INTRODUCTION

Ask a business owner how healthy their company is and they may well reach for the profit and loss spreadsheets. But what about the policies and procedures in place to encourage a healthy workforce?

To remain competitive, it’s important to make every penny of investment count. From your energy provider to your vehicle fleet, your people need the same level of care and attention as any other resource. In fact, employees are your single greatest asset and, because of this, their health is paramount to how well your business works.

Organisations are beginning to understand the impact that poor health can have on their company efficiency and profitability and are finding ways to refresh the minds and bodies of their employees.

But the notion of healthy is not quite so simple. We may think we know what it means, but the concept of health has an ever-shifting definition.

This white paper looks at how best to define healthy in terms of today’s workplaces and showcases how other organisations are creating healthy and prosperous working environments.

Your staff restaurant is “a reflection of a well-run enterprise”.

International Labour Office
WHAT DOES ‘HEALTHY’ LOOK LIKE?

The concept of ‘healthy’ is not an absolute, but has transformed over time in light of new attitudes and advancements in science. Consider the dramatic changes in opinion toward obesity, suntans and smoking, as they have swung in and out of public favour over the years.

Since the dawn of history, man has struggled to hunt, grow or — in later years — buy enough food to eat for survival. From the earliest hunter-gatherers, lifestyles were physically demanding and maintaining bodyweight and health were difficult tasks. This trend continued well into the Renaissance, where the hardworking poor and pampered rich were easy to tell apart simply by their body shape (Bloomgarden 2003).

The larger figure was then seen as an admirable quality because it demonstrated a level of health and prosperity beyond the reach of the common man. Most of us have seen the fuller figures depicted by Peter Paul Rubens, a popular Renaissance artist whose distinct style gave rise to the term Rubenesque (BBC 2014).

And what about the changing attitudes to tanning? A golden suntan in the 19th century was a sign of poverty, literally evidence of hard labour outside for long hours. Fast forward to the early 20th century and people learned that exposure to sunlight had health giving benefits, such as helping to prevent rickets. By the 1940s, the tide of opinion was turning once again as scientists documented the link between sunlight and skin cancer and, over the next few decades, public awareness of the danger grew (Bolanca 2008). Although, arguably, the sun-kissed look is back in style again today — albeit from a bottle.

Understanding that ‘healthy’ is a fluid concept is a great reminder that our views as to what makes for a healthy workplace should also be reviewed regularly; if we stay alert on the subject, then our work environments are more likely to promote health and productivity.
How do we define ‘healthy’?

If perception of what is healthy continues to shift and evolve, how can we define it?

A good starting point is the World Health Organisation (WHO), which describes health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. It’s interesting that this definition, which has not been amended since 1948, focuses in on the positive, proactive contributors to health.

WHO Europe went a stage further and, in 2003, established nine social factors that contribute towards a person’s state of health (WHO Europe 2013): social gradients; stress; early childhood development; social exclusion; unemployment; social support networks; addiction; availability of healthy food; and availability of healthy transportation.

Check out our appendix for some interesting tips as to how your workplace policies can have positive effects on each of these social factors.
HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

The majority of adults spend approximately one third of their lives at work, meaning the work environment is the ideal place to make changes in order to have the biggest impact on health.

FOOD, GLORIOUS (AND NUTRITIOUS) FOOD

HOW LUNCH BREAKS DIFFER AROUND THE WORLD

<table>
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<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>MEAL BREAK PER HOURS WORKED</th>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>20 minutes per 6 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>45 minutes per 6 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>1 hour per 6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>1 – 2 hours per 6 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>30 minutes per 5 hours</td>
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Workers in the UK have longer working hours and shorter holidays than their counterparts in Europe. They also take shorter lunch breaks — often at their desks — with 20 per cent of workers never taking a lunch break (Health Generation 2014).

Convenience is a familiar pattern for food at work and it’s easy for workers to fall into a grab-and-go snacking mentality.

Businesses are increasingly finding that providing healthier eating options for their people needn’t be complicated or expensive, and the workplace restaurant is playing a leading role in nourishing the workforce.

