

5-2010

Creating a wellness program for hotel front desk employees

Karima Abdel-Moty
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Hospitality Administration and Management Commons](#), and the [Work, Economy and Organizations Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Abdel-Moty, Karima, "Creating a wellness program for hotel front desk employees" (2010). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 427.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.34917/1651733>

This Professional Paper is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Professional Paper in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Professional Paper has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

CREATING A WELLNESS PROGRAM
FOR HOTEL FRONT DESK EMPLOYEES

by

Karima Abdel-Moty
Master of Science in Hotel Administration/Master of Business Administration
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2010

A professional paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Science in Hotel Administration
William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2010

ABSTRACT**Creating a Wellness Program for Hotel Front Desk Employees**

by

Karima Abdel-Moty

Robert Woods, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Professor of Hotel Management
University of Nevada Las Vegas

The majority of hotel front desk employees fulfill their job demands in generally similar ways, in terms of workplace conditions. The demanding and hectic nature of this job results in very tangible physical and emotional effects on the employee.

Through an analysis of current literature, guidelines on implementing a wellness program suited specifically for hotel front desk employees will be created. Through successful implementation of an employee wellness program, management will be able to provide effective job resources that will result in engaged front desk employees, and consequently, higher levels of customer service, productivity, and profitability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
PART I	5
Introduction	5
Objective of study.....	5
Justifications.....	5
Constraints.....	6
Glossary.....	7
PART II.....	9
Introduction	9
Job Resources and work engagement.....	9
Work engagement and wellness.....	10
Nature of the hotel front desk job.....	11
Physical wellness.....	13
Ergonomics.....	13
Breaks.....	15
Stretching.....	15
Fitness.....	16
Emotional wellness.....	18
Stress management.....	18
Relaxation techniques.....	19
Successful wellness programs.....	20
PART III.....	21
Introduction	21
Results.....	22
Wellness Program.....	22
Conclusion.....	27
Recommendations.....	27
REFERENCES.....	29

Part One

Introduction

Work engagement is the fulfilling, motivational, work-related state of well-being that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Recent research on work engagement has revealed it predictive of job performance and guest satisfaction, and predicted by job resources. The purpose of this paper is to design a wellness program tailored for hotel front desk employees that will serve as such a resource, by examining current literature on workplace wellness and work engagement.

Objective of study

This paper will present a set of guidelines and roadmap for the implementation of an employee wellness program as a potential job resource for a hotel's front desk employees, although it is easily implementable across various departments and industries (Bailey, Bemis-Shields, & Ford, 2007). This program will be created by researching and analyzing existing literature on job resources, and how they can influence an employee's work engagement, wellness, and job performance.

Justifications

Poor wellness as seen across both dimensions (i.e. physical and emotional) has a tangible effect on engagement (Bakker et al., 2008), performance, and an organization's bottom line (Robison, 2006). Consequently, the role of management should be to consider strategies and objectives across the institution that will promote health and wellness amongst employees. Essential to creating a workplace wellness program includes balancing performance,

communication, and encouraging employees to feel a sense of purpose at work, as well as achieve work-life balance (Cowell & Kupritz, 2005).

The product of this paper will be a wellness program for front desk employees that will address various dimensions of wellness and guidelines to how a hotel company can implement a similar program to ensure well-rounded, engaged front desk employees. According to the literature, this should result in reduced absenteeism, higher performance quality, increased productivity, customer service levels, and greater profitability (Hillier, Fewell, Cann, & Shephard, 2005). Organizations may see a reduction in injuries (Wahl & O'Neill, 2009) and total absenteeism (Parks & Steelman, 2008), as well as higher levels of job satisfaction (Parks & Steelman, 2008) and company loyalty (Wahl & O'Neill, 2009).

Constraints

Internal constraints will include the limited scope of the study and its reliance on secondary data. Additionally, there are seven generally-accepted forms of wellness (physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental, and occupational) (Chobdee, 2009). For the purpose of this study, the analysis will focus on physical and emotional, as they are most relevant to the workplace environment (Chobdee, 2009). External constraints will be the limitations of pre-existing research as it applies to this paper.

Glossary

Job resource: the physical, social, or organizational aspect of a job that reduces job demands, functions in achieving work goals, and stimulates personal growth, learning, and development (Bakker et al., 2008).

Wellness:

- **Physical:** the most commonly known and associated type of wellness; encompasses exercise, nutrition, and medical well-being.
- **Emotional:** the ability to feel and express emotions such as happiness, sadness, and anger; encompasses optimism, self-esteem, self-acceptance, and the ability to share feelings.
- **Intellectual:** the ability to make thoughtful decisions and think critically; the ongoing pursuit of knowledge and skills enhancement.
- **Social:** the ability to create a support group and network of family and friends; encompasses communication skills and intimacy with others.
- **Spiritual:** involves a belief in a sense of meaning in one's life; encompasses feelings of faith, hope, and commitment to one's beliefs and values.
- **Environmental:** involves understanding our impact on the earth and environment and making efforts to minimize harm to the environment.

