



Corporate well-being

Lesson code: VU7Q-81QA-Z3IN

INTERMEDIATE

1 Warm-up

How important do you think it is for a company to have a healthy workforce?

2 Vocabulary

Match the following words to their correct definition:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 1. absenteeism | a. a long walk for pleasure or exercise, usually in the countryside or mountains |
| 2. well-being | b. an organisation which provides money or help to people in need (e.g. ill or poor people) |
| 3. charity | c. the state of feeling healthy and happy |
| 4. temptation | d. the substances that influence your health, which you take into your body as food |
| 5. hike | e. the way in which a person stands, sits or walks |
| 6. eyestrain | f. tired or painful eyes as a result of too much reading, looking at a computer screen, etc. |
| 7. nutrition | g. wanting to have something that you know you should not have |
| 8. posture | h. when employees are not at work when they should be |

3 Reading

Read the article 'Corporate well-being' about the different health initiatives that the UK company i-to-i has experimented with. Answer the following questions:

1. Why is a healthy workforce good for business?
2. What happens on 'Fruity Friday'? Is this initiative a complete success? Why/why not?
3. What did i-to-i give its staff as a reward? Why did they stop it?
4. Why did the firm cancel the Tai Chi classes?
5. What was the 'Caledonian Challenge'?
6. Why was the 14-mile hike more popular than the Caledonian Challenge?
7. Which key areas does the firm want to focus its health initiatives on?



THE
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Corporate well-being

A firm that offers travel opportunities wants to expand the health horizons of its employees.

- 1 A healthy workforce is good for business. Apart from reducing absenteeism, there is increasing evidence that suggests a connection between good performance and employees who are in good condition. The Harvard Medical School recently found that the most healthy 25% of a workforce are seven hours more productive per week than the least healthy 25%.
- 2 I-to-i is one of a growing number of companies that is trying to improve the well-being of its staff. But, also like many firms, not everything is working.
- 3 "You could say we're a company full of good intentions, but things often prevent us from doing exercise or eating what we should," says Sarah Horner, public relations manager of the organisation, which provides opportunities for volunteer travel and training for TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). "We would like advice on what we can do to encourage all our 50 employees in our UK office to become really healthy."
- 4 The company has already experimented with a few strategies. "About six months ago, we introduced an initiative called 'Fruity Friday', which means all employees get free fruit on that day," explains Ms Horner. "It's become really popular: when the fruit arrives, people are informed online and, almost immediately, they're off to the kitchen to get some. The problem is that in the rest of the week, we consume enormous amounts of sweets and biscuits."
- 5 At least staff at i-to-i are eating less bad food than they used to. "At one stage we had a box full of chocolate, which seemed like a really nice way to reward staff. But it was almost too successful, and people were picking from it all the time. In the end, some staff members actually asked for it to be removed because they couldn't resist temptation," she adds.
- 6 The firm has also tried introducing weekly Tai Chi classes to relieve stress and improve well-being. "But they were arranged before work and unfortunately they had to be cancelled because not enough people could attend. Some travel long distances so they couldn't get here early enough. I wanted to attend, but couldn't because of the time of the classes."
- 7 Rather more successful was the Caledonian Challenge, which a fifth of the staff recently undertook. "You walk 54 miles (86.4 kilometres) in Scotland, through the night," explains Ms Horner. "We also arranged a 14-mile (22.4 km) hike recently, which we did for the charity we support, and even more people did that - probably because it was far less challenging. Nevertheless, it was still under half the workforce."
- 8 Above all, i-to-i would like to know what measures it can introduce on a daily basis, as well as on occasions, to get staff feeling their best. It would prefer to concentrate them in three key areas - eating, exercise and stress release - and it would like the initiatives to be long-term where possible.

Adapted from The Independent, 04 September 2005



4 Listening

Listen to two experts commenting on i-to-i's corporate health initiatives. Tick the ideas they suggest.

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| daily fruit breaks | <input type="checkbox"/> | a tomato growing competition | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| leaflets on healthy living | <input type="checkbox"/> | a water cooler | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| a lunchtime walking club | <input type="checkbox"/> | yoga classes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| large 'exercise balls' for employees to sit on | <input type="checkbox"/> | monthly health seminars | <input type="checkbox"/> |



5 Phrases

Match the verbs on the left with the nouns on the right to form phrases from the article and recording. Choose four phrases and invent a sentence for each one.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. reduce | absenteeism |
| 2. improve | a challenge |
| 3. introduce | a charity |
| 4. resist | an initiative |
| 5. relieve | stress |
| 6. undertake | temptation |
| 7. support | well-being |

6 Grammar - Past and present tense review

Name each underlined tense from the article and match it to one of the functions below.

I-to-i is trying to improve the well-being of its staff.

I-to-i provides opportunities for volunteer travel and training.

The company has already experimented with a few strategies.

About six months ago, we introduced an initiative called 'Fruity Friday'.

It's become really popular.

- a habitual or long-term activity in the present.
- a temporary, current activity
- a completed action that occurred at an unspecified time before now
- an action that started in the past and is complete in the present
- a completed action or state in the past



Find one more example of each tense in the article and match it to one of the functions.

7 Grammar Practice

Complete the sentences with the verb in brackets:

1. Their company _____ (offer) a variety of services for its customers.
2. Sales _____ (go up) every year, but this year they _____ (increase) even more than usual.
3. About a year ago, I _____ (start) my own business. Till now, I _____ (sign) ten contracts.
4. Right now, Mr Chang _____ (wait) for some important news. He _____ (hope) to become the new operations director of the company's Shanghai office.
5. John _____ (decide) to take an extended holiday this year because he _____ (work) so hard on the latest project.
6. Peter usually _____ (commute) by car. However, this week he _____ (take) the train because his car _____ (break down).
7. Last month, we _____ (set up) a new call centre, but so far there _____ (not/be) any results.
8. _____ (you/book) a hotel room for tonight? I _____ (ask) you to do it yesterday morning.
9. Anna _____ (visit) some friends in Italy at the moment. She _____ (go) there every year.
10. _____ (you/ever/eat) sushi? It _____ (be) one of my favourite types of food.

8 Talking point

What do you think of the initiatives and advice mentioned in this lesson? Would they be effective or popular in your company?

Has your company introduced any successful/unsuccessful health initiatives? What changes have they made/did they make to the well-being and productivity of the workforce?

What measures would you introduce to improve well-being in your company?

