

**GLOBAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE
ON ADDICTION AND MENTAL HEALTH**

An Affiliate of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Resident at GPC International

200 KING STREET WEST* SUITE 1702*Box 21*TORONTO*ONTARIO*CANADA*M5H 3T4

Phone: (416) 598-0055 * Fax: (416) 598-3811 * email: bill.wilkerson@gpcinternational.com

Bill Wilkerson, Co-Founder and CEO
Donna Montgomery, Administrator

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***12-Step Business Plan and Action Toolbar
To Combat Mental Health Disorders At work***

By Bill Wilkerson
Co-Founder and CEO

For the World Federation for Mental Health
“World Mental Health Day” Celebrations in 2002
*Mental health professionals, educators and business people will receive this material
worldwide in 90 to 100 countries.*

Year one of the World Mental Health Day theme of “mental health and work” has opened a new front in an old war. And now we offer a 12-step plan to wage that war and defeat a powerful enemy.

The old war is the battle against mental illness. The new front is the world of work. The 12-steps are a “business plan” for employers to fight the effects of depression and other disorders on the productivity of the labor force and the organization itself.

Work and Health Linked

Work is an important influence on human health for good or ill. The workplace is a little used venue in which to promote the earlier detection of mental health problems among employees, managers and executives.

Consider that:

- The early detection of mental health problems – like other health problems – is critical to the diagnosis and successful treatment of mental health disorders.
- Mental health and stress-related conditions now afflict a global population about the size of Europe.

- Early detection is key not only to reducing the level of human suffering now being exacted indiscriminately on people in every walk of life, but to containing the enormous dollar costs being registered in mature and less mature economies alike.

Disability Enemy Number One

Depression is emerging as a major killer of productivity and people.

It is the leading source of worker disability in the world. It has a growing mortality rate, about 20 per cent, according to the latest figures.

Depression and ischemic heart disease are poised to become the two leading causes of workdays lost due to disability and premature death in the global economy.

Mental health issues are fast becoming the number one health challenge for business. This argues powerfully for a business investment case for mental health.

Early Detection Crucial

At the heart of the business investment case for mental health is the urgent need for improved rates of early detection. Current detection and treatment rates are disgracefully low. Only about 10 per cent or less of the estimated total number of cases in the world today.

Specifically, business investments in mental health can usefully produce:

- Insights into how management and work practices can be adapted to create human attitudes, job policies and working cultures which will lead to the earlier detection of mental health problems on the job.
- A “gold standard” for business and management practices that are known to protect the investment which employers have in people by promoting the mental health of the labor force.
- An all-out effort in 2001 – year two of the WMHD theme of “mental health and work” – to identify how to build new standards of management which have this effect. That effort has begun in Canada.

Defeat Depression at Work

This brings us to the “12-Step” business plan and a “mental health and work toolbar” which the friends of World Mental Health Day are welcome to use as one means to reduce the effects of depression at work. We would encourage employers and employees to:

- Review them carefully with employees, co-workers, health professionals, community leaders and government policy makers.

- Look for ways to improve these “12 Steps” and the toolbar accompanying them. Adapt this information to your culture, customize it to your needs, use it to engage others in the subject, build your own business case for mental health and your own toolbar with which to take action on this serious modern day health crisis.
- Think about how these ideas can be made even more practical. Anticipate what barriers to this initiative you will likely encounter. Be patient with others. Don’t be discouraged. Take these “12 Steps” the way most steps in life should be taken – one at a time.

12-Step Business Plan and Action Toolbar

Step One – Mental Health Leadership At Work

- The leader of the employer organization – sometimes called the chief executive officer, general manager, vice-president or managing director – is key to installing the needed management practices to promote mental health and defeat depression.
- Therefore, Step One must be a briefing of the leader to ensure she or he has a clear picture of the reasons why the 12-Steps are necessary from a business standpoint.
- The leader must be briefed on the financial effects of depression, the leader must direct managers and supervisors to become informed on the matter, the leader must empower the whole organization to develop the information and procedures needed to detect the symptoms of mental health problems early.

