

## How To Assess Your Organizational Culture

An organization's "culture," meaning the composite reflection of values, expectations, and behavioral norms reflected by the group involved, is an important variable in determining whether an employee wellness program will be as successful as it potentially can be. The culture of the organization has an impact on the level of employee participation, employee adherence, and whether management might be willing to use more innovative incentives and programming. These issues are not generally known in much detail and understanding them frequently requires a high degree of sophistication. A very rudimentary cultural assessment is contained in *Figure 9* to the right. The greater the number of "true" responses, the greater the cultural-based potential for the success of your employee wellness program.

These "cultural" issues can help predict the initial success of your wellness program, as well as help with the long-term success of your program. Again, the more "True" responses, the more compatible the work culture is to employee wellness programming, and the easier your program implementation efforts will probably seem. The work culture can be changed over time, but you may not have the luxury of enough time to focus directly on the other, broader, cultural issues highlighted in the self-test in order to create an organizational "climate" that is more conducive to employee wellness efforts.

## Conducting An Employee Interest Survey

Employee interest surveys are an important part of the planning process for an employee wellness program. They should not be overlooked, but they also need to be carefully constructed and interpreted. In a general sense, there is frequently a "halo" effect when employees are asked questions about what they want. This comes from a desire not to respond in an overly critical way and jeopardize any future program or survey process. Surveys themselves usually make a positive statement about how much value is placed on the individual who is surveyed. A survey should say to the recipient, "I value you and your opinion highly enough to ask." This is a very positive dynamic behind employee surveys. At the same time, survey results usually tend to be overly positive expressions because employees are reluctant to be critical for the reasons stated above. Another related issue is whether employees have been surveyed before, what the response

Figure 9

## Cultural Wellness Assessment Self-Test — True or False?

- | True                     | False                    |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Our organization is known as an innovator.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Senior management takes reasonable "risks" with new ideas.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | In terms of human resource issues, our company is seen as one of the most progressive in our local community.        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | We have an organization "credo" that recognizes the importance of employees in the performance of our business.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Employees generally recognize that management is concerned about health issues.                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There is not a high degree of distrust between employees and management.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | New programs are followed up reasonably well by management.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Incentives have been successfully used with employees in our company.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Employees usually react favorably to management initiatives.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "New" programs are usually well received by employees.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Health issues are identified periodically by individual employees in the form of suggestions or recommended actions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management encourages employees to participate in some areas of decision-making within the organization.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | It is expected that employees express caring and support for each other.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Money, by itself, is not the only major factor used to make management decisions.                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Senior managers are good personal "models" for wellness issues.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management frequently does things that demonstrate that they value employees.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management tends to do things that "empower" employees.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A concern for health has been consistently expressed by senior management as an important consideration.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Our safety program is more than just a "compliance-oriented" program.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other employees tend to support the healthy lifestyle practices of their co-workers.                                 |