

THREE'S A CHARM

MORE AND MORE, organizations are relying on workplace teams when looking for high level decision making and problem solving. A team's combination of resources, diverse insights, expertise, and abilities provide a rich collection of information on which to generate decision alternatives. As a result, teams often arrive at higher quality solutions than does a lone individual.

Organizational leaders usually take team selection very seriously and will take great care to assemble a team of highly skilled individuals with the attributes necessary for optimal team performance. These include:

- Strong professional values.
- The ability to work collaboratively and independently.
- The ability to translate general ideas into specific performance objectives and tasks.
- Creativity and flexibility.

Teams are effective. But there is no shortage of stories about teams that were either so unproductive, they fizzled into nonexistence or disagreed so much that – like a hung jury – they never reached consensus.

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PORTION *WARS*

SINCE THE 1970s, portion sizes have grown exponentially – in restaurants, fast food outlets, and grocery stores. Knowing that consumers love a good value, food suppliers have been waging “portion wars” against each other by offering super-sized deals to attract business. Unfortunately, an unintended casualty of this war has been the health of Americans and the obesity crisis as people grew accustomed to consuming larger and larger quantities at meals.

People are ready to make dietary changes – but it hasn't been easy. We now suffer from *portion distortion* - where it feels normal to consume large portions at a single sitting. Consider this: **A restaurant serving of cooked pasta is usually five times the standard portion size and is often served on larger-than-normal plates, which gives the illusion that the serving size is reasonable.**

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Federal Occupational Health (FOH)

The Occupational Health Provider of Choice for the Federal Government

The mission of FOH is to improve the health, safety, and productivity of the federal workforce. Created by Congress in 1946, FOH is a non-appropriated service agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). FOH offers a full range of occupational health services—including Clinical, Wellness/Fitness, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Work/Life, Organizational Development, and Environmental Health and Safety programs—exclusively to federal employees.

Visit FOH on the Web at www.foh.dhhs.gov, or call 800-457-9808.

The SCOOP



Get a Helping Hand...Sanitizer

Hand sanitizing dispensers are popping up in high traffic, “high touch” public areas outside elevators and doors. It’s a great idea to prevent the spread of germs, but they’re not everywhere...yet. Carry a portable bottle of alcohol-based sanitizer to use after touching elevators, doors, and when exchanging money or goods. There are also pen-sized dispensers that can fit in your pocket. Also remember to avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth – germs spread this way.

Find out more from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/#stay_healthy.

Berry Good for You

Berries may pack a more powerful punch than we thought. According to Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists, geriatric laboratory animals showed an improvement in memory after eating a diet rich in a compound made from berries and grapes. The results are preliminary and it’s not known whether humans will benefit similarly, but berries can still be a vitamin rich and tasty dietary part of your diet.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Food and nutrition briefs, www.ars.usda.gov/is/np/fnr/fnr0409.htm#berry.



“Portion,” continued from page 1

Portion distortion causes you to eat much more than you realize at a single meal. For example, few people ever eat a standard serving of pasta, which is actually 1/2 cup. According to FOH dietitian, Lieutenant Susan Steinman, when people underestimate portion sizes, they often double or triple their caloric intake without realizing it. “I’ve noticed that people often serve themselves about 25% or more above standard portion sizes,” said Lieutenant Steinman.

You can overcome portion distortion. Dietitians use educational aids to train people to “eyeball” proper portions. These aids can be household measures like cups, spoons, plates, and bowls; realistic plastic food models; or objects

like a deck of cards (3 ounces of meat) or dice (4 dice = 1.5 ounces of cheese). Visual aids can really help by providing a tangible comparison. “Conquering portion distortion is simply a process of relearning – it just takes a bit of practice,” added Lieutenant Steinman.

Wellness education, health promotion, and consultation services are available through FOH’s Division of Clinical Services, and include dietary education programs. You can also learn more about portion control at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Weight-Control Information Network (WIN) Website at www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/just_enough.htm.

FEDERAL INFORMATION LINKS

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.hhs.gov

White House Blog
www.whitehouse.gov/blog

Healthier US
www.healthierus.gov

MyPyramid.gov (USDA)
www.mypyramid.gov

National Diabetes Education Program
<http://ndep.nih.gov>

Small Steps (HHS)
www.smallstep.gov

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
www.ahrq.gov/consumer

Weight-Control Information Network
<http://win.niddk.nih.gov>

Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative
www.organdonor.gov

CDC Disaster Preparedness
www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters

NATIONAL HEALTH OBSERVANCES

July 1 - 31

International Group B Strep Awareness Month
www.groupbstrepinternational.org

July 1 - 31

UV Safety Month
Learn about sun safety
www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin

August 1 - 31

Psoriasis Awareness Month
National Psoriasis Foundation
www.psoriasis.org

September 1 - 30

America On the Move’s September Campaign
www.americaonthemove.org

September 1 - 30

National Yoga Awareness Month
www.yogamonth.org

If You Build it, Will They Come?



