

INTELLIGENCE


Work Healthy

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

It's the new year, the time when many people make promises to themselves about what they're going to do differently in the next 12 months. Many of those resolutions concern health: eating better, exercising more, quitting smoking.

Companies are making related resolutions. Faced with

soaring health-care costs, businesses are reevaluating what used to be purely a personal matter for workers. The physical health of employees has now become a workplace issue.

 **Intelligence, T+D September and December 2003 for discussions on workers' emotional health.**

For instance, a study by the University of Michigan's Health Management Research Center found that medical costs rise as weight does. The medical bills of people who are overweight are up to \$1500 greater than those of their thinner colleagues. And related conditions such as diabetes and heart attacks can

Employers get involved in workers' physical health.

cause employee absenteeism, even death.

That's why some companies are addressing employee health proactively. GM and the United Auto Workers have joined together to offer employees, retirees, and family members an education program called LifeSteps. The program provides advice on a range of health topics, message boards, online tools, and more.

Although 71 percent of executives surveyed by the American Management Association said that companies have a responsibility to promote employee health and wellness, fewer than half of the

organizations offer educational health programs. Does your company? If not, should it?

In addition to education, half of the companies surveyed offer health club memberships or discounts and a quarter have gym facilities onsite. About a third of the companies offer incentives for employees to participate in health programs. Funds for that can be recouped in insurance costs and improved worker productivity.

« Sources/ the *Washington Post* and *HR Management Daily* Document Update

Global 360

The number of women business owners is growing around the world. One in 11 women worldwide is now an entrepreneur, says the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. « www.gemconsortium.org

Many women start their own businesses out of **necessity**. Nearly half of the women studied said they became entrepreneurs because they had no other job option. That's why **developing countries** are more likely to generate female entrepreneurs. To compare, just a third of men cite necessity as the reason for starting up their business. About one in seven men is an entrepreneur globally.

"Increasing the participation of women in entrepreneurship worldwide is imperative to creating a **healthy global economy**," says Marilyn Carson Nelson, chairperson of the National Women's Business Council, which published GEM's findings.

NewsFlash

There's a new weapon in Washington D.C.'s fight against terrorism: a learning management system. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority and the Metro Transit Police are using an LMS to help ensure employee preparedness and public safety.

Immediately after 9/11, almost 7000 WMATA employees were trained on responses to unknown substances. Last October, police officers participated in training on weapons of mass destruction. In aiding this training, the Thinq LearningServer took the place of difficult-to-manage databases, tracking training registrations and compliance. At press time, plans were in the works for the WMATA to deliver online content with the system. « **People and Plans:**

Training's Role in Homeland and Workplace Security," September 2003 T+D, for more on training and the war against terrorism.



How to Ask Your Boss for Flexible Work Hours

Are you envious of your friends whose employers let them use flex-time, telecommute, job share, or make other family-friendly arrangements? From Julie Shields, parental-leave activist and frequent speaker on co-parenting, come these tips on getting your boss to agree to flexible work policies.

Treat your request as a business proposal. Ask seriously, professionally, and with a positive attitude.

Do thorough research. Investigate your company's current policies and find out what arrangements other people in your company have made. What's worked and why?

Write it out. Present your request in a written, well-organized form.

Pitch it as a win-win situation.

Allowing flexible work schedules has helped companies reduce turnover and recruiting and retraining costs, plus improve morale and productivity.

Troubleshoot. Anticipate objections, and plan how you'll counter them.

Pilot your arrangement. Give it a short trial period, then review how it's working.

Do a self-assessment. After a month, collect feedback from those affected by your arrangement.

Agree to a formal review. Meet with colleagues and your boss to discuss any issues and problems.

Offer to expand the program. If the arrangement is working for you and the company, offer to develop a formal program.

If your boss says no, Shields says, try to resolve any issues he or she has and bring up your contributions to the company. If the answer is still no, you might consider finding an employer that better meets the needs of your family.

New Online Column! (read, blog)

T+D now has its very own blog! What's that, you ask? Short for *Weblog*, a blog is an online journal containing links and commentary regularly posted in reverse chronological order. *T+D's* blog (see a link at the *T+D* Website) will act as an extension of this Intelligence column and offers you even more news, trends, links, and thoughts on training, learning, and business.

The blog is updated several times a week and enables comments so you can talk to me and each other. Check it out today!

Access the blog at www.astd.org/virtual_community/td_magazine. Also check out *Learning Circuits's* blog at www.meta-time.com/lcmt.

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