Posaction® Plus

A SOLAREH SOLUTION

Healthy Teams Collection

Solving a Presenteeism Problem

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When we talk about presence at work, we're not just talking about attendance. In addition to physical presence, it also includes mental and intellectual presence. Generally speaking, the more satisfaction a person gets from their job, the more importance they will place on being physically and mentally present. In other words, job satisfaction is key to your employees' productivity. All too often, even though employees are physically at work, they're not mentally able to do their job.

This is known as presenteeism. Presenteeism takes up a lot of time and energy, because its consequences are often more damaging to the company than a physical absence. If you take the time to analyze your organizational environment, identify the risk factors and find ways of improving your team's working conditions, you'll be helping to strengthen the connection your employees feel towards their jobs.

Understanding the nature of presenteeism

The concept of presenteeism

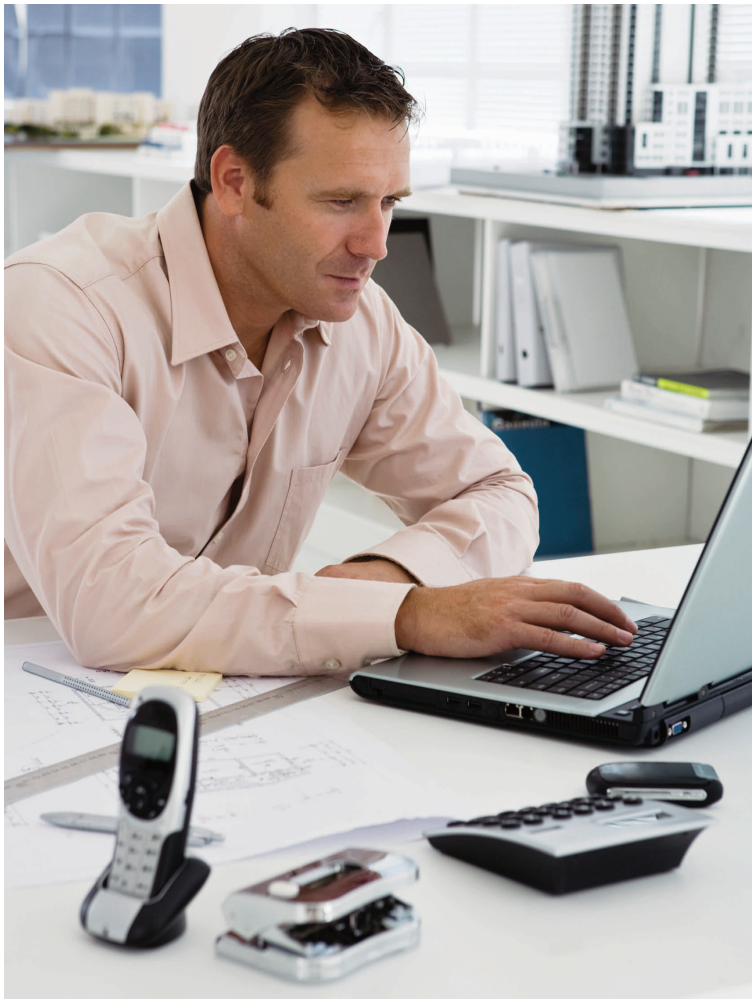
Presenteeism means being physically present at work without being mentally there. **This can occur when someone is ill, under a lot of stress, preoccupied with personal matters, or disinterested in their work**. While some people devote themselves fully to their jobs, employees suffering from presenteeism meander from one task to the next, have limited concentration, show little interest in their work, have a constant lack of enthusiasm, waste time on the Internet or on the phone, or only do the absolute minimum. Presenteeism can be seen, for example, in employees who describe their job as pointless or talk about working because they have to, not because they want to. It can also be seen in employees who can't wait for the work day to end, or who begin taking longer, more frequent breaks.

Employees who are mentally absent don't pay attention to the task at hand, are easily distracted and often careless in their work. **In short, psychological problems have an insidious effect on performance at work**. Employees who are mentally absent generally behave in ways that are detrimental to the company and its productivity, particularly since the impact is much less obvious than when an employee is physically absent. When not properly managed, presenteeism is generally followed by increasingly frequent physical absences for little or no valid reason.

The causes of presenteeism

For all employees, there are four factors that promote good motivation: finding meaning in their work, feeling accountable for their duties, being able to measure the results of their work, and being recognized for their contribution. In order to ensure presence at work, these basic needs must be met. **To do this, it's important to provide a suitable work environment, interesting tasks, and the opportunity to learn new things**. Recognition is another important factor in keeping your team motivated. Employees who feel appreciated almost always show greater commitment to their jobs. As a result, your management practices have a significant impact on presence at work.

Remember that presenteeism and decreased motivation go hand in hand. **Quite often, problems with presenteeism originate from the absence of a positive connection between employees and their jobs**. A person's lack of commitment to their job can be caused by a number of factors, which can either stem from the person themselves, or from the organization (see below). Managers dealing with a presenteeism issue generally feel powerless. However, the solution often lies in the organization itself and the work environment. By focusing on the potential organizational causes, you can prevent a large number of presenteeism problems.



