms. These spaces make it much easier and more affordable for employees to manage their stress and improve their health.

On another front, the evolving sustainability phenomenon in building design and construction has many positive consequences for Workplace Wellness efforts. Studies show that features like operable windows, user-controlled environments, daylight and good indoor air quality can reduce absenteeism, provide a sense of wellbeing and improve concentration and productivity.

Workplace Wellness efforts increase employee health, safety and wellbeing through prevention, recognition, and assistance, while reducing stress, accidents, absenteeism, and healthcare costs.

The International Facility Management Association (IFMA) is the largest and most widely recognized professional association for facility management, supporting approximately 17,300 members. The Association's members are represented in 125 chapters, 16 councils and one Special Interest Group (SIG), in 52 countries worldwide. Globally, IFMA certifies facility managers, conducts research, provides educational programs, recognizes facility management degree and certificate programs and produces World Workplace, the largest facility management related conference and exposition.

The Atlanta Chapter of IFMA has almost 500 members and provides networking, education and community service opportunities for our professional and associate members.

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