Action Tool I

The Leader Letter – Building The “Business Case” for Mental Health

- This tool can help you appeal to business leaders, get their attention, articulate their stake in the mental health of their workforce.
- Following are paragraphs assembled in the logic of a long letter to a business leader. You can use the information selectively. Pick and choose which paragraphs work best for you to communicate with employers in your area.
- Review the allied material in this year’s World Mental Health Day kit. Customize and adapt what’s here.
- The following 25 paragraphs are a guideline for communicating with business leaders on this crucial topic by way of letters, articles, speeches or conversation. The 25 paragraphs are numbered to help the user of the kit refer to or organize them into specific messages.

Subject: The Business Case for Mental Health
25 Selective Paragraphs to Build Written or Oral Messages

1. A Business Asset

The mental health of today's workforce is one of the most valuable assets that a business can have in the intensely competitive world in which we live and work.

2. Premium On Mental Performance

Today's economy puts a premium on the mental and behavioral performance of people working in organizations large and small.

3. Innovation and "Thought Content"

In today's economy, innovation and the "thought content" of products and services give businesses their competitive edge. But how does business protect these important assets?

4. Ability To Think

Innovation and product "thought content" are brought to market by people, by their ability to think, concentrate, meet deadlines, stay patient, have trust, behave cooperatively, stay resilient, communicate, relate well to others and skillfully use information technology.

5. Brought To Market Buy Mental Health

In effect, innovation and product "thought content" are the source of a company's competitive edge and are brought to market most effectively by employees who have mental health and emotional wellbeing.

6. Human Innovation In Auto Sector

Automobiles come off the assembly line today with more microchips than sparkplugs. Their competitive features flow from human innovation.

7. People Replacing Machines

In a significant way, people of the information age have replaced the machines of the industrial age as the most important form of capital investment.

8. Spending More On Connecting People

Today, corporations spend more money every year on telecommunications than interconnecting people than they do on oil, the blood of machines. This tells us – in powerful, financial terms – how important human capital is to global business.

9. Mind Will Do The Heavy Lifting

In this kind of economy, the human mind and not our arms, backs and legs will do the heavy lifting of business.

10. Economy Of Human Ingenuity

The software revolution has not only created the global information economy, it has created an economy of mental ingenuity. In this economy, the mental health of the labor force is a primary asset.

11. Asset Under Attack

Meanwhile, this asset is under attack by rising rates of mental health disability. And this is costing business tremendous amounts of money.

12. Hundreds Of Billions A Year

Medical conditions, which impair the mental health of working people, cost business around the world hundreds of billions of dollars (US) (adapt to local currency) each and every year.

13. Leading Cause of Disability

The most common serious mental health problem, depression, is – by far – the leading source of worker disability in the world today.

14. Driving Short-Term Absenteeism

Mental health problems are driving short-term absenteeism at work. This trend threatens to spiral out of control and we are urging business leaders to get familiar with their own experience in order to stem this very dangerous tide.

15. Heart Disease and Depression

Heart disease and depression, we now know, are linked. Business people tend to know a lot about the risks of cardiovascular disorders, but not much about depression.

16. Leading Source Of Work Days Lost

We urge business leaders to become aware of both. Together, they are emerging as the principal sources of workdays lost through employee disability and premature death.

17. Business Pays For Depression

Business, in fact, pays two thirds of the dollar cost of depression in the form of lost or diminished industrial productivity.

18. Growing Unfunded Liability

For many, even most employers, the cost of mental health problems within their workforce is a large and growing un-funded liability.

This is due to the lack of information and awareness of the existence, scope and impact of mental health disorders on individuals and the organizations they work for.

19. Depression: The Size Of Europe

The numbers of known and suspected cases of mental illness are growing. A population the size of Europe is a good estimate.

20. Third Of Workforce Afflicted

Individual employers should take note of this. Unless you recruit your staff from a planet other than earth, the odds are high that 10 to 30 per cent of your labor force – at any given time – is suffering a mental health disorder.