A presenteeism problem reveals itself through performance issues

Some personal causes of presenteeism

- Stress, fatigue, sleep disturbances
- Decreased morale, general disinterest
- Problems with family dynamics (children, elderly parents)
- Financial problems
- Dependency problems (substance abuse, compulsive gambling, Internet)
- Difficulty balancing personal and professional lives
- Poor health, illness
- New personal situation (separation, death of a loved one, moving, etc.)
- Uncertainty regarding career, retirement, etc.

Some organizational causes of presenteeism

- Inappropriate management style, poor leadership
- General working conditions, too much work or monotonous tasks
- Inflexible work schedule or days off
- Lack of job security
- Lack of recognition or appreciation
- No team spirit
- Lack of participation in decision-making
- Insufficient circulation of information
- No room for advancement
- Lack of essential resources, etc.

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Identifying the keys to mental presence at work

An unhealthy work environment can generate anxiety and anger, reinforce negative attitudes and damage the connection a person feels towards their job. The factors below and on the next page, will help you identify the specific details of a problem related to the work environment and minimize the potential causes of presenteeism.

Management style

Your management style is key to creating a work environment that motivates people to come to work, focus on their job and give 100%. Sometimes it's just a matter of altering certain management practices to alleviate the discomfort experienced by an employee suffering from presenteeism. Actions like supporting teamwork, facilitating discussions or recognizing a person's skills by assigning them interesting tasks, are all simple things that can make a big difference.

Quality of communication methods

Lack of information is often a source of demotivation for employees. Hurried voice mail messages or hastily written e-mails can lead to disinterest, irritation or even anger. Regular meetings with team members, on the other hand, allow the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences, all of which are essential to improving performance. However, make sure to avoid information overload, disinformation and misdirected information.

Interpersonal relationships

Work environments are made up of people from different generations and cultures. The tension created by the needs, expectations and values of each group is often caused by prejudice. In order to establish mutual trust, it's essential to explicitly recognize the qualities of all team members, promote an open-minded attitude, and encourage idea sharing. In addition, since all human beings have a need to be fulfilled in their jobs, you can minimize negative reactions by setting common objectives and channelling energy into the results you want to achieve.

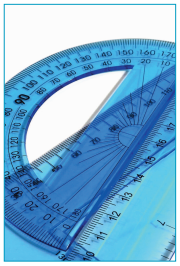
A positive approach

To maintain a high level of motivation within your team, it's important to develop a blame-free culture. Any manager who assigns responsibilities must be prepared to assume certain calculated risks. By giving your team members a certain degree of freedom, you'll be developing their autonomy and encouraging them to be resourceful in resolving any problems that arise. A constructive attitude toward mistakes and failures will motivate your employees to find solutions to any obstacles they might encounter.

Work-life balance

Today's social context has a considerable impact on presenteeism. Older workers often have to deal with responsibilities related to aging parents (illness, researching retirement homes, death, etc.). Younger workers, on the other hand, are dealing with the growth of both their career and their family (raising children, buying a home, etc.). **As a result, the needs associated with work-life balance must be taken into account**. For example, if you have young parents on your team, avoid holding meetings early in the morning or at the end of the day, since these are times when children need to be dropped off or picked up from daycare. Flexible work schedules will also help your employees take care of things that can't be done outside of working hours, like taking an elderly parent to the doctor. These are some simple ways to help your employees focus more on their job when they're at work.

Personal matters are often a key factor in presenteeism



Evaluation of Organizational Causes

Check off the box that best describes the situation within your team. Statements for which you answer "No" indicate possible areas for improvement.

	Yes	No
Job-related factors		
Are the job descriptions clear and well communicated to your employees?	☐	☐
Is the workload balanced according to employees' capabilities?	☐	☐
Does the work offer enough variety to be satisfying?	☐	☐
Is the freedom granted adequate in relation to the expectations?	☐	☐
Is value placed on teamwork and knowledge sharing?	☐	☐
Is the work space conducive to concentration?	☐	☐
Do employees have adequate resources and equipment to do their jobs?	☐	☐
Role in the organization		
Are requests consistent with employees' job descriptions?	☐	☐
Are expectations clear with regard to objectives?	☐	☐
Are team member responsibilities clearly defined?	☐	☐
Are performance standards fair and reasonable?	☐	☐
Career development		
Do your employees have the appropriate knowledge and skills to do their jobs?	☐	☐
Do your employees have opportunities to potentially be assigned new responsibilities in the company?	☐	☐
Do your employees have access to continuing education programs?	☐	☐
Organizational environment		
Are cases of intimidation and harassment dealt with promptly?	☐	☐
Is conflict managed in a fair and reasonable manner?	☐	☐
Does your management style encourage employees to take initiative?	☐	☐
Is information circulated in a fluid manner between you and your team?	☐	☐
Are employees treated with respect?	☐	☐
Do employees receive regular feedback about their work?	☐	☐
Do you regularly recognize your employees for their contribution to the success of the team and the company?	☐	☐

A healthy work environment fosters employee engagement

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Developing an action plan

Intervention strategy

A presenteeism problem invariably reveals itself through inefficiency, and is therefore supported by facts. In addition, it's difficult for you take action until you've determined the impact of the problem. It's therefore important to keep a concrete record of the employee's behaviour and assess the repercussions of that behaviour.

