

# TOOLKIT 12

## Promoting Shiatsu at an Exhibition



### Exhibitions

Exhibitions can be an excellent way of promoting Shiatsu and your practice. They are also a great opportunity for personal and professional development.

Angie Jury, who has organised more than 70 Mind, Body and Spirit events, says “Our research shows that many members of the public are still nervous of entering a therapy centre as they are unsure what they need to ask for. A therapy event provides an open environment in which they can see others having treatments, collect information and ask questions, without taking the first step through the clinic door. Once better informed, the hope is that they will become clients, something that has proved to be the case.”

Check your local papers and search the internet for exhibitions being held in your area. Any exhibition where there is public can be targeted so don't think you have to stick to health exhibitions, consider local business exhibitions too. The Society holds a list of exhibitions it knows about at <http://www.shiatsusociety.org/members/external-communications>

Benefits of exhibiting:

- promote Shiatsu and your practice to a targeted audience
- generate quality sales leads to gain clients
- identify and understand the needs of your clients
- network with like-minded businesses
- gain valuable competitor intelligence
- launch Shiatsu and your practice in your area and build your reputation
- another revenue source for yourself
- having hundreds of potential clients in one place
- a chance to promote yourself, your business, Shiatsu and your values
- build a potential client database
- test market awareness and perceptions
- direct marketing to your potential clients by talking to them and giving them a Shiatsu taster

You cannot usually evaluate your success straight after the exhibition because although clients may be aware of you now they may just retain your literature ready to try a Shiatsu at a later date or when they have a particular problem, this is why it is always good to ask clients where they heard of you.

### Exhibiting Successfully

Attending an exhibition can involve a large commitment of time and money for your business. By preparing thoroughly in advance you can ensure your business maximises the potential benefits and the return on your investment. You should ensure you:

- find out what time you can set up your stand and get there early
- check that all the equipment works before you go 'live' (if you have electrical equipment such as a CD player)
- select suitably trained or knowledgeable staff for the stand

- brief staff thoroughly
- identify everyone on your stand with a badge stating who they are and the name of your company
- employ sufficient staff on the stand to deal with enquiries, allowing for rest breaks
- avoid spending time talking to colleagues so visitors do not have to interrupt you with their queries
- allocate enough time to each visitor to allow for questions and note down details to follow up
- provide a means of recording queries and taking contact details
- avoid taking too many details during the event - these can be collected during your follow up
- take breaks away from the stand so you don't have to eat or drink while you're on duty
- provide plenty of promotional materials that will stand out later
- attach your business card to the front of promotional material and highlight points of interest
- give visitors your contact details to make it easy for them to get in touch after the event

Business Link July 2012

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1073792474&type=RESOURCES>

## Health Exhibitions

### Finance

Local exhibitions can be relatively cheap with stands around £50 per the day. Space at local school and church pamper evenings can be around £3. Ask clients for a donation or a minimal fee for a taster Shiatsu to cover your costs. Take all your costs into account – travel, stand cost, posters, gift vouchers etc.

It is more than possible to make a generous profit!

### What materials will I need?

You are welcome to borrow the pop-up banner stands from the Shiatsu Society for free. See your Journal for photos of them. We will courier them to and from you. Banners can also be collected from the following schools who hold sets for members to use:

- School of Shiatsu Edinburgh
- Bristol School of Shiatsu
- Aberdeen School of Shiatsu
- Shiatsu College Norwich
- Shiatsu College Newcastle
- Shiatsu College Brighton
- British School of Shiatsu-Do London

You will also need to take along your leaflet and business cards. The Society Journal is full of promotional material you can purchase – leaflets, exhibition packs, posters, pens etc.

It is also a good idea to take fact sheets with you on Shiatsu research and how Shiatsu can help with specific ailments.

Always check with the exhibition organisers what equipment they will provide for exhibitors as this could save you taking along items such as tables and chairs.

