

Health and Safety Corner

CREATE AN ADVANTAGE IN A HEATED JOB MARKET: ATTRACT GOOD EMPLOYEES THROUGH WORKPLACE SAFETY

By: Barbara Glynn Alves

For the last few years, the rising cost of health care benefits has been a hot issue here in the Garden State. It's an important issue to New Jersey employers who are looking to attract and maintain good employees. But what does that have to do with workplace safety? Primarily, there are a lot of similarities in the cost and implementation of workplace safety programs and employee health care coverage. Also, the idea behind both is that healthy employees are better employees. Yet while most employers highlight the components of their benefits packages to job candidates, they only promote their safety records to clients, insurers or regulatory agencies. The truth is that expounding the benefits of a "safe place to work" could be just as attractive to prospective employees, or for keeping good employees, as a decent benefits package. Still, you never see that advertised in the want ads. Maybe it should be. It's worth exploring...

The costs of Health Care Benefits and Worker Safety Programs come right off the bottom line. Most good employers spend considerable resources to develop safety programs, provide the recommended safety equipment, and train their employees to work safely, all in the effort to reduce accidents and loss time on the job. Employers don't want to see high Worker Compensation Rates, and they most probably, genuinely, want to see their employees go home in one piece. Equally, there is a tremendous amount of money spent in reducing health care costs through employee wellness programs such as smoking cessation, exercise programs, and weight reduction, all in an effort to keep employee claims down and reduce program costs. Employers like to see their employees

come back to work the next day as well!

Everyone benefits from a healthy work force. Absenteeism, caused by either on or off the job situations, has both obvious and hidden costs. Industry professionals from both the benefits and safety services can tell you all the statistics of risk and loss, etc., and how an employer can reduce overhead costs through loss time reduction - which is by keeping employees healthy and injury free.

*'promote a "top down"
program to achieve
company safety goals'*

Employers use benefits consultants to help them educate their employees in reducing the risks associated with poor health and sickness, just as they may use a safety consultant to educate employees in safe workplace behavior. The benefits consultant will work aggressively with an employer to develop the communication tools needed to promote these costly benefits. So too will the safety consultant work with management to promote a "top down" program to achieve overall company safety goals.

So why don't we see workplace safety listed right there next to all the wonderful benefits an employer can advertise to attract good people: 401K plans, on-the-job training, bonuses, health care insurance or tuition reimbursement? The most obvious difference is that providing health care coverage and all those other benefits is voluntary, but workplace safety is compulsory. Could this mean that employers don't view their workplace safety programs as anything special since they are required to provide them - just like the employer next door? But providing a "safe place to work" is not that run of the mill; OSHA's statistics on workplace accidents can prove that. Businesses with higher than average safety records should embrace their achievements when looking to build their workforce. If your safety statistics show that your facility is on the right track, let prospective employees know.

If a safe work place is part of your company's vision, why not use it as leverage when hiring your next employee? Here's a Want Ad I'd like to see...

WANTED: SHIFT SUPERVISOR/ FOREMAN FOR GROWING MANU- FACTURING OPERATION

ABC Co. has an immediate opening for an experienced supervisor in its manufacturing facility. Requirements include 4-6 years supervisory experience, proven leadership and good communication skills. Knowledge of batch operations, materials handling and warehouse environment a requirement. Spanish and Portuguese a plus.

ABC Co. offers competitive salaries, 401K plan, on-the-job training, a credit union, paid vacations and holidays, and on-site day care. **Our unique Employee Care Program includes full medical, dental, vision benefits and a dynamic Workplace Safety Program with extensive training in home and job wellness.** Come join our growing team!

Call 888-555-1212 for an interview.

About the Author

Ms. Alves is the Director of Business Development & Administration for Emilcott, an EHS consulting firm in Chatham, NJ. She has over 20 years of training and marketing experience - 17 years in the environmental, health and safety industry. Prior to joining Emilcott, Ms. Alves was a client representative at Corbus, responsible for the sales and promotion of EHS software products. She also served in various marketing capacities with Air & Water Technologies, promoting a broad range of EHS engineering and pollution control services/products, this includes over 40 titles of EHS video training products for the AWT Institute.