Sample Record of Events

Behaviour	Impact
Frequent absences from workstation	Client calls not answered, extra work for co-workers
A lot of personal phone calls	Unfinished or poorly done work
Frequent data entry errors	Billing errors, having to redo accounting transactions
Missed deadlines	Overtime paid to ensure delivery to clients

Meeting with the employee

Before talking to the person, prepare a meeting guide that includes the purpose of the meeting, a description of the performance problem and its impact, along with possible solutions. Start the meeting by describing the problem calmly and using the facts you've gathered to explain what will no longer be tolerated. Ask for the employee's point of view, and ask them to suggest a solution. You can then draw up an action plan together. This plan should describe what will be done to resolve the problem (who, what, when, how) as well as each person's responsibilities. **Clearly indicate your expectations, what will be done to resolve the problem, and the performance criteria that will be used**. If you can make any changes with respect to organizational factors, indicate that as well. For more serious cases, you can explain the consequences that may occur if the person's behaviour doesn't change. Conclude the meeting by explaining that a follow-up will be carried out in the short-term based on the action plan.

Ask the employee experiencing the problem, to suggest solutions

Presenteeism due to disengagement

Managing presenteeism due to disengagement from work, starts with assessing the causes of the employee's demotivation. To do this, you need to talk to the person using the facts you've gathered regarding the impact of their behaviour. It's not unusual for employees to have a different perception of their behaviour and performance than the manager. As a result, when asking the person to alter their behaviour, you need to use specific, measurable performance criteria with regard to the quality and quantity of their work. These criteria should be the focus of your discussion with the employee.

Presenteeism due to personal problems

Managing presenteeism due to personal problems can be difficult for a manager, since the problem generally has nothing to do with the work organization. If it's a one-time occurrence for a specified period of time, you could agree on some kind of temporary arrangement if you feel it's justified. However, if the problem is more major and/or long-term, your role is to refer the person to the appropriate professional resources and indicate that even though they have your moral support, you have a responsibility to ensure the performance of your team. By focusing on the impact of the presenteeism problem rather than what's causing it, you'll be able to distance yourself from the personal factors and fulfill your duties as a manager.

Cultivating a positive work environment

Employees with good attendance are generally satisfied with their working conditions. To effectively manage presence at work, managers must be able to create and maintain a work environment that promotes respect and equity. Effective management of physical and mental presence at work means ensuring that employees have the desire and the ability to devote the necessary attention to their jobs.

To maintain a positive work environment, it's important to encourage different points of view and to cultivate team spirit. The mutual trust that is developed in this kind of context generates a greater sense of accountability and increased motivation. In a positive work environment, it's also much easier to create a feeling of belonging, and in turn, improve the sense of commitment that all members of your team have towards their jobs.

In the working world, employees' physical and mental presence is of utmost concern. Effective managers know how to recognize the value of their employees' work and thereby increase the satisfaction they derive from a job well done. They also understand the importance of rewarding people for their achievements and their contribution to the company's success.

By promoting good mental and intellectual presence at work, you'll be noticeably improving quality, customer service and productivity. It has been proven that people are more motivated when doing jobs they feel are interesting and valuable in a positive, peaceful environment.

Professional resources for managers

The Posaction® Plus management assistance program is included in your group insurance contract. The program includes training modules, coaching, a post-traumatic counselling service and psychosocial assistance for troubled employees.

Confidential telephone coaching

- Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (ET)

1.877.744.2789

Post-traumatic counselling

- Round-the-clock service for serious incidents

1.800.668.0193

For more details about the program
www.posactionplus.com

Posaction® Plus
Your management assistance program

Psychosocial assistance for troubled employees

By referring employees to professional resources, you'll be helping them take concrete steps to resolve their problems and regain their regular performance at work.

Round-the-clock confidential service

1.800.668.0193

- Work-related problems
- Personal problems
- Family problems
- Dependency problems

No charge for using the services

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Other titles available

- Solving an Absenteeism Problem
- Managing Interpersonal Conflict
- Managing Reactions to Change
- Managing Difficult Behaviour
- Solving a Performance Problem
- Delegating for Efficiency
- Recruiting the Best Candidates for Your Team
- Making the Most of Your Performance Appraisals
- Motivating and Developing Your Team

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The Healthy Teams collection is part of the Posaction® Plus management assistance program included in your group insurance contract. The program offers tangible solutions designed to improve management practices and prevent absence from work. Additional copies of this module, or copies of other titles in the collection, can be ordered free of charge at **www.posactionplus.com**

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Expert in human capital

PLS-508-HUM

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