- Occupational: involves the pursuit of work that utilizes a person's talents and skills in order to provide them with satisfaction; working in an occupation that feels meaningful and important.

Work engagement: positive, fulfilling, motivational, state of work-related well being that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker et al., 2008).

Part Two

Introduction

An examination of the literature on wellness and work engagement suggest that wellness programs can be a viable resource. In this section the pertinent literature on these topics are discussed in an attempt to show how a wellness program can achieve desired corporate goals. Each pertinent topic, beginning with job resources, will be discussed in this chapter. Although there are seven generally accepted forms of wellness, only three will be examined, as they are most relevant to the work place.

Job Resources and Work Engagement

Job resources are physical, social, or organizational aspects of a job that reduce the negative consequences of job demands. Job resources also aid in achieving work-related goals as well as in stimulating personal growth and development (Bakker et al., 2008). Additionally, numerous research studies have shown a positive correlation between job resources and work engagement (Bakker et al., 2008). As intrinsic motivators, job resources foster individuals' development; as extrinsic motivators, they push employees to exert increased effort toward a task (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). Results illustrated that job task information, support from upper management, an environment promoting innovation, and social aspects of the workplace were all related positively to work engagement (Hakanen, 2006).

Work engagement can be defined as a state of well being that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Taris, Cox, & Tisserand, 2008). Research on engagement has shown that work engagement is predictive of job performance and client satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2008). Facilitated by job resources, employees become more engaged in their jobs as they

acquire various levels of fulfillment from it, and consequently perform better (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Job resources have been found to create the bridge and transition between work engagement and performance (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

Work Engagement and Wellness

It has been argued that job resources are increasingly motivational as employees' job demands increase, such as long hours or uncomfortable work conditions. (Bakker, Demerouti, Hakanen, & Xanthopoulou, 2007). Job resources defend employees against the impact of high job demands (Bakker et al., 2007). Recent studies have shown that the relationship between job demands and stress is weaker when employees are given high value job resources (Bakker et al., 2007). Moreover, engaged employees seem to have higher levels of optimism, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and resilience (Bakker et al., 2008). Engaged employees, when compared to other employees, experience more positive emotions, including happiness and enthusiasm; better physiological and psychological health; and transfer their engagement to others (Bakker et al., 2008). By nature, employees attempt to create 'resources caravans', an intangible and mental accumulation of job resources; individuals working in a resourceful work environment, providing them with various levels of resources, are more likely to feel valued, be optimistic, and meet goals (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

Employee involvement improves work processes as well as the quality of goods and services, and helps to minimize workplace stress. Healthier employees are more productive, and employees that are more productive tend to be healthier, partly because they are under less stress due to their improved productivity (Ginn & Henry, 2003).

Nature of the Hotel Front Desk Job

Recent studies have shown that hospitality and service employees work in constantly changing work environments, and that job resources play a striking role in performance in these situations (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Hotel employees service different types and quantities of customers, work with various colleagues and supervisors across numerous departments, and experience differing levels of autonomy throughout their work tasks; job resources that aim to create a balance between this environment and the individual employee can be crucial to performance (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

The position of hotel front desk often involves repetitive work, awkward postures, and standing for prolonged periods of time (Ministry of Manpower, 2003). The average hotel front desk employee spends the majority of his/her eight-hour shift standing in front of a chest-level counter, looking down at a computer, or over at a guest. For those front desk employees participating in shift work (performed outside the typical daytime, business hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.), fatigue becomes more prevalent, as the employee is forced to work against his/her natural circadian rhythms (Blachowicz & Letizia, 2006). Physiological and psychological health effects of shift work can include disturbed sleep patterns, stomach trouble, and stress (Stellman, 1998). Work in hotels is often demanding and hectic; hotel staff is required to provide service to guests efficiently, courteously, and accurately, while maintaining a pleasant demeanor (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Employee Wellness Programs

The goal of an organization is to create job resources from which employees can benefit. Employee wellness programs are examples of job resources which attempt to improve the overall

health of employees through wellness education and injury/illness prevention. Results from over 100 research studies conducted over the last two decades on health and wellness suggest that these programs provide improved health for employees and a positive return on investment for business organizations (Bailey et al., 2007). In fact, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that for every dollar spent by employers on health and wellness management programs, the return on investment ranges from \$1.49 to \$4.91 in benefits (Lankford, Kruger, & Bauer, 2009).

In addition, wellness programs have been shown to reduce absenteeism and increase employee productivity (Bailey et al., 2007). Recent studies have illustrated that workplace health promotion brings a range of benefits to employers in the form of reduced sickness, lower rates of absenteeism, increased staff morale, and a swell in levels of productivity (Daykin, 1998). Ultimately, organizational productivity increases when employees are healthy and active (Clark, 2008).

