

# HYPNOTIC DOLLARS AND SENSE

Why employers should offer stop smoking programs.

by Luke Young



An innovation is about to sweep the Australian workplace that offers a simple program for employees to dramatically improve their health and well being (including that of those around them) and where employers and employees profit together from the outcomes.

It's a workplace-based hypnotherapy program where willing employees and employers partner to conquer a smoking addiction. It should appeal to savvy modern day employers willing to try something new. With tobacco use widespread in the Australian community, about one quarter of the adult population are considered to be regular smokers. Translate those figures to the average workplace, and the opportunity becomes obvious.

We believe the workplace has tremendous potential as the right kind of setting to encourage large groups of people to stop smoking in an environment where they have the full support of their employer and peers. Employers can, and do, play a pivotal role in the health and well-being of the Australian community. **Corporate Express** and Foxtel have both adopted this approach.

The search for employee benefits that offers something financially measurable in return is a difficult quest, but the benefits flowing from this program can be measured through workplace productivity. For example, if the average smoker not yet suffering from

a related medical condition takes three smoko's a day on work time at say 10 minutes a 'smoko', then that's likely to equate to 30 minutes down time on the job. Multiply that by 5 days a week for approximately 47 weeks in a year, the result could be 118 hours up in smoke. That's the equivalent of roughly 3 working weeks lost per annum, and if

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that smoker fulfils a job function that other workers depend on, then the compounding effect on workplace productivity can be many times that again. If you're an employer with 100 smokers having three 'smokos' a day, then that's at least 12,000 hours down time per annum, or the equivalent of at least 7 employees on a full time 'smoko' annually. It's a stealth killer medically and financially.

Our experience is that approximately 85% of willing participants completely achieve their quit smoking goal following the program. Recent media campaigns have done well to terrify

smokers over the quality of life effects that come from prolonged smoking, but that in itself is not enough to slow down even the more passive smoking addicts, let alone the hardened ones. Research has shown that most adult smokers want to stop smoking, but few ever succeed without some kind of assistance.

Of course, a person's right to smoke does not change, and not every smoker in a workplace will want to participate in any sort of stop smoking program, let alone one that involves hypnotherapy. However, the experience with Corporates so far has seen these people very much in the minority, and many are spurred on by the proactivity of their work colleagues who want to give it a go. The best thing any employer can do is provide the right setting for success. That includes the offer of support in terms of program time and meeting a share of the program costs to those willing to participate.

The benefits of a healthier and fitter workforce have been well documented. Less process disruptions, reduced absenteeism and a decrease in staff turnover all make a real difference to the bottom line. A workplace-based stop smoking campaign is an opportunity for employers to make a real difference for their employees and the greater community. □

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