To delve more into how a healthier workplace is a more productive one, check out our white paper ‘Leaner and fitter with a bottom line to match’.

WHY IS NUTRITION IMPORTANT IN THE WORKPLACE?

- To reduce sick days
- To reduce accidents
- To reduce stress
- To raise morale
- To increase productivity

NUTRITION COUNTS

- Insufficient iron intake can impair work performance by as much as 30 per cent
- A nutritious diet can raise productivity by 20 per cent
- Many adults spend half of their weekday waking hours in the workplace
- 70 per cent of UK workers regularly eat at their desks
- Over half of UK workers take less than 30 minutes for their lunch break.
HEALTHY WORKPLACES IN ACTION

With such a clear link established between good nutrition and increased productivity, what's holding back UK organisations from taking action to improve the food choices available to their workforces?

Perhaps it's something as simple as getting inspiration as to how and where to start.

SO HERE ARE SOME CASE STUDIES TO SPARK IDEAS:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CHARTWELLS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chartwells is a leading provider of contract catering and support services to the education sector in the UK.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduced the ‘Nutrition Smart Board’:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• A free, online educational resource tool</td>
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<td>• Aims to educate pupils on the importance of healthy eating and physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provides teachers with access to lesson plans, presentations and activities</td>
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<td>• Splits audience into age groups to provide relevant information to pupils aged four to 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Links with both the national curriculum and the European Food Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 700 registered users.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits to the organisation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• USP for Chartwells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Competitors do not offer the same level of added value activity free of charge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demonstrates commitment to working in partnership with schools</td>
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<td>• Links to the public health agenda.</td>
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Chartwells’ Nutrition Smart Board is an ongoing resource launched in September 2012 which aims to educate schools that use Chartwells as their catering provider in healthy lifestyles. The site is updated regularly with new resources and blogs for teachers and, in the future, it will expand into multimedia projects, including ‘cook-along’ videos for teachers to stream. The resource complies with the national curriculum and contributes to educating young people on the importance of leading active lifestyles and maintaining a healthy weight.
ESS

ESS is a market-leading provider of catering, retail, leisure and support services in both the Defence & Government and Offshore sectors.

Introduced nutritional labelling…

On TAQA oil rigs:
- All four TAQA rigs have nutrition labelling for food served
- Food operations team developed suitable recipes for offshore
- Lower fat and locally-sourced products used
- Offshore nutritionist visited all rigs to give presentations and sessions to promote health and wellbeing.

In the Armed Forces:
- ‘Nutritionist Choice’ food labelling developed
- Will be promoted to customers in the Army, Navy, RAF and Royal Marines
- Supports a healthy diet from the ‘Service Special’ menu
- Aimed at those undertaking intense training
- Signposts customers to healthier options
- A ‘Diet Plan’ will be published to help customers keep track of key nutrients they need for training.

Benefits to the organisation:
- Actively promotes the wider public health agenda to customers
- Helps build stronger relationships between the service provider and client
- Highlights continued efforts in improving the overall health and wellbeing of its customers.

In August, the remaining three TAQA oil rigs in the North Sea went live with nutrition labelling making ESS the first contract catering company to supply full nutritional labelling to a full contract offshore. Recipes have been developed to improve the nutritional profile that is now presented on all food. ESS nutrition labelling will also be introduced to the Armed Forces in October 2014. Developed by a registered ESS nutritionist, it will promote healthy eating across the Armed Forces, with a focus on signposting the right meals for those doing intense training.
QUICK WINS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

So what can you learn from these case studies to take into your own organisation?

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Enthusiasm from the top when planning and implementing programmes is vital
- Lowering cost and bumping up convenience for workers drives take-up
- Gathering and acting on employee feedback makes participation more likely
- Being unafraid to design a solution to meet the specific needs of the organisation.

Lowering cost and bumping up convenience for workers drives take-up
CONCLUSION

What and how your people eat at work is your organisation’s best opportunity to influence the overall health of your workforce. It’s astounding, once you look at the facts, how great an effect improving your people’s nutrition can have on your overall productivity and your bottom line.