Whereas traditional health and wellness programs have focused on those employees experiencing illness or seeking rehabilitation, present-day programs are geared toward every employee in the organization, even those who are reasonably healthy (Bailey et al., 2007). Furthermore, wellness programs are an effective way to create a caring corporate image toward a company's employees (Daykin, 1998), and in that regard, return on investment will be evident in less turnover and better recruitment (Clark, 2008). Rosen Hotels & Resorts, which has implemented an award-winning wellness program, has turnover rates of single digits, compared to the annual turnover rate of 100 percent or more common in the hotel industry (Deatrick, 2008).

Physical Wellness

The objective of a wellness program should be to provide resources which promote good health. The initiatives will result in higher employee productivity and performance (Bailey et al., 2007) as well as lower insurance premiums and a decrease in loss of employee work time due to illness (Bailey et al., 2007). Research has shown that employees with poor health have lower work performance than their counterparts with good health (Bailey et al., 2007).

Ergonomics.

The biggest risk for hotel workers is ergonomic injury from sprains, strains, and repetitive work (California State Compensation Insurance Fund, 2010). Prolonged periods of time experiencing awkward body postures will increase stress on the muscles and ligaments, causing fatigue, discomfort, and increased possibility of injury (Ministry of Manpower, 2003). Excessive bending of the neck and back during keyboard work can cause neck and back aches and prolonged standing may contribute to aches and pain in the legs, feet, and back (Ministry of Manpower, 2003).

Although musculoskeletal injuries could result from a sudden accident, more often they are the result of gradual wear and tear from repetitive and prolonged activities (Ministry of Manpower, 2003). Awkward body postures increase the stress on ligaments and joints. It has been shown that computer use under these conditions can cause various repetitive strain injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome (in the wrist) as well as shoulder, neck, and back problems (Stellman, 1998). Computer screens can also produce eyestrain and other visual problems (Stellman, 1998).

Employees are at special risk if workstations are poorly adjusted and require awkward

body posture, or if work is continuous without adequate breaks (Stellman, 1998). Ergonomics prevents these types of injuries by using proper work practices to ensure the safest way to work for employees (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010). Sprains and strains can be prevented by proper workstation design and placement of equipment, as well as adopting proper posture (Ministry of Manpower, 2003). Preventative measures include providing adjustable computer workstations, training staff on how to adjust their equipment properly and maintain correct postures, as well as ensuring that employees take rest and stretch breaks (Stellman, 1998). Desk counters and computer monitors should be at an appropriate height to minimize neck and back bending (Ministry of Manpower, 2003). Workstations used by more than one person should be height adjustable. Agents should be able to adjust stations quickly; adjustable workstation components include monitor stands, keyboard supports, and work surfaces (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010).

Computer work can cause glare that can also contribute to eyestrain as well as create muscle soreness and fatigue by causing employees to adopt awkward postures (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010). Overhead lights can also shine directly into employees' eyes or reflect images onto a computer screen, making it difficult to view the screen (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010).

Furthermore, wearing shoes with enough cushioning to relieve the stress on knees and back while standing for long periods of time, as well as using anti-fatigue matting will aid in these environments (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010). When possible, sit-stand chairs could reduce standing time for employees, while supporting a more neutral posture for computer use (Lorusso, 2000).

Breaks.

The idea of constantly working for hours at a time goes against our biological wiring; everything in nature is oscillatory (sunlight, seasons, sleep patterns), and the idea of working without stopping is too much (Whole Living, 2010). It is far better to sprint and then break, rather than push or coast all day; the human body works best when it is fully on and fully off (Whole Living, 2010). There are essentially three levels of thinking: level one is superficial (such as deleting e-mails), level two requires more focus, and level three involves deep thinking. The average employee engages in “level three” thinking either first thing in the morning, or right after break (Whole Living, 2010). The key is to use breaks constructively – such as by taking a brief walk, doing some exercise, or stretching – as opposed to having a cigarette, a cup of coffee, or a bag of chips (Pascucci, 2009).

Working in 90-minute to two-hour stretches of time, separated by 15-minute breaks will yield optimal results (Whole Living, 2010). Breaks allow employees to vary posture and rest tired muscles. If 15-minute breaks are not feasible, employees should still be allowed to take a few minutes to something that uses different muscles or a different posture (Workers’ Compensation Board, 2010). Pauses of 20 seconds to 2 minutes, combined with relaxation and stretching exercises, will help combat muscle soreness (Workers’ Compensation Board, 2010). Workers should also receive training on health hazards, and whenever possible, be provided adequate time off between shifts to allow for sleep adjustments (Stellman, 1998).

Stretching.