21. Mental Health: A Revenue Collection Issue

The stake, which employers have in this matter, is not simply a cost issue. It is also a revenue issue. The business toll taken by mental health disorders is found in lost sales, lost opportunity costs (innovation), customer service problems and the sluggish collection of receivables outstanding (dollars owed the business).

22. Low Rates Of Detection

The effects of mental health disorders on work are complicated by the very low rates of detection and lack of proper treatment among those suffering mental health disorders – as few as ten per cent – maybe less – of the total.

23. High Rates Of Success

Yet, depression alone can be treated successfully in three out of four cases, which are accurately diagnosed.

24. Workplace And Early Detection

The workplace itself – more so than the home — has great potential to improve the rates of early detection of mental health problems. The “12-Step Business Plan For Depression” is centered on that very proposition.

25. The Business Case For Mental Health

The business case is made not on humanitarian grounds, but solid business grounds. The investment by business in the mental health of their workforce is predicated on a financial return being realized on that investment.

Step Two – Develop Financial Targets As Incentives To Defeat Depression

- All businesses and organizations must have incentives to do things differently. One such incentive is to target depression through achievable financial targets – how much the company will save, how many new sales will it achieve, how much will its productivity improve, how many health-related costs which the employer is now paying out might be saved.

Action Tool II

Business Financial Incentives to Defeat Depression

Depending on the business or mission or the organization, the company can set specific mental health based revenue and cost targets over, say, three years, to rein-in:

- Absenteeism rates (days per employee per year);
- Wage replacement costs on short and mid-term basis;
- Employee health costs (especially prescription drugs);
- Short-term disability rates and the principal stated cause for each claim;
- Customer services costs and customer complaints;
- Monthly sales revenues and receivables outstanding beyond 30 – 60 days;
- Unit production costs and lost time online.

Establish performance standards in each case which define what the organization’s expectations are compared to the competition and where the organization’s actual performance should be. For example, in the case of absenteeism, 11 days a year per employee is very high. Half of that is still too high. Three to five days is about average.

Establish realistic targets to achieve improvements – but (and this is critical) do so on the fundamental assumptions that:

- The employee is the company’s key asset;
- The employee’s mental performance is key to the value of that asset;
- The conditions in which employees work can protect that asset or harm it;
- The biggest risk to the value of that human asset and to the company’s productivity is – beyond doubt – the effects of stress-related and mental health disorders.

Now, make this next assumption.

In almost any workplace – anywhere in the world – the number of employees suffering an undiagnosed mental health problem (probably depression) is 10 to 20 per cent of the total workforce. This is a conservative estimate.

The known prevalence of depression is growing and depression is getting younger, mostly striking people in their prime working years. In 40 per cent of the cases the average age of onset is 20 and the average age overall is 27.

Therefore, to achieve the financial targets set out as part of the “12 Step Plan for Depression,” the company must do what it can to help improve dramatically the early detection of these mental health problems in the workforce. This makes good business sense. To that end:

- Set realistic targets to bring about the early detection of depression at work – say 35 per cent of those suffering the disorder compared to less than 10 per cent which is the case now.
- Set realistic financial targets for each case based on improved rates of early diagnosis and proper treatment. For instance dollar savings in the form of reduced wage replacement costs (the employee is off work a shorter time or is not absent at all); and reduced employee health costs. *(These two categories alone should produce savings ground \$10,000 (US) per employee per year.)*

The effective use of Action Tool II depends, however, on the presence of an effective referral service for employees who may be suffering mental health problems. That follows next.

Step Three – Establish Employee Mental Health At Work Referral Systems

- Training is necessary to assist executives, managers, supervisors and employees to recognize possible signs of mental distress in others and to appropriately assist that individual deal with them probably through a qualified professional.

- Written policies are necessary to encourage “sensitivity and outreach” among people who share time and space at work when one of us may be exhibiting the signs of emotional distress or mental health problems.