Take along a table to display your literature. Do yourself a checklist:

## **Sample Checklist**

- Tablecloth
- Table or box to put literature on
- Chairs
- Stools
- Posters
- Massage Portable Chair
- Futon, cover, carry case & hygiene towel
- Your Leaflets
- Your business cards
- Cash Tin
- Bag of Velco Sticky Strips
- Travel Wipes / antibacterial handwash
- Wall Leaflet Holder
- Table top leaflet holders
- Box for Questionnaires
- Practitioner File (to be used after booklets run out)
- Clipboards for clients to complete the treatment record cards
- Book Lists & Newsletters
- Pens
- Treatment records

## **Stand out**

- Run a competition.
- Have a colourful stand with balloons and banners.
- Have flowers on your table along with literature
- Have chairs for clients to sit on as most exhibitions lack seating and people can get very tired walking around such events.

## **Insurance**

All practitioners working on the general public should have insurance. Some of the larger exhibitions will want to see evidence that you are insured so take your policy along.

## **Advertising**

Some exhibitions have promotional guides, websites and newsletter which are great to advertise yourself and your stand in if your finances allow. People will know you are exhibiting and where they can find you.

Use social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Linked In to let people know where and when you will be exhibiting.

Invite local media to visit your stand. Offer them a taster treatment.

## **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment will need to be carried out when working for a lot of exhibitions.

An example:

Task/Subject	Hazard	Who's at risk?	Risk level	Precautions or Control Measures	Comments
Clients health	Client may not declare any health problems	Client	Low	Every client to complete a treatment record and sign to say they declared any health problems	Shiatsu is a gentle finger pressure and gentle stretching so risks are minimal.
Tripping / falling	Clients may fall/trip over the futon, banners or table	Client	Low	Items to be placed in a safe position and not in walkways	There is no equipment used

## Treatment Records

You will need to take a treatment record for everyone you treat. Keep it brief – ask the client to fill in their name, address and email, any medical conditions etc whilst you are treating another person. This can be useful for following up after the event and keep a mailing list of people who may be interested in any future offers you may have. You will need a tick box on the form to get the persons permission to do this.

After each treatment quickly write down details of the work you have just done on the person.

You will need to keep these records for a minimum of 7 years.

Example 1:

## Name of Practitioner / Business

## Treatment Record Card

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Exhibition:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Client Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Client Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Notes:**

**Disclaimer:**

I confirm that I have declared any health issues I have to the practitioner.

Signed (Client) ..... Date .....

Example 2:

The following treatment card has kindly been supplied by member Janine King:

<b>The Bucklesbury Clinic - Client Medical Record</b>			
Name:		Telephone:	
Address:		Mobile:	
Date of Birth:		Email:	
		Where did you hear about us?	
<b>Do you now or have you in the past had any of the following: (please tick)</b>			
High blood pressure		Arthritis	
Low blood pressure		Osteoporosis	
Epilepsy		Asthma	
Diabetes		Varicose veins	
Heart problems		Psoriasis	
Cancer		Fainting episodes	
HIV or Aids			
<b>Are you taking any regular medication? (prescribed or unprescribed)</b>			
<b>Are you pregnant or trying to become pregnant:</b>			

**Please let us know if any of the above changes when you come for future treatments**

## **Support**

Why not contact other Shiatsu practitioners in your area to share the stand space, costs and workload? This can be very useful when taking a break during the day. One person could be treating and the other(s) talking to the public and handing out literature.

You could also combine with practitioners of other therapies.

## **Vouchers**

Take along gift vouchers to exhibitions to sell.

November / December exhibitions can be an excellent time to take a stand at a local exhibition. A lot of schools and churches hold Christmas Fayres. Take gift vouchers along to sell as they make excellent Christmas presents.

## **Show Offers**

People love a free gift or vouchers. Consider giving vouchers for say £5 off the cost of a future treatment.

## **Bookings**

If you are running a stand on your own then have a booking sheet on a table at the front of the stand so that the public can just write their name and telephone number in a time slot. If there is more than one of you then have someone take the booking.