During these breaks, employees can engage in short exercises or stretches. Although exercises are not a substitute for a proper workstation, or a permanent cure for pain or

discomfort, they can help reduce muscle tension and eyestrain (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010). Stretching can reduce injuries and absenteeism, by placing bones in proper alignment, reducing friction in joints, and increasing flexibility and durability (Lorusso, 2000).

Excessive mouse clicking and typing can lead to strained muscles, tendinitis, and other repetitive-stress injuries (Whole Living, 2010). Finger stretches and wrist rolls help stretch the palms and fingers, to relieve compression, and correct imbalances caused by holding awkward positions for extended periods of time (Whole Living, 2010). Repeatedly moving the head to look at a screen and then up at a guest causes the neck and shoulder muscles to work overtime to support the constant shifting movements (Whole Living, 2010). "Head hangs" stretch the muscles on the sides of the neck, while promoting relaxation (Whole Living, 2010). Furthermore, when forearm motion and circulation is impeded (such as when standing at a workstation, with hands on a keyboard), arms can become sore and more prone to injury (Whole Living, 2010). Arm stretches promote circulation and relieve muscle tension in the wrists, forearms, shoulders, and back (Whole Living, 2010).

Fitness.

Regular physical activity is viewed as essential in preventing disease and enhancing health (Myers, 2000). On-site exercise equipment is proven to have positive effects on employees' cholesterol, blood pressure, fitness levels, and frequency of exercise (Lankford et al., 2009). This could include workplaces providing exercise facilities, attractive stairwells, and/or extending hours of operation or flexibility in employees' schedules to improve access to opportunities to be physically active (Lankford et al., 2009). Exercise increases strength as well as self-confidence and self-esteem (Myers, 2000).

Since 2001, the state of Minnesota has introduced four employee transportation bills to emphasize “non-motorized” commuting, including bicycle commuting to increase physical activity and improve employee health (Lankford et al., 2009). The bill called for state agencies to provide facilities to support bicycle commuting, including indoor, sheltered, or high-security bicycle parking; showers and dressing areas for bike commuters; and the equivalent subsidy vehicle commuters receive for parking (Lankford et al., 2009).

Programs designed to promote fitness achieve an array of objectives, such as improving cardiovascular fitness and increasing muscular strength. Further fitness increases flexibility, which helps to reduce the risk of injury, as well as increases mental acuity, resulting in reduced stress and depression (Ginn & Henry, 2003). There is also a significant correlation between physical fitness and positive emotionality (Myers, 2000). Exercise training has been shown to significantly decrease anxiety, mild depression, and stress (Myers, 2000).

These programs also often include health education and nutritional counseling. Health education may cover the avoidance of disease and injury, such as those caused by repetitive motion. Evidence of workplace efforts combine health education classes with health screenings and counseling (Lankford et al., 2009). MGM Mirage offers a “Wellness Floating Holiday” to employees, a paid day off to get a physical exam and health screening (MGM Mirage Careers, 2010). Additionally, nutritional counseling is a factor in cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders such as diabetes, inflammatory diseases such as arthritis, and some types of cancer (Ginn & Henry, 2003). There is a clear relationship between food and health, moods, performance, and longevity (Myers, 2000).

Emotional Wellness

Existing theories support the idea that emotional happiness engenders success (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Effective wellness programs are beginning to expand from purely “physical” by addressing the “emotional” and “mental” side of health issues. Certain health problems are rooted in more deeply rooted psychological issues, and in these cases, poor physical health is merely a consequence of poor mental health (Clark, 2008).

Numerous studies report a significant relationship between feelings and illness, with emotions being a major component of mental health and well-being, and accurate predictors of physical and psychological health (Myers, 2000). Negative emotions such as anxiety are associated with an increase in the potential for illness; hostility has been shown to be a major contributor to high blood pressure and coronary artery (Myers, 2000). Other risk factors of poor emotional health include excessive alcohol use, avoidance of problems, unhealthy relationships, sedentary lifestyle, and poor diet (Mental Health Wellness Week, 2010).

Stress management.

Hotel jobs are most often categorized as work that causes psychological stress (Daykin, 1998). In regards to emotional wellness, a deficiency in a front desk employee’s emotional wellness can lead to stress, a bad temper, and consequently, to poor customer interaction (Krogen, 2007). Stress affects both physiological and psychological functioning and has a direct effect on the immune system (Myers, 2000). Physiologically, stress can cause appetite or weight changes (Jolly, 1996), headaches (Krogen, 2007), muscle aches (Jolly, 1996), and cardiac problems (Mental Health Wellness Week, 2010). Stress-resistant employees experience more positive immune system responses, mental health, physical health, and greater resistance to

psychosocial stressors (Myers, 2000). Stress can have a debilitating effect on emotional wellness by increasing irritability (Kroger, 2007), anger (Jolly, 1996), depression, and anxiety (Krogen, 2007). The presence of stress in a person's life can inhibit their feelings of self-esteem, happiness, and optimism (Krogen, 2007) as affect the ability to concentrate, remember, and made decisions (Jolly, 1996).

