



## 2004 Strategies – People Focus

### Step 4: Overcoming Barriers that Restrict the Development and Reinforcement of a Healthy Workplace

What are some of the major barriers to the development of a healthier workplace?

- **Giving organizational health a narrow or simplistic focus.** Many companies focus their organizational health efforts simply on the ‘absence of disease’ or on workplace safety or strictly on physical health. Viewed and implemented in this way, many aspects of a comprehensive workplace health strategy will be missing, and therefore the workplace is less successful in achieving true organizational health. (For more information on developing a comprehensive Organizational Health Strategy, please visit the CHWW 2003 Strategies in the Archives.)
- **Lack of systems to measure the economic impact of absenteeism, turnover, recruitment costs, and other indicators of health in an organization.** Many organizations do not see the need to invest in preventive measures simply because they do not recognize the costs of their current situation. Often these organizations condone unhealthy behaviours such as excessive overtime as they are unable to measure the negative impact that these behaviours may be having on the organization.
- **Not identifying needs accurately.** Without a thorough needs assessment it is difficult to identify organizational health needs and to develop and implement those programs and strategies that will have the biggest impact on improving the health of your organization. (For more information on **Needs Assessments**, please visit the CHWW 2003 Strategies in the Archives.)
- **Using “canned” solutions.** The most successful workplace health initiatives are those that are developed based on identified needs and with the input of all of the relevant stakeholders. Seldom does bringing in a canned program have great results.

What are the major barriers to developing a healthier workplace in your organization? Do the above sound familiar, or are there other barriers in the way?

#### **Tip:**

To identify barriers in your organization, try the following:

- Ask the members of your Workplace Wellness Committee or Task Force to identify barriers that they feel are impeding progress. You could do this in a group meeting or focus group, or by asking committee members individually to submit their ideas on the barriers they think are getting in the way.
- Survey your employees to ask them this question.
- Interview members of your senior management team and/or various middle managers to get their input on this issue.