Example:

## TREATMENT BOOKINGS

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Exhibition: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME	NAME	COMMENTS

### Indoor or Outdoor exhibition?

Most exhibitions are held indoors so always check how much space you will have. It is a good idea to explain to the Exhibition Manager that Shiatsu needs a quiet space so maybe ask for a corner or somewhere that isn't noisy. Check which exhibitors will be next to you also.

If outdoors then prepare for the British weather! Gazebo's secured down well make excellent treatment rooms. Depending on the time of year blankets and a portable heater can be useful.

### What is not permitted

You may find that some venues do not permit items such as candles, children, incense, music etc so always check beforehand.

### Music

If you plan to have background music playing at your stand then check with the organiser that this is permitted. Do not cause a nuisance to neighbouring exhibitors. Check that the venue has a license to play music and that you are playing music that is licensed. There is a lot of royalty free music available on the internet. Just search for 'royalty free music'. For further information see the Toolkit on Music Licenses.

### Futon or chair?

Taster treatments can be carried out on a futon or a chair. It usually depends on the practitioner's preference and the amount of space you have on your stand. Remember that a futon will need



room for you to manoeuvre around it. The Society has a massage chair you can borrow for free but it is collection only from Rugby.

If taking a futon then think about whether you can transport it easily.

If using a futon ensure you take along couch roll for hygiene reasons and any cushions you feel you may need to support clients.

Kneeler stools can also be used.

## **Workshops / presentations**

If the exhibition allows for speakers then contact the organisers to ask if you can have a slot to promote Shiatsu. Inform the audience what Shiatsu is, what it can help with and where they can find your stand in the exhibition to have a taster treatment or pick up literature. It is not a good idea to have an unmanned stand so this is where working with other practitioners can come in useful as they could be working on the stand whilst you are speaking. You could also have a practitioner giving a member of the audience a taster treatment whilst speaking.

## **Follow ups**

Always follow up on any enquiries you receive.

Most organisers make the visitor lists available in their entirety (often free, sometimes for a one-time rental fee). A quick 'Sorry we missed you but did you know...' can mop up quite a few new client leads.

## **Measuring success of your attendance**

### Why measure?

There are four reasons for measuring the results of every exhibition you attend:

- To justify your investment – you should show a return on your investment whether that's takings from the exhibition or income from new clients generated from your attendance at the exhibition.
- Measuring gives you the facts. You need to get your marketing mix right to help choose the best exhibitions for you - Not all shows are alike. Measuring helps identify your winners.
- To improve your own activities - What you do before, during and after each show can matter as much as which shows you choose.
- Marketing may be a science, but it's rarely a perfect science. Every time you evaluate an exhibition, you're actually measuring many things at the same time, including the show itself, the market climate and your competitors' activities.
- It can be dangerous to jump to a conclusion about an event based on only one experience. You might conclude that an event was wrong for you when actually it was a competitor's special promotion that rained on your parade. Similarly, you might think your pre-show mailing was a major success when it may have been due to the show audience doubling.
- The key is to capture your learning so that you can improve your plans over time.

## **Business Exhibitions**

Business exhibitions are very different from health exhibitions and you will have a very different audience. Most people attending health exhibitions are keen to learn more about improving their health, including the use of complementary therapies. Many business people will not have this attitude and can be sceptical about CAM. It is your job to change their way of thinking! A lot of business people will be suffering from ailments such as stress, bad backs and insomnia amongst other things. This is your chance to open their eyes to Shiatsu and its benefits. You are also targeting a market who should be able to afford regular treatments.