In recent years, a number of large surveys conducted on healthcare staff in the United Kingdom have identified employee stress and burnout to adversely influence staff-patient relationships, create negative attitudes, and result in poor service outcomes (Munn et al., 2005).

Stress management can be defined as the ability to identify stressors and reduce them (Myers, 2000). Managing stress is a key factor in achieving optimal emotional wellness, and an effective wellness program can incorporate useful tools to manage stress, and increase overall workplace happiness. Support groups, counseling, and even rehabilitation services are highly useful in addressing the emotional aspect of wellness (Clark, 2008). Stress management programs teach employees how to manage the stress in their lives through various relaxation techniques (Ginn & Henry, 2003).

One California-based benefits company found great success by hosting daily yoga sessions at the workplace. In terms of this company's corporate culture, yoga was the perfect activity, targeted to both physical and emotional health. Yoga increased employees' physical strength and simultaneously acted as a de-stressor (Clark, 2008).

Relaxation techniques.

Deep breathing is one of the easiest stress management techniques to learn and can be done anywhere; when employees become stressed, one of the body's automatic responses is

shallow, hasty breathing, which in turn increases stress (Mental Health Wellness Week, 2010). Taking deep, slow breaths is an antidote to stress and allows the body to counter-balance its stress reaction (Mental Health Wellness Week, 2010).

Successful Wellness Programs

Successful employee wellness programs, although varied across the different dimensions, share commonalities. Ultimately, they begin with health assessments, offer a number of resources and employee incentives, and track results in turnover and absenteeism over a multiyear period (Bailey et al., 2007).

The most significant factor in the success of an employee wellness program is upper management support, which shows employees that leadership has enthusiasm for the initiative. Therefore, wellness must be incorporated into an organization's strategic plan. Employees must see upper management involved in wellness efforts, otherwise, these programs will be viewed as a "flavor-of-the-month," short-lived fad, rather than as a vision for employee wellness and health. It is becoming increasingly apparent that for wellness-promotion initiatives to have an impact, they have to be engrained in the culture of an organization (Munn et al., 2005).

The presence of an on-site wellness leader is also highly effective in engaging and motivating employees. Communication is crucial as well; corporations should publicize and promote their wellness programs through regular and frequent newsletters, meetings, and advertisements (Clark, 2008).

Conclusion

Poor wellness as seen across the various dimensions has a tangible effect on engagement, performance, customer service, and an organization's bottom line (Robison, 2006). The role of management, therefore, should be to consider institutional initiatives, which put into effect certain job resources that promote the health and wellness of employees. Given that improved health should increase employees' productivity and thus their value, employees should respond to wellness programs with higher commitment and loyalty to their employers (Ginn & Henry, 2003).

The product of this paper will be a wellness program for front desk employees that will address the various dimensions of wellness, and guidelines to how a hotel company can implement a similar program to ensure well-rounded, engaged front desk employees, resulting in reduced absenteeism, higher performance quality, increased productivity, customer service levels, and profitability (Hillier et. al, 2005).

PART THREE

Introduction

Based on the review of current literature discussed, it has been supported that resources available to employees on the job positively affect work engagement. According to the literature, engaged employees experience reduced levels of absenteeism, higher performance quality, increased productivity, customer service levels, and greater profitability (Hillier et. al, 2005), as well as higher levels of job satisfaction (Parks & Steelman, 2008) and company loyalty (Wahl & O'Neill, 2009).

Results

The role of management, therefore, should be to consider institutional initiatives that put into effect certain job resources that promote the health and wellness of employees. Creating and generating wellness at work involves a balance between healthy performance, a sense of purpose, effective and inclusive communication, and work-life balance. Given that improved health should increase employees' productivity and thus their value, employees should respond to wellness programs with higher commitment and loyalty to their employers (Ginn & Henry, 2003).

