Developing practical recommendations for integrating workplace safety and wellness initiatives

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What do we mean by an integrated approach?

Building on traditional safety and health initiatives by identifying and enhancing working conditions most relevant to worker health, safety, and wellbeing.
What is not considered an integrated approach?

Adding a workplace wellness program

Source: Excellence Canada
The case in support of an integrated approach

Workplace safety, health, and wellbeing are inextricably linked, both on- and off-the-job
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The case in support of an integrated approach

- Reduction in workplace injuries and illnesses
- Improved workers’ job satisfaction
- Enhanced organizational culture of trust, safety, health
- Reduction in work-related stress
- Improved health opportunities, more informed decision-making
- More productive employees
- Reduction in healthcare costs
- Family, community, and societal gains
In support of an integrated approach

Europe

Australia

Canada
OHS and wellness activities in Ontario

Biswas et al. Larger Workplaces, People-Oriented Culture, and Specific Industry Sectors Are Associated with Co-Occurring Health Protection and Wellness Activities. IJERPH. 2018
The case against implementing an integrated approach

- It’s just wellness with a fancier name
- Even if you build it, they won’t come
- Emphasising individual worker responsibility for health
- It’s not feasible
- Not sure how to implement it
Project objectives

**STEP 1:** Conduct a scoping review of existing literature

- Document approaches to integrated workplace safety and wellness
- Identify characteristics of integrated approaches, their challenges and successes, and “what works, for whom, and in which contexts”

**STEP 2:** Work closely with stakeholders to identify principles that should be considered by workplaces for an integrated approach to workplace safety and wellness

- Consult with a stakeholder advisory committee
- Conduct a ranking exercise of principles and recommendations of importance to stakeholders
Stakeholder advisory committee

Representation from
• Research
• Government
• Private sector
• Public sector

• Consultancy
• Leadership
• Health & safety
• Human resources
• Employee benefits program
Step 1: Scoping Review

Review Question:
What are facilitators, barriers, and recommendations that are relevant to the implementation of integrated worker health approaches?
Step 2: Identifying Recommendations

- Stakeholder Consultation Workshop
- Qualitative Analysis of Stakeholder Discussions
- Stakeholder Review Exercise
Recommendations

Pre-Plan
Understanding when to consider planning for an integrated approach

Plan
Establish objectives and processes required to deliver an integrated approach

Do
Delivering/Implementing the plan in the "Plan" phase

Check
The data and results gathered from the “do” phase are evaluated

Adjust
Making adjustments to the integrated approach, if needed
Recommendations

Plan

Adjust

Check

Do

1

Plan

Adjust

Check

Do

... Solved!

Plan

Check

Do

Check

Do

n

Image credit: Christoph Roser at AllAboutLean.com
Estimated time and resources required

- Pre-Plan, 14%
- Plan, 26%
- Do, 35%
- Check, 12%
- Adjust, 13%
Assess readiness

Understand whether the organization is open to reassessing how it supports the health and safety of its employees.

Find out if the organization prioritizes the safety, health, and wellness of employees in their existing practices, mission statement or corporate policies.

Examine whether the external economic climate and political climate is favourable for the implementation.

Assess organization’s willingness to direct, or redirect, internal resources in support of program development and implementation.

If unionized, assess the support of union leadership and their future role.
Gain leadership buy-in by outlining what employers and employees can gain from an integrated strategy in terms of its value on investment and return on investment.

Identify change agents and champions within the organization who can help the organization and employees see the value of an integrated strategy.

Assess perceptions of enablers and barriers to change among leadership and employees. Understand who believes changes are needed, and why.

Leverage evidence of the benefits of integrating wellness and safety from data sources (internally or externally).

Listen to what organizations have to say and leverage what you can to get going.
Understand needs and priorities

Tailor the integrated strategy towards employer needs and priorities.

Conduct a needs assessment of employer and employee priorities via meetings, focus groups, surveys, etc.
A planning committee should have representation from organization leadership, employees, department representatives, and possibly members of the community at large that can share their insights on the implementation process (e.g., non-profits, health care organizations).

Consider putting in place mechanisms to protect employee privacy, allay any fears of retribution and communicate these clearly to employees.

Consider tailoring communication about the strategy to different departments and employees. For small-medium organizations, consider if sending a single message is more appropriate.
Consider a change management process to prepare, equip and support leadership and employees on the uptake of the integration strategy.

Train leadership, HR/safety, wellness managers, and employees early on to make sure everyone understands how the strategy will work and its benefits.

Consider adding an external stakeholder to the planning group. Consider the addition of an external individual with relevant experience to the planning process.

Consider formal and informal meetings with representation from within the organization and other organizations/researchers/community organizations to learn/share experiences regarding the challenges and successes of implementing an integrated strategy.
Prepare budget and resource requirements

Ensure budgeting and staffing resource requirements are considered or make clear how existing budgets and staff will be utilized.
Develop an evaluation strategy

Develop an evaluation framework and develop metrics to measure the progress or successes of the integration strategy.

If it is difficult to develop or implement progress measures, consider whether there is existing data to inform progress.
Implement and deliver the integrated approach

Ensure leadership presence in program delivery models.

Ensure a balanced integration of physical and psychological health and safety.

Ensure that the integration of wellness activities do not compromise safety activities.

Make sure all design and implementation steps are conducted in a timely manner.
Communicate and promote the integrated approach

Enable change agents to promote the strategy.

Build momentum on early successes from short and simple programs and leverage for larger and more long-term strategies.

Decide what and how often to communicate the strategy in a way that is meaningful to employees and that will reach the most employees. Communicate how the program goals will be measured. Clarify what is voluntary and what is mandatory.

Have individuals and departments that employees typically interact with (e.g., colleagues, HR, managers) deliver the communication strategy.

Communicate how successes will be achieved, and the consequences of success, in other analogous settings.
Measure and evaluate

Ensure that progress measures reflect goals set out in the original implementation plan.

Consult with the organization’s leadership and program participants on their perspectives on how the program was delivered and if any challenges need to be addressed.
Communicate successes and barriers

Make the organization’s leadership and employees aware of any milestones and successes resulting from the integrated strategy.

Communicate barriers to success that were identified and what has been done to attempt to address them.
Refine and continually improve

1. Pre-Plan
2. Plan
3. Do
4. Check
5. Adjust

Revisit and adjust the design and implementation of the strategy regularly.

Prepare, support, and help employees in any changes to the refinement of the strategy.

Build idea that this is a continuous improvement process, so the process is never ‘done’.
Recommendations

Pre-Plan
1. Assess readiness
2. Gain organizational buy-in

Plan
1. Understand needs and priorities
2. Plan the strategy
3. Train others
4. Prepare budget and resource requirements
5. Develop evaluation strategy

Do
1. Implement and deliver
2. Communicate and promote

Check
1. Measure and evaluate
2. Communicate successes and barriers

Adjust
1. Refine and continually improve
Next steps

- Refine the recommendations for specific workplace contexts (e.g., workplace size, industry sectors, provinces)

- Develop and validate recommendations into indicators of integrated safety and wellness
Thank you

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