## **Practicalities of working a business stand**

- Look business-like and smart – wear a suit or Shiatsu Society polo shirt.
- Take wipes to wipe the seat of the chair you are using
- Take a plastic bag to put your wipes and any other rubbish in.
- There may be insufficient room to use the table provided on your stand. A storage box with a lid will often double up as a table if you cover it with a table cloth and it is also somewhere to put your valuables and space card and handout leaflets.
- Demonstrate on a kneeling stool or a chair if there is insufficient floor space.
- A kneeling stool or chair is better than using a 'Stressbuster' type massage chair. If there are chair massage people there, then there is no differentiation between them and Shiatsu.
- If you are unsure what the difference is.....Chair massage offers preventative and stress release work. Shiatsu offers whole body work, responding specifically to illness and/or injury, emotional and physical.
- Book your Bed & Breakfast well in advance not too far away from the venue. You may have to 'set-up' the night before.
- To assist with timing your Seated Shiatsu Tasters treatments, Jane Prescott suggests you could purchase a 15 minute Egg Timer. It is easier to 'read' at a glance than a little clock, and colourful and decorative on my stall side-table. You can purchase them online at: <http://www.tinknstink.co.uk/parents-shop/sand-timers>. You could also purchase 10 or 30 minute timers.

## **Communication Pointers**

- When you speak to businesses talk their language: think how you would feel if a car mechanic, doctor, engineer, physicist, architect, mathematician etc. only spoke to you in his/her particular specialised language. Keep it simple and real, not Qi, meridians, energy etc.
- Talk cost effectiveness and staff absenteeism, musculoskeletal disorders – bone, joint and muscle problems such as lower back pain. Ask them about stress and bullying in the workplace and tell them what Shiatsu can do
- Ask them what sort of work they do – at a computer all day, telephone work, standing, sitting, dry stuffy atmosphere, is absenteeism a problem to their company.
- Encourage visitors to your stand to experience a treatment and also to fill out the questionnaires. Demonstrations visually draw people to the stand.
- Make use of slack time by visiting all the stands to make contacts, take with you leaflets and pen and pad.

## **A Few Facts**

The following facts can be useful to state when giving talks or why not add them to fact sheets that can be handed out to employers? Absence from work by employees costs companies a lot of money. If you can show that Shiatsu can reduce sickness days and thus reduce costs for the companies then you should get their attention.

- A survey by the Health & Safety Executive found that 13.5 million working days were lost between 2007 and 2008 due to stress related absence. Source: Health & Safety Executive, July 2012. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/management-standards.pdf> Research paper: HSE Management Standards and stress-related work outcomes – Kerr et al 2009
- The most widespread work-related complaints are joint, bone and muscle problems but asthma, panic attacks, migraine, back pain, dermatitis, IBS and hearing loss have all been linked to the particular job a person does.

- Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI): this covers a range of injuries to the nerves, muscles and tendons of the upper limbs. Half a million people in Britain have reported an RSI condition and many more are thought to suffer in silence. Factors thought to contribute to this condition include stress, repetitive work over prolonged periods, poor posture and a badly designed work station. RSI builds up gradually. Early warning signs can be singling or numbness in muscles and joints. (Visit [www.rsi.org.uk](http://www.rsi.org.uk) ).
- On average, in relation to unauthorised absence, people are absent from work for 6.5 days a year (CBI 2011 Absence Survey). According to the 2011 CBI Absence Survey the annual cost of absence to the UK economy is £17 billion.
- From the BBC News Page 5 October 2011 – A study has concluded that stress has become the number one cause of long-term workplace absence. With concerns over the economy mounting, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development also found a link between job security and mental health problems. In the public sector, 50% of firms claim stress-related absences had increased in the past year. Reporter: John Moylan
- Results from the European Shiatsu Federation's research undertaken by the University of Leeds and part funded by the Shiatsu Society showed that at the end of the study, 86% of clients perceived that Shiatsu was effective in treating symptoms of stress and tension, problems with muscles and joints including back pain and posture, low energy and fatigue; 77-80% of clients indicated that they had changed their lifestyle as a result of receiving Shiatsu; 95% of clients experienced an increased sense of calm and feeling of relaxation. Long AF. J Altern Complement Med 2008; 14(8):921-30.  
<http://www.shiatusociety.org/content/current-and-published-research>

### **Questionnaire / Prize Draw Example:**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Exhibition: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you heard about Shiatsu before today? Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you had a Shiatsu treatment before? Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, where did you hear about Shiatsu? Yes ☐ No ☐

Would you like us to send some further general information  
about Shiatsu and your local practitioner details?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please enter your name and address details below and we will enter you in our Prize Draw to receive a £30  
voucher towards a Shiatsu treatment.