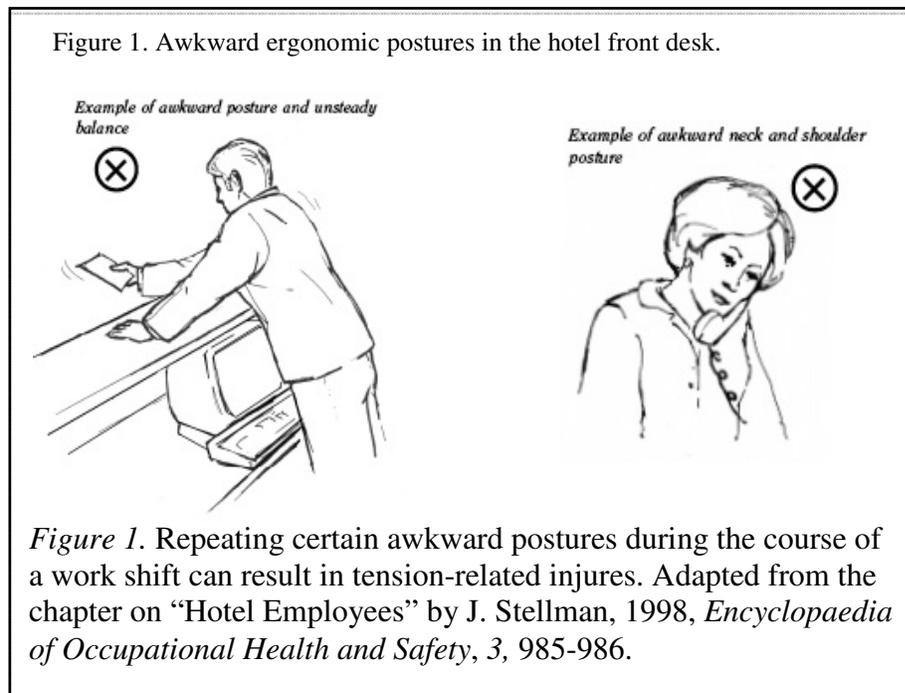
The product of this literature review is a set of guidelines for management to implement a wellness program catered specifically to front desk employees, which will address physical and emotional wellness, to help ensure well rounded, engaged front desk agents.

Physical Wellness

Ergonomics.

At the front desk, awkward postures can happen when:

- Agents have a long reach to the telephone or keyboard
- The computer monitor is too low or too high
- Agents need to adjust body to compensate for glare on the computer screen
- Agents must hold a telephone receiver while keying or writing



Adjust
workstations

that the

following statements are true:

- Agents can easily reach frequently-used items
- Agents do not cradle the telephone between shoulder and ear
- The monitor is an arm's length away from the agent
- The top of the monitor is at eye level

so

- The keyboard is at elbow height
- When an agent uses the keyboard, wrists are straight and elbows are by his/her sides
- The mouse is on the same level as the keyboard and does not require awkward reach
- Agents have a choice of sitting or standing at the workstation

Consider these tips for controlling glare on a computer monitor screen:

- Adjust brightness and contrast
- Use a light-colored background on the screen
- Place the monitor so that line of sight is parallel to a window or door
- Adjust the monitor to a vertical position, if possible

Other tips to consider:

- Encourage employees to wear shoes with enough cushioning (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010)
- Use anti-fatigue matting and carpeting (Workers' Compensation Board, 2010)
- If possible, use adjustable sit-stand chairs to ensure good posture (Lorusso, 2000)

Figure 2. Example of sit-stand workstation



*Figure 2. Using a sit-stand workstation can reduce the risk of fatigue and injury.. Adapted from the chapter on “Hotel Employees” by J. Stellman, 1998, *Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety*, 3, 985-986.*

Breaks.

- Provide 15 minute breaks every 1.5 to 2 hours, or allow for micro-breaks of 20 seconds to 2 minutes, combined with relaxation or stretching exercises (Whole Living, 2010)
- Adequate time off between shifts (Stellman, 1998)

Stretching Exercises.

1. Finger stretch: Stretches the palm and fingers; helps to relieve compression in the hands, wrists, and fingers
2. Wrist roll: Puts the muscles through a full range of motion, helping to correct imbalances caused by holding wrist in one position for an extended time; lubricates the wrist joint
3. Head hang: Stretches muscles on all sides of the neck; gently opens the chest and shoulders, encouraging deeper breathing, promoting relaxation
4. Forward bend: Opens the chest, encouraging deeper breathing; stretches shoulders and neck as well as hamstrings and lower back; brings blood to the head and clears the mind
5. Wall stretch: Promotes circulation and relieves muscle tension in the wrist, forearm, shoulder, and chest; helps prevent carpal tunnel (Whole Living, 2010)

Fitness.

- Gym & sports facilities
 - Provide on-site exercise equipment (Lankford et al., 2009)
 - Extend benefits/membership to a local gym to employees (Lankford et al., 2009)
- Team up with local businesses to offer discounts to outside resources, such as Jenny Craig, nutritional/natural supplements, spas, massage therapists
 - Place a basketball hoop outside, and keep basketballs near the break room
- Attractive stairwells (Lankford et al., 2009)
 - Encourage employees or a local school to do murals
- Yoga or other group classes
 - Create health challenges to incentivize employees (Whole Living, 2010)
 - Encouraging local companies to showcase their offerings (Whole Living, 2010)
- Organized sport teams or other employee extracurricular events (Lankford et. al., 2009)
- Bike-to-work program (Lankford et al., 2009)
 - Bike storage
 - Showers

Health.

- Health assessment/screenings (Lankford et al., 2009)
- Health education (Lankford et al., 2009)

Nutrition.

- Nutritional counseling (Ginn & Henry, 2003)
- Provide healthier options in the vending machines (Whole Living, 2010)
 - Most vending companies provide a variety of nuts, dried fruit, trail mix, etc.

