



Unions leading change: How a health care union used an evidence-based strategy to engage employers in healthy workplace change

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Presentation by:
Elisabeth Ballermann, Health Sciences Association of Alberta.
Graham Lowe, The Graham Lowe Group Inc.

Session outline

1. Study background
2. Action strategy
3. Key findings
4. Lessons
5. Implications for you

Context

1. Allied health professions rarely the focus of research or action
2. 2005 collective bargaining successes on economic issues
3. Regionalization in Alberta
4. HSAA leaders committed to addressing members' QWL concerns
5. HSAA had collaborated with a few employers to improve working conditions
6. Employer urgency about recruitment and retention issues
7. Province-wide initiatives to address work environments

Survey goals and methods

GOALS

- ✓ Obtain members' input on the quality of their work environment, and on improvements needed.
- ✓ Enable the HSAA to take a leadership role in providing work environment solutions so that its members can provide the best quality services to patients and clients.

METHODS

- ✓ Mail questionnaire sent to 12,000 HSAA members at their home addresses.
- ✓ 5,131 completed questionnaires returned to Graham Lowe Group.
- ✓ 43% response rate is good for surveys of this type.

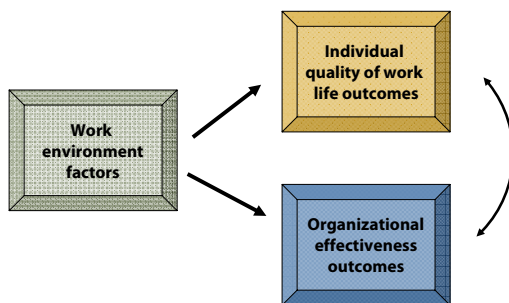
Issues examined

- Work time
- Job conditions
- Training and professional development
- Work teams and relationships
- Supervisors and management
- Organizational change
- Patient and client safety
- Workplace and employee health
- Employees' work experiences
- Retirement
- Suggestions for improvement

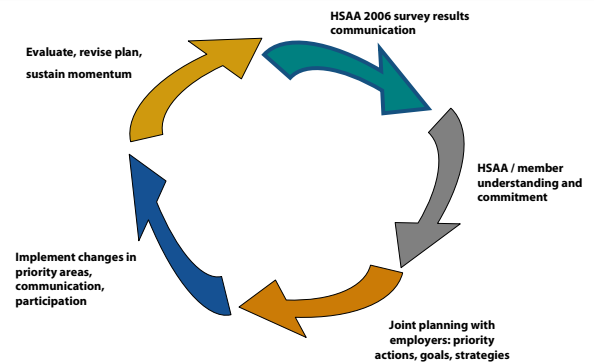
Action research timetable

Steps	Time
Proposal to HSAA Board	September 2005
Planning, consultation with HSAA staff and project committee	Fall 2005
Development and testing of questionnaire	Winter 2006
Data collection	March- April 2006
Preliminary results presented to HSAA Board	June 2006
Report released	September 2006
Labour relations officer strategy workshop	October 2006
Communication strategy and employer reports	Fall 2006
Member action planning workshop	November 2006
Meetings with individual employers	On-going since fall 2006

Framework for interpreting survey results



Work environment change model



Guiding principles for action

1. Positive and constructive approach
2. Involve members
3. Partner with employers
4. Make the business case for action
5. Build on existing strengths
6. Focus on a few priority areas
7. Set realistic goals and timeframes

Engaging employers through survey design and reporting

- Independent experts designed, conducted and reported results
- De-coupled from collective bargaining
- Focused on outcomes relevant to both employees and employers
- Linked work environments to HR goals and quality and safety
- Provided national benchmarks on key employee outcomes
- Practical suggestions for improvement
- Each employer was provided their own report

Organizational performance insights

- ✓ Heavy workloads are pervasive, due to inadequate staffing levels, increased job performance expectations, and increased complexity of work.
- ✓ There are unmet needs in training and professional development, but respondents positively assessed the training they had received.
- ✓ About 80% of survey respondents felt that their co-workers, patients or clients, and other health care professionals treat them with respect.
- ✓ Less than half considered their supervisor to be effective supporting them in their jobs.
- ✓ 1 in 3 respondents agreed that they have been able to learn from past experiences of organizational change, including regionalization.
- ✓ 59% agreed that working conditions in their area contribute to patient safety.
- ✓ There are elements of a safety culture, but room for improvement.

