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Workers' Comp – A Different Perspective on Cause & Effect

If one looks at the essence of management or life in general, success boils down to the degree of one being more the cause of things versus being more the effect of things.

The baseball player who can hit the ball with regularity is *causing the effect* versus the batter who solemnly trudges back to the dugout as *being the effect* (of the pitcher).

The child learning arithmetic feels triumphant when his answer is correct. He is cause over the adding of those numbers. The child does not feel good when he gets the answer wrong. He is, to this degree, the effect of these numbers.

The teachers who go home frazzled with spitballs in their hair are being the effect of their students. Conversely, teachers who leave their jobs feeling good and that have orderly classrooms with kids learning, are being more cause.

When we apply this concept to management it is easy to determine whether we are cause or the effect of our jobs.

The manager who can decide on a course of action, plan for the desired results, implement the plan, and attain the goal of the plan is to that degree cause over their job. The manager, who can't accomplish this most of the time, feels stressful and is to that degree the effect of their job.

In fact, stress can be defined really as the manifestation of areas in our life where we are more the effect than the cause of something.

How is this concept germane to controlling workers' comp costs?

First we will address the manager and then examine this concept from the employee's perspective.

To manage equates to control, which can be defined as being more cause than effect over job related activities. I have always struggled with the prevailing model of managing workers' comp costs and how any workers' comp executive can feel entirely in control.

It is estimated that 98% of the workers' comp dollar in the US is spent on post claim activities, i.e. medical costs, claims administration, and other "downstream" measures. This leaves a very small 2% to spend on pre-claims or prevention strategies, upstream measures that are the source of all future claims.

Using this paradigm, or anything vaguely similar, is it at all possible to be cause over controlling workers' comp costs?

Even if we are quite expert at claims cost containment, we will be thrust back to being the effect when tomorrow brings more claims. This method of management creates a moderate win situation with potentially high stress and will continue until we can prevent tomorrow's injuries equally well.

We see many businesses in manufacturing, healthcare, distribution, logistics, city and county governments, etc., that experience a high frequency and severity of sprain/strain injuries. Despite savings due to aggressive claims management, the Holy Grail is in preventing tomorrow's injuries today, before they happen.

Now *that* is managing from a position of "cause" versus the more stressful position of being the effect of unwanted and costly injuries.

The manager wanting to be more cause over their job would also be greatly helped to the degree that their staff is cause over their jobs.

The executive that is ultimately in charge of controlling workers' comp costs, can become more cause to the degree employees themselves move from being predisposed to being a victim of a work related injury (effect), to a more causative position of being able to be more responsible for his or her own well-being.

This process is truly a beautiful thing. Watching people learn how they can become cause over their own health (on and off the job) is not only extremely cost effective it is also highly rewarding. Moreover, you can watch the morale of the company change before your eyes.

A good example of this was a woman who worked in an office environment who had been taking a pain killer to squelch a headache intermittently for over 8 years. During a Sittingsafe® ergonomics workshop this woman learned, drilled and practiced how to set up any workstation specifically for her body and how to stretch away physical stress.

This woman did a lot of mousing. Her mouse was positioned, off to the right and away from her body, a very common position for computer users.

Well the attendees were asked would they, while at a party, hold their beverage in the same arm position as when mousing (please put your hand on your mouse and answer this question)? Their almost unanimous response was "Oh my gosh, no way!" Why? "Because it would be uncomfortable and eventually hurt!" Where do you have your arm while holding a beverage? Yes, the elbow is always drawn right next to your body. Why, because it feels better there! It is a neutral posture whereby muscles are not being insidiously engaged and contracted to hold the elbow away from and extended from the body.

Well this woman was unknowingly contracting these same arm, shoulder and neck muscles 4-hours a day for 12 years. This innocent daily stress insidiously accumulated over time to cause neck pain and a chronic headache.

In that workshop she experienced the power and simplicity of learning how to be more cause over her health versus being an innocent victim of her job. She had discovered the source of her long term and life-altering headache and at once went from being the effect of her job to being more cause over it and her life. Within days she was off her pain medication and was no longer a potential liability to the company.

It has been said that life is a game. In games, winners are more cause and losers are more effect. In the game of business, successful executives are being more cause than effect. That is the simplicity of it.

Workers' comp executives can now win the game of preventing tomorrow's claims today and be more cause over workers' comp costs than ever before AND reduce stress at the same time!

It is always good to hear from you. If you have any suggestions for articles or would like certain aspects of this one expanded upon, please let us know.



Prevent tomorrow's injuries today! TM
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