WELLNESS FACILITIES OF DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY: ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR DIMENSIONS OF Participation Rates Among Dow Employees, Retirees, and Dependents

MSA 698 Directed Administrative Portfolio
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Organizational Dynamics and Human Behavior Implications for Participation Rates Among Dow Employees, Retirees, and Dependents

Section 1: Organizational Dynamics & Human Behavior Aspects of the MSA 698 Issue

This paper is a continuation of a series of studies examining the issue of participation in the wellness programs at Dow Chemical Company. The lack of participation in the wellness centers is a problem for the organization because the participation rate of Dow employees is designed to improve the health of the employees, and vital for the return on invested funds into the program.

This paper examines the organizational dynamics and human behavior issues that affect the participation issue. Specifically, this paper identifies the organizational culture, leadership, management communication, and employee attitudes and motivation. These issues have been formulated into specific questions. Those questions are:

1. What is leadership's perspectives toward employee use of facilities and other wellness programs? Is there subtle leadership resistance suggesting that they believe employees might abuse the privilege or some other reason to not promote facility use?

2. Is communication about and awareness of facilities sufficient to ensure they are used by the largest possible population?

3. For those who use the facilities, what motivates them to do so?

4. For those who do not use the facilities, what are their reasons for not doing so?

5. What other barriers to facility utilization exist and are inhibiting facility utilization?

6. What creative motivational strategies could be used to increase motivation to use the facilities?
In the subsequent sections of this paper a brief review of related literature is presented. Following the literature review is a presentation of other collected information to answer the specific questions formulated to further examine the issue of participation from organizational dynamic and human behavior perspective. The related literature and other information help to provide recommendations for the organization.

Section 2: Brief Review of the Literature

Leadership and communication are shown to influence organizational culture, employee attitudes, and employee motivation. Employee attitudes and motivation towards wellness programs can also be influenced by other factors as well such as personal preferences, lifestyle habits, or time constraints. Leaders also help create the organizational culture within a company. An organizational culture of health can influence employees to participate in healthy activities such as healthy eating or fitness regimens at a company’s wellness centers.

Leaders of an organization and their leadership styles play an important role in the work environment. In some workplace wellness programs there are not only rewards for participations, but also consequences for a lack of participation. Some of the consequences include higher health care premiums for biometric screening that did not meet the organizations’ standards of health and possibly a loss health insurance for those who refuse to participate in the biometric screening. The organizations who utilize consequences as well as rewards have higher participation rates among their employees (Mujaba & Cavico, 2013). With wellness programs there can be concerns of justice and fairness regarding discounted health care packages granted for those who participation or a lack of discounts or even increase in health care premiums for those who do not participation. Employees show favorable perceptions of justice when their leaders show high levels of consideration and communication (Holtz & Harold, 2012). Leaders
who explain the importance of the employees before implementing consequences may have better feedback from their employees regarding fairness and justice of those actions.

Leadership style also influences employee attitudes. Employee attitudes can impact their productivity at work and their organizational commitment, which can include participation in work programs such as a wellness program. Transformational leadership and high levels of self-efficacy are shown to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Walumbwa, Lawler, et. al., 2005). Transformational leadership provides “inspirational motivation, intellectual simulation, and individualized consideration” (Walumbwa, Lawler, et. al., 2005, p. 4). A combination of self-efficacy and transformational leadership helps employees tackle difficult obstacles and have high performance levels which are positively related to work-related attitudes (Walumbwa, Lawler, et. al., 2005).

Organizational commitment is positively impacted by transactional leadership styles as well as transitional leadership styles, as opposed to passive-avoidant leadership styles. Transactional leadership is based on traditional leadership transactions with employees, such as rewards, penalties, promotions, and explanations for actions that affect the employees (Clinebell, Skudiene, et. al., 2013). Positive work-related attitudes and commitment to the organization can help employers gain participants in wellness programs that will help the individual as well as the organization as a whole.

The organizations that build a culture of health into their workplace show greater participation in the wellness programs. An overall culture of health with engaged leaders of the organization promotes the wellness program and encourages employees on a day-to-day basis to make healthier choices (Kent, Goetzel, et. al., 2016). This lead-by-example practice is ‘about creating a ‘way of life’ in the workplace that integrates a total health model into every aspect of
the business practice” (Kent, Goetzel, et. al., 2016, p. 119). A culture of health affects the organization at a global level as well. The cost of chronic diseases and health care not only impact that specific country, but impact the economy globally (Malouf, 2011). This shows the importance of a healthy organizational culture.

