GuardingMinds @ WORK

Suggested Actions and Resources

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCIES AND DEMANDS

OBJECTIVE: A work environment where there is good fit between employees' interpersonal and emotional competencies, their job skills, and the position they hold.

Engage your employees to improve psychological competencies and demands

Putting psychological competencies and demands On the Agenda is easy with these resources. A workshop slide presentation and facilitator guide help you have a productive conversation with your team about this psychosocial factor and each of the relevant statements from the Guarding Minds at Work survey.

If this factor shows up as a relative strength in your workplace, have a team discussion to find out why they scored this factor higher than the national average. This can lead to appreciation and understanding of what is already good. Policies and processes can also be developed or refined to continue to support positive psychological competencies and demands.

If this factor has been flagged as an area of concern in your workplace, engage all stakeholders in discussion about which actions might provide the best solutions. You can use ideas from the list below to begin the conversation. When everyone contributes to improving psychological health and safety, the responsibility is shared, the outcomes are more effective, and the effort is sustainable.

Below are actions and resources related to improving psychological competencies and demands. This list does not contain every solution. There may be other ideas that you find or think of and want to try. However, these suggestions can help provide a strong and cost-effective foundation for addressing psychological competencies and demands.

The practical strategies come from research studies, have been recommended as best practices, or have been applied effectively in workplaces. The resources included here are free. You can also find excellent services available at a cost from a variety of reputable providers.

Once you have reviewed the actions and resources below, we encourage you to use the Action Planning process to help you think critically about which combination of free, paid, or internal resources will best meet the needs in your workplace.

Actions by statements

If there are specific psychological competencies and demands statements from your Guarding Minds at Work survey that you want to address you may want to consider one of the actions or resources provided directly under the statement below. More general actions and resources, relevant to psychological competencies and demands, are also included at the end.

1. **Hiring/promotion decisions consider the "people skills" necessary for specific positions.**
   - Interviewing for behavioural competencies, especially for leadership positions, can reduce the negative impact from psychologically unsafe leadership strategies. The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA) provides a useful resource you can adapt for your hiring or promotion approach.
   - Engage representatives from the team where the role will reside to describe which people skills will be most relevant to this position.
   - Ensure that hiring and promotion decisions consider interpersonal and emotional competencies in addition to technical skills and knowledge. The ability to manage emotions and relationships, and to effectively solve challenging interpersonal problems at work, is especially relevant when interviewing for a position that includes supervision or support of others. CCSA provides an Interviewing Template to help and Positive Psychology provides some interview questions that focus on emotional intelligence.
   - Involve potential team members and others in the selection process of applicants for new positions or consideration of internal candidates for advancement opportunities.
   - Create detailed job descriptions that include interpersonal and emotional competencies requirements. Engage existing employees in development. The Government of Nunavut has a template that may be helpful.

2. **My company hires people who fit well within the organization.**
   - Ensure that for every job there is a detailed job description developed through consultation with employees doing the role. If not, consider developing it with people who will or have interacted with that job role. You can begin by considering what is done each day, week, month, and throughout the year. Beside each task, record the knowledge, skills, psychological, emotional, and physical demands required.
   - Engage team members in the interviewing process specifically to comment on how the person may impact the existing team dynamic and performance.

3. **I have the social and emotional skills needed to do my job well.**
   - Social and emotional skills are part of lifelong learning and evolve based on our circumstances, including our job demands. Workplaces can provide opportunities to develop these skills and reap the rewards in terms of productivity and well-being. While formal training programs may be effective, they can also be expensive and time consuming. Discussions that share information freely available online and in your community can also be effective.
   - Team activities can help build resilience and emotional intelligence. Building Stronger Teams provides numerous strategies and information that can help employees respond more effectively to workplace stressors, resolve issues, and support each other.
   - Social and emotional skills can be taught. Expensive programs aren't necessary. Rather, they could be part of regular team meetings or even assigned work. Personal Development contains many different activities specifically for the growth of emotional intelligence.

- Provide ongoing training in interpersonal and emotional skills, particularly those required for highly demanding positions. Building Stronger Teams has a section on Supporting Effective Team Leaders.

4. My organization has prepared me to deal with the psychological demands of my job.

- A process to define both the usual and less common psychological demands of the job. For example, a librarian, bus driver, barista, or store clerk may need to deal with someone who is high on drugs and violent. It may be only occasionally, but it is a possibility. When we are well prepared for even uncommon, but possible events, we will feel more comfortable when faced with them.

5. I am able to do my job in a way that meets my personal and professional values.

- Personal values assessment discusses how values are aligned with the role of each employee by taking the top 3 to 6 personal values from this assessment.
- Discuss professional values to better understand how each employee's values can contribute to their work success as well as how they may differ from others. Fill out the work values test.
- Once values are established, facilitate a discussion about how to improve alignment in the workplace.

Additional actions and resources

- Develop a culture in which the concept of emotional intelligence is understood, valued, and used as a criterion for recruitment, selection, recognition, or reward and promotion. Building emotional intelligence has resources to help.
- Provide training and guidelines for evaluating an applicant's potential interpersonal and emotional fit with the specific position, as well as with the overall organization. Some strategies and tips are provided by human resources professionals. Competency measures are also available.
- Orient all new employees to the interpersonal and emotional competencies needed for their jobs. Being a Mindful Employee is one resource that helps explain the responsibility to contribute to a psychologically safe workplace.
- Acknowledge when someone demonstrates positive communication skills. Some of the activities in Take Your Break include approaches for employees to acknowledge each other such as Post a positive message.
- Conduct regular and collaborative performance evaluations that include constructive feedback about interpersonal and emotional behaviour. Supportive Performance Management has some tips to do this.
- Where appropriate, consider a process allowing employees to explore internal positions that may better match their interpersonal and emotional competencies. This can include job-shadowing or career-development discussions. This 1:1 template can help open up this type of discussion.
- Once created, allow potential candidates to review the detailed competencies requirements during the hiring process.

- During the probationary period of employment for new hires, provide ongoing feedback, training, and support. Resources to make onboarding more effective, including this toolkit for Onboarding Newcomers from the Immigrant Employment Council of B.C. provides helpful strategies that can apply to all new employees.
- Identify and incorporate best practices for protecting employee psychological safety in your policies and procedures. Policy Recommendations can help.

Use this space to jot down additional ideas and suggested actions:

To consider which actions are most likely to result in the outcomes you desire, use the Action Planning process to guide your decision making and help you identify timelines, milestones, budgets, responsibilities, and measures of success.

Thank you to Workplace Safety and Prevention Services for their generous contribution to the development of these action items. For more tools and resources, please visit Think Mental Health.ca

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