Emotional Wellness

- Stress management (Myers, 2000)
- Relaxation techniques
 - Deep breathing exercises (Mental Health Wellness Week, 2010)
 - Controlled breathing (Mental Health Wellness Week, 2010)
 - Yoga stretching (Clark, 2008)
- Counseling services (Clark, 2008)
- Support groups (Clark, 2008)
- Rehabilitation services (Clark, 2008)

Additional measures that can be taken by management:

- The presence of an on-site wellness leader (Clark, 2008)
- Ample communication with employees via newsletters, bulletin postings (Clark, 2008)
- Motivational emails with friendly wellness reminders (Clark, 2008)
- Post advertisements for local farmers' markets or new restaurants (Whole Living, 2010)
- Take 10 minutes at every meeting to do brief stretch/exercise (Whole Living, 2010)
- Reward employees who regularly attend wellness events (Whole Living, 2010)
- Plan active celebrations (i.e. birthday parties) (Whole Living, 2010)
- Hula hoop, limbo contest, conga line

Conclusion

The majority of hotel front desk employees operate their job tasks under similar conditions, often standing at a chest-level counter, looking down at a computer, or over at a guest, for the significant portion, if not all, of their eight-hour shift. Work in hotels is often demanding and hectic; hotel staff is required to provide service to guests efficiently, courteously, and accurately (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).

Through successful implementation of a program such as the one described above, management will be able to provide accurate resources that will engage their front desk employees, optimize their levels of productivity, and increase profitability to the company.

Ultimately, this wellness program can be altered and designed to assist any employee in any industry, depending on their job functions and daily activities. This particular wellness program suits front desk employees directly, or any other front-line, service employee who is on standing stationary for the majority of their shift (i.e. casino dealers, airline agents, restaurant hostesses, etc).

Recommendations

Front desk employees are faced with tiresome work conditions that can cause various ailments ranging from minor fatigue, to muscle soreness and stress. Research has shown that employees with poor health have lower work performance than those with good health (Bailey et al., 2007). Wellness programs combat this epidemic by bringing a variety of benefits to employees in the form of job resources, and to employers in the form of reduced sickness absence, increased staff morale, and higher levels of productivity (Daykin, 1998).

The wellness program presented in this paper is tailored to the situational characteristics and human factors found in specifically in the hotel front desk position. Even within this specific job, however, work conditions can vary greatly across companies and properties. In implementing a successful program, it is important to consider and weigh these differences in order to meet the needs of employees. If tailored, this outline of a wellness program can be re-created to fit virtually any job position within any industry.

Additionally, this program can be expanded to include the other elements of wellness – intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental, and occupational – in hopes of addressing every aspect pertinent to employee wellness in the workplace. Because of the constraints of this literature review, not every factor of employee wellness was addressed, and this can be a point of further application in the future.

References

- Acton, R. (2006). Wellness programs generate return on investment. *The Business Journal of Central New York*.
- Alliance for Work-Life Progress. <www.awlp.org>.
- Bailey, A., Bemis-Shields, H., & Ford, E. (2007). Employee wellness programs. *21st Century Management: A Reference Handbook*.
- Bakker, A., Schaufeli, W., Leiter, M., & Taris, T. (2008). Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology. *Work & Stress*, 22(3), 187-200.
- Bakker, A., Demerouti, E., Hakanen, J., & Xanthopoulou, D. (2007). Job resources boost work engagement, particularly when job demands are high. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(2), 274-284.
- Blachowicz, E. & Letizia, M.J. (2006). The challenges of shift work. *MEDSURG Nursing*, 15(5), 274-280.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). Career guide to industries: Hotels. <www.bls.gov/oco/cg/cgs036.htm>.
- California State Compensation Insurance Fund. (2010) <www.statefundca.com/safety/safetymeeting>.
- Chao, C. (2000). Hotel ergonomics: What customers want and employees need. Cornell University: Hotel Ezra Conference. Ithaca, New York.
- Cheung, G. (2004). Human factors. *San Diego State University People Interventions*. <<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/ARossett/pie/Interventions/humanfactors.htm>>.
- Chobdee, J. (2009). Seven dimensions of wellness. *Environmental Health & Safety*. University of California, Riverside. <http://wellness.ucr.edu/seven_dimensions.html>.

