



Globe and Mail
national daily newspaper
Toronto, ON
March 29, 2019

EMPLOYEE RECOMMENDED WORKPLACE AWARD

Focus on well-being helps companies keep employees

AUDREY CARLETON

SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED MARCH 29, 2019

0 COMMENTS



Category winners of the 2019 Employee Recommended Workplace Award

GLENN LOWSON/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Recruiting and retaining talent is essential to any strong organization. But focusing on this while juggling other organizational goals can be a challenge.

With growing emphasis on mental health and wellness within Canadian workplaces, more and more organizations are beginning to see a correlation between their employees' well-being and their willingness to stick around.

Here are a few ways that the winners of the 2019 Employee Recommended Workplace Awards, created by The Globe and Mail and Morneau Shepell and presented on March 19, have improved recruitment and retention by adopting wellness initiatives in the workplace.

Competitive benefits make a competitive company

“We don’t have enough employees in Quebec to work in every job available, so we have to be a very good place to work so we can keep our employees.

“We try to focus on wellness and on what employees need to have in their life. ... Everybody wants to do sport or have time for training, so we just opened a gym at the office. We just try to listen to what they need and what they want, so they can be happy where they work ... They like to work here, and they think they have good conditions – better than other places.”

- *Élisabeth Paquin, advisor, human resources at Aéroport de Québec Inc., in Quebec City. Winner, mid-sized not-for-profit organization*

Supporting employees in reaching their personal wellness goals

“We have other support benefits, such as employee wellness programs, where folks can be eligible for up to \$150 per employee for health and wellness related initiatives that they may take on.

“Does \$150 make someone physically fit? No. It won’t by itself. But it complements the things that they’re doing on their own, or it can be a catalyst to doing something, like doing yoga. If you have someone that helps with the cost of that, and they pick it up, then it’s something you continue. So I think there are straight benefits and there are other things that can help be catalysts for supports to other things that they already do.”

- *Mark Phillips, chief administrative officer at the Town of Kentville in Kings County, N.S. Winner, small governmental organization*

Celebrating diversity and inclusion within the workplace

“We have a culture that’s very inclusive, a culture where people look out for each other, and so there is very much a family feeling at OCAS.

“We created what we call a ‘fun squad,’ and it is a committee of employees who get together ... and the mandate for this committee ... is, No. 1, whatever program that we do should practise inclusion, and No. 2, that whatever events we do are fun. And what I

mean by ‘inclusion’ is we celebrate a lot of things here at OCAS and the fun squad takes a direct role in it. For example, Christmas celebrations, Diwali celebrations, [Lunar] New Year, all those things are celebrated, and we want to create a workplace where, instead of not doing something or not celebrating a particular religious belief, we want to be able to celebrate all of them.”

- *David Hong, vice-president, customer and employee success at OCAS Application Services Inc. in Guelph, Ont. Winner, small not-for-profit organization*

Helping employees achieve success in all forms

“Our company purpose is to help others succeed. And we realize that a key enabler to helping our clients succeed is helping each other internally succeed.

“About three years ago we created a program that we call Spirit 32, ... a whole-person development program. We’ve offered all kinds of things through that, so we had, for example, a 16-week mindfulness training program that was part of that. We’ve done a series of seminars on brain health. We have a naturopath we work with who has come in and given sessions on how to get well, how to boost your immune system, all kinds of physical health-related things. We have a corporate movement program where we try to get people up and moving, we have a healthy snacking centre, we have a lot of initiatives that are part of that whole-person development program, and we have a whole team that works to keep that alive and fresh.”

- *Sarah Liverance, partner at Sklar Wilton and Associates in Toronto. Winner, small privately-owned corporation*

Sparking conversations between co-workers around mental health

“Over the past couple of years we set up a mental-health committee because we said, ‘We just want to ... get rid of the stigma, and start talking about stress management and how stress affects one’s performance.’

