Family Friendly Business Practices

Today, people work longer hours with more demands. Workplace demands put more stress on workers as they try to balance their work lives with their home lives. This has led to reports of higher financial stress, as well as greater work-life conflict. More attention is being paid to the toll these demands and pressures can take on workers and their families.

Family Friendly Business Practices are options companies can give their workers that let them create a schedule that best fits workers’ needs and helps reduce the stress of balancing work and life. The most common are:

- **Flexible scheduling or allowing for a less strict work day** (i.e., not a 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. shift). This allows employees to balance their work and personal lives.
- **Telecommuting or letting people work outside of their office.** This option reduces stress and has real health benefits for both the mother and child.
- **Childcare Benefits** (on-site, near-site, or any combination of the three). These benefits can encourage positive parenting activities (i.e., breastfeeding) and have been shown to reduce employee stress by giving workers more time with friends and families, as well as greater flexibility for personal needs, such as scheduling doctor appointments.

Many businesses today see the value of offering family-friendly practices that help to support their workers in raising their children and caring for their aging relatives. Reducing employee stress can help employees be healthier overall and make them more productive when they are at work.

Family Friendly Business Practices and Health

Today’s workers face more demands on their time from all directions, forcing them to constantly balance their attention between work and their personal lives. This can have a harmful impact, as long periods of stress have been shown to cause poor mental health and can negatively affect physical health too. Stress can lead to feelings of worry and sadness, while also upsetting sleep and creating a tense work environment. Stress has also been linked to weight gain, obesity, higher blood pressure, and putting more strain on a person’s heart. Family friendly business practices are a way for businesses to decrease the impact of stress on their workers by helping to create a more integrated work-life experience. Flexible work schedules and telecommuting policies reduce employee stress by giving workers more time with friends and families, as well as greater flexibility for personal needs, such as scheduling doctor appointments. Employer-sponsored childcare can encourage positive parenting activities (i.e., breastfeeding) and has been shown to reduce stress and have real health benefits for mother and child. By allowing for more worker control, family friendly business practices can directly impact both stress-related physical and mental health issues.

Return on Investment for Family Friendly Business Practices

Family friendly business practices give workers more control over their time and creates company loyalty. Having dedicated and healthy workers also helps companies by lowering the cost of losing workers and missed work days. In fact, a 2016 study found that the cost of losing an employee can range from tens of thousands of dollars to nearly two-times the employee’s annual salary. Overall, giving workers more control over their time through family friendly business practices does not hurt company success, and in fact, can make workers happier, more engaged, and less likely to leave.

References:

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State of Family Friendly Business Practices in Colorado

In Colorado, EPIC (Executives Partnering to Invest in Children), Colorado Essentials for Childhood, and Health Links have come together to lead the charge for more family friendly businesses. They recently created a “Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit” and “Family-Friendly Workplace Assessment” (see table below) to help businesses become more family friendly. The assessment helps get businesses involved by giving them family-friendly scores and access to resources and training. Their goal is to create supportive and successful companies, along with a stronger market throughout Colorado that supports its workers.

Colorado Spotlight: Family Friendly Companies

These companies meet the Family Friendly Workplace Toolkit criteria of a Family Friendly Business, which are:

- **Flexible Work Hours**
- **Core Benefits** (ex. health insurance, retirement savings plan)
- **Paid Leave** (ex. maternity leave, sick leave)
- **Support Services** (ex. access to counseling)
- **Career Development** (ex. access to additional job training)
- **Community Involvement** (ex. volunteering)

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Boulder County
offers paid leave, and an "infants-at-work" policy

Children's Hospital Colorado
offers an employee assistance program (EAP) and a Backup Care program

DaVita, Inc
offers employees flexible work schedules, support services, and financial support for employees in need

Pinnacol Assurance
has a paid time off bank instead of separating out earned time-off, flexible work schedules, and core benefits

USAA
offers workers flexible schedules, telecommuting options, and a wellness program

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