



February 2012

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Welcome

Welcome to 2012! We hope you're enjoying the summer. It's a big year for us and we've got a lot of great things planned.

We begin this issue by giving you a snapshot of the highlights for the coming year. We've got a great story about how fun works in the workplace, with an example of how it's done at Vero Insurance. And we explore how simply encouraging employees to take an active role in setting up their workspace can significantly increase wellness and productivity in your workplace.

Enjoy your time in the sun and remember to wear a t-shirt, hat and sunscreen and keep yourself hydrated!

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Coming up in 2012

There are a number of exciting things happening in the NZ musculoskeletal injury prevention sector this year, particularly within the DPI Programme. We've picked out a few highlights to share with you now.

An upgraded online Work Smart Tips tool is coming your way. It is easier to use than the original, has more options and is customised for thirteen different industries. Best of all, we can add a new industry by ourselves at any stage in the future, without needing a developer to do it for us.

One of the most exciting and significant projects in the pipeline is an upgrade of the entire DPI Programme. All tools and resources will eventually be delivered via a single 'one-stop-shop' website which will be rolled out in stages throughout 2012. The new tools will include:

- online DPI Programme training - for both new and refresher training
- a generic induction module for new employees
- a refreshed HabitAtWork with videos and still shots of real people doing the stretches and exercises
- an online 'Learning Management System' where training records can be stored
- access to 'Self-Management tools for Workers' to report and manage discomfort
- links between workers and employers so that training records and discomfort, pain and injury issues can be managed at an organisational level.

This year we will also introduce you to the World Health Organisation Healthy Workplaces Programme and how it applies to us. Eventually the DPI Programme will adopt a similar approach to this Programme and we want you to understand the direction we are going in.

There are a number of exciting things happening at ACC and around the country, including:

- the Moving and Handling Guidelines that will be launched at the [Moving and Handling Conference](#) in Auckland during 21-23 March.

- the 11th [World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion](#) will take place in Wellington from 1 to 4 October 2012.

As you can see, there's plenty to do and lots to look forward to.

Please make sure you keep your membership details current on the [DPI Programme website](#) so we can keep you updated on what's happening. If you need any help to log in, please send [Maddy](#) an email.

Let's have a fantastic year!

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How workplace fun works in practice

In November last year we explored workplace fun, and discussed how it can be a useful part of good human resource management practice. We also asked readers for stories about fun in their workplace.

Abigail Whyld is Branch Liaison at Vero Insurance in Auckland, and she told us how fun works in her department. She provided the following update:

Our tribal fun initiative

I work in the IT Department at Vero Insurance. We have the usual functional and project teams but we also have a culture of 'tribes'. This means that anyone in the department can set up, lead or participate in a tribe which relates to anything they are passionate about or interested in.

One hugely successful tribe is 'Tribe Wannahug', which exists to create fun in the IT Department. It is supported by our Executive but is self governing: 21 members come from ten different teams.

We organise a wide variety of events and they happen at least once a month. Some of the events we organise include fundraisers such as Oct Dog Day (hot dog sale), an Amazing Race for staff, multi-cultural holidays such as Chinese New Year and Easter, charitable causes such as Movember and a weekly Friday quiz.

One of the biggest events we organised was when we made up a covers band from internal staff. They played a gig in a public bar and the locals and backpackers were dancing along with us!

Benefits

Tribe Wannahug activities have definitely brought the people in our large department closer together. They have also helped the wider organisation to realise we are more than just a bunch of boring geeks behind locked doors!

We find most people love the competitions. Interest and activity ramps up as judging day gets closer, and this really strengthens teamwork and lifts morale.

We often hear people say how much they like to hear laughter in their workplace. They appreciate how Tribe Wannahug helps us to celebrate and have fun, while still upholding Vero Insurance company values.

Award for performance at Vero

Vero Insurance was a finalist at the 2011 JRA Best Workplaces Awards which is one of the larger surveys of workplace climate and employee opinion in New Zealand. Vero Insurance was also awarded membership of the JRA 'Five Year League'. This award recognises continued performance in the JRA Best Workplaces Awards.

Good on Vero Insurance's IT Department for the positive results they've created through their tribe culture.

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'Empowered' workspaces increase wellness and productivity

Employees who have control over the design and layout of their workspace are happier and more productive. In fact productivity can increase by as much as 32 percent with no loss of accuracy. Sound too easy? Not according to Dr Craig Knight, who was in New Zealand recently to prove his point, one that's backed up by eight years of research at the University of Exeter.

From a business perspective, Knight says the clean desk trend makes a lot of sense. “You can just concentrate on the job. You can see entirely where business comes from but the research we have conducted at PRISM suggests that, in fact, the reverse is true,” Knight explains.

In the December 2011 - January 2012 edition of Employment Today Magazine, Dr Craig Knight explained that when employees are allowed to choose plants and artwork to enrich their workspace, then productivity, mood and wellbeing all improve.