There will be one draw for each day of the Exhibition.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire, your name will be entered into our  
Prize Draw.

Mind Body Soul, Olympia, London. 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> November 2006

## **Basic Info for a Business talk**

### **Shiatsu, an effective means of reducing Sickness Absence.**

*State some of the facts above.*

Three main health areas of concern:

- **Stress**, (headaches, depression)
- **ULDs** (Upper limb disorders)
- **General 'health' problems** causing sickness absence.

The UK is leading the world (the USA is now second) with regard to litigation in courts taken by workers through injury, illness or 'unfair dismissal'.

This is very costly and is putting many large and small firms out of business.

### **Time for a healthier attitude**

Research suggests that many UK companies are still not managing their key employee healthcare risks effectively. Surveys by *Human Resources* magazine into stress and health in the workplace reveals major concerns about both, but little in the way of proactive policy for handling these issues.

Research from Mercer Human Resource Consulting backs these findings. The survey, which involved over 600 companies, showed that more than half of respondents identified employee absence as a problem for their organisation. However, few appear to be investing in service to address the issue. Almost two-thirds of companies do not provide stress management services while over three-quarters do not provide employee assistance programmes.

Given the increase in legislative requirements due to the tightening of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines, it is worrying that companies seem to be ignoring the potential risks associated with failure to effectively manage stress and the pre-employment health assessment process in particular. These include risk of prosecution and a rise in direct and indirect sickness-absence costs.

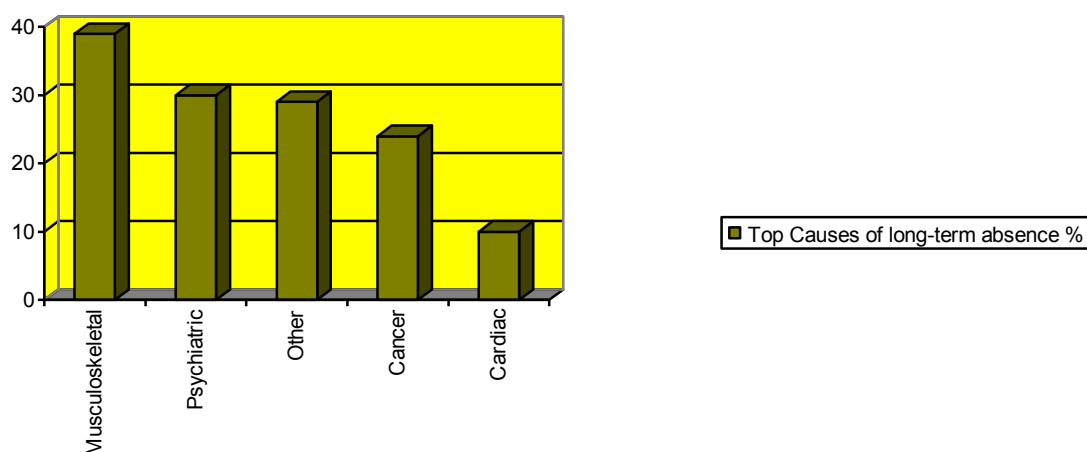
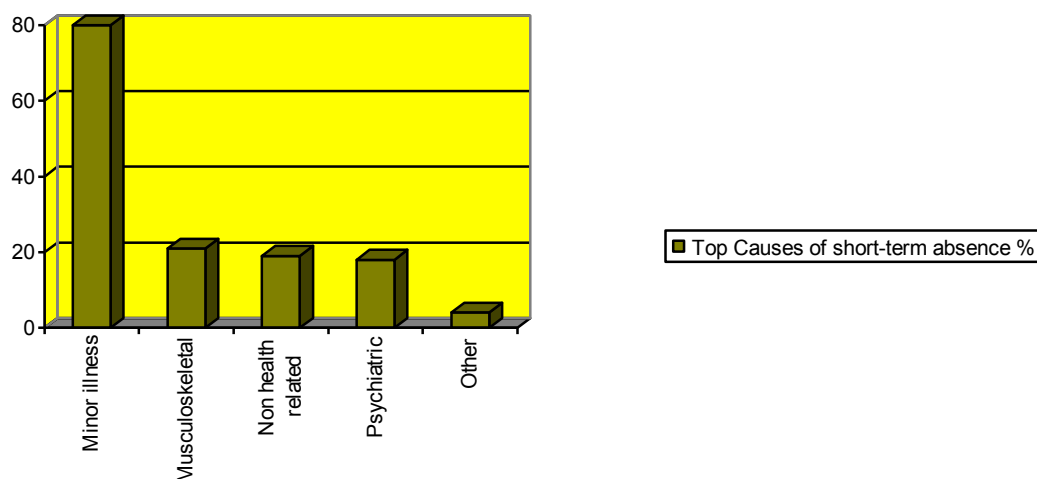
#### **HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?**

