

Making the Most of Your Employee Assistance Program

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October saw World Mental Health Day which certainly helps raise awareness. Clearly, we should all be giving this subject thought on a regular basis and not wait for these annual reminders.

One resource employers' can rely on are Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). This invaluable support mechanism is often included within insurance products such as Group Life Assurance, Income Protection and Health Cash Plans. Should an employer not have access to an EAP through such products, standalone versions are available at relatively low costs to a business.

Making your Employee Assistance Program available is one thing, but to really make the most of this indispensable resource for your employees, you need to promote the benefits, outline how easy they are to access and how your company is helping employees manage their lives better. Consider the following steps to promote the benefits of your EAP programme to your employees:

Designate people to be your 'EAP Champions' within your company

Hearing first-hand how helpful your Employee Assistance Program is from another employee can motivate your staff to try it. Directors, colleagues, managers, HR professionals — anyone with a positive EAP experience can provide a compelling testimonial as to the benefits of your EAP programme, the more senior the person making the personal endorsement, the better.

One approach we have found works well is to advertise the launch/relaunch/existence of your EAP by circulating a general communication of recommendation from the CEO, (or MD or similar high-ranking individual) praising the service and openly inviting everyone in the organisation to give it a try.

Better still, upload the CEO recommendation on to your staff intranet and make sure to include it with any induction pack materials for new starters. A senior member of staff admitting that they have used the EAP service and that it has helped them, can really break the ice and works well against any stigma associated with seeking help. It can also help putting to rest any qualms relating to the confidentiality of the service.

Promote awareness of the Employee Assistance Program throughout the year

Continually sounding the bell on your EAP is critical to driving engagement. The need for EAP services is not seasonal, it is year-round, so the promotion of it should be as well. Keep an eye

out for topical themes and awareness days so you can use these an opportunity to spread awareness of the benefits available.

Most EAP providers will be able to help you with additional wellbeing support and EAP promotional material.

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Promote all the of services available in your Employee Assistance Program

No matter how minor a feature may appear, it could be important to someone. Be sure to give each feature its time in the spotlight, be it stress management, the employee wellbeing website, health and wellness materials, structured support sessions, legal/financial information, child & elder care support and so on.

Highlight the Work/Life resources available in your EAP

Emphasising the features that support a healthy work/life balance is an excellent way to get employees interested in the Employee Assistance Program. Companies whose employees take advantage of these services can experience many benefits, including improved morale, lower turnover, drops in employee presenteeism and being more likely to be seen as an employer of choice.

Consider your Employee Assistance Program an extension of your HR department

Most EAP clinicians offer more than just administrative and onward referral services. They are also highly experienced in workplace dynamics and can help you discover new ways to enhance productivity and morale and improve employee engagement. They can help support not only employees but also team leaders and supervisors with skills such as Stress Management, Supporting Bereavement, Dealing with Mental Health Issues in the Workplace and much more.

Wingate Benefit Solutions can help ensure that you have the support in place for your staff by either providing you with full details of how you can implement this benefit or to provide you with the support and tools to promote the benefits of your existing EAP to your staff. If you would like

to find out more, please contact us at Wingate.