Specific procedures and processes must be established at work to allow distressed employees, possibly with the help of a friend, family member or their supervisor, to have easy access to the professional help they need to resolve – at an early stage – the mental health difficulty they may be experiencing.

Action Tool III

Employee Referral Systems

This is a tool for management and health professionals to use cooperatively -- together.

Managerial and Supervisor Training

When managers and supervisors are dealing with the behavioral symptoms of someone who may be experiencing a mental health problem, what do they do?

Some managers may become frustrated with that individual, concluding that he or she is a “lost cause” and seeing the problem as “none of my business.” Or they may hesitate to act for fear of intruding on the employee’s privacy rights.

It is essential that managers and supervisors receive training not to diagnose – that’s the job of the health professional – but to manage the on-the-job implications of employees’ behavior that may be influenced by the onset of mental distress.

Training of this nature should focus on:

- Developing the oral communication skills and appropriate choice of language in exploring with the employee whether that person might wish to receive professional assistance in order to determine if a health issue is affecting their ability to do their job;
- ***Trust. The findings of that referral – if acceded to – are confidential if the diagnosis of a health problem emerges. The employee must not be punished.***
- How to reassure the employee that the entire matter – now and later – will be held in strictest confidence.
- How to handle calmly and sensitively complaints from the employee about the workplace itself that may come up in this conversation. *This is not the time for the manager or supervisor to become defensive;*

- Specifically, what to say and do to help the employee get the professional assistance they may need in order to determine if health considerations are affecting their job performance. (See also Action Tool X).

Step Four – Make “Organizational Health” A Priority With Employee Health.

- Healthy employees depend on the health of the environment they work in – in effect, the health of the organization itself.
- Work climates are a powerful determinant of the health we enjoy or lose. Sick companies and sick workplaces make people sick.
- A sick company is one which feeds to their employees a steady diet of unhealthy stress, disorder, unexplained change, little or no recognition and life on a treadmill – to name just few of the known top ten sources of stress.
- The health of the organization must be a priority if the mental health of the people working in it is to be a reality.

Action Tool IV

Organizational health includes:

- The Atmosphere or climate in which people work.
- The culture of the workplace, which defines the values and behaviors that are permitted and rewarded.

Employee surveys are important to the ability of management to understand how workers perceive these matters.

Bad employee morale predicts problems in the operations of a company by as much as three years before those problems actually show up. By then, they are too late to correct. The morale of employees must be carefully studied and clearly understood.

An environment that rewards devious or political behavior on the part of co-workers or managers ruins organizational health.

Organizational health depends on the standards of behavior promoted by the leaders of business.

Step Five – Employers Must Regulate the Excessive Use of Office E-mail.

- Office protocols are urgently needed to relieve information overload being caused by Emails in offices throughout the more developed global economy.

- The massive flood of trivial, important and unnecessary information coming (it seems) from every direction is the source of employee and executive frustration on a mass scale.

Action Tool V

Regulating Excessive Use of E-mail

The technology is not the villain, the way it is used by people is.

Excessive use of e-mail often replaces personal contact with electronic contact and eliminates, as a result, tone of voice, body language, facial expression and attentive, two-way listening – all of which are proven to be critical elements of communication and understanding between and among people.

The risks in the present culture of office technology can be summarized as follows:

One - E-mail and its enslavement qualities.

Among the principal causes of stress is a prolonged sense, among employees, of constant catch-up, interruption and distraction. Over time, such stress can trigger mental distress that may further evolve to a medical condition among some.

Individuals experience this kind of stress when they are forced to spend hours upon hours digging through electronic messages – some trivial and some relevant to their work – which build-up overnight, during the day or even through the lunch break.

E-mail, in this form, contributes to the creation of the 24-hour work day, it inhibits efficiency and almost becomes a “leash” to which employees are tied whenever they leave the office for a short time or overnight – this, because of the sheer volume, variety and disparity of e-mail messages they must contend with on return.

Two - frustration with voice-mail and its diminishment of the phone for transactional purposes.