Work-life conflicts can be an issue that can interfere with participation rates in workplace activities including wellness centers. Conflicts in the workplace that interfere with an employee’s personal life can cause distress on the employee’s work life and their personal life. Also, conflicts in an employee’s personal life can affect their work performance. Leaders who can mediate work-life conflicts can improve employees’ job satisfaction and psychological wellbeing (Munir, Nielsen, et. al., 2012).

**Section 3: Management and Leadership Implications of Communication and Awareness**

Dow Chemical Company has roughly 56,000 employees, with the majority of those employees located in Midland, Michigan the headquarter location for the company (Dow Chemical Employee Number, 2016). These employees are spread through the company in different departments in several buildings, and different management for each building and department. Each leader has a duty to relay the importance of participating in the wellness centers and programs.

In an informal interview with Dow employee, Andrea Fenton, she disclosed issues she sees with the leadership support and communication for the wellness centers. She explained that the management believes in the importance of participating in the wellness centers. She even explained there are plans to update the Employee Development Center, which is the oldest of the Dow wellness center. The communication employees receive about the wellness centers are
through an optional mailing list and running ads on the Dow televisions, which can be found at various locations around the company (Fenton, A., personal communication, 2017).

Through an informal interview with Mike Butzu, the wellness center director, it was disclosed that there are several departments throughout the organization that do not place emphasis on fitness, nutrition, or participation in the wellness centers. Butzu has struggled to engage with some of the department leaders, as they have busy schedules or are uninterested in fitness. In Butzu’s experience, the departments that rely on manual labor generally have eating habits that are unhealthy and are physically exhausted after work and do not want to go workout (Butzu, M., personal communication, 2017).

There are several recommendations that can be made from the knowledge of this information. Not all employees are on the mailing list, which limits the communication and advertisement of the wellness centers. By creating a mailing list to send emails to all employees, the managers can get the employees’ attention regarding new classes or programs to participate in at the wellness centers. For the departments which rely on manual labor, the employees may benefit more from learning about nutrition and stretching and strengthening the muscles they use during their work day. The leaders at the wellness center can help guide the leaders of those departments towards helping the employees realize the importance of their health for their job performance and their general health.

Section 4: Role of Motivation on Employee Participation

Each individual is motivated in different ways and has different reasons for participating or not participating. Some employees are motivated to participate because they were active before they were given the opportunity to join the wellness centers. Some employees are
motivated because of the low membership fees. Other employees are motivated to participate because their co-workers participate and either convince them or guilt them to participate.

In January of 2016, the wellness center’s Executive Director and one of the health interns created a wellness challenge and presented it to multiple departments throughout Dow Chemical Company. In the challenge, the participants got their body composition measured before the challenge, then given 8 weeks to improve their body composition. Each department came up with their own incentives and prices for the winners of the challenge. After the initial body composition measurement, the wellness team provided nutritional and fitness advice and motivation through presentations and weekly emails. These challenges motivated some of the employees who are motivated by competition, and motivated others to participate because they had others changing their lifestyle with them. Some of the employees stated that they have a difficult time eating healthy and being motivated to exercise when they are surrounded by unhealthy eating habits all day and being around others who do not exercise. These challenges are not mandatory, but encourage departments to start making healthier choices, and potentially start using the wellness facilities as a part of their weekly routines.

A lack of motivation is a problem that effects many employees as well. Not all employees are motivated by competition, and not all department managers have included the fitness challenges for their employees. Other employees, such as Andrea Fenton, have several meetings throughout the day which interfere with group fitness classes they like to attend. Fenton also noted that she doesn’t live close to the wellness facilities, and likes to eat dinner before her workouts, but feels unmotivated to go back to the gym after she gets home (Fenton, A., personal communication, 2017).
In another informal interview with Duane Dopp, a third shift employee who sometimes works second shift, voiced his concerns. Many employees in his department and several other departments work different shifts throughout the week. This kind of inconsistency has left him with irregular sleeping patterns and a lack of desire to exercise during his time away from work (Dopp, D., personal communication, 2017).

