

Homeostasis and the Healthy Workplace Award
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As systems in the body maintain, increase, or compromise good health, so do systems in the workplace. Ideally, both the body and the workplace attain homeostasis, a state of equilibrium in which all systems work in harmony for the greater good of the structure. The skeletal, digestive, cardiovascular, endocrine, and central nervous systems all work together to create a well-functioning body. Each plays a vital part, and if even one of these systems is out of sync, the entire body is affected negatively. So too the workplace is comprised of important systems which include organizational leadership, training, communications, motivation, and praise. Each body and every organization is unique because of interactions among the various systems.

The bodily skeletal system and the workplace organizational leadership both create form and structure; communications and the cardiovascular systems pump a steady stream of life force throughout the body; training can be viewed as the digestive system, taking ideas and converting them to energy and action to propel the organization forward; praise and motivation are the endocrine and central nervous systems that control growth and nutrients to sustain life. Thus, the workplace is as alive and dynamic as the human body, and can also be adversely affected if any part of any system is diseased.

To be healthy, an organization needs to begin with clarity of direction, with employees focusing their collective energy to accomplish the goal. The body is made up of individual cells coming together to create a phenotype, which denotes an individual's particular inherited characteristic. An organization is comprised of individual employees coming together to create the particular organizational culture, with its individualistic vision and goals. Through the Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award in PPA, we recognize the benefits of a psychological and physically sound workplace.

Below are some of the characteristics that comprise a healthy workplace:

- ❖ Quality benefits plans
- ❖ Ways to measure job satisfaction
- ❖ Effective leadership and communication
- ❖ Policies and procedures supporting employee needs
- ❖ Training programs
- ❖ Equity among employees
- ❖ Employee Assistant Programs (EAP)
- ❖ Input from employees
- ❖ Physically and emotional safe work environment
- ❖ Methods for employees to demonstrate potential

The PPA Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award was developed to identify and assess the employees working together as they achieve their organization's vision and goals. The award recognizes organizations that enhance the quality of the whole work environment experience for their employees. To assess the health of a workplace, we evaluate the systems, examine what business or goals there are for the organization, and evaluate how the organization leads, communicates, supports, motivates and basically cares for its employees. Through the

award we recognize those workplace leaders who ensure that the workforce is caring for its employees.

In business today, employees can do everything right and still get caught in the downsizing changes that organizations are forced to make. The driving forces behind the instability or stability can be simplified into three key areas: change, competition, and educated customer needs. The healthy workplace is able to put its systems in sync, thus creating organizational homeostasis through leadership, effective communication, appropriate policies and procedures, and support of the employees. Maintaining a healthy workplace can be viewed as an art form which many large to small organizations are paying a great deal of money trying to acquire. There is no one right way for an organization to become and remain healthy. Establishing the healthy workplace is an art form through which the interactive organizational systems flow.

To assess healthy organizations we review the organization's policies, procedures and supportive programs that indicate well-being of the employees. Organizations complete an application as the first step in being identified as a healthy workplace. The application has each organization identify its size (1,000 or more employees; 500 to 999; or 499 to 50 and small and large not for profit); type of business; and how the organization promotes a healthy workplace. Key parts of the application focus on employee's development, family support, employee involvement, and how the organization provides a healthy and safe work environment. Leadership, communication, and employee morale come into play through these questions of how the employees are guided and supported in the workplace. To add strength to the application process, employee testimonials are solicited and included. The process gives each organization the opportunity to provide supportive data toward winning the Healthy Workplace Award. It is beneficial for an organization to win this award for a number of reasons. First, the Healthy Workplace Award is recognition for all that an organization provides to its employees.

Furthermore, the award promotes the organization as a healthy workplace, which can give it a competitive edge. Prior winners have been interviewed and acknowledged on radio and television. The Award helps to celebrate all of the “good” things the organization provides for its employees, and finally, the award helps to attract and retain talented people. While there are currently many troubling issues in our nation and in our workplaces, it is time for organizations to feel good about the beneficial things they do for employees.

As people in organizations strive to be successful, they can remember the body metaphor, which illustrated that individual systems support the entire health of an organization, and if one system suffers, the entire organization suffers. Upon reading this article, have you been contemplating how your organization provides a healthy workplace for you, supporting you in demonstrating your abilities? Are you willing to recommend your workplace for the award to recognize that it is a healthy workplace? If so, nominate your workplace for the award today by calling Dr. Rex Gatto at 412-344-2277 for an application.

Two Questions

What is needed for an organization to be healthy?

1. clarity of direction, with employees focusing their collective energy to accomplish the goal. (Correct answer)
2. A process to ensure that employees can take decisive action
3. A place that supports employees and their families
4. That the business systems are identified as part of an organizational process

What are three driving forces behind the instability and stability in business today?

1. Employee performance, leadership and communication
2. Retention of employees, leadership and change
3. Change, competition, and educated customer demands
(correct answer)
4. Effective policies and procedures, leadership and employee performance.