The frustration stems from “never” being able to get anyone on the phone. The annoyance of playing telephone tag electronically.

Also, callers who leave abrupt or incomplete messages. Callers who leave long and rambling messages. Off-hour voice-mail messages to avoid direct contact. Calls being forwarded to a person who’s not there either.

Three - computer addictions.

Aside from the self-inflicted wounds just noted, there is evidence that overuse of computers – the Internet, specifically – produces symptoms akin to those observed among persons addicted to alcohol, drugs or gambling.

This trend is relevant to business. It may play out at work, leading to addictive behaviors and depression.

New Protocols Called For

In this context, therefore, steps are needed:

- To evaluate the effects of e-mail and voice-mail utilization on the efficiency and “quality of life” of organizations – seeking not to uproot the technology, but guide its usage in healthier and more effective ways.
- To survey employees on this issue to determine how e-mail and voice-mail utilization patterns – and behaviors – affect their ability to do their job.
- We further recommend that business give consideration to new protocols governing the use of e-mails as a matter of business policy with a view to reducing the aggravation, frustration and ultimate stress-levels they are currently generating in companies across Canada.

These new protocols might, in part, have the following characteristics:

- Maximum use of existing technology filters at workstations, giving employees some measure of control, although this will not stem the flood.
- Introduction of “restricted delivery” periods for e-mails limited to official business urgent and necessary.
- Prohibitions of e-mail deliveries in off-hours. This is no different than not calling someone at home at night unless it is absolutely necessary.
- “E-mail Culture Training” to equip co-workers with the writing composition skills and insights to use the e-mail more efficiently and selectively without adding to the “relentless load” factor now present in most work places.

Similar protocol measures are called for with regard to voice-mail. In both cases, valuable technology is being wielded by people to frustrate other people. This can contribute to serious stress-related conditions and, with other pressures, can evolve into morale, absenteeism and productivity problems.

Step Six – Workable Strategies Are Needed To Accommodate Employees Returning-To-Work After A Disability Leave For Depression.

- Returning to work is part of the recovery process.

- Needed, though, are clear workplace policies, practices, training protocols and the necessary professional advice for both employers and employees to accommodate the very particular return-to-work requirements of workers disabled by depression and on leave from their job for weeks or months.

Action Tool VI

Mental Disability And Return-To-Work

This is a management tool.

1. Work must be seen as part of the recovery process in depression cases.
2. Most of those returning from depression-induced disability must re-enter the work place on a gradual basis.
3. More aggressive “return to work” strategies employed in recovery from soft tissue injury, for example, are not necessarily replicable for mental health concerns.
4. The reason is this: studies show that a person recovering from depression may exhibit a willingness and ability to return to work before the depression itself is sufficiently wrestled to the ground. Returning to work too soon, therefore, can hasten a relapse.
5. On the other hand, productive activity is important to the recovery process. Disability management programs must be equipped – through the knowledge and experience of the people running them -- to recognize and sustain this delicate balance. Business leaders will serve their companies well to ensure this capability is in place.

Step Seven – Knowing About The Physics of Depression.

- Employers and employees – at every level – can benefit from understanding that mental health problems are not invisible deficiencies in a person or a flaw of character. The stuff of stigma.
- One useful way to broaden the understanding of people about mental health issues is to help them become aware of the physical aspects of such disorders and the proved connections between depression and physical illness.

Action Tool VII

Knowing The Physics Of Depression

This is a leadership tool.

We encourage business leaders to summon their human resource executives and health professional staff to report on the known and suspected connections between depression and physical disorders including cardiovascular disease. Consider the following:

- Depression among heart patients increases five times the odds of a second fatal heart attack inside six months of the first.
- A high level of depression in men increases the risk of a first stroke by 56 per cent and in women, 85 per cent.
- Depression compromises the body's immune system.
- Anxiety disorders – next to depression, the most prolific mental health disorder – are often so concrete that the person experiencing them will go to the hospital emergency room experiencing severe pain. Panic disorders may mimic a heart attack, and are often misdiagnosed accordingly.
- Depression itself has physical properties, reflecting a biochemical event in the brain.

