

10 RULES FOR RETURNING EMPLOYEES TO WORK

1. Don't let them leave in the first place.

Have the organization focused on promoting a safe and healthy workplace. Human resource professionals need to make the business case for that (it's not just about morality or legal compliance).

2. If the employee leaves the workplace, stay connected with the employee.

Immediately try to figure out why the employee went off to ensure that the employee gets the help needed to get back to work.

3. Have an Attendance Management Policy.

Establish a workplace expectation that attendance is valued. Establish standards for attendance but build in appropriate discretion and flexibility that may be necessary for individual assessments in the context of the human rights duty to accommodate.

4. Don't have benefits at a level that make it economically better for an employee to be off work than at work.

5. Activate the return to work program the moment the employee leaves the workplace.

Develop a sense of urgency. The longer the person is off, the longer the person will be off.

6. Have a return to work program that ensures that someone is responsible for managing a particular employee's return to work.

Make that return to work comfortable and encourage it. Recognize that the employee is not going to hit the ground running; not many employees come back to work fully recovered. Accommodation is a good thing to get employees back to work.

7. Deal with attendance abusers.

If someone is abusing the program, ensure that there are consequences, and that people know.

8. Some people just can't work – Get them out of your workplace.

9. Make it a corporate objective to reduce absences from work.

This needs attention at the executive level. Calculate the savings, measure it (and it can be measured) and reward those who deliver.

10. Be aggressive – Push the envelope but don't play hardball.

Be smart.