“Because we’ve been able to talk about mental health and physical health and wellness all around and work-life balance ... we’ve been able to have conversations with employees to say, ‘You know what, if you’re going through a tough time, take some

time off, reach out to our employee assistance program, reach out to someone in the organization.”

- *Carole Morris, director of human resources at MDS Aero Support Corp. in Ottawa.
Winner, mid-sized privately-owned corporation*

Cultivating support networks between employees

“We have lots of different physical things [employees] could participate in. We have a gym, boot-camp classes, yoga classes, a ball-hockey court, hockey at lunch time. And then we have a lot of clubs. Those clubs are fantastic because they’re not always in work time, but they get people meeting other co-workers that they don’t interact with day-to-day in their work life. So they’ll go hiking together, or there’s a soccer group, there are some people who go mountain biking. Once they build those connections, a) they’re living more of a healthy lifestyle, and getting out and being physical, which also helps mental well-being, so it’s doing all that, but then they’re also building connections and relationships with employees and co-workers. That really helps with retention.”

- *Heather Hantos, director of human resources at Pason Systems Corp. in Calgary.
Winner, large publicly-traded corporation*

Showing support for mental wellness from the top-down

Last year, the CEO of Avison Young sat down with the company’s staff to share his own experiences grappling with mental health. His candor “broke the bubble” around the stigmatized topic in the workplace.

“I think breaking that fourth wall and just getting everyone to be on the same page and know that they have the company backing them, even if they’re going through a tough time, I think that it really resonates with our employees. One of the things that you’ll hear them say is ‘We love the culture here.’ I think with the focus on health and wellness being an underlying thread to our culture, us trying to make sure that employees have enough time to get out and do other things that they enjoy, be with their families, focusing on that, putting emphasis on it, I think it’s really helped employees be happier at work. Happier employees are more productive at work, and they want to stay.”

- *Parveen Sandhi, director of human resources at Avison Young (Canada) Inc. in Toronto. Winner, large privately-owned corporation*

Happy employees help recruit new talent on their own

“I feel like focusing on the wellness and health of our employees sort of speaks for itself. Those employees are champions of the organization, and they do a lot of the work in promoting the organization through their own happiness and well-being at work. We can also use them as examples when recruiting, so we can say ‘Here are some of the ways that we support our current staff.’ We have all of these programs and incentives to make sure that our staff are happy and healthy and therefore more productive and engaged in the workplace.

“We have alternate work schedules for people that have conflicting times in their days, so we try and work around that type of thing whenever possible. We have great benefits that are family friendly, great sick and vacation time and that sort of thing.”

- *Rachel Palichuk, Northwestern Health Unit, with 13 offices across Ontario. Winner, mid-sized governmental organization*

Showing employees that they are valued and supported, no matter what

“The more emphasis we have on employee health, like total health or psychological health, it really speaks to new employees coming in because they feel like it’s a more inclusive place of employment. And it’s helping them understand that they don’t have to be the perfect employee, they’re there because of the skills that they’re bringing to the job, and whatever else you bring with it, we can help. They’re not looking to us for a place of therapy or healing, that’s not it at all. It’s just recognizing that when they’re showing up for work, we’re meeting their needs. And we’ve listened to them, and we’re providing for them. And they’re more than just the job. Who they are as a person is really critical to us.”

- *Shelley Parker, industrial psychologist at NB Power in Fredericton. Winner, large governmental organization*

Promoting company values within and beyond the office

“Our focus is always been on the safety of our members and looking after them, and for us that starts with our employees. So saying that we look after employees helps fulfill that promise, gives them purpose and connection to what it is that we do. When it comes to retention, when you feel actual connection with what the organization’s purpose is, and you feel that you share the same values and you feel that you share the same drive, it makes what you do worthwhile. And so we try to maintain that throughout our organization at all times and wellness plays a huge part of that culture of looking after people and being people-centric and being member-centric.”

