

If you build it they will come: delivering a workplace AOD Program

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Background

- Recent and rapid expansion in interest in AOD issues in the workplace
- No real corresponding increase in the delivery of workplace programs
- General view that "our industry is OK"
- Recent research contrary to prevailing view



Workplace AOD Issues

- Alcohol:
 - 33% of workplace accidents
 - Over two-fifths (43.9%) of the workforce drinks at risky levels
 - Generally, males are riskiest drinkers (except for women in management roles)
 - Workers' consumption shaped by prevailing workplace culture
 - In 2001 2.7 million work days lost due to alcohol-related causes

Workplace AOD Issues

- Workplace culture
 - Alcohol as reward/award
 - Tradition, ceremony and ritual
 - Health and safety culture
- An employment issue or a personal issue?

Workplace AOD Issues

- Poor understanding:
 - Scope
 - Costs
 - Safety impact
 - Available options
- Testing: “the silver bullet”

Workplace AOD Programs

- Multi-level:
 - Policy
 - Education
 - Early intervention
 - Support and referral
 - Testing (?)

Case Study 1

- Very large workforce, multi-site, numerous occupation groups, predominantly young males
- Concern regarding alcohol use:
 - Safety
 - Discipline
 - Adverse publicity
- Existing responses/strategies not integrated

Case Study 1

- Ambitious program (too ambitious?)
 - policy (development and advice)
 - early intervention
 - capacity building
 - treatment
- Establishing the groundswell: a bottom up approach

Case Study 2

- Complex industry, many stakeholders, predominantly male shift workers
- Fatal accident
- Government imposed random testing program
- Regulatory authority recognised need for more comprehensive approach

Case Study 2

- Developed two stage approach:
 - Informed and meaningful consultation on developing program
 - Program development
- Audit program for compliance

Challenges...

- Culture(s) of the workplace
- Evidence base insufficient
- Not a problem in our industry
- The “can of worms”
- Everyone is an expert

Challenges...

- Focussing on drug “use” rather than drug “users” in the workplace
- Being realistic about testing
- Does the walk match the talk

Rewards...

- Immediate benefits:
 - Participation in an informed debate
 - Clearly articulated expectations
 - Structured options
- Longer term impact:
 - Cultural change
 - OH&S
 - Productivity, absenteeism

Tips...

- There has to be something in it for everyone
- Consult, consult again, then go back and consult just to be safe
- Someone from “outside” can often be more credible than someone from “inside”
- Terminology ... Do you think I mean what I think I mean?

Conclusion

- Clear need for workplace responses
- A legitimate AOD activity
- Culture change is slow, but fundamental to success
- If you build it they will come... be ready