UNHEALTHY EMPLOYEES cost organizations in terms of absenteeism, turnover, medical claims, and performance decrements. Healthy workplace initiatives improve employee health and quality of life through access to wellness facilities, stress management services, and medical services. There are many types of programs. Some focus on work/life balance. Some target specific physical health risks of employees. Some focus on creating a positive organizational culture (respect, empowerment).

Deciding on a suite of services that provides the best fit with your organization and offers the highest return on investment (ROI) can feel daunting. What if the program fails to elicit sufficient employee interest and commitment? According to a study published in the June 2009 issue of *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, employee involvement may be the key to ensuring the long-term success of healthy workforce initiatives.

Researchers found that when employees provide input into the design and implementation of healthy workforce initiatives, they take more ownership in its success and/or failure. However, it's not enough to simply survey the workforce. Rather, employees value active participation such as task forces, focus groups, even town hall meetings.

Effective employee involvement results in a partnership between the managers and staff that maximizes the strategic selection of customized initiatives. Here are some tips to consider.

- Provide employees with opportunities to engage in creating their healthy workplace.
- Identify organizational barriers to implementation and develop strategies to reduce those barriers.
- Tailor programs to the unique needs of the workforce.
- Invite periodic employee feedback for the purpose of improving and refining programs.

Much like other workplace change strategies, healthy workplace initiatives are most successful in a participatory environment where employee feedback is solicited and considered.

FOH designs and customizes healthy workplace programs and is an organizational change leader. Contact FOH for more information about workplace initiatives and change strategies.

Your workplace EAP is available to help you and your family manage a variety of issues. See the contact information on the back page.



NOTHING to Smile About

THERE IS NO ARGUMENT that smoking is bad for your health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 out of every 5 deaths in the United States can be linked to the health effects of smoking. Clearly, everyone accepts the dangers associated with smoking.

There's something else about smoking you may not be aware of. Smoking can harm your looks. Here's how.

- **More wrinkles.** Smoking causes increases in facial wrinkling, typically known as smoker's face. Smoking reduces blood circulation and reduces the body's ability to form collagen, the main structural component of skin.
- **Tired eyes.** Tobacco's stimulant properties can make it difficult to fall asleep. Its addictive properties can make it difficult to stay asleep as

withdrawal symptoms kick in.

- **It can ruin your smile.** Tobacco turns your teeth yellow and leads to increased risk of gum disease.
- **Unsightly hands.** Smoking turns your fingernails yellow.

Remember, it's never too late to reap the benefits of quitting. Within a few days after quitting, there are notable improvements in blood pressure, heart rate, and circulation. After one year, you will have reduced your risks of heart and lung ailments by half. And with every subsequent year, the benefits continue to increase.

FOH offers federal agencies several tobacco cessation program options that utilize scientifically proven methods, yet are flexible enough to meet each individual's unique needs. Contact FOH for more information and resources. You can also learn more at www.cdc.gov/tobacco.

FOH FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The EAP is part of the Coast Guard's Work Life Program. Each Integrated Support Command (ISC) and the Headquarters Support Command (HSC) has a Work Life Office and EAP Coordinator. To contact a Coast Guard EAP Coordinator, call your ISC or HSC Work Life Office. For administrative details about the program, contact Jeffrey Dunlap at 301-443-7589 or e-mail at jdunlap@psc.gov. To visit us on the Web, go to www.FOH4You.com.

Help available all day, all week, all year.
1-800-222-0364 TTY: 1-888-262-7848

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This newsletter is available electronically at www.foh.dhhs.gov/eapnews/uscg.

For questions regarding the publication and distribution of the newsletter, contact Haydee Gelpi at 301-443-7664 or e-mail at hgelpi@psc.gov.

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One factor critical to team performance is team size. According to a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, when it comes to problem solving, *three's a charm*. A group's decision making will nearly always outperform the ability of any one of its members working alone.

When researchers studied groups of different sizes, they found that groups of three performed equally well as did groups of four or five. In most cases, after group size exceeds five, performance can begin to degrade. "If groups of three perform as well as groups of larger size, it is obviously a more efficient use of human and logistic resources to use three-person groups," the researchers concluded.

Of course, there will be times when a larger group is required, such as when the task is prolonged or very complex. For those instances, remember that as a group size increases, communication and coordination problems often set in, and performance and satisfaction may diminish.

Also, as team size increases so does the potential for social loafing – the tendency of people to work less hard in a group than they would individually. *Social loafing* occurs because individual contributions are less noticeable in the group context and it's easy to allow just a few individuals to carry the workload.

Once your team is assembled for optimal performance, remember that long-term performance is tied to providing realistic goals and adequate resources. A group's performance will suffer when:

- Goals are unclear, unchallenging, or arbitrarily imposed.
- Goals are focused too much on specific individuals.
- Adequate budgets, facilities, best practice procedures, and sufficient technologies are not available.

FOH provides consultation and training on teamwork and teambuilding. Contact your FOH EAP for more information. And remember, next time you're assembling a team to solve a workplace problem, remember: Three's a charm.

Source: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 644-651, 2006.