

2007 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award Winners

By

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Like housework, organizational psychological health is never done. That’s because it’s an ideal that requires commitment and diligence..

However, deciding to strive towards this ideal is the first and perhaps only step one needs to take. The companies that embark on this process say they are never finished. There is always more to do and the work is really never done.

In this second part of a two-part series on the winners of the 2007 Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award, we feature: Westminster Credit Union, Vancouver Community College, Executive Strategies and the Cariboo Chilcotin Child Development Centre Association.

Previously featured winners were the British Columbia Automobile Association, Vancouver International Airport Authority, and WorkSafeBC.

Westminster Savings Credit Union

In the large-for-profit category, Westminster Savings Credit Union (WSCU) demonstrated excellence in the promotion of organizational psychological health for its work-family-life balance programming. WSCU’s 380 employees serve more than 50,000 members. WSCU recognizes employees have a life that extends beyond work and that if staff live a balanced lifestyle they can provide better service to members.

WSCU provides Employee Family Assistance programs that provide counseling, assistance with finding child or elder care, as well as helping with stress management and providing nutritional and disease management information.

The “Live Well Now” program also highlights WSCU’s meeting-staff-needs-helps members philosophy, by paying a portion for exercise activities, offering physical examinations (two clinics were planned and two more added due to staff interest) and providing free flu shots.

Staff receive 12 days for illness in their immediate family and can use three of these days to care for other family members –in-laws, parents, nieces and nephews. WSCU pays 100 per cent of full-time employee health-care benefits and 50 per cent of part-time employee benefits. Generous vacation time, job sharing, reduced work weeks and variable hours help employees obtain more time with family and friends, reduce the stress of scheduling appointments and engage in more outdoors activities.

Staff like these initiatives, as indicated by an employee engagement survey conducted by the company. Eighty-five per cent of employees believe their supervisor understands their need for work-family balance. Eighty six per cent believe their supervisor or someone at work cares about them as a person and 91 per cent say they are proud to work for WSCU.

Vancouver Community College

Vancouver Community College, with 1200 employees, won an award in the large-not-for-profit category for excellence in Employee Recognition. The program lets the college show appreciation to staff for their loyalty, commitment and a job well done. The program is comprehensive --notable, considering the small size of the college's human resources department relative to the size of the organization.

The program includes recognition for employees who have reached their 20th, 25th, 30th or 35th year with the organization. Turnover is very low at the College and many have been honoured for 20 to 35 years of work. Staff are rewarded for achieving a certificate, degree or diploma and the college provides staff free tuition for any courses taken at the college. Staff can take part in the Wellness Incentive Program that highlights environmental responsibility, weight loss, emotional well-being and spiritual activity.

An employee-driven awards committee includes representation from faculty, staff and administration at all campuses. Staff can be recognized for their community involvement, customer service, leadership and team work by the committee. The college endeavours to recognize individual's and teams, demonstrate its values, retain high performers and encourage accountability through its employee recognition programs. The college notes that there has been a large drop in grievances in specific departments by honouring achieving staff.

Executive Strategies

This small-for-profit company has 11 staff, with seven full-time employees and four on contract. The insurance-planning company demonstrated excellence in Employee Involvement. It places a premium on open communication, and the free expression and exchange of ideas. Regular contact and communication is built into the way the company works. Weekly team meetings are held, where staff are encouraged to submit ideas and discuss each other's suggestions. One staff person noted , "Everything I have suggested has been accepted."

Staff receive ongoing feedback from team leaders and peers. The president receives feedback from the staff as well. Staff engage in monthly one-to-one meetings with their manager as well as participating in team meetings.

Relationships at the company are close. Staff celebrate birthdays, work out together and socialize after work. Staff feel included and a sense of autonomy in

their work. They feel trusted and valued especially when the company allows them to manage their own time. If they need time off to care for a sick relative they take it. As a result, sick time is not abused. Staff have even been asked to go home if they were too sick to work.

Employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention are high—no one has ever quit. When new staff are hired, everyone has input into the selection to ensure that the new person can work well with everyone.

Staff believe the values of openness, feedback, camaraderie, involvement and fun are central to the organization's success—the company has grown from three employees to 11 since opening six years ago.

Cariboo Chilcotin Child Development Centre Association

Cariboo Chilcotin Child Development Centre Association (CDC) is a not-for-profit agency operating in Williams Lake. It provides assessment, education and assistance to children who require help with physical, social, emotional, communicative and intellectual development. They have 39 employees and demonstrate excellence in Employee Growth and Development.

While they are a small organization, they spend over a thousand dollars per staff member on training as well as encouraging employees to enhance their credentials. They provide coaching and mentoring and supervisors are well-trained on issues such as harassment. The agency is unique in its building of collaborative relationships with other community services to co-ordinate services, enhance communication and share costs with other groups.

Ninety-two per cent of staff indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the work environment, while 96 per cent say they are satisfied with the training policies. CDC engages these extensive training policies to attract professionals to the Cariboo Chilcotin and ensure that workplace practices align with organizational values as this relates to client services.

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