The physical properties of mental disorders are important to recognize as a basis for understanding the dynamics of such problems and shaping return-to-work strategies for disabled cardiac or depressed employees with these complications in mind.

Step Eight -- Build An Inventory of Emotional Work Hazards

- Emotional work hazards are as dangerous to our health as unsafe manufacturing plants and equipment, or toxic air we are compelled to breathe.
- For example, the emotional wear and tear of not having sufficient control of our workplace and our job poses as much risk to the health of our cardiac system as smoking.
- In order to eliminate unhealthy emotional work hazards, we have to know what they are. An inventory is needed.

Action Tool VIII

Eliminating Emotional Work Hazards

We recommend that business:

- Determine in concrete and clear terms what motivates their employees to want to come to work and, conversely, what keeps them away.

Lateness and, eventually, absenteeism are predictors of mental distress or disengagement. These matters can be probed empathetically and used as a means to signal emotional issues, which may, if left untended, require professional attention.

- Determine in concrete and clear terms if chronic customer service problems can be traced to emotional distress among employees.

Studies show that employees who enjoy their work will create customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, job/attitude problems – contrary to simply a sign of negative thinking or behavior – are sometimes a clue to underlying health issues especially when they materialize in otherwise effective employees.

- Determine in concrete and clear terms evidence of the following known hazards to mental health at work –
 1. A culture that tolerates constant interruptions from one person to the next. And by supervisors among their subordinates.
 2. Time wastage, including managers who waste employee time by way of unclear instructions or confused priorities.
 3. Employees who keep taking on more and more work. Their desire not to say no, to be a team player, to believe the work must get done – all positive features of behavior in many instances – can underline their resilience and mental health.

Office Politics

Experienced “office politicians” – the manager or employee who manipulates information and facts to position themselves in a favorable light, often at the expense of others – are often driven by massive self-absorption on their part or by fear that, in their mind, justifies the means to an end.

Organizations that encourage this kind of behavior by promoting or rewarding the wrong people are usually suffering the symptoms of a “sick system” producing a lot of innocent victims who can develop pathologies themselves, according to studies at the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

We recommend those business leaders:

- Examine their company culture for evidence of employee dissatisfaction produced by the practice of office politics.
- Foster environments that do not reward a form of behavior that pollutes the potential of many other employees and is a predictor of stress-related absenteeism, even disability.

Step Nine – Create Information Services To Help Employees Maintain A Balance Between The Work And Family Lives.

- A chronic imbalance between the work and home lives of individuals is believed to be the root source of one-third of all cases of depression recorded in the United States.
- Since we live in a global economy, it is safe to assume the frenetic effects of intensified work produce high levels of stress around the world.
- Especially when that stress crowds out our family obligations, time with our children, the things which make up a healthy balance between work and family.
- It is a good business investment to train managers and give them the information tools they need to detect this kind of stress among employees and colleagues and help develop work arrangements which bring needed relief not only to that individual but to their family who are paying a big price as well.

The performance of the organization itself will benefit and that makes a work/life balance strategy plain good business.

Action Tool IX

Balancing Work and Life

The number of employees now in the workplace who must work and care for their children or elderly parents, or both, has grown markedly. Estimates put the number in the realm of 62 per cent of all employees.

On top of that, in many Western countries, more than half of all married couples both work and more than one-fourth of all working parents have responsibilities to care for an aging relative.

Further, more than a third of all employees surveyed feel their productivity has declined because of childcare problems and more than half of the absenteeism in the U.S., for example, can be traced to family-related problems.

In fact, business costs in the U.S. for absenteeism due to eldercare obligations among employees have been priced at \$900 million (US) a year. The aggregate cost of eldercare in lost productivity is \$11 billion (US) a year in that country.