Companies are taking action right now to improve their employees’ health with comprehensive programmes that have improved nutritional intake at their core. And the International Labour Office goes so far as to describe a workplace restaurant that provides healthy menus and fresh ingredients as “a reflection of a well-run enterprise”. Investment in helping your people eat better at work is a sound investment for any business.

Healthier employees mean greater efficiency and teamwork in the office as well as better rates of attendance and improved staff retention. Investment you make in your workforce stays within the company, meaning savings in recruitment and training. A healthy workforce is a more alert, productive and valuable asset to your business.

There are many things UK businesses can learn from existing experience. The biggest secret to success is being up-to-date with the latest knowledge, open minded as to what may make a difference in your unique circumstances, and aware that a wide variety of factors have an impact on what makes a workplace healthy.

The knowledge and the proven effects are there for the taking.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX

WHO Europe created nine social factors that contribute to a person’s state of health. Here’s how your workplace environment can help promote better health across each of the factors.

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<tr>
<th>SOCIAL FACTOR</th>
<th>IN GENERAL</th>
<th>AT WORK</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social gradients</td>
<td>Those at the bottom of the social ladder are more likely to live short, unhealthy lives. Disadvantages include: few assets; poor education; a dead-end job; poor housing; struggling to raise a family; insufficient pension.</td>
<td>This is also reflected in a typical middle-class office environment, where staff at the top of the chain enjoy better health and longevity than subordinate workers.</td>
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<td>Stress</td>
<td>Stress is the body’s response to anxiety at home or work. It stimulates the cardiovascular and immune systems and is damaging over long periods of time. Stress is also linked to social gradients.</td>
<td>A caring work environment with job security reduces stress and improves productivity. Employees also feel valued through feedback, reward, and provision of facilities for socialising, relaxing and eating.</td>
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<td>Early childhood development</td>
<td>Stress, malnutrition and smoking during pregnancy and early childhood affect the health not only of the baby but also of the adult they will become.</td>
<td>Supporting pregnant employees at work helps to lay the foundation of good health for their children and for the mother’s continuing good health.</td>
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<td>Social exclusion</td>
<td>A very low income, or poverty, denies access to a good standard of education, housing, transport and other crucial aspects of modern life. Stress and ill health ensues.</td>
<td>People move in and out of poverty. Employers can protect employees’ prospects with regular training, assessment and mentoring, and building staff morale and teamwork.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>The anxiety of unemployment together with its financial implications greatly increase the risk of poor health and an early death.</td>
<td>Job insecurity can be as damaging to health as unemployment. Businesses can use effective communication to reassure employees.</td>
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<td>Social support networks</td>
<td>Quality social relationships with friends, family, work colleagues and the community, provide practical and emotional support. This greatly improves health and emotional wellbeing.</td>
<td>Trust, respect and mutual support in the workplace make for happier employees, better teamwork and a sense of belonging.</td>
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<td>Addiction</td>
<td>Addiction to alcohol, smoking and drugs usually begins with economic or social disadvantage. The addiction exacerbates the downward spiral, depleting income and affecting health.</td>
<td>Employers can offer education, information and access to support for addiction. These can be leaflets in the workplace restaurant, online, or via staff meetings.</td>
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<td>Availability of healthy food</td>
<td>Access to affordable, healthy food is critical. People on lower incomes buy cheaper food, which is often high in fat and low in nutritional value, putting them at risk of obesity, dental cavities and disease.</td>
<td>Offering healthy food options at work encourages employees to make good choices. Along with better health, they have more energy and improved concentration.</td>
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<td>Availability of healthy transportation</td>
<td>Public transport, walking and cycling offer opportunities to exercise, socialise and improve the environment. Despite this, car use in Europe is still on the increase.</td>
<td>Employers can introduce car share schemes; bike sheds and subsidies for bicycles; and ‘walk to work’ days. All of which can promote teamwork as well as health.</td>
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