According to a 2011 survey conducted by Virgin HealthMiles, part of Sir Richard Branson’s famed Virgin Group, nearly 90% of employers now rely on employee wellness programs to slow rising healthcare costs. The goal of these programs is to create happier, healthier workforces by emphasizing preventive health strategies. Chances are your organization offers its own preventive wellness programs. But if your programs don’t incorporate preventive employee relations (ER), you’re likely curbing the rewards you could be reaping.

Just as preventive wellness programs focus on proactively minimizing the costs of chronic disease, preventive employee relations (ER) focus on proactively minimizing costly employee complaints, grievances and hot spots. Preventive ER relies on the discovery of trends, patterns and inconsistencies related to ER issues (such as discrimination, harassment, workplace bullying, etc.), which then enables your organization to take appropriate action and plan for the future accordingly.

Put simply, preventive employee relations help you create a happier workforce and a healthier workplace. Think of it as adopting an ER wellness solution.

Why Your Employee Wellness Initiatives Should Include Preventive ER

4 Key Components of Preventive Employee Relations

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The 4 Key Components of Preventive ER

To be truly preventive, an ER wellness solution consists of these four key components:

1. **Comprehensive ER data and metrics, i.e., information related to your employees’ interactions with Human Resources and Employee Relations.** Especially critical are data on trends and patterns that would likely go unnoticed without a system that is specifically designed to gather and analyze such information.

2. **A plan of action based on these analytics.** Once your data reveals where and what your ER “hot spots” are, you must formulate your plan to take action before these hot spots become chronic, potentially litigious cases. Your plan should include where and how to deploy new policies and regulations, improve training and education, and provide additional coaching for managers and supervisors, if necessary.

3. **Buy-in from your executive team is the next key component.** Maximize your chances for buy-in by presenting your data in a way that shows your leaders where and how they can implement strategies for reducing costs, retaining talent and balancing skill sets more effectively throughout the organization. And be sure to show the bottom-line business impacts—not just the impacts to HR.

4. **An environment that supports the ability to make change happen quickly and encourages employees to come to HR with questions or problems is the final component of an ER wellness solution.** Such an environment is the ideal “fertile soil” for preventive employee relations to take root in and flourish. However, even if your current environment isn’t ideal, the first three components will help ensure that your efforts are successful.

Of course, the first step toward preventive employee relations is the gathering of ER data and metrics, and for that you need a sound HR case management system.
A Sound Case Management System

An HR case management system is designed specifically to capture comprehensive information regarding all of your employees’ interactions with human resources and employee relations. It completely unifies your employee relations activities—from on-boarding to exit interviewing—serving as the single, consistent repository for your critical data.

At many companies, information related to a single dispute is spread across the organization—some with Employee Relations, some with managers, some in paper files, some on hard drives, etc. This makes it almost impossible to gather and effectively use this information, especially in the midst of an ER crisis. An HR case management system eliminates this disarray, serving as a convenient, consistent and secure data storehouse. As a result, the system is able to deliver data and insights that might otherwise remain buried in your company’s HR files or other disconnected information systems.

Other significant advantages of a high-quality HR case management system include:

- It should offer the kind of comprehensive audit trail that simply cannot be duplicated by other HR information systems and tools.
- It should offer flexible reporting features that enable you to produce rich, customized reports in a variety of formats (Word, Excel, PDF, etc.).
- And it should make it easy for you to open complaints, input data and update cases—all of which reduces training costs and ramp-up time while maximizing utilization.
A sound HR case management also should make cases easily accessible even after they’re closed, which allows you to leverage what you’ve learned from your experiences and apply it going forward.

“It is time for HR leaders to step up and be proactive in creating a program that focuses on addressing employee complaints and grievances and changing policies or practices to reduce them. Your employees are your most expensive and valuable asset and happier more productive employees play a critical role in the long-term health of an organization. Engagement and employee relations ‘wellness’ depend on the continuous development of talent and preventive measures,” states Cathy Missildine-Martin, SPHR, Co-Founder and Chief Performance Officer of Intellectual Capital Consulting.

Cathy and many other HR thought leaders concur that if your organization wants to reap the benefits of a happier, more productive workforce and reduce the costs of litigation and turnover, it’s time to consider adopting an ER wellness program and a high-quality HR case management system.