Work/Life Strategies

We urge business leaders to enact life/work balance policies which include:

- Flexible work-hours and mid-day departure times to meet family needs;
- Home care services as an employee health benefit;

- On-site services (meal preparations, dry cleaning, pharmaceutical) to reduce the hassle for employees who face these kinds of deadlines day-in and day-out en route to/from work;
- Workplace daycare and elder care services.

Work/Life Balance Strategies Provably:

- Reduce disability-related absences from work;
- Attract and retain the most talented people;
- Contribute to both revenue and profitability;
- And beyond relieving employee stress, create a bond between employer and employee, a partnership with benefits flowing both ways.

Step Ten – The Business Roundtable’s “Rule-Out-Rule”

- The deteriorating job performance of persons suffering depression is often misread by employers as a sign of lessened ability or negative working habits.
- This misreading of the reasons for workplace performance problems is due to the fact that the symptoms of depression are often behavioral in nature and most managers inadvertently interpret as something they’re not.
- The behavior of the undiagnosed depressed person may translate inside the workplace into missing important deadlines, being late for work, getting upset with other people, not concentrating on the job at hand, not participating in meetings, not caring about the job they were hired to do.
- It makes good business sense to differentiate between performance problems, which are rooted in health considerations, and those, which are not.
- A process is desirable, therefore, at an early stage in the evaluation of that individual’s job performance, to differentiate between a health-driven performance crisis and one due to other factors.
- In effect, a process which “rules in or rules out” a health issue or a health consideration over which that individual has no control, and is necessary to resolve before the employee will recapture their productivity.

Action Tool X

“Rule-Out-Rule”

A person suffering depression – often a top performer, loyal employee and good friend among job peers and supervisors alike – may exhibit behaviors that mimic bad or negative attitudes. These may be symptoms of their disorder and not their attitude toward their job.

Failing to register this distinction can cost an employee their job and cost the company an otherwise valuable employee and asset in which it has a significant investment.

But how can we tell the difference?

We recommend a new concept being introduced by the Roundtable called the “Rule-Out-Rule” in order to unmask the effects of depression in those cases where it mimics plain work failure.

This says:

- When an employee is performing badly, especially where this contradicts past performance, introduce the “Rule-Out-Rule” to rule out (or, as the case may be, rule in) health problems as the source of performance deterioration.

This process will be defined and published by the Roundtable in detail, but generally, it involves:

1. Training of supervisors, managers and executives to ask questions of an employee which respect their privacy while helping them to consider a health consultation before performance issues are reviewed in more conventional terms.
2. Creating mechanisms for referrals to internal professional staff or external health professionals in order to screen the individual for symptoms of depression, anxiety or other conditions.
3. Deferring the “performance review” process until this health review is complete.
4. Preserving the confidentiality of the matter at all costs.
5. Setting into place a process to receive the health-review report from the employee (orally or otherwise, as they may wish), and should a health concern emerge, accommodating that concern by way of work schedule and other arrangements.

In effect, this is an asset protection program. And it meets head-on one of the most significant business costs of them all – employee turnover – as well as offsetting the productivity costs which, by then, will already begin to accumulate.

Step Eleven – Measuring Productivity to Promote Mental Health

- Productivity is one way to monitor the health of a company. It should also be a useful tool in measuring the health of the people inside it – the employees who do the value-added work which makes or breaks the employer’s quest for success.
- This step in the business plan to defeat depression is a challenging one. It will require considerable research, imagination and effort by business people to design productivity standards, which tell the employer a lot more than rates of output and unit costs.
- In truth, industrial productivity in the information age will reflect the quality of life at work, the quantity and cost of products and services being turned out.

This means we need productivity standards of measurement, which calculate both. And employee health, of course, is at the heart of this profoundly important equation.

Action Tool XI

Health-Based Productivity

It is estimated that the “downtime cost” of depression in the U.S. is 172 million person-years based on conservative six-month prevalence rates of the disease – with impairment ranging from absenteeism to basic performance and interpersonal problems to poor overall functioning and, ultimately, incapacity to work at all.

The insidious part of the disease propels this astounding figure. It infiltrates product quality and customer relationships. We urge business to consider opportunities to introduce models of health-based productivity measurers as an instrument for success in the information economy – the economy of mental performance.