Mental health problems are a significant cause of both long and short-term sickness absence (30% and 14% respectively), yet few companies are responding strategically and proactively. Though worrying, this finding is unsurprising.

Mental health illnesses range from stress to full-blown psychiatric disorders such as depression. As these illnesses are largely subjective, they can be difficult to diagnose and are often highly contentious. Despite its prevalence, understanding of mental health conditions is limited and few line managers have the skills, confidence or appropriate support to manage them. Additionally, co-workers are often cynical or frustrated by colleagues who are absent due to these problems, perhaps because they can be harder to relate to than a physical injury.

Many employers adopt reactive, ad hoc approaches which do not address the causes of the problem, or simply consider the issue too hard to tackle. Consequently, conditions can become chronic, requiring expensive solutions and resulting in increased income protection payments, ill-health early retirement claims or litigation.

The prevalence and impact of stress within organisations provide a compelling argument for addressing the issue. The direct costs of sickness absence attributable to stress are estimated to be between £3.3 billion and £5.1 billion. Indirect costs are difficult to quantify, but could add an extra 50% to 100%. Anyone with direct experience of either managing an employee or working with a colleague with mental health problems will know only too well the impact that it can have in the workplace and the potential loss of productivity.



### Know what you need to fix

HSE guidelines require companies to use an assessment tool and programmes to reduce any identified risks. Companies may be visited by the HSE, particularly if they have a critical incident attributable to stress. Prosecution is possible if appropriate measures and initiatives are not in place.

Mental health-related absence alone is a key issue for companies; when musculoskeletal problems are considered, the absence problem multiplies. Mercer's survey found the majority of all long-term absence is attributable to musculoskeletal problems and stress. Many problems, such as repetitive strain injury and back pain, have a psychological element, so addressing the mental health aspects would therefore improve sickness absence rates.

Mercer's experience suggests companies are unsure about adopting the HSE methodology. Some think that, by placing stress on the agenda, conducting audits and assessments and raising awareness, it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy and increase risk exposure. Companies have a duty of care to address psychological work-related risks, but may be concerned that, once a risk is identified and quantified, it is more difficult to ignore. Given the number of products, services and approaches available, determining the best solution can also be confusing. Due to the subjective and multi-casual nature of stress, employers are uncertain as to exactly what it is they are trying to fix.

## TACKLING THE PROBLEM

Companies should treat stress as they would any other risk that affects employees and operational efficiency. The first step is to develop a strategic approach that includes both proactive and reactive elements. This approach requires commitment from management and should include a stress risk assessment or audit, preventative measures (such as alterations to work patterns and awareness training), together with support services, for example, an employee assistance programme, and early access to effective treatment services.