Quality of work life insights

- ✓ Over 1 in 4 disagreed with the statement: "my work environment is healthy." Fewer than half rated their work environment as both healthy and safe.
- ✓ Workers in healthy and safe work environments have higher levels of trust in management, are more engaged in their jobs, and report that their team delivers high quality services.
- ✓ Over the past few years, 43% reported that work-life balance has been getting harder to achieve. A supportive work environment is crucial to work-life balance.
- ✓ Changes such as adequate staffing levels, increased flexibility and choice in work hours and schedules, and decreased workloads would help most to achieve work-life balance.
- ✓ HSAA survey respondents perceive themselves to be somewhat less healthy and under somewhat more job stress than other Canadian workers.
- ✓ While workplace health promotion activities or programs are not common, respondents who participated in these reported benefits, including a healthier and safer workplace.

HR insights

- ✓ 88% of HSAA members surveyed are very committed to the kind of work they do in their job, but only 45% are very committed to their employer.
- ✓ 13% plan to quit in the next 12 months, and this is strongly related to job dissatisfaction and low employer commitment.
- ✓ One in five respondents plan to retire from their current employer in the next five years. Decisions to delay retirement, or to return to work in health care after retiring, are influenced by the quality of the work environment.
- ✓ Employer practices and policies – not the job performed – have a major impact on employees' quality of work-life as well as job performance.

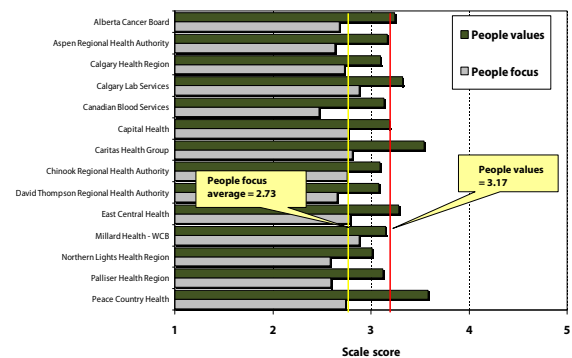
Big strategic insight

- The values, policies, and practices of specific employers matter most when it comes to finding ways to improve quality, whether it is quality of employee work life or quality of patient / client services.

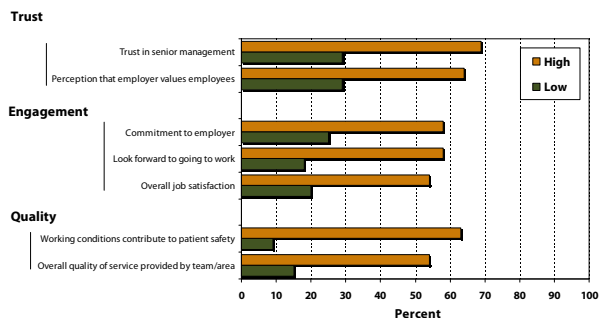
Examples of using evidence to invite action

- Here are examples of how we presented results to members and employers in ways that invited follow-up discussion and action.

People focus and people values scale scores, by employer

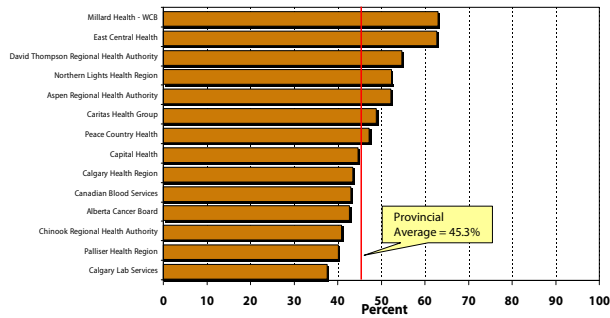


Percent of respondents with a healthy and safe work environment reporting high and low levels of trust, engagement, and quality service

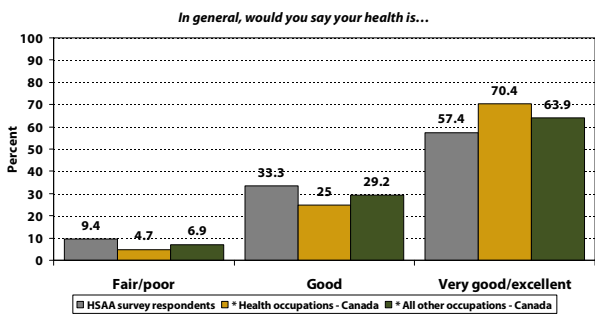


This graph reports the percentage of respondents with both healthy and safe workplaces in high and low categories on key outcome measures. All relationships between the healthy and safe measures and outcome measures are statistically significant (p< .000, Chi-square test).

Percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that their work environment is both healthy and safe, by employer



Self-perceived health, comparing HSAA members with other employees in Canada

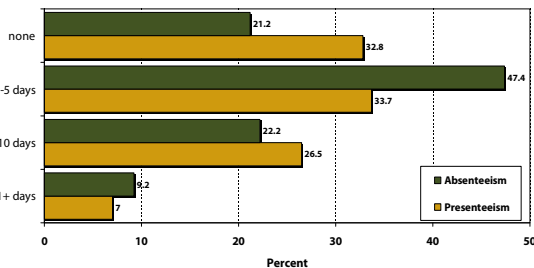


* Source: Statistics Canada, 2003 Canadian Community Health Survey.

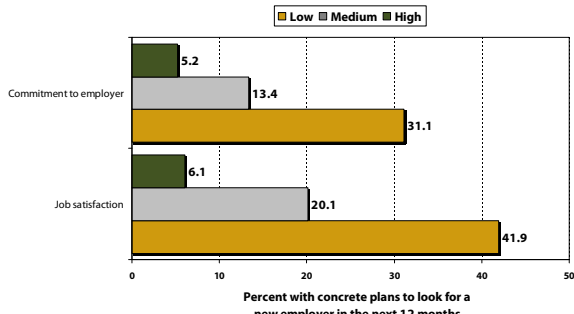
Incidence of absenteeism and presenteeism

Absenteeism: "During the past 12 months, how many days were you away from work because of your own illness or injury?"

Presenteeism: "During the past 12 months, how many days did you work despite an illness or injury because you felt you had to?"

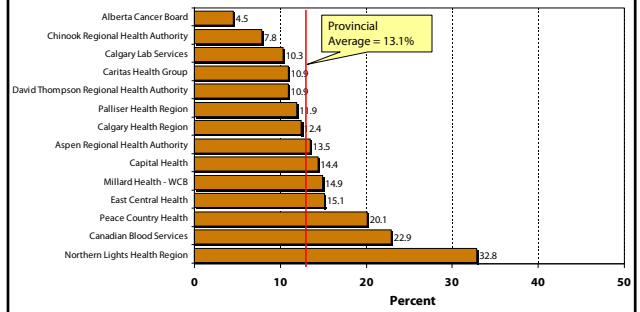


Percentage of respondents who intend to quit by level of job satisfaction and commitment to their employer



Differences between levels of job satisfaction and commitment to current employer are statistically significant (p = .000, Chi-square test).

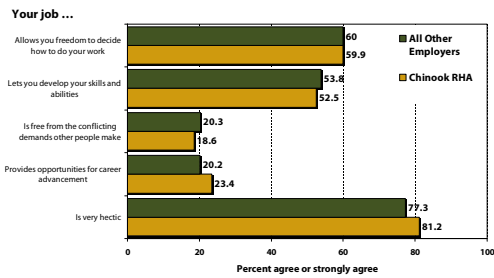
Percent of respondents who have concrete plans to look for a new employer in the next 12 months, by employer



Understanding the 'drivers' of quality of work life and job performance

DISCUSSION:

- How are these job factors related?
- Which of these factors has the biggest impact on quality of work life? On job performance?
- What are two changes that would get at the root causes of these problems?



¹ Answered on a 5-point scale, where 1 = "strongly disagree," and 5 = "strongly agree." Responses of 4 and 5 combined are reported in this graph.

Building on recent improvements

DISCUSSION:

- What's working?
- What can you influence?
- Lessons for future change?

Top five work environment improvements in past 12 months, Calgary Health Region	% of all responses
More staff/adequate staffing	13.4
Teamwork/team meetings/co-worker relations and communication	12.1
Nothing - neutral comments	8.9
New manager/supervisor	8.3
Improved physical space	7.6
Top 5 suggestions as % of all suggestions	50.5
Total number of respondents = 932	

Using members' suggestions for improvement

Open-ended question responses	Quick win	2007 actions and goals	2008-2009 actions and goals
Greatest training need in the next 12 months	✓	→	
Useful actions by employers to help HSAA members achieve professional development goals			
One change that would contribute most to work-life balance			
One thing employers could do to improve quality of work life			
One thing HSAA could do to improve quality of work life			

Strengths to build on

THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF STRENGTH (based on positive responses):

- ✓ Employees' commitment to their work and their clients.
- ✓ Employees take initiative and contribute their skills and knowledge.
- ✓ Positive team relations.
- ✓ Training investments pay off.
- ✓ Workplace health promotion investments pay off.
- ✓ Positive assessments of service quality and patient safety.

