

# Return-to-Work Conditions for Success

## Successful RTW Programs

Factors that contribute to the success of a Return-to-Work (RTW) program include:

### Senior Management Commitment

Senior management plays an important role in communicating the organization's commitment to the RTW program. Senior management needs to:

- Demonstrate visible support by actively participating in the development, administration and promotion of the program
- Provide the necessary resources of time, money and manpower to make the RTW program a success
- Believe in and have the ability to find alternate or modified work for injured workers
- Hold all levels of management accountable in fulfilling RTW processes
- Regard RTW as a priority

### Supervisor/Manager Commitment

Supervisors are key players in the RTW process and are instrumental in ensuring the success of individual RTW plans. They need to:

- Participate fully in all aspects of RTW planning in a timely manner
- Believe in and have the ability to find alternate or modified work for injured workers in their area
- Be role models and visibly support and promote the benefits of a RTW program

## Collaboration

In order to create cooperation, participation and a sense of ownership to a RTW program, it is important that the employer, the worker, the union (if applicable), and representation from the occupational health and safety committee collaborate during:

- The RTW program development
- Individual RTW planning
- Planned program reviews

A successful RTW program also takes a collaborative approach with injured workers during RTW planning. Worker input is essential for successful return to work.

## Flexibility

An all-or-nothing approach to RTW leads to failure. Be flexible in defining alternate or modified work options in the workplace and in individual RTW planning.

## Consistency

Be consistent in applying the RTW processes across an organization. Nothing undermines a RTW program more than one where only some workers are required to participate in it and others are not.

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## Realistic Objectives

Set reasonable goals. Do not expect that a RTW program will turn every time loss claim into a no time loss claim.

## Positive Work Climate

An injured worker is unlikely to want to return to a negative work environment. Setting up a RTW plan in this type of climate will be challenging. Successful RTW programs operate in an atmosphere of openness and cooperation. To build a supportive climate:

- Ensure coworkers do not engage in harassing or discriminatory behaviours
- Focus on safety (in both a reactive and proactive manner)
- Develop communication that allows any worker to voice concerns, ask questions or suggest recommendations about safety, the RTW program or an individual RTW plan

## Training & Orientation

A successful RTW program educates the workforce in RTW processes and includes it in new worker orientations. Orientation should focus on what needs to be done by each party and why RTW is the right thing to do.

Key individuals should receive more in-depth RTW education including:

- Senior management
- Staff members charged with developing, implementing and reviewing the RTW Program
- Supervisors
- Union (if applicable)

## Continuous Improvement

No program is perfect, particularly in its implementation stage. There can be problems in the defined procedures, process, forms, etc. Individual or challenging RTW plans may require frequent review of the RTW Program.

All parties (i.e., employer, union, workers) must work together to overcome any obstacles. The organization must commit to continuous improvement and plan regular RTW program reviews.