Effective treatment is available through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and other psychological therapies. A recent trial in the Metropolitan Police showed that a course of CBT and cognitive analytical therapy was effective in getting 80% to 90% of staff with work-related stress, depression and anxiety back to work.

Limited CBT and associated psychotherapies are currently available from the NHS, and services are currently oversubscribed. However, these treatments are also available privately, and employer-funded, fast-track access to private therapy is worth considering in the light of the costs of sickness absence and potential claims.

## PRE-EMPLOYMENT HEALTH CHECK

Despite increasing discrimination and risk legislation, 70% of employers do not undertake pre-employment screening for all employees. Many employers have stopped undertaking pre-employment health assessments because they consider them to be of limited value due to the employment and discrimination law issues around refusing employment to an ill or injured individual.

Potential employees cannot be refused employment on the grounds of ill-health where reasonable adjustments can be made to accommodate them. However, the potential risks of not identifying an existing illness or disability should be considered. Employers may unknowingly discriminate against individuals with disabilities by not making required workplace adjustments. Organisations also have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act to make every effort to minimise the risk of exacerbating an existing employee health problem.

To protect against or prevent future litigation relating to workplace injuries or work-exacerbated illness, a baseline snapshot of an employee's health is useful to determine the impact of the current workplace on an illness or injury. The introduction of e-based pre-employment assessments has made the process more efficient and cost-effective. Prospective employees can complete a questionnaire on-line and results can be available immediately if no issues are identified. Follow-up is required in 10%-15% of cases, usually by telephone.

## TIME FOR A RETHINK

The survey raises concerns around the attitude and performance of UK employers in relation to employee health. Employees are worthy of more strategic, effective and efficient healthcare programme. The good news is that, by investing in managing employees health risks, organisations can make real long-term savings.

Our 60-second guide

- The direct costs of stress alone set businesses back between £3.3 billion and £5.1 billion a year. HSE guidelines require you to use assessment tools and other initiatives to reduce stress in the workplace – or face prosecution. See [www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards)
- Treat stress as you would any other risk that affects employees and operational efficiency. Be proactive with a stress risk assessment or audit, pre-empting stress by altering work patterns and carrying out awareness training. Install support services and provide early access to effective treatment services

- Use pre-employment screening for all employees to provide a snapshot of their health and to determine the impact of the current workplace on illness or injury. This can usually now be done online
- Workplace health programmes are worth the effort: according to one estimate employees who take part can cut short-term disability by nearly six hours, and gain a small, but significant, performance improvement of 2% - equivalent to two days a year of productive time
- Make sure any health programme is not just an add-on – embed it in the company culture for maximum effect and to create employee buy-in
- Don't just focus on absence – a more holistic approach to better health and performance at work should cover any or all of the following: sleep; stress; nutrition; exercise; bodyweight, risk

January 2007

## Introducing Well-Being in the Business Agenda

**Tim Potier, Drummond HR, July 2012**

In difficult economic times, one might think that employee well-being is not a priority in the business agenda. With revenues diminishing, companies outsourcing part of their activities to developing countries and unemployment reaching dramatic levels, why would employers focus on employee well-being?

A crisis is also an opportunity to change the established models and to redefine the way to prosperity. The term creative destruction known as “Schumpeter’s gale” and adapted from the work of Karl Marx highlights this process in which old ways of doing things are destroyed and replaced by new ways. This was identified by the Austrian-Hungarian-American economist as the motor of the economic growth. In the past, employee well-being has not been a major preoccupation for employers but it is high time to consider this arena as a niche to tap into. Well-being at work can be defined as “creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation “ (Tehrani, N., Humpage, S., Willmott, B., & Haslam, I, 2007).