Learning and development improvements

THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS :

- ✓ Feedback from supervisors to help employees do a better job.
- ✓ Time and financial support to maintain professional certifications.
- ✓ A stream-lined process for approval of PD requests.
- ✓ A wider range of training choices, especially job-specific courses.
- ✓ Annual performance appraisals, which include recognition, feedback on job performance, and support for learning and career plans.
- ✓ Organization-wide support for reporting errors, learning from them, and taking the appropriate action.

Healthy workplace improvements

THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS :

- ✓ Effective communication of existing workplace safety, health and wellness programs.
- ✓ Accommodation of injured or ill employees.
- ✓ Enabling easy access to family/personal leave.
- ✓ Maintaining and strengthening respectful relationships in the workplace.
- ✓ On-going consultations with employees on health promotion needs and opportunities.
- ✓ Rethink attendance management programs.

Work load, hours and schedule improvements

THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS :

- ✓ Provide flexibility in schedules and hours, where feasible.
- ✓ Ongoing consultation with employees to find solutions to work time and work load issues.
- ✓ Work distribution processes that are perceived to be fair.
- ✓ Efficient and fair mechanisms for enabling employees to change their FTE or schedules.
- ✓ Assess the impact of existing workplace rules, policies and procedures on work distribution, individual work loads and scheduling. Find efficiencies.
- ✓ Provide incentives, resources and training so that managers and supervisors are better able to support team work and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The win-win-win scenario

Employees win

- Time and funds for PD
- Job feedback
- Healthy and safe work environments
- Improved scheduling
- Control over workloads
- 2-way communication

Employers win

- Increased capabilities
- Improved productivity
- Reduced costs
- Reduced turnover
- Higher trust
- Higher commitment
- Good reputation

Clients/patients win

- Improved service quality
- Improved system efficiency
- Reduced risk of errors

Signs of progress

MEETINGS WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT AT SIX HEALTH REGIONS (more scheduled):

- *Palliser Health Region*: focus groups are reviewing survey with key board members participating. Linked to initiatives with Baptist Leadership Institute.
- *Calgary Health Region*: joint working committee set up to focus on top three issues, mainly focused on recruitment and retention. Survey initiated much-needed union-management communication.
- *Peace Country Health*: meeting with managers responsible for HSAA members, followed by commitment to joint workshops on three major issues.
- *Aspen Regional Health Authority*: meeting with CEO. Follow-up meeting with executive to align with staff survey results and set up QWL committee.

More signs of progress

MEETINGS WITH TWO OTHER EMPLOYERS:

- *Canadian Blood Services*: Three presentations and agreement to set up local committees in three sites, focusing on scheduling. Implementing pilot on self-scheduling.
- *Calgary Lab Services*: integrated approach to HSAA and employer survey through joint committee to address QWL issues. Formal terms of reference and plan to address short, medium and long-term goals.

PROVINCE-WIDE INITIATIVE:

- *HBA Services*: joint committee with this HR and labour relations support organization to develop and implement guidelines for staffing, hours and schedules. The goal is to improve work-life balance and staffing efficiencies.

Lessons for HSAA

- A survey by independent experts is a good opportunity to open up discussion on QWL issues
- Change depends on employer involvement
- Linking with employer initiatives (especially surveys) is important
- Emphasize mutual benefits throughout the process, not just employer benefits
- Expect uneven progress across employers and work with the most willing
- Action research must include strategy and tactics

Future challenges for HSAA

- Sustaining momentum
- Measuring and tracking progress
- Collective bargaining
- HSAA capacity
- Employer capacity
- Balancing province-wide and employer focus

Key ideas and action implications for you

KEY IDEAS YOU HAVE GAINED IN THIS SESSION:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

ACTION IMPLICATIONS:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

For more information

The full report, *Creating a Quality Work Environment: Results from the HSAA 2006 Work Environment Survey*, is available on both websites below.



www.hsaa.ca
elisabeth@hsaa.ca
lynettem@hsaa.ca
780.488.0168
10212 - 112 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1M4



www.grahamlowe.ca
glowe@grahamlowe.ca
250.712.0630
209, 346 Lawrence Avenue
Kelowna, BC V1Y 6L4