



# the monthly croak

It has been a very busy month for the frog team with some fun projects commencing and new relationships established with some very interesting people. In this month's issue we were prompted to talk about absenteeism & wellness in light of an email that was shared with us by someone within our network. This email urged people to ensure they take their 'swine flu leave' before it becomes a non-event. It warned that before long there will be no need to be isolated after travel or contact with others "so it was important to get in quick". This email and dedicated facebook pages promoting spreading the flu highlighted perfectly the major costs and stress involved in having disengaged staff.

## what is a wellness programme?

Now, when we say "wellness programmes" if you have visions of Richie Simmons prancing around your lunchroom in sequined shorts, or hairy-legged vegans lecturing your staff on the nutritional value of lentils, then think again. Fortunately, what we mean by wellness programme is something quite different, multi-pronged, modern and full of impact.

A Wellness Programme is a multi-faceted blend of:

- Educational seminars
- Workshops
- Health building incentives
- Team-building fitness-challenges and
- Coaching

To change your employees behaviour around:

- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Smoking cessation
- Stress management.

The economic costs of poor health:

Did you know that New Zealanders have one of the highest rates of obesity in the Western world? Scary but true. In New Zealand the adult obesity rate is 25-26 per cent and the proportion of adults who are overweight is just over 36 per cent. Obesity has been proven to contribute to higher levels of cancer, heart disease and diabetes and has been shown to substantially limit a person's ability to work. Chronic disease is expensive to a country in many ways. Directly; of course there is a big impact on the health budget. In 1991 the direct costs of obesity to New Zealand's health care system were conservatively estimated at \$135 million per year, or 2.5 percent of health expenditure for that year. It was estimated the figure for 2000/01 was at least \$247.1 million, (just short of double) and it will be much higher today. Globally the cost of poor health and obesity are pitched at 3% of GDP. Given that we do business in a global village, we do need to take notice of the inclining trend toward poor health and its downstream effects on economic wellness. After all, when they sneeze in Times Square, we catch pneumonia down under. Indirectly; the hidden costs of poor health to business are massive. Unfit and/or nutritionally depleted people are less productive, have higher rates of absenteeism, a poorer attitude to work are less resilient and leave their jobs more readily. - *(nicely put by Kirsten Leng)*

Wellness programmes are not the same for any two organisations and that is why it is important to discover, through a comprehensive [employee survey process](#), what is important to your staff to ensure you spend your energy and resources in the most effective areas for your people.

## how to have a healthy workplace

We're constantly told we need to eat better, exercise more, get more sleep, and spend more time with our families and friends. But sometimes, there just aren't enough hours in the day. Here are some tips from Kath O'Sullivan on how to have a healthy workplace. Remember good health isn't a weekend hobby you need to create a healthy work environment for yourself and those around you

Firstly refresh your body - Sitting behind a computer for eight or more hours can do your body a lot of damage. Here are some things to consider:

- Posture is so important. Use a comfortable chair which supports your back. Arrange your desk and computer so that your feet are flat on the floor, your arms rest comfortably at your keyboard, and your monitor is directly at eye level.
- Stay active. Get up regularly and get your blood flowing. It's also a good idea to stretch your legs, back and neck every hour, particularly if you experience any pain in those areas.
- If you work from home, you have more opportunity than most to prepare fresh, healthy lunches and snacks for yourself. But regardless of where you work, choose foods that are nutritious and which provide you with plenty of energy to keep you at your most creative and efficient throughout the day.
- Don't be a coffee addict. One or two cups a day is fine, but don't rely on it to keep you awake all day. If you're feeling tired, try a tall glass of water – it will perk you up at least as much as a coffee and cleanse your body at the same time.

Then revitalise your mind

- Use a different part of your brain. We tend to use one particular mode of thinking when at work, and concentrate all our mental efforts on a single task. Try engaging your mind in a different way when you take a break. For example, if you spend a lot of time thinking creatively and laterally, it might be good to refresh your mind with something more rational and logical like a crossword or a sudoku.
- Make your office or workspace a haven of inspiration. Surround yourself with images and words which will help you stay focused on your goals and vision, spark your creativity, or look at things differently.

Revive your spirit

- Flying solo can get a little lonely from time to time. If you don't naturally have a lot of interaction with others on an average work day, make the effort to call friends, colleagues or clients on a regular basis. Why not meet them for lunch? Not only will you feel better emotionally, it's a great opportunity to discuss current projects and get some feedback and advice.
- Find little ways to feed your soul at work. Play your favourite music, sit outside and work in the fresh air, or bring plants and flowers into your office. You'll feel happier and more positive about how you're spending your time if you create a healthy workplace.
- Remember to enjoy yourself. Work should be fun, so have a good laugh at yourself when you catch yourself losing perspective. Make a decision to have a bit of fun every day. It's transforming and it's contagious.

It's easy to say "this sounds all too hard." But small changes towards a healthy workplace can make a world of difference, for you and your business.