Leaders play an important role in motivating their employees, and should be taught by Dow executives and the wellness staff how to improve their leadership techniques in order to increase participation within their departments. Another suggestion would be to keep employees on a regular schedule in order to regulate their sleep patterns, which getting enough rest is a part of being healthy, and can give those employees more energy to utilize the fitness facilities.

Section 5: Organizational Culture Influence on Utilization

The culture at Dow Chemical Company is focused on safety because of the hazardous and potentially dangerous and harmful products the employees work with. Even in the off-campus wellness centers, there were monthly safety training sessions to discuss ways to avoid unnecessary harm or injuries. All employees and interns working for Dow, even temporary employees, have to complete a safety training course through the Great Lakes Safety Training Center. The course is a one-time 4-hour safety training course to help employees understand the dangers they may encounter and ways to safely avoid these situations through proper safety communication and precautions (Great Lakes Safety, 2017). The emphasis on safety is a top priority at Dow Chemical Company because of the potential dangers on the job sites.

Health is slowly becoming a part of the organizational culture at Dow Chemical Company. The building of the wellness centers was the first step to creating a culture of health in the organization. The body composition challenges were an additional step towards creating a
healthy organizational culture. Each department has a different cultural atmosphere based on their form of work. Many department leaders did not and still do not place an emphasis on working out or eating healthy. Butzu stated that he struggles to get some of the departments to participate in these challenges, and some of the groups that do participate do not take it seriously during the time it is implemented (Butzu, M., personal communication, 2017).

Safety is an important part of health, and should stay part of the organizations culture. Health should also become a larger part of the organization’s culture to increase the employees’ awareness and knowledge of importance of their overall health and wellness. The culture the top managers of the organization build will influence the culture throughout the organization, and a organizational culture of health and wellness can increase the participation rates in the wellness centers.

Section 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

After reviewing related literature and other information provided by organizational resources and informal interviews, the specific questions regarding organizational dynamics and human behavior at Dow Chemical Company have been answered. There are different messages being sent by the different leaders throughout the different departments of the organization. The physically demanding departments, place less emphasis on utilizing the fitness facilities because of the physical demands placed on their employees. The communication between the wellness center staff and the employees of Dow Chemical Company has increased, but still has a lot of room for improvement and consistency.

Employees who use the facilities are motivated by discounted gym membership rates, group fitness classes for a variety of workouts, and the multiple wellness center locations
Employees who do not use the fitness facilities gave reasons such as physical exhaustion after work, disinterest in fitness, lack of time to participate, blue collar employees not feeling comfortable or welcomed in the upscale East End Wellness Center, and a lack of support from colleagues to engage in a healthier lifestyle. Other barriers that have stalled the participation on the facilities are the limited number of squat racks and benches available for those who like to lift heavier weights or even powerlift.

Creative motivational strategies that can be used are the wellness staff engaging with the leaders in each department, and bringing fitness and wellness opportunities to the job site. Examples of this would be teaching a group fitness class on-site during lunch or right after work, so the employees have the convenience of the fitness center coming to them, saving them time and effort to make it to the wellness facilities. The wellness staff could also make regular visits to departments throughout the week to give presentations on nutrition, fitness, and the importance of participating in the available resources. The leaders in each department can motivate their employees by engaging in department fitness challenges, so they can create an organizational culture of health and wellness within their department.

**Recommendations**

There are several recommendations for Dow Chemical Company’s leaders on organizational dynamics and human behavior to help increase participation rates in the wellness centers. The leaders should make a biometric screening and fitness screening process a part of a mandatory yearly exam to motivate employees to make healthy decisions in exchange for discounted health care rates. They should include all employees on an email list regarding the wellness centers and related activities. They could benefit from department specific workout plans to help the employee stretch or strengthen the muscles they use during manual labor or the
muscles that are weak from a lack of exercise or being hunched over a desk all day. The management in each department should relay the importance of these exercises to their employees. The leaders should delegate regular shifts to employees so they can form regulated sleep patterns and possibly give them more energy to make it to the wellness centers on a regular basis. Lastly, the leaders should make health a larger part of the organizational culture along with safety. These changes in human behavior and organizational dynamics can help increase the participation rates in the Dow Chemical Company wellness centers.
References


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