How the research worked

The research asked people to do a series of tasks in four separate environments:

1. A ‘lean’ office contained only the essentials – a bare desk, a swivel chair, a pencil and paper.
2. An ‘enriched’ office contained plants and artwork.
3. In the ‘empowered’ office, participants were provided with the same plants and artwork but they were able to arrange them however they chose, or not use them at all.
4. A final ‘disempowered’ office gave participants the opportunity to decorate but then the experimenter rearranged the office so it matched the enriched office – a scenario office workers have to cope with all too often, says Knight.

To measure productivity, those participating in the research were given two tasks which they were asked to do as fast and as accurately as they could:

1. Participants were given a pile of memos and asked to sort them into chronological order (information management) and then answer a series of multiple-choice questions based on the information in the memos (information processing).
2. A vigilance task measured attention to detail. Participants were given a magazine article and were asked to cross out every lower case letter ‘b’ that they came across.

Knight says they used pictures and plants because they wanted something that wouldn’t confound their experiments. “If I give you a bigger desk or a bigger chair or change the temperature, you’d expect that to have an effect. But if we say all we’re

going to do is put plants around your desk, that shouldn't have any effect on what you're doing at all – it's just this psychological enrichment thing.”

The results

“We used the lean space as our control and then we asked: ‘Does productivity increase or decrease?’” Knight explains. “What we found is [the empowered workers] were working 32 percent faster but they were not making any more errors.”

The study participants were also asked a series of questions about how they felt about their workspace. Results consistently showed that the more control people had over their office spaces, the happier and more motivated they were in their jobs.

The benefits of an empowered workspace included:

- **Increased productivity** – controlled experiments in laboratories and workspace found empowering people in their working environments resulted in increases in productivity of up to 32 percent.
- **Accuracy** – in spite of completing their office tasks up to 32 percent faster than workers in lean conditions, the accuracy of the empowered workers did not decrease at all.
- **Increased wellbeing** – in both laboratory and real-life experiments, Prism managed to establish considerable improvements in levels of concentration, comfort and job satisfaction. There was also a reduction in feelings of discomfort and ill health.
- **Increased organisational identity** – giving people a genuine voice in their workplace resulted in higher levels of organisational identification.*

“The reason we think that enriched works better than lean, and empowered is better than enriched, is if you go into a lean space there's nothing for you to engage with at all,” says Knight. “You go into an enriched space ... there's stuff you can engage with. It's interesting in some part.

“When you go into an empowered space ... there's more altogether for you to get engaged with so that works best of all ... and it's as simple as that. The more involved you can get, the better it is. People like to personalise their space.”

Knight explains, rather than imposing a corporate identity on employees, bosses should allow their staff to realise their own identity in their environment. “This provides the optimal solution for productivity.”

Knight advocates that people are able to choose their environment as groups. “It’s no good letting people choose as individuals – it’s anarchy. You let people decide as discrete groups, and you also let them decide from a template.”

The worst thing you can do is to impose a system – like a lean office or hot-desking – on people, he says. “It’s a psychological nightmare. If people buy into the space, and maybe vote for it because there may be certain other privileges they get instead, if they’re happy with it, then it’s absolutely fine. It’s all about how it’s managed.”

Worker empowerment reduces the effects of contributory factors

It seems incredible that allowing workers some control over their immediate work area has such a powerful and measurable impact. However these results make more sense when you realise that worker empowerment positively affects three of the seven groups of contributory factors that can lead to discomfort, pain or injury.

Psychosocial factors

Many workers are surrounded by people and circumstances they cannot control. Being able to exercise control over something as simple as the workplace environment is of significant psychosocial benefit.

Individual factors

Each worker’s perception and experience of their world is unique and is affected by their physical and mental state of health. They will tend to be happier and more comfortable at work when they can adapt their workspace to suit their personal preferences.

Workplace layout

Some workers genuinely enjoy a clean workspace with few objects on it. Others love to surround themselves with photos and mementos. Providing plants, art or other items, prompts workers to decide how they wish to set up their workspace.

[View the full article from Employment Today](#)

* Source: www.prism-identity.com

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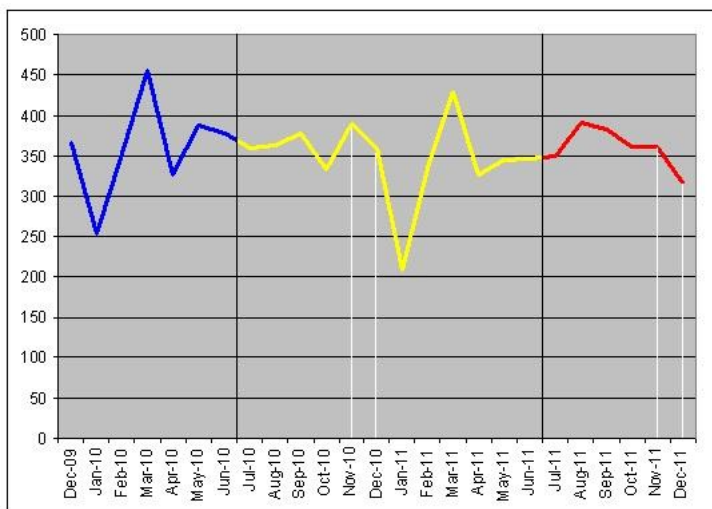
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