Recent research has identified that enhancing the well-being of the workforce results in increasing productivity. According to a study investigating the well-being and performances of 1,200 employees, individuals who are categorised as thriving demonstrated 16% better overall performance (Spreitzer, G. & Porath, C., 2012). A happy workforce is also characterised by higher engagement levels as the study pointed out thriving individuals were 32% more committed to the organisation and 46% more satisfied with their jobs (Spreitzer, G. & Porath, C., 2012). Interestingly, a recent research project conducted by the Newcastle upon Tyne based HR Consultancy, DrummondHR, has highlighted that improving workforce engagement is the top priority for HR professionals in the UK (Potier, T. & Moore, H., 2012 p.7). Since early 2008 DrummondHR has focused research on well-being in the work place. A well-being predictive tool based on a data set of 35,000 elements which has psychometric qualities has been developed. The tool is called Well-being Insight Wbi and has been independently validated by Newcastle University’s Industrial Statistics Research Unit in 2011. Wbi can predict absence at 0.79 from psycho-social factors and can predict at 0.86 those employees who are likely to display presenteeism. This predictive insight into absence, well-being and presenteeism enables organisations to reduce the cost of absence and to enhance discretionary effort.

Taking into account the great benefits linked with employee well-being, why are a significant number of organisations still having a limited engagement in well-being promotion? This may be due to an incorrect assumption regarding the cost of implementing a well-being strategy and also simply because the proven benefits are at that time not widely known by employers.



First of all well-being initiatives do not necessary have to be costly to be efficient. Secondly, the research carried out in the last few years in this arena underlined that investing in employee well-being is a valuable investment. A report published by the Department of Health provides a calculation of the return on investment associated with well-being action and this represents a significant annual return on investment of more than 9 to 1 (Knapp, M., McDaid, D. & Parsonage, M., 2011, p. 22). Return on investment could even be improved with a better assessment of well-being levels. A survey of HR and Health and Safety professionals found 52% of the respondents indicating that their organisations do not assess well-being while an even larger proportion (64%) do not assess the impact of their well-being activities (Potier, T. & Moore, H., 2012, P. 8). The assessment is a key point in developing focused well-being programmes that deliver value for money. The extra profits generated by better employee performance are substantial, specifically with the reduction of presenteeism, and another sphere of economic benefits to be considered is the savings connected to absence reduction.

140 million working days are lost every year due to sickness absence in the UK. Employers pay £9 billion each year in sick pay and associated costs, plus the indirect costs of running an organisation while people are on sick leave. The UK state spends £13 billion in health related benefits annually (Black, D. C. & Frost, D., 2011 p 7). Considering the colossal cost of absence, reducing this phenomenon is a critical challenge for employers and for the State. In the last 2 decades absence from work has decreased in the UK with average days lost by each employee each year going from 7 in the early 90's to 5 in 2011. This may be due to employers actively tackling the issue and also because of more proactive efforts to reduce injuries caused by lifting and handling. However, if no serious action is taken the evolution could reverse in the next few decades as a new driving factors of employee absence are emerging.

While the number of physical injuries has been reduced the level of stress at work is increasing. Due to those workplace pressures 1 out of 5 workers in England and Wales have developed depression or anxiety and a similar proportion of workers (19%) report sickness to avoid work because of these pressures (Populus, 2010, p. 23). The cost to the economy of mental health disorders in England is expected to rise dramatically dementia costs were £14.9 billion in 2007 and it is predicted to reach £34.8 billion in 2026 (McCrone, P., Dhanasiri, S., Patel, A., Knapp, M. & Lawton-Smith, S., 2008, p. 114). Another factor which is likely to increase absence is the growing number of older workers. Managing an aging workforce will be the main challenge for the British economy. Obesity is another threat to the well-being of the working age population. With predictions of 60% for adult males and 50% for adult females being obese in the UK by 2050, obesity is a rising national issue (Butland, B., Hebb, S., Kopelman, P., McPherson, K., Thomas, S., Mardell, J., Parry, V., 2007, p. 34).

## **Further reading**

Business Link

<http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1073792474&type=RESOURCES>

Health and Safety Executive

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/research.htm>