We do a variety of programs. From a physical standpoint we’ll have challenges, we have an onsite wellness coach who can help people with their health goals, a wellness committee that looks after activities. But we also take an expansive view of what wellness looks like, so we have a great rewards program that allows employees to recognize each other and give each other points that they can redeem for goods.”

- *Tony Tsai, AVP corporate communications at CAA Club Group in Toronto. Winner, large not-for-profit organization*

Helping employees assess their own well-being

“We decided to go on that journey about two and a half years ago, where the organizational context meant it was perfect timing for us to introduce a total health index. It was a big cultural shift, selling to the employees that in order to be a high-performing company moving forward ... we needed to start managing our energy, instead of just managing our time.

And that’s where the Total Health Index started to feed this HR strategy. ... You do your questionnaire, with a personalized, confidential result that you get at the end. So you get basically your score card on ‘what’s my energy level’ or ‘what’s my balance or my unbalance’ in four pillars. The first year we did it, we had a little over 50 per cent participation. When we did it last year, we had close to 85 per cent participation. So that’s a good signal that people bought into it.”

- *Marc St-Pierre, vice-president of human resources at Sandoz Canada Inc. in Mississauga, Ont. Winner, mid-sized publicly traded corporation*

The organization is only as healthy as its people

"Our organization is only as healthy as our people. Things that matter to us, matter to our employees and we demonstrate that daily through wellness, diversity and inclusion. We believe it helps us attract and retain the very best people in the industry."

- Camille Paquette-Small, manager, Talent and culture, at Workplace Resource Canada in Toronto, a certified dealer for Herman Miller Canada Inc. Winner, small, publicly traded corporation

Responses have been edited for clarity and length.

Winning trophy for the 2019 Employee Recommended Workplace Awards.

GLENN LOWSON

HOW THE ERWA AWARD WORKS

Employees' overall health and well-being is key to their productivity and engagement at work, and that realization has more Canadian companies focusing on how to help their staff stay healthy – both physically and mentally.

As a result, more organizations are creating a wide array of workplace programs that range from committees that plan cheap and fun events to boost staff morale, to additional learning opportunities to help staff improve their eating habits, exercise and ability to cope with stress, to workplace programs that allow flexible working hours and remote working options.

The Employee Recommended Workplace Award, created by The Globe and Mail and Morneau Shepell, recognizes companies for excellence in achieving a healthy, engaged and productive work force. It is the only award of its kind that is based entirely on feedback from employees.

Here's how the award works. Employees complete a short confidential survey that includes questions about their physical and mental health, as well as aspects of their work and life – all elements of Total Health that impact employee engagement and productivity. Once completed, each employee gets an individual report that outlines their overall score, areas of strength, and areas they may want to focus on improving. As well, participating organizations receive a summary report that identifies areas of strength and areas where more work may be needed to improve the health of their work force.

Scores for each organization are tallied from the aggregate scores of their employees. If an organization's score reaches a minimum statistical threshold, the company earns the distinction of being named an Employee Recommended Workplace and can use the award badge to promote their company. This is no small feat. Employee Recommended Workplaces are those companies that were in the top percentile among participants and have a workplace that prioritizes health and wellness. In 2019, 75 organizations earned the designation.

The companies with the highest overall scores are awarded the Top Category award based on their size and business structure. The winning organizations achieve the top Total Health scores in their categories, representing privately owned, public, not-for-

profit and government sectors in small, mid-sized and large businesses. The Employee Recommended Workplace Award is unique in that it is purely based on statistics and employee responses. There are 12 Top Category winners for 2019.

In addition to the employee surveys, employers complete a questionnaire in which they outline key operating principles and the wellness programs they offer.

Registration for the 2020 Employee Recommended Workplace Award will open on April 3. Visit www.employeerecommended.com for more information.

© Copyright 2019 The Globe and Mail Inc. All rights reserved.

351 King Street East, Suite 1600, Toronto, ON Canada, M5A 0N1

Phillip Crawley, Publisher