Such models would embrace:

1. Formulation of a health index to measure the status of the company’s organizational health, blending it with more standard productivity measures of unit cost and output.
2. In “call centers” and high volume service units, an introduction of a metric -- or measurement tool -- to capture customer service and satisfaction points (relative to problem-solving). Again, the goal is to consider both the quantity and quality of work pinpointing productivity levels.
3. Establish clearly the impact of stress on employee and volume output and downtime.

The top-line (sales) and bottom-line (income) point is this:

Stress that creates disease is not an unavoidable cost of doing business. It is an unacceptable cost of doing business.

Step Twelve – Eliminate The Top Ten Sources Of Stress At Work.

- Stress can trigger depression and depression can invade many, many aspects of our physical, emotional, work and personal lives. A global assault on the commonly known sources of workday stress is urgently needed.

Action Tool XII

Remedies For the Top Sources Of Stress

1. *Time And Space*

Help employees off the treadmill at work. Many people are getting ill not from too much to do but from their sense they have too much to do all at once all the time.

2. *Know What Is Expected*

Give employees a clear picture of what their employer expects of them; what, fundamentally, their job is; what priorities they are being asked to observe one day to the next.

3. *Job Fulfillment*

Money is not the only reward people work for. Give them something just as valuable in the long-term – appreciation for doing good work, the boss saying thank you for the extra effort, helping them realize that what they do contributes to the company's success. Job fulfillment spurs productivity. It means matching the right people with the right job. Just as paychecks buy bread for the table, self-fulfillment at work buys bread for the soul.

4. *Sharing Success at Work*

Help employees to see that success is something to share not own. This requires leadership by example in the management ranks. Share the credit just as we share the load.

5. *E-mail and Voice-mail Cease-fires*

- E-mail overload is a huge source of frustration and anxiety in the workplace. Casualties are mounting daily. Liberate employees from the enslavement of e-mail.
- Call forwarding today promises a human alternative to a voice message but often delivers – another voice message. This is a real tooth-grinder for hurried callers trying to break through cyberspace and make human contact. Let us resolve in 2001 to call-forward – only when someone else is there.
- In this context, create a culture of common sense in the use of e-mail and voice-mail technologies.

6. *The Gift of Clarity*

This is a gift from the top. A gift of clarity in setting a future direction for the company. Productive employees need this sense of direction. Without it, bad management practices produce confusion, frustration and reduced output. This generates dangerous stress on a large scale. Weak leadership is bad for your health.

7. *Listening To Others at Work*

This is an art form, hearing not only what other say but understanding how they feel and what they need to do their job. Body language means a lot in communication between people. We can't read body language by e-mail.

8. *Redistributing Workloads Wisely*

One person doing the job of two or three, working a lot of overtime, feeling trapped. Heavy workloads are one of the top ten sources of stress today – employees are worried their workload is preventing them from doing what they perceive to be a good job. They are worried about quality, and about making mistakes. Supervisors and managers must hear those concerns, and interpret them wisely.

9. *The Principle of Inclusion at Work*

Isolation at work – not getting information, not being invited to meetings, feeling shelved, your work going unnoticed, your suggestions going unanswered, the boss playing favorites – is number two on the top ten list of workplace stress. Isolation breeds unhealthy insecurity, a loss of self-esteem, and even depression. Replace isolation with inclusion, information and a sense of belonging to the team.

10. *The Gift of Trust*

A lack of control over one's own work is number one on the list of the top ten sources of stress. *It poses a risk to the cardiac health of workers as great as smoking. The gift of trust gives employees the freedom to make decisions about the tasks before them, fusing a pledge between employer and employee to trust each other in order to do good work and receive the benefits of it. * Reference: Institute of Work and Health

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If you would like more information, please contact
Co-Founder and CEO, Bill Wilkerson at GPC International
at 416-598-0055 ext. 271 or
email bill.wilkerson@gpcinternational.com