

## Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures

# Case Study: Bowden Print

A medium sized printing business is implementing healthy workplace initiatives with the support of management and the enthusiasm of a workplace champion.

### The Approach

Bowden Group is a printing firm of approximately 35 staff undertaking a variety of roles including administration, management, sales, printing, design, typesetting, store management, packing and production.

Under the leadership of an enthusiastic and motivated office manager the company is embarking on the process of becoming a healthier workplace. Their initial focus is the provision of fruit and, importantly, vegetables, to staff. As part of the office routine a staff member shops weekly for fruit and vegetables taking into account staff preferences. Staff are also encouraged to bring in any surplus fruits for exchange. The almost weekly birthday cakes have reduced. Inspired by the Swap It Don't Stop It campaign<sup>1</sup>, a number of staff shared their swapping ideas, such as using the 'Healthy Swap Options App' ensuring access to information about healthy options was only finger tips away.

Physical activity is the other priority area. All staff have been provided with the *Be Active Walk Yourself Happy* educational booklet<sup>2</sup>. Physical activity experiences are shared and celebrated – the office manager's abseiling achievement following significant weight loss, participation in a five kilometre walk and becoming a regular gym attender was a highlight and has inspired others to be more active.

Health information such as seasonal fruits and vegetables and healthy breakfast ideas are displayed in the workplace.

### The Rationale

Company management believe that healthier staff will be more focused, have longer concentration, are less likely to make errors and thus are more productive. This in turn, leads to happier clients. Staff engagement is recognised as an important contributor to a more stable staff, and better morale.

### Fit with organisational core values

Bowden Group has a long history in South Australia as a family business and is understanding of and responsive to the family needs of workers. They also know the importance of adopting new technologies and innovations. They recognise the 'enthusiasm of management team and staff, including two fourth-generation family members' and that all staff play a critical role in ensuring the best possible client experience.

The CEO believes it is critical to continually reflect on the business and its relationship with the rest of the world. Trends adopted by the company include becoming more environmentally aware – with changes to products and practices as well as adopting a social responsibility policy. This saw greater support for community sporting groups, participation in local activities such as the launch of Bowden Village, gift giving Christmas cards and fund raising. They have in recent years been active participants in, and adhere to, the Ten Principles of The United Nations Global Compact<sup>3</sup>.

Supporting staff health and wellbeing is clearly a direction for the future. It complements their existing and important focus on occupational health and safety in their organisation and is critical in being a leader in the marketplace as an employer of choice with resulting staff attraction and retention.

### The Process

Bowden Group is one of the small and medium businesses supported by the Inner West Business Enterprise Centre's Healthy Worker Adviser (HWA)<sup>4</sup>. After attending a healthy breakfast event which engaged local businesses in thinking about healthier workplaces, the Chief Executive Officer was inspired to think about what could be done at Bowden Print. With the enthusiasm of the Office Manager a series of changes have been put into place and events are being planned with the HWA's assistance.



## Positives and Achievements

The culture of the organisation is changing, especially around food. Not so long ago there was a very strong norm of morning teas, hamburgers and other high fat meals for lunch and snacks. The interest in healthy food has grown enormously and really engaged staff. The environment is changing too - one of the vending machines has been removing reducing access to unhealthy products.

Having an office champion with a supportive management makes all the difference.

## Overcoming the Challenges

Providing a staff breakfast proved problematic in terms of cost, but the fruit bowl was a suitable solution as an early step. Starting with diet and physical activity allows the organisation time to engage staff before tackling some of the more difficult issues of smoking and alcohol.

Cost and time is generally challenging for small business. It is clear that if there is a positive business outcome then an investment is easy to justify however measuring this is difficult.

The company plans to benchmark sick leave along with injury rates to track changes that might be achieved through having a healthier workplace.

Discussions are underway with the Healthy Worker Advisor about the development of a health and wellbeing policy to make clear the company commitment and guide actions. This would see a healthy workplace as one of the top ten priorities for the organisation.

A longer-term program with a series of focus areas is now being developed. It is hoped that in the weekly newsletter the inclusion of health information and participation in a team events will be taken into consideration. Support for smokers to quit is on the agenda though there are not many smokers, as is a priority of reducing sedentary behaviour, standing and stretching for those who are desk based for their work.

## Duration and resources

The healthy breakfast event in late 2013 was the start of Bowden Group's focus on becoming a healthier workplace. There is no specified budget but funding for the fruit and other events is available.

***'I always refer to everyone as part of Team Bowden, and similar to business' where everything is measured by percentages, the 'health' of Team Bowden needs to be viewed the same way. The usual comment... 'if you eat something that is not good for you, you increase the chance of heart disease or cancer by x percent'. Clichéd as it sounds, if we can turn this 'chance percentage' in our favour and positively improve Team Bowden's health, even by 1% we are definitely heading in the right direction... 'it is simple, healthy staff equals a healthy business'***

*Damien Burchell, Chief Executive Officer,  
Bowden Group*



<sup>1</sup> Australian Government. Measure Up. <http://www.measureup.gov.au/internet/abhi/publishing.nsf/content/become-a-swapper-lp>

<sup>2</sup> SA Health. Walk yourself happy. Available from: <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public/content/sa+health+internet/healthy+living/be+active/how+to+walk+yourself+happy>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations. Global compact. The ten principles. <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> IWBC Healthy Workers <http://bec.org.au>

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[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers)  
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