- Choice Hotels International. (2010). <www.choicehotels.com>.
- Clark, A. (2008). The new frontier on wellness. *Benefits Quarterly*, 2, 23-28.
- Cowell, E., & Kupritz, V. (2005). Human resources and the future of communication in the workplace: A cross-generational perspective. *University of Tennessee, Knoxville*.
- Daykin, N. (1998). Workplace health promotion: Benefit or burden to low-paid workers. *Critical Public Health*, 8(2), 153-166.
- Deatrick, M. (2008). Orlando's Rosen Hotels & Resorts named one of only nine nationwide winners of 2008 Apex Award from UnitedHealth Group's *hub* magazine. *Rosen Hotels & Resorts: In the News*. <www.rosenhoteles.com/news_2008-09-10_RosenHotels>.
- de Lange, A., De Witte, H., & Notelaers, G. (2008) Should I stay or should I go? Examining longitudinal relations among job resources and work engagement for stayers versus movers. *Work & Stress*, 22(3), 201-223.
- Fitch, K., & Pyenson, B. (2008). Taking stock of wellness. *Benefits Quarterly*, 2, 34-40.
- Ginn, G. & Jean Henry, L. (2003). Wellness programs in the context of strategic human resource management. *HOSPITAL TOPICS: Research and Perspectives on Healthcare*, 81(1), 23-28.
- Hallmark Insights. (2008). Case study: InterContinental Hotels Group. *Hallmark Insights Business Incentive Solutions*.
- Hakanen, J. (2006). Burnout and work engagement among teachers. *Journal of School Psychology*, 43(6), 495-513.
- Haworth, J. & Lewis, S. (2005). Work, leisure and well-being. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 33(1), 67-79.

- Hillier, D., Fewell, F., Cann, W., & Shephard, V. (2005). Wellness at work: Enhancing the quality of our working lives. *International Review of Psychiatry, 17*(5), 419-431.
- Jolly, C. (1996). Stress: Taking charge. *Iowa State University PM 1660*.
- Kivimäki, M., Ferrie, J., Brunner, E., Head, J., Shipley, M., Vehtera, J., & Marmot, M. (2005). Justice at work and reduced risk of coronary heart disease among employees. *Archives of Internal Medicine, 165*, 2245-2251.
- Krogen, C. (2007). Sacramento State Wellness.
<<http://csuswellness.blogspot.com/2007/02/wellness-must-be-prerequisite-to-all.html>>.
- Lankford, T., Kruger, J., & Bauer, D. (2009). State legislation to improve employee wellness. *The Science of Health Promotion, 23*(4), 283-289.
- Lorusso, T. (2000). Ergonomic designs for hotel work. Cornell University: Hotel Ezra Conference. Ithaca, New York.
- McGillivray, D. (2005). Fitter, happier, more productive: Governing working bodies through wellness. *Culture and Organization, 11*(2), 125-138.
- Mental Health Wellness Week. (2010). <<http://mhww.org/techniques.html>>.
- MGM Mirage Careers. (2010). <<http://www.mgmmiragecareers.com/benefits/wellness-program.aspx>>.
- Ministry of Manpower (2003). *Occupational Safety and Health Guidelines for the Hotel Industry*.
- Munn-Giddings, C., Hart, C., & Ramon, S. (2005). A participatory approach to the promotion of well-being in the workplace: Lessons from empirical research. *International Review of Psychiatry, 17*(5), 409-417.

- Myers, J., Sweeney, T., & Melvin Witmer, J. (2000). The wheel of wellness counseling for wellness: A holistic model for treatment planning. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 78*, 251-266.
- Parks, K. & Steelman, L. (2008). Organizational wellness programs: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 13*(1), 58-68.
- Pascucci, M. (2009). 25 Ways to Stress-Out Less. *Campus Calm*.
http://www.campuscalm.com/25_stresstips.html.
- Robison, J. (2006). Your job may be killing you. *GALLUP Management Journal*. <
<http://gmj.gallup.com/content/22375/your-job-may-killing.aspx#2>>.
- Schaufeli, W. (2004) The future of occupational health psychology. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 53*, 102-157.
- Schlotz, W., Hellhammer, J., Schulz, P., & Stone, A. (2004) "Perceived work overload and chronic worrying predict weekend-weekday differences in the cortisol awakening response." *Psychosomatic Medicine, 66*, 207-214.
- Stellman, J. (1998). *Encyclopaedia of Occupational Health and Safety, 3*, 985-986.
- Taris, T., Cox, T., & Tisserand, M. (2008). Editorial: Engagement at work: An emerging concept. *Work & Stress, 22*(3), 185-186.
- Wahl, M. & O'Neill, M. (2009). The value of wellness: Working in remote locations. Offshore Technology Conference. Houston, Texas.
- Whole Living. (2010). Making life work: Preventing burnout when home and office collide.
<[www. http://www.wholeliving.com/portal/site/bs/menuitem.f65a7812](http://www.wholeliving.com/portal/site/bs/menuitem.f65a7812)>.
- Workers' Compensation Board. (2010). <www.worksafebc.com>.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. (2009). Work engagement and financial returns: A diary study on the role of job and personal resources. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 82, 183-200.

Zank, D. & Friedsam, D. (2005). Employee health programs: What is the return on investment?

Wisconsin Public Health & Health Policy Institute, 6(5).