Engaging Supervisors to Influence Employee Well-Being: Why, What, and How to Get There

Session Outline
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Summary:

Many organizations and best practices emphasize both top leadership and grassroots efforts such as Champions to address employee well-being. What about everything in-between? How are frontline supervisors being engaged? This session will guide attendees in discovering the role supervisors play for well-being, including perspectives shared in one-on-one interviews with supervisors themselves. Attendees will learn to craft strategic and meaningful interventions which address the supervisors' needs and barriers to positively impact the work environment. There is much research on the role of supervisors and mid-level managers as key "influencers" at the work unit level on employee engagement (Linnan, Weiner, Graham, & Emmons, 2007; McCalister, Dolbier, Webster, Mallon, & Steinhardt, 2006). Research consistently finds that less than one-third of Americans feel engaged in their jobs and that managers account for at least 70% of variance in employee engagement scores (Harter & Adkins, 2015). However, most managers are not creating environments in which employees feel motivated or even comfortable (Harter & Adkins, 2015). In addition, research from the Human Capital Institute and Sirota Consulting has reported that managers need to lead by example and are a primary influence on the day-to-day work environment (Wiete, 2013).

Before implementing an approach to specifically engage managers, it is important to map the course by first understanding their perspective and reactions to existing resources and expectations. This session will share perceptions of the supervisors themselves to further understand the barriers and unique challenges for supervisors to focus on their own well-being and that of their employees, and their perceived role to influence the health and well-being of their staff. Leveraging this knowledge, attendees will learn how to craft practical and meaningful interventions which are integrated into the role of supervisors to positively impact the work environment for employees.

Objectives:
1. Understand the research and rationale to engage supervisors in supporting employee well-being.
2. Identify barriers, needs, and perceived roles from the supervisor perspective to support employee well-being.
3. Outline practical, meaningful interventions to integrate into supervisor roles to positively impact work environments.

Outline:
1. **Introduction and background**
2. **Why supervisors? Existing research and rationale.**
   - Supervisor role in employee engagement
   - The connection of social network theory and patterns of social influence in the workplace environment
   - The role of well-being champions vs supervisors for impacting work unit factors

3. **What? The supervisor perspective for supporting employee well-being.**
   - Methods for gathering feedback from supervisors
   - Barriers for supervisors supporting wellness activities in the work area, including examples
   - Perceived role for supporting health and well-being of staff
   - Stated needs for supporting employee health and well-being
4. **How? Practical and meaningful interventions**.
   - Examples of organizational approaches for supporting supervisors to influence the work unit
   - Review an action plan to further enhance the involvement of supervisors
   - Lessons learned to date

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